

Home Care reforms information series

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Welcome to the 13th edition of LASA's newsletter on home care reforms. The newsletter is published monthly and is also available on our [website](#) along with previous editions. If you have specific topics or questions you would like addressed in future editions, please email homecare@lasa.asn.au. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and support members in response to current issues that have emerged with implementation of the [Increasing Choice Home Care](#) reforms (IHC) on 27 February 2017.

LASA'S MY AGED CARE HOME CARE PROVIDER SURVEY

The [Home Care Provider Survey Report](#) of our national home care package members, evaluating the initial experience of 73 providers in the eight-week period following the introduction of the IHC reforms is now available on the LASA [website](#). The report examines the evidence regarding home care package movements and provides recommendations to inform the continued implementation of IHC.

Most home care packages were level two (62.6 per cent) with a combined total of 12,318 packages across all package levels as of 27 February 2017. The number of providers and packages that were accounted for in the survey represented over 10 per cent of home care providers and packages nationally.

Consumer exits were reported for 58.4 per cent of providers, consumer regrades for 42.7 per cent of providers, consumer transfers for 33.0 per cent of providers and queue activations for only 25.0 per cent.

Movements were more likely to occur in level two home care packages ahead of level three or four home care packages, with the least likely area of movement being level one home care packages. Where such movements did take place, it was generally of a magnitude of 5 per cent or less of a provider's total packages being administered.

Half of providers experienced a decline in their total number of packages, a quarter of providers experienced an increase in their total number of packages, and the remaining providers experienced no change in package activity.

New entrants were also noted as contributing to a small proportion of consumer transfers and queue activations, this being an early indication of the emergence of increasing competition in a market-based environment for delivery of a capped supply of home care packages. Key themes that emerged from provider comments included:

- low numbers of home care package activations by consumers from the national queue
- continued difficulties in using the MAC provider portal and in interactions with the MAC Contact Centre
- reports that consumers are experiencing confusion and poor understanding of official correspondence sent to them for package approval and assignment
- reports of provider difficulties associated with not having access to timely and accurate information in the context of the recent policy changes
- reports of delays in consumers having access to home care package assessments through Aged Care Assessment Teams.

Recommendations from the LASA report include:

1. Release of information on the national queue and MAC home care package movements that will support the transition of home care package providers into a changed operational environment and can inform market positioning at the local level.
2. Undertake further investigation of consumer experience of the home care package approval-assignment-activation process to clarify consumer readiness and capability for participation in the MAC approval, assignment and activation process.
3. Implement an interim strategy to facilitate active follow-up of consumers who are issued a package assignment, working towards reducing the number of inactive package days between package assignment and activation.

CONSUMER TRANSFER OF UNSPENT FUNDS

In respect to consumer transfers, both original and new providers should have in place documented procedures for this transfer process in the event difficulties occur. Procedures should list responsibilities for communication with the consumer and the other provider, as well as the transfer of any unspent funds.

The expectation of consumers seeking to transfer their package funds from one provider to another is that this should be a simple process with minimal disruption to care. Where difficulties occur, consumer complaints could emerge and providers with well documented transfer procedures and good handover practices will minimise any adverse impact that may result from consumer complaints.

A summary of the process for transfer of home care package funds from the original to new provider is included in [Issue 3 of LASA's Home Care Information Services](#) – Unspent Home Care Amounts and Exit Amounts.

The Department of Health has provided recent clarification to LASA concerning the transfer portion. It must be paid by the original provider to the new provider within **70 calendar days** (not 70 working days) from the cessation date as agreed between the original provider and the consumer.

New providers that have not received the transfer portion of a consumer's unspent home care amount within the legislated timeframes should:

- notify the consumer to inform them the transfer portion has not been received
- liaise with the consumer and the original provider about the delay, as appropriate
- where necessary, support the consumer to raise the issue with the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner.