

The logo for the Seniors Alert Scheme is composed of three stacked circular icons on the left, each containing a white icon: a red emergency call button, a hand with a red wristband, and a mobile phone. To the right of these icons, the words "Seniors", "Alert", and "Scheme" are stacked vertically in a purple, sans-serif font.

# Seniors Alert Scheme

## Annual Progress Report 2017



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development



## Acknowledgements

The Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal would like to pay tribute to the registered community groups who deliver the Seniors Alert Scheme in local towns, villages and areas throughout the country. With their support, much of which is voluntary, the Seniors Alert Scheme can reach out to vulnerable older people and support them to live in their homes independently and with peace of mind.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the progress and delivery of the Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS) from 1<sup>st</sup> January up to the end of December 2017 and also includes information relating to SAS participants, organisations and installations since 2015.

During 2017, the Seniors Alert Scheme underwent a number of positive changes that were agreed by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) based on feedback received from registered organisations and based on an independent report commissioned by the Department. A new programme framework was launched with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017. The improvements to the scheme, such as the expansion of eligibility criteria, in conjunction with a nationwide media campaign to raise awareness of the SAS, have resulted in a substantial increase in the uptake of the scheme. Compared to 2016, the number of participants approved increased by 73%. A significant rise in participant approvals was recorded in November (217% increase compared to the previous month), which coincided with the launch of the new programme. The number of installations completed has risen by 41% in 2017 with a further significant increase expected in early 2018. Some of the key figures for the SAS as at the year-end 2017 are outlined below and in the infographic presented overleaf. Further detail is provided throughout the report.

### SAS expenditure

- €2,552,543 was the total expenditure on the scheme in 2017

### Scheme participants

- 21,231 participants have been approved since the beginning of the scheme (2015). 12,788<sup>1</sup> participants (60% of the total number) were approved in 2017.
- Age profile: Over half of participants are aged 80 and over. The average age of a scheme participant is approximately 80 years. Over a quarter of people on the scheme are aged 80-84.
- Gender: Two thirds of participants are women (66%), and one third are men (34%). There was a small increase (1%) in men accessing the scheme in 2017.
- Almost two thirds of people accessing the scheme were living alone or spending long periods alone.
- Over 50% of participants joined the scheme because of an existing health condition. 16% of people cited fear of crime and feeling isolated as reasons for joining the scheme.

### Community organisations

- 601 organisations are actively registered to operate the scheme.
- Almost 60% of these are community alert/neighbourhood watch organisations and over two thirds were unincorporated associations.
- 96% of organisations are located in areas that score below average on the deprivation index indicating that they are providing services in disadvantaged areas.

### Installations & equipment

- 18,073 installations of SAS equipment have been completed to date, with 10,168 installations recorded in 2017. A high number of installations is expected in Q1 of 2018.
- 75% of participants requested a base unit and pendant with a landline connection.

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<sup>1</sup>Please note that 12,609 participants were reported at year end. This figure was based on a cumulative total and on further analysis, the status of 179 participants had changed, resulting in a more accurate participant figure of 12,788.

## SAS 2017 Statistics

18,073 installations of SAS equipment to date



75% of participants requested a base unit and pendant with landline connection



**21,231**  
participants  
approved since 2015



**73%**  
increase in participant  
numbers between 2016  
and 2017



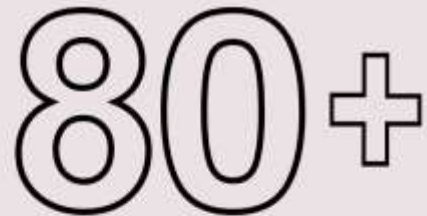
**12,788**  
new participants  
approved in 2017



Over 50% of participants  
joined the scheme because of  
an existing health condition



34% Male  
66% Female



Over half of participants  
aged 80 and over



**601**  
Community & Voluntary  
Organisations  
registered to deliver  
the scheme



69% of organisations are  
located in rural areas



63% of participants live  
alone or are alone for  
long periods

## 1 Introduction

This report provides an overview of the progress and delivery of the Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS) funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). It is based on an analysis of the data submitted by the community organisations operating the scheme and the data held in the SAS online system at the end of 2017.

This report contains a summary of the changes to the scheme introduced by the DRCD in 2017. It provides an analysis of the data available on people accessing the scheme and the community organisations delivering the scheme at a local level to date. It also includes information on the equipment used, installations and suppliers. Comparisons of 2016 and 2017 data are also provided where applicable.

### 1.1 Background

The Seniors Alert Scheme is designed to encourage community support for vulnerable older people in our communities through the provision of personal monitored alarms to enable older people, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. The scheme helps to keep older people in their own homes for as long as possible by providing security and enabling a person to immediately call for help in the event of a break-in, fall or accident in the home.

The scheme was first introduced in 1996 as *Community Support for Older People (CSOP)* and was re-designed to form the Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS) in 2015, funded by the (former) Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government<sup>2</sup>. Pobal assumed the management of the scheme on behalf of the Department from September 2015.

In October 2017, a new Seniors Alert Scheme was officially launched by the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring TD in the Third Age Foundation in Summerhill, County Meath (see photographs below) whose Department took over responsibility for the scheme in 2017.



Above: The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring TD, at the launch of the new Seniors Alert Scheme, Third Age Foundation in Summerhill, Co. Meath on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

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<sup>2</sup> The lead funding Department for the SAS from 2017 is the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).



## 1.2 Changes to the Seniors Alert Scheme in 2017

Registered community groups operate the scheme at a local level on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development. Pobal and the Department are keenly aware that these groups have a wealth of knowledge and experience of what the issues are for individuals and local communities.

Following an external review of the Seniors Alert Scheme carried out in 2016<sup>3</sup> and based on the feedback of the registered community groups who administer the scheme, a number of key changes were introduced by the DRCD and launched as part of the new scheme in 2017. The most significant changes included widening the eligibility criteria to allow more participants to avail of the scheme, provision of one year's free monitoring services and the provision of further support to the community organisations in delivering the scheme.

The key features of the new scheme are outlined below, with effect for all applications from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017:

- Widening of the eligibility criteria to include all of the following: persons age 65 or older and living alone, living with another person who meets the eligibility criteria, living alone for significant periods of time during the day, or someone who is over 65 and is a carer to someone else in their household (for example a disabled son/ daughter).
- Free monitoring service for the alarm for the first year of participation in the scheme.
- Increase in the administrative payment to community groups involved in rolling out the scheme (€10 per application).
- Changes to the lot structure - reduced from ten to seven lots by county boundaries, and a reduction in the number of suppliers from five to four companies.
- Additional guidance and support relating to Garda vetting legislation was provided under the scheme.

On foot of the newly launched scheme, Pobal and the DRCD held a series of information sessions in November and December 2017. These sessions aimed to inform community groups of the benefits and improvements to the scheme and corresponding enhancements to the online SAS portal (see Chapter 6 for further information on supports and information sessions).

In addition to the information events, a nationwide media campaign was rolled out in order to raise awareness about the scheme and how to access it. The campaign sought to encourage more participation in the scheme by both community organisations and individual participants. A series of local radio interviews were held and coverage in local newspapers helped to raise the profile of the scheme. The media coverage received a very positive response from local communities and the impact of this coverage can be seen in the increased participant numbers in 2017, particularly in the last quarter. Further detail on uptake of the scheme is included in Chapter 2.

