

Home Care reforms information series

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Welcome to the 14th edition of Leading Age Services Australia's newsletter on the Home Care Reforms during 2017, which 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 them to 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.

CONSUMER CHOICE AND HOME CARE PACKAGE BUDGET EXPENDITURE

Consumer directed care is both a philosophy and an orientation to service delivery where consumers can choose and control the care and services they purchase. Providers must operate in line with guiding principles and legislation to enable consumers to experience greater choice and control.

Understanding the aged care principles and legislation as supports goal setting, care planning, care provision and budget expenditure for client's home care packages has become fundamental to consumer direct care. Over time, providers will experience consumer requests for care, services and purchases that may test their understanding about what a home care package budget can and cannot be used for, as well as relationship management in working with consumers in administering their home care packages and negotiating budget expenditure. Importantly, home care package budget expenditure is intended for the delivery of care and services that support a consumer to remain living at home. Requests that are not consistent with, or seek additional personal benefit above, this program objective should be questioned by providers in respect to budget expenditure.

A list of care, support and services that may be provided under a home care package are included at [Schedule 3 – Care and services for home care services, Part 1 – Care and services of the Quality of Care Principles 2014](#). This list is not exhaustive and other care and services can be provided to consumers if they meet the consumer's identified care needs and goals, as identified in the care plan.

Providers should consider any supports the consumer already has in place, such as carers, family members, local community and other services. A home care package is intended to meet the needs of the consumer that are not already being met by these other supports.

Importantly, [*Schedule 3 – Care and services for home care services, Part 2 – Excluded items of the Quality of Care Principles 2014*](#) specifies items that must not be included as part of a consumer’s care plan. This includes:

- use of the package funds as a source of general income for the care recipient;
- purchase of food, except as part of enteral feeding requirements;
- payment for permanent accommodation, including assistance with home purchase, mortgage or rent;
- payment of home care fees;
- payment of fees or charges for other types of care funded or jointly funded by the Australian Government;
- home modifications or capital items that are not related to the care recipient’s care needs;
- travel and accommodation for holidays;
- cost of entertainment activities, such as club memberships and tickets to sporting events;
- gambling activities; and
- payment for services and items covered by the Medicare Benefits Schedule or the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

A home care package budget is also not intended to be used by consumers as an aids and equipment scheme. However, some aids and equipment, including custom made aids, can be provided to a consumer where this is intended to meet the consumer’s care needs as identified in their care plan and the item/s can be provided within the package budget. Where large purchases are to be made, agreement will be required regarding who will be responsible for ongoing maintenance and repair costs, as well as what will happen to any purchased/leased item once the consumer leaves the package. The agreed position and responsibilities of each party should be documented.

A provider’s Home Care Agreement is critical in defining the parameters of home care package budget expenditure. The Agreement needs to include provisions that clearly cover the provider’s rights and responsibilities in responding to consumer requests for budget expenditure that are not listed in *Schedule 3 – Care and services for home care services of the Quality of Care Principles 2014* and as relate to the provision of care and services that support a consumer to remain living at home. As consumers exercise their choices for care and service provision through their home care package, providers should be reviewing the robustness of their current Home Care Agreement, seeking consultative advice and looking at the requirement for the Agreement’s revision to improve upon their existing Home Care Agreement.

Additionally, providers should work to maintain clearly documented and dated consumer care plans that specify how a package budget will be used, revising the care plan as required when a change to ongoing budget expenditure is requested and agreed to between the consumer and provider. Any agreed one-off additional services and purchases, and the justification for such, can be documented in the consumer's care record where they occur outside of formal care plan revision.

Importantly, home care package budget expenditure is governed by a principles-based approach that is a matter of negotiation between a consumer and provider in the context of the specific circumstances surrounding a consumer's care and service needs that support him/her to remain living at home. For consumers that are requesting consideration for budget expenditure outside of *Schedule 3 – Care and services for home care services of the Quality of Care Principles 2014*, providers will need to invest time in working with the consumer, providing information and options that will support the identification of an agreeable arrangement that will allow a consumer to exercise choice and control, while acknowledging the limits of a home care package's budget expenditure.

Providers that approach the care relationship and budget expenditure with transparency and openness in the negotiation process, with the backing of a robust Home Care Agreement and care plan tool will provide clarity and support to both staff and consumers as they work together in supporting consumers in their exercising choice for care and services to remain living at home.