



Australian Government



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Assigning priority level for service

Purpose

This fact sheet outlines the different priority levels used by assessors when assessing clients for services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) or the Home Care Packages Program and details the circumstances when a client's priority would need to change.

Priorities

To access aged care services, clients must undertake a screening and assessment process to determine their eligibility. As a result of the answers given during the screening process and assessment of circumstances, a priority for service delivery will be generated.

Priority for CHSP services

The priority for service is listed on the referral that is sent through to the service provider after the client's assessment. It outlines the timeframes for managing the referral, commencing care and services, and for updating service information within the client record. A referral will be listed as low, medium or high priority and all referrals must be actioned within 3 calendar days, regardless of their priority.

Whilst the system can generate these priority ratings based on information collected during the assessment process, it is up to the assessor to either agree with this rating or change the rating when developing the Support Plan with the client.

Priority for home care package services

Clients assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) and approved as eligible for a home care package are assigned a home care package service priority.

There are only two priorities for home care service – medium and high. The priority indicates how quickly the client requires the package. The default priority will be medium priority with only a small percentage of clients who are at immediate risk being approved as high priority.

The primary goal is to quickly identify and facilitate access for those clients with an immediate need for access to care. When determining the priority, assessors will:

- use their clinical and independent judgement when determining priority and decisions are based on immediate care needs; not future care requirements.



This is to ensure consistent assessments and equitable distribution of packages nationally.

Following a comprehensive assessment, determination of a person's priority requires an ACAT Delegate decision and is a reviewable decision under the *Aged Care Act 1997 (the Act)*. Any change to the priority for home care may need a re-assessment by an ACAT to inform the ACAT Delegate of the evidence that constitutes the need for a new decision around priority.

Providers should not provide any advice to clients or their families regarding package priority, levels or timeframes. It is the role of the assessor who will use their clinical judgement to determine relative care needs and undue influence by providers may lead to adverse effects on the national prioritisation system.

Approved providers have been deemed suitable to provide aged care services under *the Act* and must comply with the approved provider responsibilities. Providers found to be misleading clients may be referred to the Department of Health for compliance action, Aged Care Complaints Commissioner or for matters relating to Australian Consumer Law, to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

When should a client's priority change?

Priority for CHSP services

It is the role of the assessor to agree with or change the recommended priority rating based on the client's need.

Assessors have the responsibility at the time of an assessment to ensure the priority rating for a client adequately matches the client's needs and circumstances.

Assessors can change the priority rating when developing the initial Support Plan with the client and at a later stage during a review of the client's Support Plan.

The following are examples of what may influence a change in the priority determined:

- the impact of falls or pain on the client's ability to carry out everyday tasks
- the vulnerability of the individual to further deterioration
- the level of service to be provided
- the effect of service delivery on the family or carer
- the client's motivations to achieve certain goals
- the likely effect of the service provided in assisting clients to attain their goals.

Priority for home care package services

An ACAT's recommendation regarding a client's priority for home care package services should be based on their clinical judgement and will include information they have gathered during the comprehensive assessment and knowledge of the relative urgency of the client's need for a home care package. ACATs are required to provide sufficient evidence to a Delegate to support the need for a change in a client's priority for home care package services.



Please note, where a provider identifies a client may require a change in priority, they can request a Support Plan Review and the assessor will determine whether it is appropriate to undertake a new assessment depending on changes to the client's care needs or circumstances.

Related Documents

- Information on Support Plan Reviews is provided in the [When to request a Support Plan Review](#) fact sheet.