## 1.3 Context – older people in Ireland (2016 Census data)

The number of older people in Ireland is steadily increasing. According to the most recent census data available (2016) the total population of older people in Ireland (over 65 years) is **637,567**. This represents a 19% increase in this age group since the previous census in 2011. The over 65 age category accounts for 13% of the national population.

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<sup>3</sup> Review of the Delivery Model of the Seniors Alert Scheme, Telehealth Quality Group 2017

As can be seen in Table 1.1 below, there are consistently more females than males in the 65 years and over age categories. The gender gap increases with age, with two thirds of people aged 85 years and over being female. The following table presents the breakdown of older people in Ireland by gender and age category.

Table 1.1: CSO statistics: profile of older people in Ireland 2016

Age category	Male	Female	Total
65 - 69 years	104,961	106,275	211,236
70 - 74 years	79,501	82,771	162,272
75 - 79 years	54,117	61,350	115,467
80 - 84 years	35,196	45,841	81,037
85 years and over	23,062	44,493	67,555
<b>Total</b>	<b>296,837</b>	<b>340,730</b>	<b>637,567</b>

The proportion of older people in each county/local authority area ranges from 9% to 18% with a national figure of 13%. Mayo, Kerry, Leitrim and Roscommon had the highest proportion of older people (in the region of 17–18%) and Kildare and Fingal had the lowest proportion (10% and 9% respectively).

In 2016, 577,171 older people (over 90% of people aged 65 and older) were living in private households. A quarter of older people (156,799) were living alone. This figure rises to 60% of people aged over 80<sup>4</sup>.

These statistics provide the backdrop for the figures provided in this report in relation to participant and organisational uptake of the Seniors Alert Scheme. There are some considerations to be taken into account when reading and interpreting the statistics in relation to the scheme - please see Appendix I for further details.

## 2 SAS 2017 key figures

This chapter provides a summary of the key figures and statistics in relation to the uptake and delivery of SAS in 2017 and demonstrates the main changes in the programme in comparison to 2015 and 2016. The figures provided here are based on the data contained in the SAS online system as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

The uptake of the SAS scheme increased significantly in 2017 compared to 2016, with a 73% increase in the number of participants approved for the scheme and a 41% increase in the number of installations completed. The number of organisations delivering the scheme, participants and installations completed since the inception of the programme are displayed in Table 2-1 below. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will provide further detail in relation to these figures.

<sup>4</sup> <http://alone.ie/tag/older-people/>



Table 2-1: SAS headline statistics 2015 - 2017

	2015	2016	2017	Cumulative to 2017	Increases from 2016 to 2017
<b>TOTAL ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>12.3%*</b>
Organisations approved - active	341	213	47	601	8.5%*
Organisations approved - inactive <sup>5</sup>	0	14	23	37	57.1%
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS APPROVED</b>	<b>1,321</b>	<b>7,301</b>	<b>12,609**</b>	<b>21,231</b>	<b>72.7%</b>
<b>TOTAL INSTALLATIONS COMPLETED</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>7,219</b>	<b>10,168</b>	<b>18,073</b>	<b>40.9%</b>

\*This figure represents the number of new organisations in 2017 as a proportion of the total number of organisations at the end of 2016.

\*\*This figure is based on a cumulative total in comparison to the number of approved participants at the end of 2016. The total participant figure used for analysis in this report is 12,788. See further detail in Chapter 3.

## 2.1 Financial summary

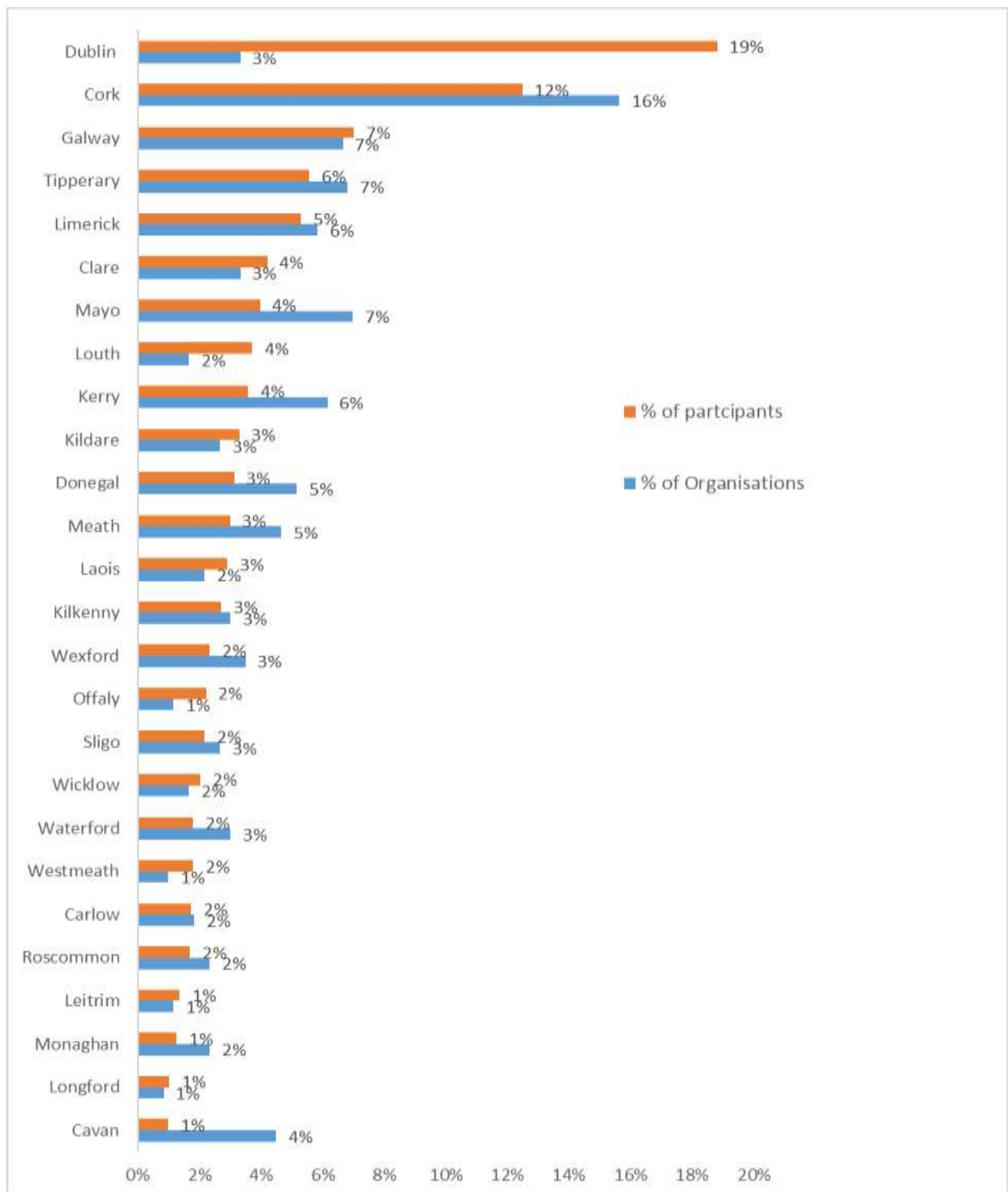
Total expenditure on the SAS in 2017 amounted to **€2,552,543**. This included payments to suppliers for equipment, installations and monitoring costs, administration fees paid to community organisations operating the scheme and beneficiary/technical support such as information events and system development.

## 2.2 Geographical coverage

The Seniors Alert Scheme provides national coverage and registered organisations operate in all of 26 counties. Figure 2.1 below depicts the proportion of registered SAS organisations and approved participants per county as at the end of 2017. A complete list of the number of organisations and participants per county can be seen in Appendix II.

