



31 January 2024

Dear Provider

Re: Serious Incident Response Scheme – Home Services

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (Commission) is writing to you about your responsibilities related to incident management and prevention, including your incident reporting responsibilities. These responsibilities form part of the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) and have applied to providers in respect of their home services since 1 December 2022.

We have been monitoring incident reporting of all home services providers and have identified that the Commission has not yet received any SIRS notifications from **some of your services**.

It may be that your service/s has/have not experienced any or many reportable incidents, however, the Commission is aware that low reporting or no reporting potentially indicates:

- a provider's incident management system may not be effective in identifying risks to care recipients, and not then effectively informing processes to prevent and respond to those risks;
- a provider's potential lack of awareness or understanding of its responsibilities, particularly those related to incident management and prevention; and
- a provider's potential misunderstanding of what constitutes a reportable incident.

The Commission website (<https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs>) contains information on the SIRS, including education resources for staff.

The nature of home services carries a heightened risk of providers being unaware of incidents occurring, particularly where a care recipient receives services from a single care worker. This vulnerability reinforces the importance of a provider's responsibility to have effective measures in place to prevent incidents.

We strongly encourage you to review your incident management system and processes to ensure they enable you to meet your responsibilities.

A provider's incident management and prevention responsibilities, as set out in the *Aged Care Act 1997* and Part 4B of the *Quality of Care Principles 2014*, or under relevant funding/grant agreements, include:

- how incidents are identified, recorded, and reported, and to whom incidents must be reported;
- how the provider will provide support and assistance to those affected by an incident to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing (e.g. providing information about access to advocates);
- how those affected by an incident (or their representatives) will be involved in managing and resolving the incident;
- when and how the provider will require an investigation into an incident to work out the cause, any harm, and any operational issues that may have contributed to the incident occurring;
- when remedial action is required and what that action should be; and
- who is responsible (e.g. a staff member) for notifying all reportable incidents to the Commission under the SIRS.

For further information about your incident management and prevention responsibilities, you can:

- Email us at sirs@agedcarequality.gov.au
- Call us on 1800 081 549 Monday to Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm
- Visit the SIRS section of our website at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs

Our website also offers a guide to incident management for aged care leaders and workers: <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/for-providers/serious-incident-response-scheme/roles-sirs>.

We are keen to engage with providers to understand the reasons for not reporting or under-reporting incidents to the Commission. Our next step will be to contact you over the next three months to arrange a meeting to further understand your circumstances.

Yours sincerely



Ann Wunsch

Executive Director

Approvals and Serious Incident Notifications