

Linkages

Introduction

This section describes the requirements for the HACC funded Linkages activity. Readers should also refer to:

- Part 3: 'The Victorian approach to care: the active service model'
- Part 2: 'Service coordination, assessment and care planning'.

The objective of the HACC Linkages activity is to support people with complex care needs. This support is designed to assist people to live independently in the community by providing individually tailored packages of care and case management to delay admission to residential care.

Scope

Linkages are designed for people with complex care needs that cannot be fully met by the usual level of HACC services, or who would gain particular benefit from case management.

Linkages case management assists a person and their carer to access a range of supports based on their goals, aspirations and needs, to improve and/or maintain their capacity to remain living independently in the community.

A Linkages package is essentially flexible funding to purchase additional hours and/or a greater range of services than would otherwise be available. Funding is typically used to employ staff, purchase or subcontract services and buy equipment.

The Linkages case management process involves:

- screening for eligibility
- holistic assessment in partnership with the person and their carer of the person's strengths, capabilities, aspirations and goals
- consideration of current service use and determination of additional services needed
- consultation with the person and their carer to develop a holistic, goal directed care plan, including activities to promote various aspects of health and wellbeing and to enhance their ability to live and participate in the community
- care plan implementation and care coordination
- regular monitoring and review of the person's progress and situation, with adjustments to goals and service delivery as appropriate
- managing the person's exit or transition from the service.

Within this scope, Linkages providers:

- work in partnership with other health and community service organisations to ensure an integrated approach
- provide services within the package that may be short-term, episodic or longer-term as the needs of the person or their carer change
- purchase additional services that are a priority for the person and their carer and that will enhance their independence.

Exclusions

A person receiving a Commonwealth Home Care package is not eligible for a Linkages package.

A person receiving an Individual Support Package (ISP) is not eligible to receive a Linkages package.

For further information on these programs refer to Part 2: 'Interface programs'.

Assessment and care planning

Following a self-referral or referral by another service provider, Linkages commences with a face-to-face assessment with the person and their carer in their home environment.

This assessment covers relevant health, functional, social and environmental issues. As this is a comprehensive assessment, it is not necessary to refer the person for a separate Living at home assessment.

Linkages are targeted to people with complex needs who require case management and support services in order to remain living independently in the community. Indicators of complex needs include when the person:

- has a range of interacting physical, medical, social and emotional needs
- requires assistance to organise and coordinate their care
- requires assistance to coordinate their formal and informal supports
- has difficulty in accessing HACC services which are sufficiently flexible to meet their needs
- has additional needs as a result of their diversity (for more information see Part 2: 'Diversity')
- has needs that may rapidly change and require frequent monitoring
- has a carer whose quality of life is significantly compromised by their care role and requests assistance.

Not everyone who has complex needs will require a Linkages package. The differentiating point is the requirement for case management, and the need for additional support services to live independently in the community.

Following a Linkages assessment, the case manager and the person and their carer develop a goal directed care plan. This plan should include strategies to achieve the person's goals and detail services to be provided by HACC and other programs or providers.

Supports are planned and delivered in a manner that reflects the person's and carer's priorities and preferences. The focus of supports is on restorative care and maintaining and/or enhancing the person's capacity to live independently in the community.

The effectiveness of the care plan is monitored through the case manager's communication with the person, carer and other participating service providers. The care plan should include a timeframe for review, updating and progress towards outcomes.

Transition from Linkages

Transition planning is an essential part of overall care planning. Any planning for a transition from a Linkages package should involve the person, their carer and other service providers. Alternatives to Linkages should be sought in the following situations:

- the person's situation improves and Linkages is no longer required
- the person's needs cannot be adequately met in the community with available resources, and transition to an alternative program is appropriate. Possible alternatives include:
 - a Commonwealth Home Support Package
 - an Individual Support Package (see Part 2: 'Interface programs')
- the person's living arrangement has changed or they have requested alternative care
- the person's needs have exceeded the reasonable capacity of a Linkages package, and the service is an inappropriate substitute for residential care.

Maintenance of effort

The role of Linkages is to purchase additional services that supplement hours of HACC service delivery.

People going on to a Linkages package should continue to receive HACC services they were receiving, as appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

This is referred to as 'maintenance of effort'. The principles of maintenance of effort are that

- People should continue to receive HACC services at the same level as the average amount received by other clients of the particular HACC organisation.
- From a person-centred perspective the Linkages service and the HACC organisation should work together to determine what maintenance of effort arrangement will deliver the best outcome for the person in their particular circumstances.

Linkages funds

Linkages funds should be used to provide services and equipment which will make a critical difference to assisting the person to remain living in the community. Package funds should be used to:

- provide services, items or equipment that are consistent with HACC aims and objectives
- purchase high-quality services, items or equipment with due regard to cost effectiveness.

Package funds should **not** be used to pay for items that constitute normal living expenditure, such as utility bills, rates or food - although delivered meals or food preparation assistance are acceptable. The intent of the flexible care funds should be considered.

Package funds should not be used to purchase equipment where this is the role of another funded agency or program such as the Statewide Equipment Program (SWEP). If no other agency or program is responsible for purchasing or providing the equipment, Linkages flexible care funds can be used.

Equipment purchased by Linkages remains the property of the Linkages service and is returned by the person, if practical, when they cease using the service. The cost of servicing the equipment is negotiated and may rest with the equipment user, owner or be a shared arrangement. Hiring of equipment, which may include servicing in the hire fee, may be a more suitable option than equipment purchase.

HACC services may be purchased at, or lower than the HACC unit price as negotiated with the service provider.

Staffing statement

Linkages case managers are expected to provide case management for an average of 25 to 30 people at any time. However, this case-load may vary considerably due to case complexity and a range of other factors. The skills and knowledge required by case managers include:

- a detailed knowledge of both the ageing process and the needs of younger people with a disability
- a detailed knowledge of the needs of specific groups such as the HACC special needs groups and people with diverse needs
- a professional qualification in a health and community services discipline
- previous direct experience in working with people with complex needs in the HACC target group
- knowledge or experience of the active service model and a person-centred approach.

Subcontracting

Linkages may subcontract another agency to provide a specific service. The arrangement must be documented in a written contract which specifies, as a minimum:

- quality compliance
- the type of service purchased and agreed service levels
- expectations of the service provider, such as quality services, staff qualifications and pre-employment checks
- cost, accounting and invoicing procedures
- risk management requirements, for example OHS and insurance policies
- data collection and reporting requirements
- procedures for breach of contract and dispute resolution
- contract period and review date.

In considering subcontracting arrangements the Linkages agency is required to consider continuity of care and best value.

Regardless of the method of service delivery, overall responsibility for the person's outcomes, particularly quality assurance and consumer rights, remains with the Linkages provider.

Reporting requirements

Organisations funded for Linkages are required to participate in the quarterly collection of the HACC minimum data set (MDS). Subcontractors should report data to the organisation that has a direct funding link to the department. This organisation will in turn report to the department via the HACC MDS.

For details, see Part 1: 'Reporting and data collection'.

The HACC MDS is used to record details of individual people receiving a package. Note that there is no MDS activity type called 'Linkages'. Instead, use the relevant MDS activity types (such as personal care), recording the hours that were paid out of the Linkages package. Ensure that all Linkages funds expended on services for a particular person are accounted for in terms of hours, in the MDS report.

Links

HACC diversity planning and practice

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/projects/diversity_framework.htm

HACC Assessment framework

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/assessment.htm>

Statewide Equipment Program (SWEP)

<http://swep.bhs.org.au/>