<sup>5</sup> Both active and inactive organisations are listed here. Although inactive organisations have withdrawn from the scheme, they may still have participants registered.

Figure 2.1 SAS approved participants and organisations per county (sorted by number of participants)



In line with the national population distribution, there is significant variation in the numbers of organisations and participants at county level. As would be expected, the greatest concentration of approved participants are in the urban centres with the highest overall populations – Dublin, Cork and Galway. The number of registered organisations in approved participants in Dublin accounted for 19% of all participants, whereas the number of organisations in Dublin represented just 3% of all registered organisations. The top three counties account for just over a quarter of all

organisations registered (26%) and over a third of all approved participants (38%). Some larger rural counties have a higher than average uptake of organisations to the scheme, e.g. Tipperary, Mayo, and Kerry (these counties combined make up 20% of registered organisations with participants approved).

### 2.2.1 Urban and rural differences

When looking at the differences in uptake of the scheme in urban and rural areas, it is noteworthy that 69% of participants are registered with organisations located in urban areas<sup>6</sup>, while 69% of registered organisations are located in rural areas. This is indicative of the local nature of the scheme and the geographic spread of organisations in rural areas, i.e. more organisations are required in rural areas to provide locally based services across larger but more sparsely populated regions. A smaller number of organisations is required in urban areas as they have access to a more concentrated population base. Further observations regarding urban and rural differences in relation to organisations and participants are discussed throughout the report.

### 2.2.2 Deprivation levels

Over 94% of SAS organisations are located in areas defined as ‘marginally below average’, ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘very disadvantaged’ according to the Pobal Haase Deprivation Index<sup>7</sup>, with 95% of participants registered through organisations located in these areas. While the location of the organisation does not directly correlate to the location of the registered participants, these figures indicate that SAS organisations are predominantly providing services in areas that are below average on the deprivation scale. Further detail is included in Chapter 4.

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<sup>6</sup> The urban/rural designation is at Electoral Division level and taken from CSO statistics based on 2011 census data.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.pobal.ie/Pages/New-Measures.aspx>

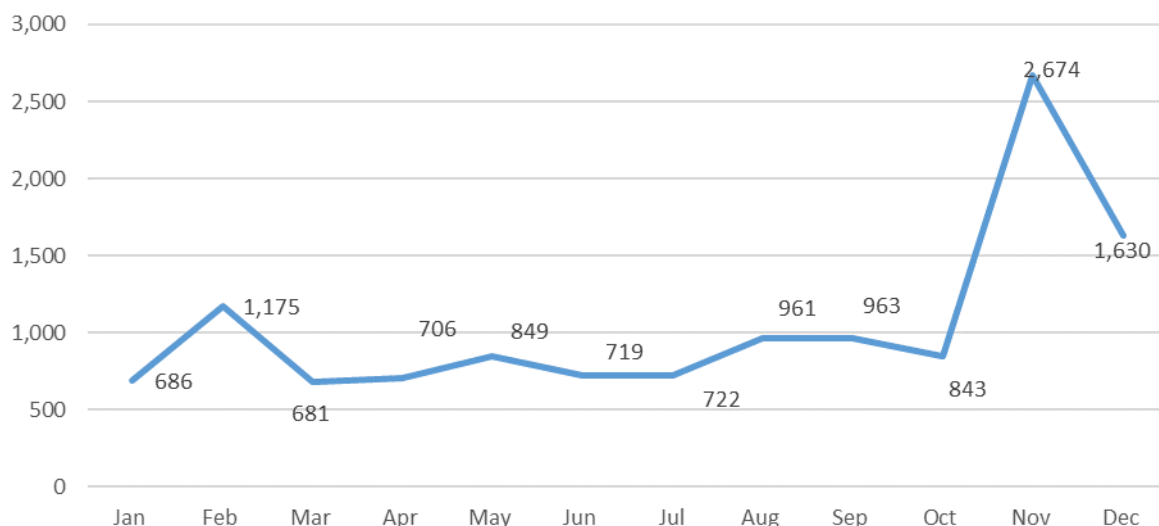
### 3 Participant details

A total of **21,231 older people** have been approved for the scheme since September 2015. In 2017, 12,788<sup>8</sup> people were approved to join the scheme which represented a 73% increase in comparison to the number of approved participants at the end of 2016.

The significant increase in applications to the scheme occurred largely in the last quarter of 2017. It can be attributed to the changes made to the scheme by the Department, including the expansion of the eligibility criteria and the provision of free monitoring for the first year of participation in the scheme. In addition, the increased promotion and advertising for the scheme in October and November 2017 has raised awareness and led to increased uptake of the SAS during this period.

Figure 3.1 below displays the dramatic increase in the number of scheme participants in November and December, with a 217% increase in approvals from October to November. Over a third (34%) of all participant approvals for 2017 occurred in the last two months of the year.

Figure 3.1 SAS participant approvals per month 2017



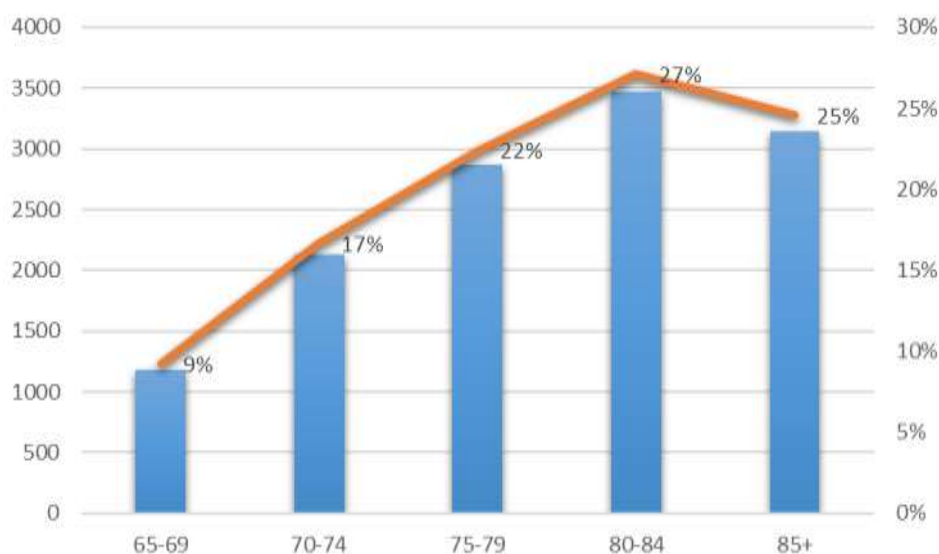
#### 3.1 Demographics - gender and age

SAS participants are predominantly female, with two thirds of people accessing the scheme to date being women. This gender breakdown has remained relatively constant since 2015. There was a slightly higher uptake by men in 2017, with males making up 34% of participants joining the scheme in 2017 compared with 33% at the end of 2016.

<sup>8</sup> 12,609 participants were reported at year end 2017 based on comparison to the end of 2016 data, however, the data available for the 2016 participants had subsequently changed with 179 participants now marked as status 'unsuccessful' - thus the more accurate figure for those accessing the scheme in 2017 is 12,788 and this is the figure used for the analysis presented here.

