

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet Member – Health and Social Care  
Cabinet

**DATE:** 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2009  
14<sup>th</sup> January 2010

**SUBJECT:** Common Financial Assessment Project

**WARDS AFFECTED:** All

**REPORT OF:** Charlie Barker  
Strategic Director - Social Care and Well-Being

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Keith Baines, Business Transformation Team  
Tel.: 0151 934 4428

**EXEMPT/  
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

To seek approval from the Cabinet Member to include funding received from the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NWIEP) into the Capital Programme for the purpose of improving the efficiency of Financial Assessments.

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

To comply with the Council's Constitution.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:-

- i) approve the Common Financial Assessment Project as detailed in this report;
- ii) refer the funding of up to £150,000 to Cabinet for inclusion in the Health and Social Care Capital Programme 2009/10, noting that financial commitment will only be entered into as and when grant approval is gained for each phase of the project.

**KEY DECISION:** No

**FORWARD PLAN:** Not Appropriate

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** Immediately following the call-in period for the minutes of this meeting.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS: None**

**IMPLICATIONS:**

**Budget/Policy Framework:**

A grant of £200k has been approved by the Northwest Regional Efficiency Programme for Sefton, Lancashire and Tameside. Sefton will use up to £150k of this fund to cover the cost of running the project. No other funds will be required. At the time of writing this report, grant approval for phase 1 of the project in the sum of £38,701 has been received. Financial commitment will only be entered into as and when grant approvals for further phases are made.

**Financial:**

<b><u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>2009/ 2010 £</b>	<b>2010/ 2011£</b>	<b>2011/ 2012 £</b>	<b>2012/ 2013 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure	£150K			
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources	£150K			
<b><u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u></b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/	June 2010			
How will the service be funded post expiry?	N/A – one off project			

**Legal:**

None

**Risk Assessment:**

If the recommendation is not approved, the funds cannot be included in the capital programme and the work cannot be undertaken

**Asset Management:**

none

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

FD 250 -

Officers from the following organisations have been involved in the application for this grant and the planning of the project: Sefton H&SC directorate, North West Electronic Government Group, DWP, Lancashire Council H&SC Directorate and Tameside H&SC Directorate

**CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:**

<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>		<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community		X	
2	Creating Safe Communities	X		
3	Jobs and Prosperity		X	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	X		
5	Environmental Sustainability		X	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities		X	
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	X		
8	Children and Young People		X	

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

None

## **BACKGROUND:**

1. Recent work in South Lakeland has shown that, for vulnerable older people, there are over 25 eligibility checks across 47 services relating to only two needs: “Warm, safe and secure housing”, and “Staying in general good health as long as possible”.
2. Of these, the financial assessments undertaken in adult social care are perhaps the most longwinded and stressful. Much of the difficult to source data is already held within the public sector, particularly by the DWP. Sharing this data would provide an opportunity to reduce unnecessary stressful contacts for Service Users and to reduce the council’s overheads.
3. The principal benefit from data sharing for the Service User is a much simpler application process, if they are already in receipt of benefits. For local authorities the benefit comes from quicker and easier assessments and reassessments as a result of having knowledge of an individual’s status and not having to ask for duplicate sets of information. There are potential savings for the council in reducing the effort required to carry out assessments, reducing expenditure by identifying ineligible claims and reducing the amount of bad debt arising from overpayments due to incomplete information being available when assessments are carried out.
4. There are also benefits for the DWP in terms of better knowledge of, for example, an individual’s accommodation status and thus whether they are eligible for attendance allowance and similar benefits.
5. With this in mind the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership have made available £200k (£150k to Sefton) to fund a project to improve the effectiveness of financial assessments in adult social care (ASC) for non-residential care across the whole of the North West through the adoption of best practice guidelines and closer working with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The funds are to support a joint programme with Sefton, Tameside and Lancashire councils and the DWP to share financial Assessment information
6. The project will be carried out in three phases:
  - 1) Baseline. The processes undertaken in the different sections and organisations will be documented to provide a means of comparing processes. These will be used to identify common data and processing requirements and opportunities for sharing information.
  - 2) Scenario generation and process redesign. The baseline information will be used to inform a series of workshops where a common approach to financial assessments will be identified. The output of the workshops will be a high level scenario; this will then be turned into a detail process definition.

3) Pilot. Once the detailed process is agreed by all parties, a pilot will be undertaken to prove the viability of the agreed process. The results of the pilot will be published in the form of an 'implementation guide' that can be circulated to all North West councils.

7. The NWEIP funds will be used employ staff to undertake the project tasks. Staff will be a mix of Sefton employees and contractors. The scope will be controlled by the project manager to ensure that no budget over-runs occur and that all expenditure incurred on the Common Financial Assessment Project can be met from within grant approvals received, up to a total of £150,000.