

OLDER & BOLDER
SUBMISSION TO NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FORUM
ON
IMPLEMENTATION OF HOME CARE PACKAGES



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

Older & Bolder is an alliance of eight non-governmental organisations in the ageing sector in Ireland. The members of the alliance are committed to a joint campaign for the development and implementation of a National Positive Ageing Strategy for Ireland. The members of Older & Bolder are:

- Active Retirement Ireland
- Age & Opportunity
- Age Action Ireland Ltd
- Alzheimer Society of Ireland
- Carers Association
- Irish Hospice Foundation
- Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
- Senior Help Line

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) has invited submissions on the implementation of the Home Care Package Initiative. Older & Bolder wishes to comment briefly on the Home Care Package Initiative and to link our comments to the development of a National Positive Ageing Strategy for Ireland (NPAS).

Individual members of Older & Bolder are also making their own responses to the NESF call for submissions on the Home Care Package Initiative. This submission does not therefore represent all that individual organisations may wish to say in relation to the Initiative.

2. HOME CARE PACKAGE INITIATIVE

The Home Care Package Initiative, administered by the Health Service Executive, is aimed at people who need medium to high care support to continue living at home independently (DoHC, 2009). According to the HSE, Home Care Packages are targeted particularly at (i) those at risk of admission to long term care; (ii) those at risk of inappropriate admission to acute hospitals ; and (iii) those requiring discharge to home from acute hospitals(HSE, 2009 : 42). The NESF has invited comments on *experience* of the Home Care Packages in the context of a request from Government “to study what leads to successful and unsuccessful implementation of Government policies”.

The reality is that individuals, families and organisations experience Home Care Packages within the parameters of a system for the planning and provision of services. Older & Bolder wishes to focus its remarks on a specific aspect of this system.

3. THE INFORMATION DEFICIT

3.1 The Need for a Baseline and Targets

There is an information deficit regarding the Home Care Package Initiative. This must be a constraint on efforts to describe and evaluate the implementation of the Initiative. The first information issue relates to the lack of clarity about the baseline from which the Home Care Package Initiative has started and the objectives it wishes to achieve. The HSE Service Plan for 2009 estimates that 8,700 older persons will be in receipt of Home Care Packages this year. That is approximately 1.8 per cent of the older population. In Scotland, the number of people receiving intensive home care (defined as ten or more hours of home care) was 17.1 per 1000 of the 65 years and over population in 2005 (Scottish Executive, 2005). In Australia, Community Aged Care Packages were available to 19.4 per 1000 of the 70 years and over population in 2007. These packages provide an alternative to low-level residential aged care for older people living in the community. Extended Aged Care Packages (EACH) and EACH Dementia packages were available to 2.3 per 1000 of the 70 years and over population in 2007. EACH packages provide an alternative to high-level residential aged care and EACH Dementia packages are available to people with behavioural or psychological symptoms associated with dementia (AIHW, 2008). In both Scottish and Australian settings, the contexts for home care are of higher levels of community service provision.

What is the level of need for Home Care Packages in the Irish setting i.e. what percentage of the community residing older population is in need of intensive home care support and what is the match between level of need and level of provision of the Home Care Package service? Meaningful estimates of need and targets for the development of the Home Care Package Initiative have not been disseminated since the inception of the Initiative in 2005. Typically the goals for the Initiative are presented in general rather than specific terms and there is no evidence of a coherent plan for the Home Care Package Initiative (c.f. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016, pp.50, 52). The HSE has itself commented that "The principal contributing factor to overall budgetary pressures within PCCC (Primary Community Continuing Care) continues to be the sustained growth in Demand Led Schemes" (HSE, 2008: 5).

Pressure arising from growth in Demand Led Schemes is also symptomatic of the lack of information for policy and planning purposes with attendant difficulties for coherent planning of services.