In relation to the age breakdown of participants, over 52% of people who joined the scheme in 2017 were aged 80 years and over. The age profile of SAS participants has remained relatively consistent since 2015 with over a quarter of participants in the 80-84 year age category (27%). In 2017, there was a slight increase in the uptake of the scheme among 85-89 year olds (from 17% to 19%). The approximate average age of an SAS participant is 80 years<sup>9</sup>. The uptake of the scheme is higher amongst people in more senior age categories, up to the peak of 80-84 years. This shows that the focus of the supports is geared towards people in the older age categories still living at home. For more details see Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Age profile of SAS participants in 2017



### 3.2 Location of SAS participants

As displayed in Figure 2.1 (page 7) the majority of SAS participants are in urban areas where the population density is highest, namely, Dublin, Cork and Galway. These three counties combined account for 38% of all scheme participants. This is broadly in line with the population of older people in these three counties – together they account for 49% of all people aged 65 and over in the country. In 2017, there was a significant increase in the number of participants registered in every county. The counties with the highest proportion of new participants registered in 2017 were Longford, Donegal, Dublin and Westmeath. In these counties, new participants registered in 2017 accounted for at least 65% of their total number of approved participants.

69% of all participants accessed the scheme through organisations located in urban areas and 31% through organisations in rural areas. 95% of participants accessed the scheme through organisations that were located in areas below average on the deprivation index, showing that the scheme is targeting people in disadvantaged areas. At present, it is not possible to geo-code the locations of scheme participants. With improvements to data capture on the SAS system going forward, including encouraging the use of eircodes for all participants and organisations, it is hoped that analysis of socio-economic status of participants using geographical data can be carried out in the future, informing the allocation of future resources.

<sup>9</sup> An approximate average age is provided due the reasons outlined in section 1.4 in relation to recording the number of people leaving the scheme.

### 3.3 Eligibility/living status

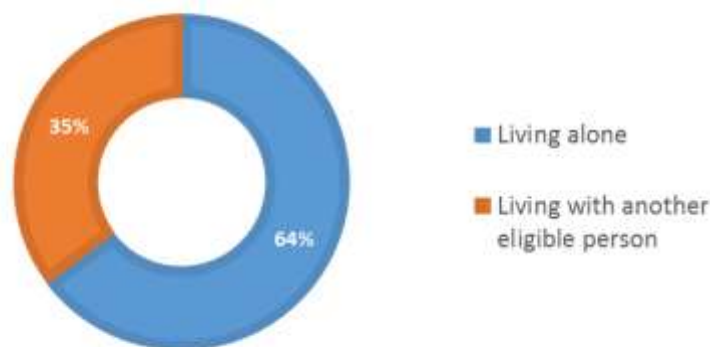
Feedback received from registered groups indicated that previous eligibility criteria excluded a number of individuals who would benefit from the scheme and who were 65 or older. In response to this feedback, the eligibility criteria for the scheme expanded in 2017 and two new categories were added to the options for living arrangements for participants in November 2017.

The following eligible categories are now available to choose from, i.e. people aged 65 years and over who are also:

- Living alone;
- Living with another eligible person;
- Living alone for significant periods of time (2017 addition) - This was added in response to the reported incidence of older people living with a son or a daughter at work who was out for much of the day;
- Carers (2017 addition) - This was added in response to the reported incidence of older people living with an adult son/ daughter or other family member with a disability.

At the end of 2017, almost two thirds of people approved for the scheme were reported as living alone (64%) and over a third of approved participants were living with another eligible person (35%)<sup>10</sup>. This marked a slight change from 2016 when 68% of participants were living alone and 32% with another eligible person. The uptake in relation to the two new categories will be available as part of the 2018 dataset.

Figure 3.3 Living status of scheme participants at end of 2017



### 3.4 Reasons for accessing scheme

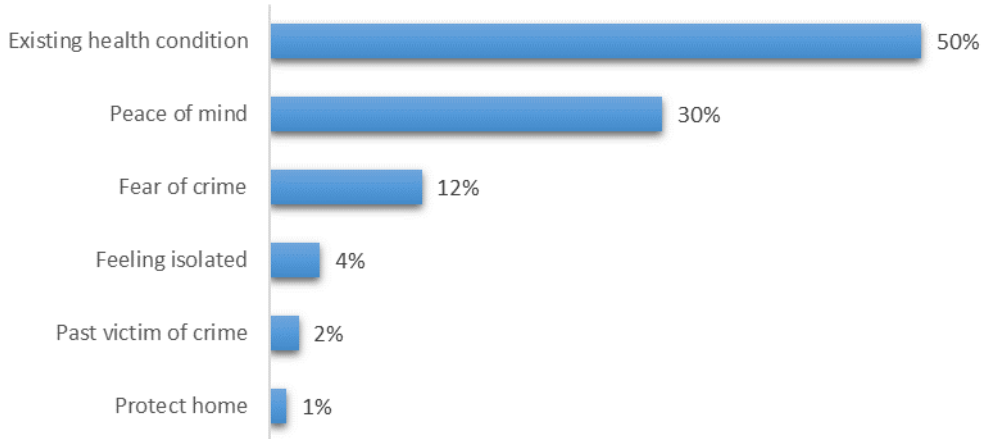
Just over half of approved SAS participants joined the scheme for additional security due to an existing health condition. Almost a third of people (30%) stated that they accessed the scheme for peace of mind and 12% cited fear of crime as their reason for joining the scheme. Figure 3.4 shows the breakdown of reasons for participating in the scheme. There have been no significant changes to these categories since 2016. When these reasons are viewed in terms of urban and rural

<sup>10</sup> At the end of 2017, approx. 1% of responses were from the two additional categories (introduced in late 2017). The full dataset for the four eligible categories will be available in 2018.



differences, the proportion of people citing fear of crime and feeling isolated is substantially higher (at 21%) for rurally based participants than people accessing the scheme in urban areas (14%).

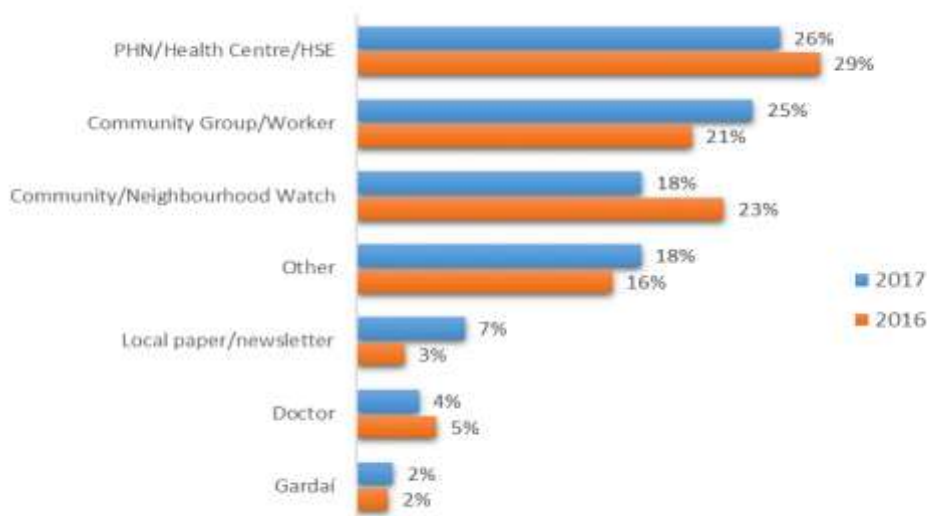
Figure 3.4 Reason for joining the SAS 2017



### 3.5 Knowledge of the SAS

Participants learned about the SAS through a variety of information sources, with health service providers and community groups/workers being the two most frequent sources cited (26% and 25% respectively). In 2017, there were increases in the number of people learning about the scheme through: community groups/workers (5% increase compared to 2016); local newspapers/newsletters (4% increase); and the number who selected ‘other’ (2% increase). The majority of responses in the ‘other’ category were friends/family, senior citizen and active retirement groups, charities and carer organisations. There was a 3% increase in the number of people in this category who cited advertising on local radio, social media and information events as their source of learning about the scheme, showing the impact of the media campaign launched in late 2017. Figure 3.5 below displays the ways in which participants heard about the scheme in 2016 and 2017.

