

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE**RETENDER OF THE HANDYPERSON AND ADAPTATION SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report seeks Cabinet approval to commence the tender process for the Handyman and Adaptation Service (HPAS).
2. This is a Key Decision because it will result in expenditure of £1 million or over and it will have significant effects on two or more electoral divisions.

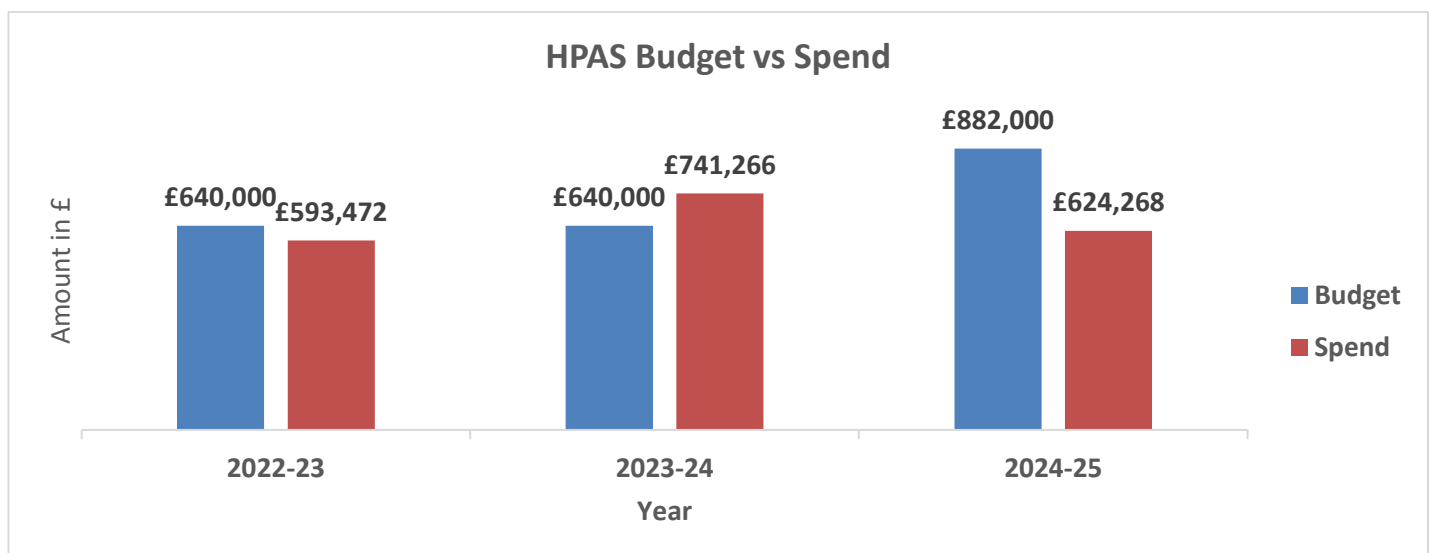
Information

3. The Handyman and Adaptation Service supports individuals to stay safe and independent in their homes by providing free or low-cost, high-quality adaptations and small practical jobs. Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are required to provide minor aids and adaptations (up to a cost of £1,000) and have a duty to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support. HPAS enables Nottinghamshire County Council to fulfil these duties.
4. The service supports all residents of Nottinghamshire (excluding the City of Nottingham) who are aged 60 or over or have a disability.
5. The service has proven to be highly beneficial, enabling safe and independent living, reducing the risk of falls and trips, preventing, reducing and delaying the need for more expensive care services and major adaptations, and speeding up hospital discharges. Over the past three years, the total number of jobs completed by HPAS was **7,460**, this including **2,432** hospital discharge jobs.
6. Services provided under HPAS include:
 - Minor adaptations which can be installed in individual properties to support people to maintain safety and independence within their own homes as part of the Council's Care Act duty of prevent, reduce and delay. Adaptations are supplied and fitted free of charge and include additional internal stair rails, internal grab rails and external grab rails.
 - Handyman jobs which are small jobs such as fixing curtain rails to improve home heating, fixing loose carpets to remove trip hazards or fitting a key safe to enable

access to the property for family or carers. Traders are paid £15 in cash per job, paid directly to them by the person in receipt of the service.