3.2 Operational Information

The operational information published about the Home Care Package Initiative is scant. There are figures for the overall cost of the Initiative (€14 m in 2008), the distribution of Home Care Packages across four HSE areas and the breakdown of packages delivered in kind and in cash. That seems to be the limit of the operational information in the public domain. The availability of information to address the following questions would be useful:

- What proportion of applicants are granted Home Care Packages?
- On what grounds are applicants refused Home Care Packages?
- Is there a waiting list for Home Care Packages?
- What is the geographic distribution of applicants, refusals, potential recipients on waiting lists (if such exist)?
- What proportion of recipients fall into each of the target categories identified by HSE?
- How many hours of care are allocated under Home Care Packages?
- What happens to recipients when their Home Care Package comes to an end?
- What have the outcomes been for individuals in each of the target categories?
- What is the approach to means testing for Home Care Packages around the country?

In the absence of basic operational information about the implementation of the Home Care Package Initiative, it is impossible to analyse the merits and demerits of the Initiative. If the information is simply not available, this limits the capacity of policy-makers and planners to devise and implement policy to address the needs of older people. If there is a further issue of impaired information flow, this limits the capacity of older people and older people's advocates to examine and critique an initiative that has been set up with public money to meet citizens' needs.

4. OTHER ISSUES

Other issues warrant consideration in examining the implementation of the Home Care Package Initiative. In brief, these include the following:

- 4.1 The degree to which the Home Care Package Initiative is embedded in the systemic development of essential community care services for older people
- 4.2 The lack to date of a consistent approach to Comprehensive Needs Assessment for care recipients and their carers to underpin the allocation of Home Care Packages and other long-term care supports to older people
- 4.3 The management of cross-sectoral working within the Home Care Package Initiative e.g. linkages between housing and health services in the case of recipients who need home adaptations
- 4.4 The absence of a system of care and case management and the requirement for recipients of cash-based Home Care Packages to assume the responsibilities of an employer, given that the target group for this Initiative is a particularly vulnerable sub-group of the older population
- 4.5 The need for clarification to older people of their entitlements in relation to home care supports, including Home Care Packages
- 4.6 The need for active dissemination to older people of consistent and accessible information about their entitlements *and the methods for accessing those entitlements*

Each of the above is a concern in relation to the Home Care Package Initiative. In the context of the welfare of older people, recommendations regarding Comprehensive Needs Assessment, care and case management and cross-sectoral working have been advanced over many years (NCAOP, 2002; Delaney et al, 2001; NESF, 2003). However, progress on implementation has been slow and data to enable closer examination of the implications of these concerns for older people seeking to access services remain patchy and inadequate.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Older & bolder recommends the development of a publicly accessible information system regarding the Home Care Package Initiative. Models of such systems are available internationally. The work of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, for example, warrants further study in this regard (visit <http://www.aihw.ie>).

In particular, Older & Bolder highlights the need for public articulation of a baseline and specific targets, related to levels of need, for the Home Care Package Initiative. The NESF itself has highlighted both engagement and accountability as policy implementation issues (McGauran and Moore, 2008). An adequate information system for the Home Care Package Initiative would facilitate the engagement of older people and older people's advocates in the policy evaluation process and ensure greater overall accountability to citizens.

6. RELEVANCE TO NATIONAL POSITIVE AGEING STRATEGY

Older & Bolder believes that the specific policy implementation issues identified here in relation to the Home Care Packages have broader application for policy and planning for the older population. A Cross Departmental Group has been convened by the Office for Older People within the Department of Health and Children to work on the development of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. Older & Bolder recommends that, in communicating with the Cross Departmental Group, the NESF Project Team highlight the salience of a number of issues for the development of the NPAS. These are:

- The need, within the framework of the NPAS, for policy goals translated into specific, measurable and time-scheduled targets.
- The need for these targets to be underpinned by an agreed baseline or starting point, related to the quantified needs of the older population.
- An information system that supports policy making, planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Clarification to all stakeholders, including older citizens, of the roles and responsibilities of relevant bodies, including Government Departments and Local Authorities, in cross-sectoral delivery of services.
- Clarification to older people of their health and social care entitlements and proactive support to enable older people to access those entitlements.

7. FURTHER ENQUIRIES

Further enquiries related to this submission may be directed to:

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