



IRISH MEDICAL
ORGANISATION
Ceardchumann Dochtúirí na hÉireann

IMO Submission to the Department of Health on Home Care Services

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1. In your opinion, what are the good things about home care services in Ireland?

The IMO has welcomed the introduction of homecare packages in 2009 which if appropriately implemented can enable elderly people to live independently in their homes for as long as possible and can serve to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospitals. However, the IMO remains concerned about the lack of national standards for homecare packages and the failure of the Government to adequately resource homecare services to meet demand or the complexity of care required.

2. Do you think that home care services work well alongside primary care and other community services to meet the needs of people who receive home care?

Note: Primary and community services include GP services, public health nursing, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and respite care.

Yes No Don't know

3. Do you think that home care services work well alongside hospitals to meet the needs of people who receive home care?

Yes No Don't know

4. Do you think that home care services work well alongside informal carers to meet the needs of people who receive home care?

Note: informal carers are family and friends that provide care and support

Yes No Don't know

If you have any comments in relation to how well home care services work with other providers of care, please include them below:

If appropriately implemented home care services can enable elderly people to live independently in their homes for as long as possible and can serve to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospitals. However, the level of resources allocated to home care packages is insufficient to meet current demand or the complexity of care required by frail elderly patients.

Transparent information should be provided to patients, informal carers and for healthcare providers on how to apply for home care services, how they are assessed, access to services, what services are provided and by whom, as well as how home care services are monitored and how decisions can be appealed.

Liaison with informal careers in needed to ensure informal carers are appropriately supported.

5. Do you think that people who receive home care should have more of a say in the range of services that are provided to them?

Yes No Don't know

6. Do you think that people who receive home care should have a choice in who provides their care?

Note: Home care can be provided by the HSE, not-for-profit providers and private providers.

Yes No Don't know

If you have any comments in relation to choice of home care services and providers, please include them below:

Providers of home care packages must be accountable for their quality of care. Providers of home care services must be appropriately trained and under the direction of the appropriate authority. Services should be patient-centred and be able to meet the requirements of elderly frail patients.

Private providers home care service may be ill-equipped to meet the medical needs of patients with cognitive impairment. Detailed guidance may be needed to support many aspects of care for patients with cognitive impairment, but most importantly appropriately trained staff and resources are required to ensure that residential services meet the specific needs of these patients.

Standards for quality assurance of home care services must be developed by HIQA and all public, not-for-profit and private providers. HSE tendering arrangements must ensure that all providers of home care packages are compliant.

Feedback from service users as to the quality of the care should be incorporated in the quality assurance system.

7. In your opinion, how could home care services in Ireland be improved?

Note: When giving your answer to this question, you may wish to think about the following:

- How you apply for home care
- How your need for home care services is assessed
- Who can access services
- What home care services are provided
- How home care services are provided
- How home care services are monitored
- How you can appeal a decision about your home care

While there has been an increase in the number of home care packages from 10,230 in 2011 to 15,272 in 2015, the level of provision does not reflect unmet need nor the complexity of care required.

Funding levels for home care packages must be gerontologically informed and adequate to meet both the complexity of care and to comply with National Quality Standards.

Transparent information should be provided to patients, informal carers and for healthcare providers on how to apply for home care services, how they are assessed, access to services, what services are provided and by whom, as well as how home care services are monitored and how decisions can be appealed.

8. If you, a relative or friend needed home care services, who would you ask for information first?

General Practitioner, social services, community health nurse, other service users – e.g. word of mouth

Transparent information should be provided to patients, informal carers and for healthcare providers on how to apply for home care services, how they are assessed, access to services, what services are provided and by whom, as well as how home care services are monitored and how decisions can be appealed.

9. Are you aware that tax relief is available to people that pay for home care services?

Note: tax relief reduces the amount of tax that an individual has to pay.

Yes No

If you have any comments on this issue, please include them below:

It is not clear who is responsible for paying for home care services – the patient or their family members. Under vulnerable adult policy, failure to provide for a vulnerable adult's needs by a carer is considered negligent – regardless of the carer's capacity to meet these needs

10. Do you think that the same approaches should apply across the country in relation to the following?

- How you apply for services Yes No Don't know
- How your need for services is assessed Yes No Don't know
- Who can access services Yes No Don't know
- What home care services are provided Yes No Don't know
- How home care services are provided Yes No Don't know
- How home care services are monitored Yes No Don't know
- How you can appeal a decision about your home care Yes No Don't know

If you have any comments on this issue, please include them below:

Need for services should continue to be assessed using the standardised assessment tool

Access to services is dependent on the level of resources provided, currently resources for home care packages are insufficient to meet either demand or the complexity of care required. Access should be based on need and eligibility standardised across the country

In order to protect vulnerable elderly people from abuse HIQA must prioritise the development of standards for the delivery of home care services. HSE tendering arrangements must ensure that all providers of home care packages are compliant.

11. Do you think that the same national quality standards should apply to all (public, private and not-for-profit voluntary) providers of home care?

Since September 2016 all new homecare packages approved by the HSE are provided by either private or not-for-profit organisations that have been approved by the HSE under tender. Standards for home care packages must be developed by HIQA and services should be monitored for compliance. HSE tendering arrangements must ensure that all providers of home care packages are compliant with national standards.

12. Do you think that formal home care workers should have to complete a minimum level of training that would be set by the Government?

Note: formal home care workers are people who are either self-employed or work for a home care service provider organisation

Yes No Don't know

If you have any comments on this issue, please include them below:

National standards for home care packages must be developed by HIQA equivalent to those outlined in the National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland. Formal home care workers must be appropriately vetted and standards must specify a minimum level of training for formal home care workers.

13. Taking account of limited State resources, do you think that people who receive home care services should make a financial contribution to the cost, based on their ability to pay?

Yes No Don't know

If you have any comments on this issue, please include them below:

The cost currently for home care for elderly people can be prohibitive and creates very significant anxiety for the elderly and their families. The lack of sufficient government funding for home care also creates a capacity issue in our hospitals as patients who could be discharged, if home care was in place, are instead cared for in our acute hospital system occupying on average 15% of acute hospital beds.

Older people have the right to equal access and equal resourcing of health and social care services including rehabilitative care services and long-term care whether in the community or in long-term care settings.

Demand for community and long-term care must be properly assessed and adequate Government resources-including capital investment, operational funding and manpower-must be provided to meet that demand.

14.If the State could only provide a certain amount of home care services based on health need, would you be prepared to purchase additional hours with your own money, if you needed them?

Yes _____ No Don't know _____

If you have any comments on this issue, please include them below:

Provision of home care services should be based on need and appropriately provided. Allowing a facility to purchase additional hours leaves it open to the state to maintain a minimum of services knowing that families will "top up" care if necessary.

Older people have the right to equal access and equal resourcing of health and social care services including rehabilitative care services and long-term care whether in the community or in long-term care settings. Access should be independent of family members' means and capacity.

Demand for community and long-term care must be properly assessed and adequate Government resources-including capital investment, operational funding and manpower-must be provided to meet that demand.

15. If there are any other comments that you would like to make, please include them below.

There are two vulnerable groups here – 1)the patient requiring the home care package and 2)the carers, who have to provide the majority of care that is not provided for by home care packages.

The needs of both groups need to be considered to maximise the quality and safety of homecare.