



Personal monitoring technology for Senior Australians

As announced by the Federal Government, Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) service providers are now able to use unspent 2019-20 funding to purchase up to \$1000 worth of personal monitoring technology for their vulnerable clients in need of this support during COVID-19. This is important for older Australians and their informal carers and family who are self-isolating to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19, thereby reducing their support and social connectedness. Older Australians in receipt of Home Care Packages will also be able to use their packages to access monitoring services.

Can all CHSP providers use unspent funding on personal monitoring technology?

Any CHSP provider with unspent funding in 2019-20 is able to use these funds to purchase personal monitoring technology for clients whose personal health and safety is at risk during the COVID-19 crisis.

What personal monitoring technology can be purchased and at what cost?

With client agreement, CHSP providers may purchase up to \$1000 worth of personal monitoring technology including:

- personal monitoring systems which, through the push of a button or automated technology, send an alert to a monitoring centre or family member in the case of an emergency, such as a fall or health crisis;
- network access subscriptions and 24/7 monitoring services (for personal and home alarms) for up to 12 months (which must be purchased in 2019-20); and
- technical training, initial set-up support and ongoing support for clients with their personal monitoring system.

A range of technology options are available in the private market, and the Department does not recommend any particular brand or device. CHSP service providers will need to source the monitoring equipment themselves with a view to accessing equipment that best meets the needs of the client.

The Department of Health notes that in Australia the relevant Standard for personal monitoring technology is AS 4607 (personal response systems). This Standard specifies the minimum performance, design and operation requirements for telecommunications based personal response systems.

Which clients are eligible?

Existing CHSP clients where social isolation due to COVID-19 is creating health and safety risks.

Clients which may fall into this category include:

- clients with dementia (who may be at risk of wandering or accidents);
- clients with an elevated falls risk;
- clients who live alone (or with a partner who could not help if an incident were to occur); or
- clients who have limited or no family/friends to provide routine check-ins or support if required.

CHSP providers are responsible for working with clients to determine whether they have a need and willingness to use personal monitoring technology. It does not require an aged care assessment. CHSP providers may access a range of different types of monitoring technology available in the private market. There may be a financial contribution required by clients depending on the technology chosen.

Providers who are approached by new clients requiring this technology in urgent circumstances due to COVID-19, may provide one-off assistance in accordance with the assessment rules allowing six-weeks support without the need for an assessment.

How do CHSP Providers report any funding spent on personal monitoring technology?

All CHSP Providers are required and able to report funding spent on personal monitoring technology in DEX.

Can CHSP Providers purchase IT for social connection?

CHSP providers, funded to provide social support individual or group, can use grant funds to purchase IT, such as tablets, smart devices, and internet subscriptions to help connect older people to their family, carers and social groups under existing CHSP grant rules. This support should be capped at \$500 per person per year (or up to \$1,000 in exceptional circumstances) in accordance with CHSP arrangements for other aids, equipment and assistive technology. This is not an option at the moment for CHSP providers not funded to provide social support.

What does this mean for home care providers?

Home Care Package care recipients will also be able to use their packages to access personal monitoring services to keep them safe at home.

In addition to personal monitoring, to help care recipients stay connected with loved ones and their community, Home Care Package funds can also be used to:

- Purchase suitable digital technology and video conferencing equipment that meet their needs and
- Access assistance in setting up and learning how to use the technology.

Home Care Package funds cannot be used for:

- Phone and/or internet plans or
- Entertainment activities, such as streaming subscriptions and paid apps.

Home care providers should:

- Support this engagement with assistive technology through a discussion with your care recipient in line with the framework set out in the Home Care Packages Program Operational Manual: A guide for home care providers
- Assist care recipients to choose the care and support that best meet their goals, care needs and preferences within the limits of the resources available and
- Consider the reasonable costs and best use of Home Care Package funds when determining the type of equipment and range of functionality required (it is not generally expected that care recipients will require top-of-the-range equipment to stay connected).

Additionally:

- Home Care Package care and services must be consistent with the Care Plan
- As care needs change while the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic unfold, you should review the Care Plan in consultation with care recipients
- The purchase of suitable equipment should be reflected in the Care Plan as being needed to meet care needs and goals and
- The Care Plan should also specify whether the equipment is leased, who owns it and who is responsible for any ongoing maintenance and repair costs.