

Home Care reforms information series

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Welcome to the tenth edition of Leading Age Services Australia's newsletter on the Home Care Reforms, which is available on our [website](#) along with previous editions. If you have specific topics or questions you would like addressed in future editions, please email them to homecare@lasa.asn.au.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON HOME CARE EXIT FEES — LASA MEDIA RELEASE

LASA has responded to reports on the [Today Show](#) and in the [Daily Telegraph](#) misrepresenting Australia's home care providers on the issue of charging excessive exit fees. LASA has issued a media release [\(insert link here\)](#) in response to these misleading reports.

In the days ahead, LASA will continue to advocate for more balanced reporting of exit fees and transfer of unspent home care funds. Providers are reminded about their responsibilities concerning the charging of exit amounts particularly the requirement for providers to both consult and gain consent from existing clients about home care agreement changes that have emerged with the provider's introduction of an exit amount.

For further information, please see LASA's Home Care reforms information series [Issue 3](#) and the Department of Health's [webpage](#) for an Overview of Exit Amounts. Members can also consult with LASA by calling 1300 11 636 or emailing homecare@lasa.asn.au.

1 PACKAGE UPGRADES

When [My Aged Care](#) (MAC) determines that an existing client has reached the front of the national queue to receive a package at a higher level than is currently provided to them, both the client and the provider will be notified when that client has been allocated the package upgrade. Providers will receive an immediate notification through the provider portal on MAC when one of their clients is assigned a package upgrade and will not need to accept a new referral. Please contact MAC if you are not receiving these notifications.

The client will also be sent a letter notifying them of the package upgrade, advising that their provider will be notified and that the client should speak with the provider about changes to care plans and service provision. Please contact MAC if a client has not received their notification.

MAC's automatic package upgrade for clients awaiting a higher package level seeks to minimise administrative procedures and ensure clients can promptly receive additional home care services.

Important note for providers: if a client advises they do not want to receive a package upgrade then the client will need to call MAC and opt out before they are assigned the upgrade. The client can subsequently call MAC at any time to have their higher package level approval reinstated in the queue and registered at their original approval date.

2 AGED CARE CLAIMING AND PACKAGE UPGRADES

When MAC facilitates an automatic package upgrade, the [Department of Human Services](#) (DHS) will also be notified of the package upgrade for claiming purposes. Providers no longer need to complete the following DHS Forms when completing a package upgrade for clients:

- Aged Care Home Care Packages transfer level of care for Aged Care recipients (AC013)
- Aged Care Client Entry Record (AC021)

However, the [Aged Care Client Entry Record](#) still needs to be completed by providers for all new package clients who are not receiving a package upgrade.

When providers submit their monthly aged care claim to DHS for receipt of payment of the client's monthly home care subsidies and supplements, they need to ensure key dates concerning the transfer of a client between package levels are correct to ensure the right level of subsidy/supplement payment is issued to the client's package. Any discrepancies in claimed subsidy/supplement amounts when compared with aged care payment statements received for that claimed period can be followed up with DHS.

3 CARE PLAN REVIEWS FOR PACKAGE UPGRADES

When a client undergoes a package upgrade it is important for providers to facilitate a care plan review with the client and/or their representative at the point of transfer between package levels. The review process secures an opportunity for both providers and their clients (and/or representatives) to review a client's needs and service mix in relation to the new budget and level of care being provided. It is also a good opportunity for providers to explain any changes in fees and charges, or other conditions related to the package upgrade.

It is up to providers and their clients to decide on whether a new agreement is required or an updated care plan would suffice (based on the detail of the original service agreement that is in place). Good documentation is always best practice. Importantly, providers will need to review their contractual relationships with clients being provided higher packaged level care and attend to the additional risks and legal obligations of those arrangements where increasing complexity in providing care is encountered.

For members wanting advice and support from LASA regarding home care package upgrades and care plan reviews, please call 1300 111 636 or email homecare@lasa.asn.au.

4 WORKFORCE AND PACKAGE UPGRADES

Providers are responsible for determining their capacity to deliver services at varied package levels, and to demonstrate this capacity when required. Providers offering higher level packages to clients will need to be able to respond to some key risks, including falls, swallowing difficulties, potential medication misadventures, delirium, pain management, pressure injuries, malnutrition, dehydration and the expression of unmet need associated with cognitive decline.

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Importantly, providers will need to consider their workforce capacity requirements at higher package levels, such as:

- having access to clinical expertise in providing clients with case management support and complex care decision making, service reassessment and referral
- having access to highly skilled direct care provision staff who are appropriately supervised/supported in responding to clinical care and/or complex psychosocial requirements (whether this be using internal employees or brokered care arrangements)
- having access to integrated medical, nursing and allied health care as part of a comprehensive packaged care arrangement.

LASA is a national provider of accredited training. We are here to support our members to ensure that their staff can be confident in their skills and capabilities, and are supported in their valuable role of providing care for older Australians. Our National Registered Training Organisation (RTO) offers a range of aged care, leadership and management courses. To discuss accredited training options, please call 1300 111 636 and ask for our RTO team, email education@lasa.asn.au or visit our website at lasa.asn.au/education.

If you would like to discuss in-house professional development workshops, please email homecare@lasa.asn.au.

5 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Providers are reminded of some pertinent points communicated by the [Department of Health](#) (DoH) during the recent [Increasing Choice](#) webinar and webchat:

- home care packages are being released on a regular basis through the National Prioritisation Process, including high priority and regular referrals
- wait time information for persons registered, assessed and approved to receive a home care package will not be published until later in 2017 once a pattern of package movements through DoH is established
- when a client changes his/her residential address, providers should prompt the client to update their Medicare details to ensure they continue to receive official DHS correspondence
- providers can assist their clients by submitting any address changes as part of their monthly aged care claim process
- providers are encouraged to check their aged care payment statements in March and April 2017, as any discrepancies in claimed subsidy/supplement amounts compared with aged care payment statements received for that claimed period can be followed up with DHS.

Providers are reminded that the *Home Care Packages Programme Operational Manual* has been retired. DoH has recommended that home care package stakeholders should:

- familiarise themselves with the [Aged Care Act 1997](#) and associated [Aged Care Principles](#) for guidance on service delivery and business operations
- regularly visit the [Increasing Choice in Home Care](#) and the Department of Health's [Ageing and Aged Care](#) website to review the fact sheets and legislation
- contact the [My Aged Care](#) Contact provider and assessor helpline on 1800 836 799.