Figure 3.5 How did you hear about the SAS?



There are differences in how participants learned about the scheme depending on whether they are located in urban or rural areas. People in rural areas are more likely to hear about the scheme through community or neighbourhood watch (33% compared to 14% in urban areas) and people in urban areas are more likely to be informed about the scheme through the health services (30% compared to 22%).

### 3.6 Population coverage

In terms of the percentage of the eligible population covered by the scheme, over 3% of the 65 and over population was covered by the scheme (i.e. successfully applied to the scheme) at the end of 2017 (this includes all participants with approved status since the beginning of the scheme). This figure rises to almost 10% of the over 80 category. This percentage is based on 2016 census figures and will naturally fluctuate with changes to this demographic.

### 3.7 Leaving the scheme

Table 3-1 shows the categories of leavers recorded on the system at the end of 2017 (since the beginning of the programme).

*Table 3-1: Leavers/ withdrawals/ cancellations*

Leavers/withdrawals/cancellations as at end 2017	
Approved application cancelled by participant	1,695
Participants withdrawn	423
No longer in the scheme	107
Participants unsuccessful in application	4

During 2017, 16 people were recorded as having left the scheme, i.e. leaving scheme forms were completed. This is unlikely to reflect the true figure based on the reasons outlined in section 0 of the report.

## 4 SAS community organisations

A total of **638** community organisations have registered to deliver the SAS since September 2015. Of the organisations registered, 37 have since withdrawn from the programme and been designated as 'inactive', leaving 601 'active' organisations at the end of 2017<sup>11</sup>.

70 new organisations registered with the scheme in 2017. The majority of community organisations registered in 2015 and 2016 (568 in total). National coverage for the scheme was achieved in 2016, however the Department and Pobal continue to welcome applications from organisations interested in administering the scheme in their area.

### 4.1 Locations of SAS organisations

The county breakdown of organisations (and their associated participants) is provided in section 2.2, Figure 2.1. A table displaying the number of organisations and participants per county can be seen in Appendix II. The complete list of towns and townlands covered by each individual organisation is available on the Pobal website:<sup>12</sup>

An additional 70 new organisations joined the scheme in 2017. The highest numbers of new organisations were registered in Cork, Tipperary and Kerry, accounting for almost one third of new organisations registered.

#### 4.1.1 Deprivation index

As outlined in section 2.2, 69% of SAS organisations are located in rural areas. Further analysis of the locations of SAS organisations was carried out on the 2017 data with respect to the level of deprivation of the areas where organisations are located. When the Pobal Haase Deprivation Index is applied to the organisation address, we can see that 96% of SAS organisations (578 out of 601 organisations) are located in areas (electoral districts) rated as 'marginally below average', 'disadvantaged' or 'very disadvantaged' according to their deprivation scores. 8.5% of SAS organisations are located in disadvantaged or very disadvantaged electoral districts. The location of the organisation does not directly represent the location of the registered participants due to the broad town and in some cases county-wide coverage provided by organisations. However, these figures do indicate that SAS organisations are predominantly providing services in areas that are below average on the deprivation scale.

A more detailed breakdown is provided in Table 4-1 along with the proportion of participants registered with organisations located within each category of the deprivation index. This table also contains the national population breakdown within the categories of the index to provide context to these figures.

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<sup>11</sup> Of the 601 actively registered organisations, 565 organisations had participants registered at the end of 2017.

<sup>12</sup><https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/List%20of%20Registered%20SAS%20Organisations%20%283%29.pdf>

Table 4-1: Deprivation status of SAS organisations and their registered participants

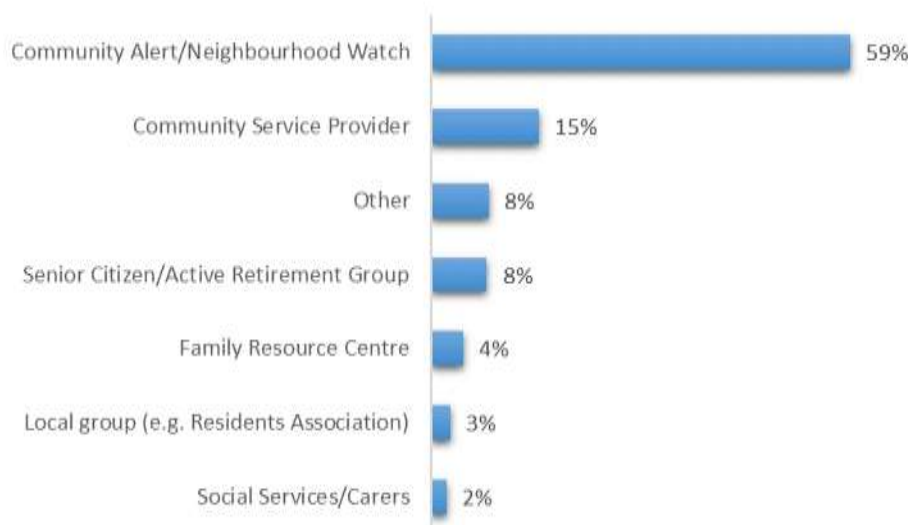
Pobal HP Deprivation Range	SAS end of 2017 (number of organisations)	SAS end of 2017 (% of organisations)	SAS participants (%)*	National population (%) (2016 census)
Very / extremely affluent/Affluent	0	0%	0%	17%
Marginally above average	20	3.3%	5.6%	37.1%
Marginally below average	527	87.7%	82.4%	31.5%
Disadvantaged/ very/extremely disadvantaged	51	8.5%	11.6%	14.4%
Not mapped to index	3	0.3%	0.3%	n/a

\*Note – this figure refers to the percentage of participants registered with organisations in each category on the deprivation index. The exact location of participants is not currently available for this level of analysis.

## 4.2 Nature of organisations delivering SAS

Organisations are requested to identify the nature of their organisation when registering to deliver the SAS. Figure 4.1 below shows the current breakdown as at the end of 2017, which has remained relatively constant since 2015.

Figure 4.1 Nature of the organisations delivering SAS



Over half of organisations registered to deliver the Seniors Alert Scheme are community alert or neighbourhood watch organisations (59%). This reflects the largely local and voluntary nature of the programme. Many of these organisations are informal associations with unpaid staff who are assisting their local communities by delivering the SAS in a voluntary capacity. This is an important element of the SAS. Local need is identified through local people who know where the needs are within their own communities. A further 15% of organisations identified themselves as community service providers, which may include Local Development Companies and Community Development Projects. 8% selected ‘other’ to describe the nature of the organisation and examples provided under this category included community councils, charities and voluntary housing bodies.

