

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		22 January 2025	
PORTFOLIO:		Councillor Melissa Fisher - Deputy Leader of the Council (Housing and Communities)	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Mark Hoyle, Head of Regeneration and Housing	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Aids and Adaptations – Pilot Project	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	No	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	Yes	If yes, date of publication:	

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek approval to allocate up to £250,000 of the Disabled Facilities Grant (Better Care Funding) programme for a pilot project in partnership with the National Health Service (Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board), Lancashire County Council and the Peel House Medical Practice. The project aims to fund early aid and adaptation interventions to prevent falls and hospital admissions and reduce the health burden cost.

2. **Recommendations**

I recommend that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agrees to waive the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules in respect of appointing Homewise Society to administer funding up to a maximum of £250,000 for the provision of aids and adaptations to eligible vulnerable households living within the pilot project area for the reasons set out in the report.
- 2.2 Note that the funding award is subject to formal approval by Lancashire County Council that is expected imminently.
- 2.3 Agree that the cost of the funding, up to a maximum of £250,000, will be met from the Council’s Disabled Facilities (DFG) Funding programme.
- 2.4 Delegates authority to the Head of Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services), to draw up, finalise and execute a contract with Homewise Society for the pilot project.

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

- 3.1 Injury from trips and falls especially among older, vulnerable adults is a significant reason for hospital admissions and a future burden on health budgets. Discussions have taken place at the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board about a pilot project, which aims to identify those people at risk of falls in the home and then to apply a targeted approach to install appropriate aids and adaptations to eligible households to prevent falls in the home, as well as reduce morbidity and mortality.
- 3.2 A similar project carried out in Wales between 2010 and 2017 showed that frail elderly residents living in areas of higher social deprivation were more likely to have significant falls resulting in hospital admission and subsequently poorer health outcomes. Data studied suggested that intervening with home adaptations, such as stair rails and grab rails and into ensuring homes were well heated/warm, could reduce this risk.
- 3.3 Peel House Medical Practice has volunteered and agreed to take part in the pilot with the aim of targeting a cohort in the Practice's locality based on frailty scores in households aged over 50. With the households' permission, the aim is to carry out home assessments to identify potential and appropriate aids and adaptations to reduce the risk of falls and enable people to remain in their home longer.
- 3.4 Hyndburn Homewise Society, Hyndburn's independent home improvement agency, already provides aids and adaptations in conjunction with Hyndburn Borough Council and for Lancashire County Council. This report proposes to award Hyndburn Homewise a contract up to the a maximum value of £250,000, to enhance the services already provided by Homewise and for the funding to be ring fenced for the aids and adaptations pilot project.
- 3.5 Homewise Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), Charity Number: 1179077.
- 3.6 Peel House Medical Practice will identify the potential households after which Homewise will arrange a household inspection, identify, and then install appropriate aids and adaptations to the home and this will be funded from the DGF grant monies.
- 3.7 It is proposed to waive contract procedure rules for the following reasons:
- Hyndburn Homewise already provide an aids and adaptations service for Lancashire County Council and therefore this funding award will add to the existing service, using their local knowledge and expertise
 - The pilot project has been developed in conjunction with similar activities carried out by Homewise and in conjunction with local health services
 - The funding will be used to cover costs only, with no profit element, therefore maximising the amount of available funding to assist eligible households

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 This is a pilot project, which if it proves to be a success, will be rolled out to potentially the whole of Hyndburn and possibly Lancashire. For this reason, no alternative proposals are suggested or recommended.

5. Consultations

5.1 A range of key stakeholders have been consulted and support the project, including the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, Lancashire County Council, and Lancashire Chief Executives Group.

6. Implications

<p>Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)</p>	<p>There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.</p> <p>The cost of the project will be met by top slicing the DFG programme within the Council’s capital programme.</p>
<p>Legal and human rights implications</p>	<p>The Council’s legal service will draw up a contract to reflect the role and obligations of Homewise awarding aids and adaptations grants to eligible beneficiaries.</p> <p>Note, that the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (SCA) has been considered. Section 2 (1) SCA defines a subsidy as: financial assistance which—</p> <p><i>(a) is given, directly or indirectly, from public resources by a public authority,</i></p> <p><i>(b) confers an economic advantage on one or more enterprises,</i></p> <p><i>(c) is specific, that is, is such that it benefits one or more enterprises over one or more other enterprises with respect to the production of goods or the provision of services, and</i></p> <p><i>(d) has, or is capable of having, an effect on—</i></p> <p><i>(i) competition or investment within the United Kingdom,</i></p> <p><i>(ii) trade between the United Kingdom and a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, or</i></p> <p><i>(iii) investment as between the United</i></p>

	<p><i>Kingdom and a country or territory outside the United Kingdom.</i></p> <p>To constitute a subsidy, the granting of financial assistance must be given to an enterprise who are engaging in economic activity that confers an economic advantage. Charities can be deemed as an 'enterprise' if it is undertaking commercial activities. However, in this instance the definition of a subsidy is not met as Homewise Society is engaging in non-economic activities and providing assistance to the vulnerable thus gaining no economic advantage. The activities provided by Homewise Society support eligible individuals to remain in their own home and to prevent hospital admissions. The funding will be used to further the core assistance activities provided by Homewise Society. Homewise are seeking to cover their costs in respect of the project but the monies payable do not include a surplus or profit element. In the circumstances, the activity being funded can be considered to be non-economic and, by virtue of section 7(2) SCA, Homewise would not be acting as an enterprise in connection with the project, so no subsidy would arise.</p>
<p>Assessment of risk</p>	<p>The pilot does not raise any significant risk. The key aim will be to ensure that funding goes to eligible households. The Council will also ensure that workmanship standards are high.</p> <p>The Council will include grant conditions to ensure appropriate insurances are in place, as well as grant clawback for non-compliance or non-delivery.</p>
<p>Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i></p>	<p>This is a pilot project and therefore a customer service analysis is attached.</p>

7. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:**
List of Background Papers

7.1 None

8. **Freedom of Information**

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.