HPAS Budget and Spend

7. Actual spend on the service has varied over the past few years. It peaked in 2023-24, possibly due to a backlog caused by reduced activity during lockdown, and has gradually decreased since then. The breakdown of HPAS spending is as follows:
 - 2022-23: £593,472
 - 2023-24: £741,266
 - 2024-25: £624,268
8. Funding for HPAS comes from the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocations provided to district and borough councils. Nottinghamshire's total DFG allocation is top sliced to fund HPAS.
9. In both 2022-23 and 2023-24, the HPAS budget was £640,000. This increased to £882,000 in 2024-25 to meet the anticipated increase demand on the service. However, the year ended with an underspend of approximately £260,000.
10. With regard to this year's underspends, some districts have requested that their share of underspend be returned so they can use it for other DFG projects. Meanwhile, other districts have expressed a preference to retain their share in their HPAS accounts to cover any potential future overspends.
11. It has been agreed that the HPAS budget for 2025-26, and for the new contract starting in April 2026, will remain £882,000 top sliced from Nottinghamshire's total DFG allocation, and this will be kept under regular review.



12. The current payment rate for traders was reviewed to ensure fairness. As part of the HPAS service review, the Commissioning Officer consulted with traders about the existing rates. Most traders expressed satisfaction, while some suggested a slight increase in line with inflation. All traders were keen to continue delivering the service and agreed to extend their

contracts for 2025-26 based on current rates. The Commissioning Team has completed benchmarking research to compare HPAS payment rates with similar services across the County, ensuring competitiveness and fairness. The current HPAS payment rate appears to be fair and in line with market standards.

13. The current HPAS Payment Rates are:

- £1 per job for sundry materials (e.g., screws, drill bits, plastic plugs)
- £15 for handyperson jobs (paid by the person in receipt of the service)
- £45.50/hour for hospital discharge jobs (within 2 working days)
- £25.50/hour for standard jobs (within 5 working days)
- £10.50 for the first 20 miles, then 45p per mile thereafter per job.

Current Service Delivery and Governance

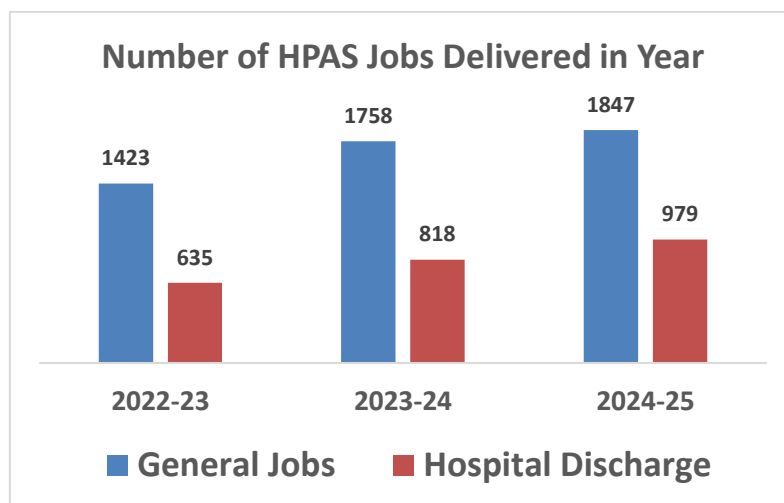
14. In 2022, Nottinghamshire County Council carried out a tender exercise for the service, resulting in contracts with eight traders/handypersons and one material supplier (Jewson). The contract was for three years from April 2022 to April 2025, with the option to extend for two additional years. The Council also has a Service Level Agreement with the Council's Customer Service Centre to coordinate the service.

15. The Customer Service Centre serves as the main contact and coordinator for the service. It handles calls and referrals, conducts assessments, assigns jobs to traders, manages inquiries and issues, and follows up with users to gather feedback and assess the service's impact on health and wellbeing.

16. The Commissioning Officer oversees the contract, ensuring alignment with service objectives and quality standards.

17. Service information can be seen in the figures below, with usage increasing year on year.

- 2022-23: **2,058** jobs
- 2023-24: **2,576** jobs
- 2024-25: **2,826** jobs



Procurement and Contracts:

18. There are two separate contracts for HPAS: one for handypersons/traders and another for the materials supplier.
19. For traders, it is proposed that the procurement be structured as a Framework divided into seven lots, one for each district, with two traders assigned to each lot. Each trader may cover a maximum of two lots.
20. For the supply of materials, it is proposed that the procurement be structured as a Framework divided into seven lots, one for each district, with a preferred and reserve supplier in each lot.

