

# Changing a Home Care Package provider

## JOHN'S STORY

John is 85 and enjoys living in his home, playing a weekly card game with friends, staying in contact with family and looking after his health. After his wife, Judy, passed away a few years ago, he was struggling to adapt to living by himself, and some of his everyday tasks were getting hard for him to manage. John was assessed for a level two Home Care Package and he has been getting help with shopping, meal preparation and cleaning.

While he greatly valued the support, John noticed that the carers coming into his home were changing frequently. Although his preference was to have male carers, his provider told him that none were available. John had also been trying to talk to his case manager about some of his concerns, including the provider charges and errors in his monthly financial statements. When she finally called him back, she sounded rushed and he felt awkward bringing up the issues he wanted to discuss.

The issues stayed on his mind. When he was playing cards with his friends, John talked about some of his concerns. His friend, Sam, was very happy with his Home Care Package provider: he had good rapport with his male carer; the package provided taxi vouchers for him to attend social events and medical appointments; his carer had shown him how to cook some simple, healthy meals; and they had made some basic changes to the kitchen to make it easier and safer for Sam to cook for himself. His electronic tablet, which was partially funded from his package, meant he could do the shopping online and have it delivered, so he didn't need to use his package funds for someone to take him shopping. John wondered why his case manager had not discussed any of those options with him.

John was finally able to speak with his case manager to raise his concerns, but he felt they weren't taken seriously, and things didn't really change. He remembered a letter he received from the Department of Health telling him of the process to change provider if he wanted to. He showed the letter to his daughter and she looked up some potential providers in his area on the My Aged Care website.

John made a list of questions to ask, including whether they would source male carers, what their fees and charges were, and how flexible they would be in tailoring his package to his needs. He was very impressed by one of the providers who came to visit him and really listened to what was important to him. Their fees and charges were also lower, which would enable him to have more services, including transport to his card game. They told him that he could start receiving home care services whenever he was ready to change providers.

After careful consideration, John called his case manager and told her that he was going to change providers. His Home Care Agreement contained all the information about exit arrangements that he needed to comply with. He contacted My Aged Care and obtained a referral code. A cessation date was agreed and the provider committed to completing relevant paperwork and transferring the balance of his unspent Home Care Package funds to the new provider. The new provider agreed to the transfer date and provided him with an Agreement, encouraging him to read it carefully before signing.

### It's now easier to choose

From March 2017, the government has made it easier for people to choose the approved provider they want to deliver the package for them. If you are already receiving a package and are unable to resolve concerns you have (or if you are moving away), you can now change provider. If you have any funds left in your home care budget, the balance moves with you to the new provider (less an Exit amount, if applicable).

The steps needed to change your Home Care Package provider are quite simple, and there are people who can help if you need it. Ask the provider, or My Aged Care, and they can make sure you know what is required.

### If you are considering changing your Home Care Package provider, here is a process you can follow.

#### Step 1. Think and research

- Write down things you really value about your current provider.
- Write down things which concern you about your current provider.
- Think about how often you currently see or talk to your case manager. Are you content with that?
- Check your monthly statement carefully and look at the costs and charges. What is the hourly rate you are being charged for services and what are the administration and case management charges? What is the charge if they broker services from an external service? Do they charge an Exit amount? Are you paying a basic daily fee that is manageable for you?
- Consider how flexibly your provider tailors your care plan to your needs and preferences.
- If you like, do some research online and or call some Home Care Package providers to find out their costs and how they can meet your unique needs.

#### Step 2. Talk to your current provider

Before you decide to change, you may like to arrange a meeting with your current case manager to share your concerns and to tell them that you are considering changing providers. Many providers will be prepared to make some changes to how they deliver your package, but it is important that they follow through.

#### Step 3. Choose a new provider and inform others of the change

- If you are still unhappy, the next step is to choose a new provider, obtain a referral code from My Aged Care, provide the referral code to the new provider and agree to the date to switch the package.
- Once you have agreed to a date, you need to inform your current provider, preferably in writing, that you are moving provider, and to let them know the date of when you are terminating the service with them.

#### Step 4. Check on your funds

- Check that any unspent funds have been transferred from your old provider to your new provider within 70 days of the agreed end date of services.

#### What was the outcome for John?

John has now been with the new provider for three months, and things have changed a lot. The same carer, Simon, has been coming every week, and they have formed a great relationship. They go to the library every week and Simon helps John with internet shopping. He has even shown him how to use his mobile phone to stay connected with his family and download some games. John now gets a taxi to the weekly card game and attends a weekly cooking class for men who are living by themselves. The new provider's lower fees and charges mean John is able to afford additional services which have made a real difference to his quality of life. In addition, he was able to negotiate with his daughter to look after the grandchildren when she needs to go out, and in return she does his weekly cleaning. This arrangement enables John to use his package funds for other things that maximise his independence, teach him new skills and keep his mind active; even his friends and family have noticed that his spirits are up.

#### Find out more

- Research and compare Home Care Package providers with the [My Aged Care Service Finder](#)
- Download the publication "Your Home Care Package: Making it work for you"
- Download the publication "[Your Guide to Home Care Package Services](#)"
- Download the publication "[Changing Providers Considerations and checklist](#)"