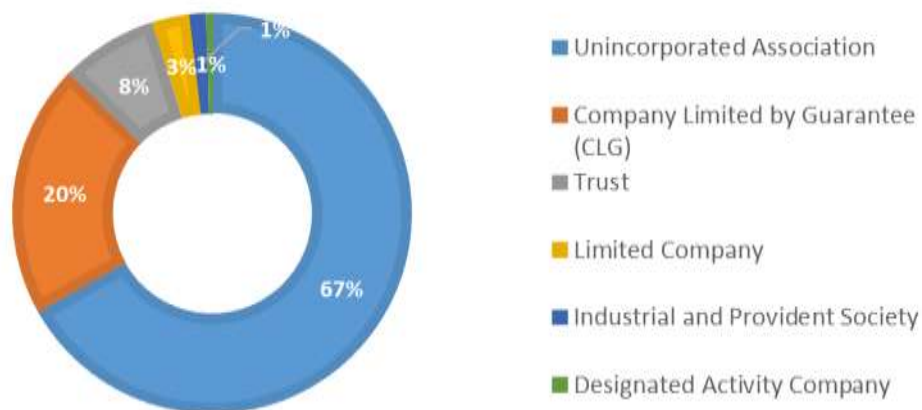
Approximately 6% of organisations were linked to larger national charities, such as branches of St Vincent de Paul and the Carers Association of Ireland.

In terms of the number of applications processed, community service providers processed the largest numbers of applications (27% of all applications). This averaged at approximately 66 applications per organisation. The community alert organisations processed 23% of applications with an average of 15 applications per group. Social services/carer organisations administered 7% of participant applications but had the highest average with 130 applications per organisation in this category. The variation in the volume of applications processed by type of organisation can be related to the paid vs unpaid nature of the organisations. Rural and urban differences should also be taken into account. For example, community alert organisations are more likely to be located in rural areas (approx. 70% of rural responses were this category compared to 37% of responses in urban areas) and community service providers are more likely to be located in urban areas (24% of responses compared to 12% for rural areas). As previously highlighted lower numbers of participants are to be expected in rural areas given the wider population distribution.

### 4.3 Legal status of organisations

Organisations are also asked to provide their legal status when registering to operate SAS. Over two thirds of organisations are unincorporated associations, which again is reflective of the voluntary and community nature of the programme. These groups usually operate with a less formal structure than a company. A further 20% of organisations were companies limited by guarantee (without share capital) indicating that they are not for profit organisations. A detailed breakdown of organisations by legal status is presented in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Legal status of community organisations delivering SAS



In relation to the number of applications processed, we can see that those organisations with a more formal company structure are processing a higher number of applications, for example, companies limited by guarantee and limited companies combined processed almost half of participant applications (46%) despite representing 23% of all organisations. This may indicate the wider reach of organisations such as LDCs e.g. county wide coverage. It also further highlights that organisations with paid staff are more likely to administer a higher number of applications than those working in a voluntary capacity.

#### 4.4 Other roles of community organisations 2017

The main roles of SAS organisations include the provision of befriending and supports to older people, alongside providing information about the scheme to potential applicants and processing of SAS applications. In 2017, an increased administrative fee was introduced to cover the scheme costs to the organisations (€10 per applicant). While the majority of organisations use the SAS online system for processing applications, there are still a small number that use paper-based forms. Approximately 10% of organisations used paper based applications in 2017.

The [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons\) Acts 2012-2016](#), which came into effect in 2016, makes it mandatory for people working with children or vulnerable adults to be vetted by the Garda Síochána National Vetting Bureau. As part of this new legislation SAS organisations are required to carry out Garda vetting procedures on staff that are in contact with vulnerable people as defined under the act. To support compliance for those organisations where this was considered relevant, training was delivered through Volunteer Centres and coordinated by Volunteer Ireland to assist organisations to be aware of their responsibilities in this regard. There was no cost to registered organisations for Garda Vetting if it was required and this was carried out by the Volunteer Centres. This is expected to become a more important requirement of the scheme for registered organisations to consider, given the age profile and potential vulnerability of the participants.



## 5 Equipment, installations and service providers

This section provides information on the number of installations, the type and average cost of SAS equipment, the firms supplying the equipment and the monitoring services provided.

### 5.1 Number of installations

At the end of 2017, a total of **18,073** installations of SAS personal monitored alarms had been completed through the scheme. This represented a 41% increase in the number of completed installations at the end of 2016.

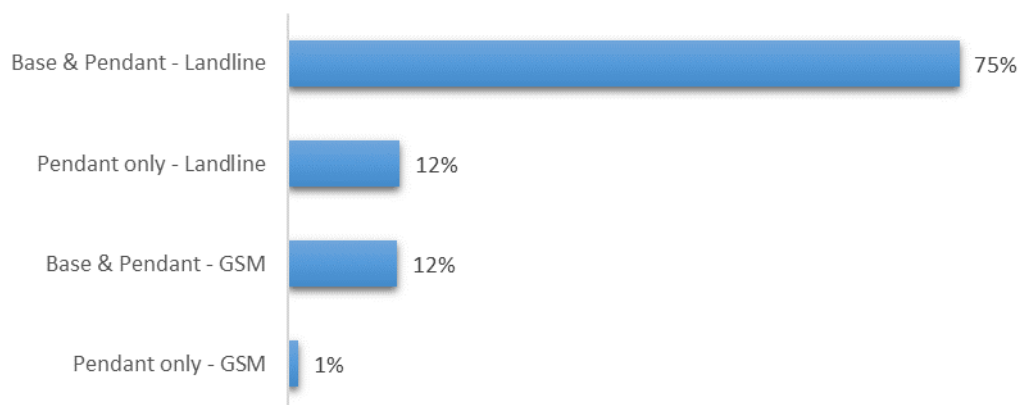
### 5.2 Types of equipment

The monitored alarm system available through the scheme consists of two pieces of equipment 1) a pendant with an emergency alarm button and 2) a base unit located in the home. In the event of a fall, break in etc. the person presses the emergency button which activates a call to a monitoring centre via the base unit. SAS participants can choose from a number of different equipment options, depending on their needs and the availability of landline and/or mobile (GSM) connections.

The majority of people on the scheme choose the base and pendant with a landline connection (77% of all approved participants to date). In 2017, there was a 3% rise in the number of people requesting the base and pendant with a GSM connection (from 9% in 2016 to 12% of participants joining the scheme in 2017). There was no notable differences in terms of urban or rurally based requests for equipment.

Figure 5.1 shows the requests for each equipment type. The landline options were favoured by the majority of scheme participants.

Figure 5.1 Type of SAS equipment requested 2017



Where people request a pendant only, this is usually due to a faulty or damaged pendant which needs replacing or where a partner becomes eligible for the scheme and requires a pendant. In some cases a pendant is required to complete a reinstallation of a base unit from existing stock. See further information on this below.

### 5.2.1 Reinstallations

In certain cases a base unit can be supplied from existing stock at a reduced cost. This occurs where a participant has left the scheme and equipment has been returned that is still in working order. The community organisation receives the base unit and provides it to the supplier who is responsible for cleansing and re-certifying the equipment for re-use. Of the 12,788 approved participants in 2017, 68 (1%) of installations were specified as being supplied from existing stock. 112 approved participant records are specified as being supplied from existing stock, representing approximately 1% of all approvals. Re-using the base from existing stock can reduce the cost of installations by approx. €100-150 depending on connection type. Procedures have been put in place with suppliers to encourage this practice to happen from November 2017.

### 5.3 Average costs

While the cost of supplying and installing equipment varies from supplier to supplier, the table below shows the average costs for the equipment, including installation and 12 months' free monitoring costs as at the end of 2017.