HPAS Service Review

21. Between August 2024 and January 2025, the Commissioning Team conducted a service review of HPAS to understand the current situation, what is working well and what could be improved. The objective of this review was to make an informed decision about the future of the service.
22. In total, 54 individuals participated in the review. The review consisted of five main elements:
 - Reviewing the data the Council has about the service.
 - Engaging with the market (soft Market Testing) – 3 responses.
 - Engaging with the current traders, the Council’s Customer Service Centre and the materials supplier (Jewson) – 11 responses.
 - Engaging with the people who used or could have used the service via online survey and group conversation – 40 responses.
 - Research into other similar services nationally.
23. The review found that both people accessing the service and traders are highly satisfied. Feedback indicates that the service is efficient, high-quality, and positively impacts people's lives. Some traders suggested that the payment rates have not been reviewed for a long time and should be increased to make the service more viable for them. The service is not well-known among eligible individuals, thus it was recommended to increase communication and advertising the service through various channels such as GP practices, local newspapers, buses and libraries.
24. Whilst the overall feedback was positive, some challenges and opportunities for improvement were identified. For example:
 - Stock issues and branch closures at the materials supplier are affecting service delivery.
 - Some customers delay or refuse payment for handyperson services.
 - A limited number of traders can handle two-person jobs, restricting service capacity.
 - The procurement process may unintentionally exclude traders unfamiliar with tender applications.

Follow-up calls:

25. The Customer Service Centre conducts follow-up calls with people that have used HPAS four weeks after the delivery of the work. The calls aim to understand their satisfaction with the service and the impact it has made on their lives. A new questionnaire was developed in early 2025 to better capture people's insights. For Quarter 4 2024-25, 36 people participated in the follow-up calls. Below are their responses to some of the questions.

| Answer | Has the NCC HPAS service met your expectations? |
|----------------------|---|
| Yes | 35 |
| Prefer not to answer | 1 |
| No | 0 |
| Total | 36 |

| Answer | Has the HPAS tradesperson met your expectations? |
|----------------------|--|
| Yes | 35 |
| Prefer not to answer | 1 |
| No | 0 |
| Total | 36 |

| Answer | Has adaptation improved your ability to move around home? |
|----------------------|---|
| Yes | 32 |
| Prefer not to answer | 4 |
| No | 0 |
| Total | 36 |

| Answer | Has adaptation reduced your need for care/support? |
|----------------------|--|
| Yes | 20 |
| Prefer not to answer | 15 |
| No | 1 |
| Total | 36 |

Proposed Options Considered

26. Following the service review, two options were proposed to the district and borough councils for the future of the service, outlining factors to be considered. These were:
- Continue delivering the current service model but consider some changes, for example, including additional services such as Housing MOTs
 - Introduce a different model of service delivery such as outsourcing and contracting an external provider to deliver the entire service across the County.
27. The district and borough councils, alongside the Commissioning Officer, recommended proceeding with Option 1: "Continue delivering the current service model, with some changes and improvements."
28. The proposed minor changes and improvements to the service are:
- Change the service name to "Handyperson **and** Adaptation Service"
 - Consider expanding the scope of the service to offer wider Housing MOT and safety checks, subject to funding from district and borough councils.

New Contract Length and Budget:

29. The new HPAS contract will be for an initial term of two years, commencing in April 2026, with the option to extend for up to an additional two years (in 12-month increments). This structure is intended to provide more flexibility in response to potential changes arising from the local government reorganisation.
30. An analysis of expenditure data over the past three years indicates that allocating £882,000 of the total DFG budget should be sufficient to cover the anticipated annual HPAS expenditure. Accordingly, for the initial two-year term of the contract, the HPAS budget will be set at £1.8 million (£882,000 per annum).
31. Given that district and borough councils have previously agreed to increase the HPAS budget in line with actual expenditure, the Commissioning Officer will continue to monitor spending and review the budget in collaboration with the districts.

