Home Care reforms information series

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Welcome to the 19th 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 (ICHC) on 27 February 2017.

LASA's SECOND HOME CARE PROVIDER REPORT

The Second Home Care Provider Survey Report and Appendices document, evaluating the experience of 34 providers in the six month period following the introduction of the ICHC reforms, are now available on LASA's website. The report examines the evidence regarding home care package movements across the six months to 31 August 2017 and provides recommendations to inform continued implementation of ICHC.

Most packages comprised level two home care packages (57 per cent) with total package activity at 27 February 2017 being 6,823 packages across package levels. The number of packages that were accounted for in the survey represented nearly 10 per cent of home care packages, nationally.

There was no significant change in total package activity across the first six months of ICHC, only a slight 4.7 per cent increase. Over the same period, almost two thirds of providers reported an increase in packages while one fifth reported a decrease. Three quarters of new entrants also picked up packages while the number of consumer upgrades increased significantly over the six month period.

Importantly, the 4.7 per cent increase in packages for this sample when compared to a 14 per cent increase in packages made available by government over the same period suggests one in thirteen consumers may not be activating their assigned package (or less 7,000 consumers system wide over the six month period). Key research findings include:

- Accumulation of unspent package funds suggesting between $200 -$350 million in unspent funds system wide.
- High numbers of home care package withdrawals (noting MAC system upgrades have been put in place to resolve these issues as is mentioned later in the newsletter).
- Premature admissions to residential care by home care package consumers at a rate of 2.7 per cent of all packages.
- Package consumers accessing top-up services, with 2.7 per cent accessing Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) services and 5 per cent accessing additional privately purchased services.

Recommendations from the survey report to the Department of Health include:

1. Improving the rate with which consumers activate home care packages.
2. Investigating trends concerning the accumulation of unspent home care package funds.
3. Improving the ratio of high to low level home care packages.
4. Improving accountability for CHSP service access as an adjunct to home care packages.

SUMMARY OF MY AGED CARE CHANGES ON 4 DECEMBER 2017

The Department of Health released a summary document to assist service providers and assessors in understanding the changes made to the My Aged Care (MAC) system on 4 December 2017.

This release is focused on delivering a number of high priority system improvements and builds on the changes made since 1 July 2015 to continue to improve the usability of the system for providers. The changes include:

- Enabling service providers to transfer services between outlets and to transfer clients between services for the same approved provider organisation, reducing the reliance on manual intervention by the MAC Contact Centre.
- Displaying additional information upon acceptance of a service referral (e.g. NAPS Service ID) and enabling providers to select which NAPS Service ID to assign a referral to when accepting a referral or drawing a client into a service from a waitlist. This will ensure that accurate information is included in payment claims, as the selected NAPS Service ID (in MAC) should match the NAPS Service ID used for claiming in the Aged Care Online Payment system.
- Improvements to the delegation, approval and extension process, including the ability for Aged Care Assessment Team delegates to approve permanent residential care with an approval end date.
- Enhancements to the functionality for service providers in the maintenance of home care packages, including:

1. Enabling the automatic re-assignment of a home care package when an entry notification is received after the package take-up deadline.
2. Enabling acceptance of a home care entry notification prior to the acceptance of a referral in the provider portal.

All relevant guidance documentation (including user guides and quick reference guides) has been updated to support this system release and are available on the Department of Health's WEBSITE.

AUSKEY OR VANGUARD PROVIDER AUTHENTIFICATION

AUSkey is the primary authentication mechanism for service providers and assessors to securely access and use the MAC system.

Following feedback from the state and territory governments on AUSkey access issues, the Department of Health is promoting two new secure authentication mechanisms – the VANguard **Federated Authentication Service (FAS)** and **Manage ABN Connections**.

Vanguard is an alternative to AUSkey which:

- Does not require the Java software.
- Is more manageable for >100 users.
- Does not require access to the Australian Business Register.
- Allows the MAC Portals to be accessed easily on multiple devices.
- Does not require use of a password.
- Requires lower ongoing administration.
- Security is maintained by the Portal Administrator for the outlet.

The Department of Health has provided a comparison table looking at the various authentication mechanisms which may help providers in determining which system will suit their business needs ongoing.