*Table 5-1: Average costs of SAS equipment 2017*

Average costs (all costs excluding VAT) 2017	
Base & pendant landline (including monitoring)	€231.55
Base & pendant GSM (including monitoring)	€281.42
Pendant only (landline or GSM)	€31.38
Re-installed base & new pendant (landline or GSM and including monitoring)	€124.30

### 5.4 Suppliers

From January to October 2017 there were five firms contracted to supply and install SAS equipment nationally. Under the new programme framework, as of the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017, this was reduced to four companies. Each supplier provides equipment across a number of counties based on a lot structure. A full list of the counties in each lot under the new scheme framework is available in Appendix III.

The four suppliers contracted to supply and install SAS equipment, as of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017, are:

- Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
- Trident Associated Securities & Kommunications Ltd (TASK Ltd)
- Tunstall Emergency Response Limited
- Helplink South Ltd

## 5.5 Monitoring services

The personal alarm and pendant supplied under the scheme are 'monitored' by service providers so that when the personal alarm is triggered, the individual is able to communicate directly with a monitoring company staff member who can assess the situation and either reassure the individual, contact nominated family members/ friends or in emergency situations contact the emergency services.

One of the key changes to the scheme implemented in November 2017 by the Department was the funding for one year of monitoring services in addition to equipment supplied. This was an attempt by the Department to increase uptake of the scheme (in tandem with an advertising campaign) and to allow individuals to feel the benefit of its use for the first year in the anticipation that they may be more willing to fund the monitoring cost thereafter (approx. €50 - €70 each year). After one year, participants can choose to stay with the monitoring provider or switch to another monitoring provider. Alternatively they can opt for the unit to be monitored by a family member.

A summary analysis of one service provider's data on alarm activation incidences showed that a large proportion of responses to the alarms being raised were for re-assurance to the participant (approximately two thirds of responses). This may occur where the person has a minor fall or fright but after a conversation they are re-assured and do not require any further assistance. Whilst this data was not exclusively related to the Senior Alert Scheme, it is an indication of the value of having this equipment available to individuals in terms of providing peace of mind to participants. Approximately 10% of alarm activations were participants in need of help, i.e. where a contact or emergency assistance was required, including ambulances, doctors, police and fire services.

As the scheme changes are implemented, this is an area that will provide useful data on benefits of the scheme for users. Information from service providers in relation to response types and response times will give a better insight into the operation of the scheme.

## 6 SAS supports provided

In 2017, the DRCD and Pobal provided a range of supports and information about the new programme framework introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017. Supports were provided to: existing SAS participants, potential participants, community organisations delivering the scheme and suppliers providing equipment and installation of the alarms.

A number of regional support events for organisations operating the scheme were held in line with the launch of the new scheme. Pobal's client services team provided a high level of support during this time. Further information relating to supports provided during 2017 is outlined below.

### 6.1 Support events

In March and April, eight regional information sessions were held across the country for organisations delivering the scheme. A further twenty information sessions were provided in November and early December in line with the launch of the new scheme.

The events received positive feedback from attendees, with 93% of attendees at the November/December sessions stating that the events provided them with the necessary information to assist in the operation of the scheme. Some quotes in relation to the information provided and the changes to the scheme included:

*"Great to see improvements to all aspects of the scheme to make life easier on volunteers"*

*"Delighted with changes for the SAS scheme"*

*"You have provided a good understanding of the updated/new SAS scheme"*

*"Very pleased with the overall event, it was informative, straightforward and easy to follow"*

*"Items that were of concern at last year's meeting have been dealt with really well"*

Some suggestions for future support events were to:

- Include inputs at events from suppliers, monitoring companies, community organisations on the ground and from local HSE/TUSLA/public health representatives;
- Hold separate events for new organisations joining the scheme to provide basic information;
- Hold evening events – for people who work during the day and volunteer on the scheme;
- Provide further clarity on costs relating to scheme – e.g. GSM costs and monitoring fees.

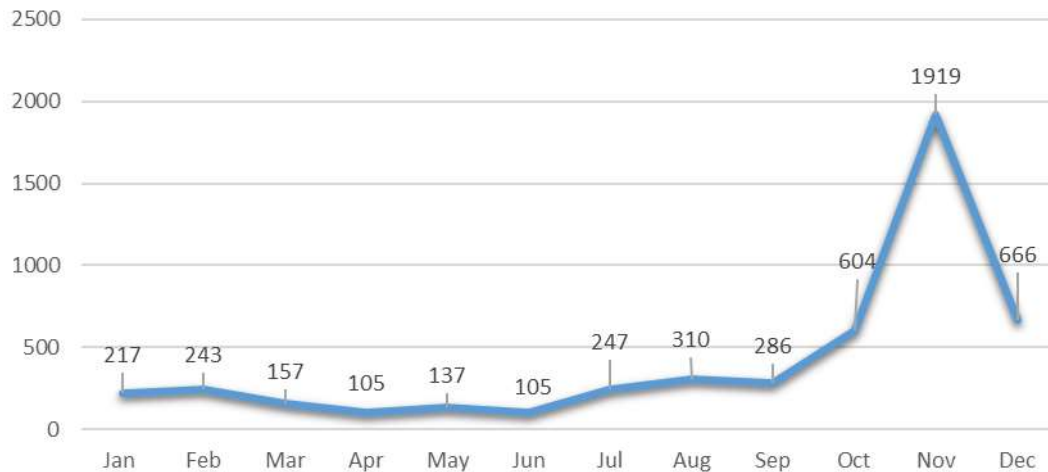
All feedback is taken into account in the design of future events and information is circulated after events to clarify any queries arising.

### 6.2 Support queries

Pobal received 4,996 queries related to SAS through their support phone line and email service from January to December 2017. There was a significant increase in queries in the last quarter of 2017, which was directly related to the new programme launch and associated advertising campaigns. The number of queries received per month is shown in Figure 6.1 below. The majority of SAS queries (81%) were received via phone and 19% via email.

In comparison to 2016, there was an average 284% increase in queries from July to December 2017. November queries increased by 727% in comparison to the previous year (1,919 queries compared to 232). The number of queries tends to decrease in late spring and early summer and increase again from August/September (with a drop off in December).

Figure 6.1 SAS Queries per month 2017



The majority of queries received (83%) were programmatic information requests, such as queries on participant eligibility and application guidance for potential applicants. Other queries were related to IT support for the SAS system and application status checks.

Table 6-1: Percentage of queries received per query type

SAS query type		% of total
Programmatic & participant query	General or programme wide information requests	83%
System query	System bugs, password changes, and technical issues	12%
Application query	Application requests, paper applications and application status checks	4%

## 7 Conclusion

The Seniors Alert Scheme in 2017 has continued to provide much needed peace of mind and security to older people in Ireland, promoting independent living for people in their own homes through a community based model.

The scheme has grown significantly in 2017, with a 73% increase in the uptake of the scheme compared to 2016. The vast majority of this increase took place in November 2017, in line with the launch of the new scheme, with a 217% increase in participant approvals. While the level of demand dropped slightly in December, in line with seasonal expectations, the higher level of demand is likely to continue in the early months of 2018. The number of installations in 2017 increased by 43%. Given the high volume of approvals in late 2017, it is expected that the number of installations will rise significantly in early 2018. The substantial increase in scheme activity can be attributed to the expansion of the eligibility requirements for the scheme, the provision for free monitoring for the first year and extensive local media coverage in latter half of 2017.