Timeframe:

32. The current HPAS contract is a three-year agreement, with the option to extend it twice for up to 12 months each time. The contract runs from April 2022 to April 2025 and has already been extended to April 2026.
33. The proposed timeline for the re-tendering process is as follows:
 - Commissioning Board approval: 13 May 2025 (approved)
 - Senior Leadership Team approval: 28 May 2025 (approved)
 - Cabinet approval: 10 September 2025
 - Update to Commissioning Board/Senior Leadership Team: Early Quarter 3 2025-26
 - Tender publication and marking: October - November 2025
 - Due Diligence and Contract award: December 2025 - January 2026
 - Start of New Contract: April 2026.

Local Government Reorganisation

34. The Commissioning Officer will work with the Procurement and Legal teams to ensure that the tendering and contracting process takes into consideration the future local government reorganisation changes and that the service will adapt to those changes.

Other Options Considered

35. Not retendering: this option was considered and ruled out, as HPAS allows the Council to fulfil its duty under the Care Act in an efficient way. If the HPAS contract was stopped, the Council would still be expected to deliver and fund minor adaptations. However, this would be more complicated, time-consuming, and possibly more expensive, as each minor adaptation would need to be funded and delivered separately.
36. Different model of HPAS: retendering HPAS with changes to the service delivery model was considered, mainly looking at contracting an organisation to deliver the service across the County on the Council's behalf. However, this option was discounted for several reasons. There was not much interest in this model during the soft market testing. The feedback from the service review was considered and was mostly positive. As a result, this option was also eliminated.

Reason/s for Recommendations

37. The service review showed that the current service model is functioning effectively and efficiently, with high levels of satisfaction reported by both traders and people in receipt of the service. Additionally, staff involved in delivering the service demonstrated strong knowledge and experience. Therefore, the recommendation is to continue delivering the service in its current form.

Statutory and Policy Implications

38. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

39. HPAS enables Nottinghamshire County Council to meet its duties under the Care Act 2014 by providing minor aids and adaptations to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support. Funding for HPAS comes from the district and borough councils' Disabled Facilities Grant allocation. An analysis of expenditure over the past three years suggests that an annual allocation of £882,000 should be sufficient to meet HPAS needs. This amount will be kept under regular review to ensure it remains appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Cabinet:

- 1) gives approval to commence the tender process for the Handyperson and Adaptation Service.
- 2) delegates to the Service Director, Strategic Commissioning and Integration, the authority to award the contract and make any decisions relating to the extension of the relevant contract in due course.

Councillor Barry Answer
Cabinet Member, Adult Social Care and Health

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Constitutional Comments (CM 08/08/25)

40. The proposed decision falls within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care. The Council has broad duties under the Care Act 2014 including the promotion of the well-being of relevant individuals and preventing needs for care and support where possible, as well as its general Public Sector Equality Duty. The discharge of these duties is intended to be supported by the Handyperson and Adaptation Service. The proposed tender process is intended to provide a legally compliant route to market for the provision of this service.

Financial comments (PD 15/08/25)

41. The HPAS budget for 2025/26 is £0.882m and is top sliced from the 2025/26 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocation of £8.602m. Based on expenditure in the last 3 years, it is expected that the budgeted £0.882m will be sufficient to fully fund the costs of the HPAS service. The districts have not agreed to a common treatment of any underspend against the £0.882m budget and as in previous years, there will be repayments back to districts if necessary and if requested.
42. Funding for the DFG is currently allocated to local authorities in England based on a relative needs approach considering the following principles:
- number of disability related benefit claimants;
 - number of people on means tested benefit;
 - proportion of population over 60 years of age;
 - proportion of local authority (LA) owned housing stock.
43. However, concerns have been raised that the current approach is now outdated and may no longer fairly represent local demand for the DFG. There is an ongoing consultation by MHCLG on revising the funding formula and this could mean changes in future DFG allocations. At this point, it is unclear what the potential financial impact could be on Nottinghamshire.
44. Under the current 2-tier local government arrangements in Nottinghamshire, DFG allocations are passed through to the districts with the top-slice for the HPAS service being agreed by them. Following the implementation of new arrangements under Local Government Reorganisation, DFG allocations will be received and administered by the newly-formed unitary authority. The total DFG allocation to the new authority will be affected depending on which districts it comprises. Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County currently have separate approaches to provision of minor adaptations and the service will need to monitor LGR developments to ensure that the service meets requirements and is financially sustainable.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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