Community based organisations and volunteers play a vital role in delivering the SAS using local knowledge and connections to ensure that the most vulnerable and isolated older people in the country are enabled to avail of the scheme. It is important that the community organisations continue to be supported to operate the scheme and have their voices and experiences listened to. The changes introduced to the scheme in 2017, particularly the expansion of the eligibility criteria and the year of free monitoring, have been broadly welcomed by the registered community groups administering the scheme, and based on the increase in participant numbers, these changes have brought significant benefits to the SAS.

A number of areas have been identified which would benefit from further analysis in order to ensure that supports and resources are being targeted to maximise SAS delivery and efficiency:

- Data from the suppliers/service providers will be collated to identify how alarm monitoring is operating and the reasons for triggering the alarms. This will provide additional information to identify the benefits of the scheme in funding the first year of monitoring.
- In 2018, analysis will be undertaken to assess what happens when the year of free monitoring expires. For example, is there a reduction in participant numbers and what is the impact for community organisations in terms of collecting unused equipment etc.
- Geo-coding of participants to identify gaps in service provision/scheme coverage. With improvements to data capture on the SAS system, such as recording eircodes, it is hoped that in future, further analysis could be carried out in relation to the location of participants.
- Garda vetting has been introduced in 2017 in line with legislative requirements. While it may present an additional challenge and administrative burden to the organisations, it will undoubtedly provide protection to vulnerable older people and will be an important aspect of scheme delivery going forward.

With the rapid expansion of the scheme experienced in the last quarter of 2017 and the increased level of demand expected to continue into 2018, the scheme will need to grow and adapt to meet the needs of all parties involved in its successful delivery. Supports provided by the DRCD and Pobal (including technical, IT and programmatic supports) must continue to meet the needs of older people and their communities. The available data should be used to identify and allow for the targeting of any areas that are underrepresented and ensure the most efficient use of resources available.



The current high level of uptake on the scheme provides a good example of how a programme can be adapted to meet the needs of people and communities using the feedback from those delivering the services. The Seniors Alert Scheme is now reaching greater numbers of older people in need of this service and supporting them to live at home. A recent survey by Active Retirement Ireland found that approximately 82% of older people wish to age in their own homes<sup>13</sup>. The SAS plays an important role in promoting independent living by providing reassurance, comfort and a sense of security for Ireland's older people, supporting them to continue to live in their own homes and connected to their communities.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.activeirl.ie/news-events/report-just-1-of-older-people-want-to-age-in-nursing-homes-or-long-term-care-facilities>

## Appendix I

### Interpretation of SAS Statistics

Given the focus of the SAS scheme, which is providing supports to older people in Ireland, there are some considerations to be taken into account when interpreting the statistics in relation to the scheme. Many of the figures provided are on a cumulative basis, e.g. since the beginning of programme. For example, 21, 231 people have been approved for the scheme since it began in 2015 and 18,073 alarms have been installed to date. However, given the age profile of the scheme participants, the number of people who have left the scheme during this period are not always recorded accurately. Participants leave the scheme for a variety of reasons, including changes in living arrangements, moving into residential care and a certain proportion will pass away each year. While organisations are asked to record the number of people leaving the scheme, where possible, it is accepted that this needs to be handled with sensitivity and care and will not be possible in many instances.

A second point to note is that the figures provided in this report are a snapshot of the data held in the SAS IT system as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017. Therefore, there may have been participants/organisations whose status has changed prior to this date, for example, moved from 'approved' to 'cancelled' and so are not included in the figures presented here.

Taking the above points into consideration, we accept that:

- a) The number of participants reported are the number that have been approved for the scheme to date but may not be the actual number of participants at a given date.
- b) The number of people reported as leaving the scheme is likely to not be exact for reasons previously identified.
- c) There will be equipment provided that is no longer in use but is not returned for a number of years or at all.
- d) The cumulative figures provided are based on what is recorded in the SAS system as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

## Appendix II

## Approved organisations and participants per county at end of 2017

Table I: Number and % of approved organisations and participants per county (sorted by participant numbers)

County	Number of registered organisations	% of registered organisations	Number of approved Participants	% of approved participants
Dublin	20	3%	3996	19%
Cork	94	16%	2650	12%
Galway	40	7%	1491	7%
Tipperary	41	7%	1179	6%
Limerick	35	6%	1123	5%
Clare	20	3%	893	4%
Mayo	42	7%	842	4%
Louth	10	2%	790	4%
Kerry	37	6%	758	4%
Kildare	16	3%	699	3%
Donegal	31	5%	663	3%
Meath	28	5%	635	3%
Laois	13	2%	617	3%
Kilkenny	18	3%	572	3%
Wexford	21	3%	496	2%
Offaly	7	1%	471	2%
Sligo	16	3%	457	2%
Wicklow	10	2%	431	2%
Waterford	18	3%	383	2%
Westmeath	6	1%	381	2%
Carlow	11	2%	367	2%
Roscommon	14	2%	357	2%
Leitrim	7	1%	287	1%
Monaghan	14	2%	266	1%
Longford	5	1%	215	1%
Cavan	27	4%	212	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>601*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21231</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*There are 601 actively registered organisations on the scheme and 565 organisations with registered participants as at the end of 2017.

## Appendix III

## SAS county lot structure

Table II: SAS county lot structure - before and after November 2017

September 2015 to 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2017			From 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2017	
COUNTY - LOT AREA	LOT NO.	SUPPLIER	LOT NO.	SUPPLIER
Dublin South Central, South East City, South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	7	Task Ltd/TeleAlarms Europe GmbH (consortium)	1	TASK Ltd
Dublin North Central, North West, Central Area and Fingal	8	Task Ltd/TeleAlarms Europe GmbH (consortium)	1	TASK Ltd
Cork	4	Task Ltd/TeleAlarms Europe GmbH (consortium)	2	Tunstall Emergency Response Ltd
Clare	5	Emergency Alarm Services (Emergency Response Limited and Alarm & Medical Services Limited) (consortium)	3	TASK Ltd
Kerry	5	Emergency Alarm Services (Emergency Response Limited and Alarm & Medical Services Limited) (consortium)	3	TASK Ltd
Limerick	5	Emergency Alarm Services (Emergency Response Limited and Alarm & Medical Services Limited) (consortium)	3	TASK Ltd
Carlow	6	Task Ltd	4	Tunstall Emergency Response Ltd
Kilkenny	6	Task Ltd	4	Tunstall Emergency Response Ltd
Tipperary	6	Task Ltd	4	Tunstall Emergency Response Ltd
Waterford	6	Task Ltd	4	Tunstall Emergency Response Ltd
Wexford	6	Task Ltd	4	Tunstall Emergency Response Ltd

Kildare	9	Task Ltd	5	Helplink South Ltd
Laois	9	Task Ltd	5	Helplink South Ltd
Meath	9	Task Ltd	5	Helplink South Ltd
Wicklow	9	Task Ltd	5	Helplink South Ltd
Galway	5	Gar Sec System Ltd	6	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Mayo	2	Care Direct 24/7 and Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited (consortium)	6	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Sligo	2	Care Direct 24/7 and Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited (consortium)	6	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Cavan	3	Task Ltd	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Donegal	3	Task Ltd	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Leitrim	3	Task Ltd	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Longford	10	Care Direct 24/7 and Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited (consortium)	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Louth	3	Task Ltd	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Monaghan	3	Task Ltd	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Offaly	10	Care Direct 24/7 and Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited (consortium)	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Roscommon	3	Task Ltd	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd
Westmeath	10	Care Direct 24/7 and Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited (consortium)	7	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd