SENIORS ALERT SCHEME

2016 Progress Report

September 2015 to December 2016

pobal
government supporting communities

An Roinn Tithíochta, Pleanála, Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

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1 Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the Seniors Alert Scheme between the period September 2015 to the end of December 2016. This represents the first 16 months of Pobal's responsibility for the schemes administration. During this time the scheme has expanded to cover over 2% of Ireland's over 65 population.

The Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS) was designed to encourage community support for older people in their communities through the provision of personal monitored alarms. These supports enable older people, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. The alarms supplied through SAS provide security and allow people to immediately call for help in the event of a break-in, fall or accident in the home.

Some of the key findings of this report include:

- In 2016 there were 7,301 individuals over the age of 65 approved under the Seniors Alert Scheme;
- The scheme represents 1% of Ireland's over 65 population and 17% of Ireland's over 85 population;
- In 2016 7,219 alarms were installed;
- €1,263,789.41 was paid to suppliers for equipment and installation costs;
- As of the end of 2016, a total of 568 organisations had been approved to apply for SAS supports on behalf of participants;
- Two thirds (67%) of all SAS participants are female and half of all participants are over the age of 80;
- Two thirds (68%) of participants were living alone;
- Over half of all participants cited an existing health concern as one of the reasons for applying to the SAS;
- 13% of participants said 'fear of crime' was a reason for applying to the scheme. This figure was highest in rural areas and among participants who were living alone;
- The vast majority (80%) of equipment types requested were pendants and bases connected to a landline;
- Over two thirds (67%) of organisations are unincorporated associations and well over half (55%) classified themselves as neighbourhood watch or community alert groups.

2 Introduction

This report provides a progress update and an analysis of the data available for the Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS) during the period from September 2015 to December 2016, as well as providing headline information for the 2016 calendar year. The report includes an overview of the changes introduced to the scheme, headline figures and a description of the organisations and participants availing of the scheme during this period.

2.1 Background

The scheme was first introduced in 1996 as *Community Support for Older People* (CSOP) in response to the recommendations of the Task Force on Security for the Elderly. On the 7th of September 2015 the management of SAS transferred from the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government[1] to Pobal.

In order to increase efficiency, improve value for money and reduce the administrative burden on community organisations, a number of key changes have been introduced as part of the service model applied to SAS since the final quarter of 2015:

- All equipment is now funded through Pobal on a centralised basis and made available through the community and voluntary organisations registered with Pobal.
- Pobal established and currently administers an online portal which allows organisations to submit applications online and to receive online approvals and correspondence related to applications.
- A monitoring panel on e-tenders was established to allow the suppliers who monitor equipment to undergo a quality check and have the details of their service, including costs provided to organisations easily viewed. This helps facilitate more choice and value for money in the provision of monitoring services.

Pobal has established a central procurement framework and infrastructure for contract management; developed a range of support materials (FAQs, user guides procedures, manuals, brochures, updated user forms etc.) and a helpdesk facility to support the online processes.

In 2016 Pobal commissioned the Telehealth Quality Group to review the delivery model of the Seniors Alert Scheme. The purpose of this review was to assess the effectiveness of the model and the relationship of the scheme with monitoring services, as well as identifying new technologies for consideration. It is expected that the review will be published later this year by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

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[1] As of 2016 this department has been renamed the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

3 Headline Figures

The following chapter highlights some of the key figures for the Seniors Alert Scheme since September 2015 to December 2016. Unless otherwise stated the data provided is accurate as of the SAS online system as at 31st of December 2016.

Table 1 below shows the overall figures since Pobal began operating the scheme in September 2015 accompanied by the same information for the period January 1st to December 31st 2016.

In the last four months of 2015 there were 686 installations completed. At the end of 2016 this figure stood at 7,905.

Table 1 SAS Organisation, Participant and Installation figures as at 31/12/2016

	September – December 2015	January - December 2016	Total
Organisations Approved	341	227[2]	568
Participants Approved	1321[3]	7,301	8,622
Installations Completed	686	7,219	7,905

When looking at the last four months of 2016 in comparison with the same period in 2015, we can see an 63% increase in the number of participants approved, as well as an 85% increase reduction in the number of installations completed.

Since beginning to operate the scheme, Pobal have approved 568 organisations to operate the SAS, with 464 (82%) of these submitting at least one application on behalf of a participant. A total of 104 (18%) organisations have not submitted an application on behalf of a participant. A process is underway to contact inactive organisations to determine if they have disbanded or no longer wish to participate in the scheme.

Table 2 SAS Organisations as at 31/12/16

TOTAL ORGANISATIONS	711
Organisations Approved	**568**
Organisations with submitted applications	464
Organisations with no submitted applications	104
Organisations Awaiting Approval	**143**
Organisations in Draft (Not yet submitted to Pobal)	108
Organisations queried by Pobal	35
Organisations awaiting appraisal by Pobal	0

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[2] The figure for Organisations Approved January – December includes 14 organisations that have since notified us that they are no longer operating the SAS and been removed from the programme. These figures are also included in the total of 568'.

[3] Please Note: On page 5 of the SAS Data Analysis Report 2015 this figure was incorrectly given as 1312.

Table 3 shows the number of participants approved since September 2015. To date 8,622 participants have been approved under SAS. This represents the vast majority of applicants, with an average 98% of applications approved.

While participant numbers have increased nationally, the highest increase in participant numbers regionally was in Kerry, with the lowest increase occurring in Kilkenny. Nationwide less than 200 participants were unsuccessful in their applications however, almost 500 cancelled their applications before approval was granted.

Table 3 SAS Participants as at 31/12/16

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	9,325
Participants Approved	8,622
Participants in Appraisal	13
Participants left, cancelled or unsuccessful	690

When looking at the last four months of 2016 in comparison with the same period in 2015, we can see an 60% increase in the number of participants approved, as well as an 85% gain in the number of installations completed.

Table 4 shows the number of installations approved since September 2015. To date a total of 7,905 installations have been completed.

Table 4 SAS Installations as at 31/12/16

| TOTAL APPROVED INSTALLATIONS	8,622
Installations Completed	7,905
Participants Awaiting Installation	717[4]

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[4] The figures given for Participants Awaiting Installation, includes an approximate 180 installations known to be completed during 2016 but not invoiced until 2017.

4 Geographic Coverage

There are SAS approved organisations in all 26 counties nationwide. **Figure 5** shows the percentage of SAS organisations active in each county alongside their percentage of approved participants and completed installations. There is quite a high level of variation between the numbers of approved participants by county, with figures of over 1,300 in Dublin and 1,200 in Cork, while numbers in Cavan, Monaghan and Leitrim all remain less than 100.

As of the 1st of January 2017, 92% of all approved participants had their installation completed. This ranged nationally from 81% and 82% in Longford and Roscommon respectively, to 97% in Kilkenny, Monaghan and Waterford.

Figure 1 Percentage of approved organisations, approved participants and completed installations by county
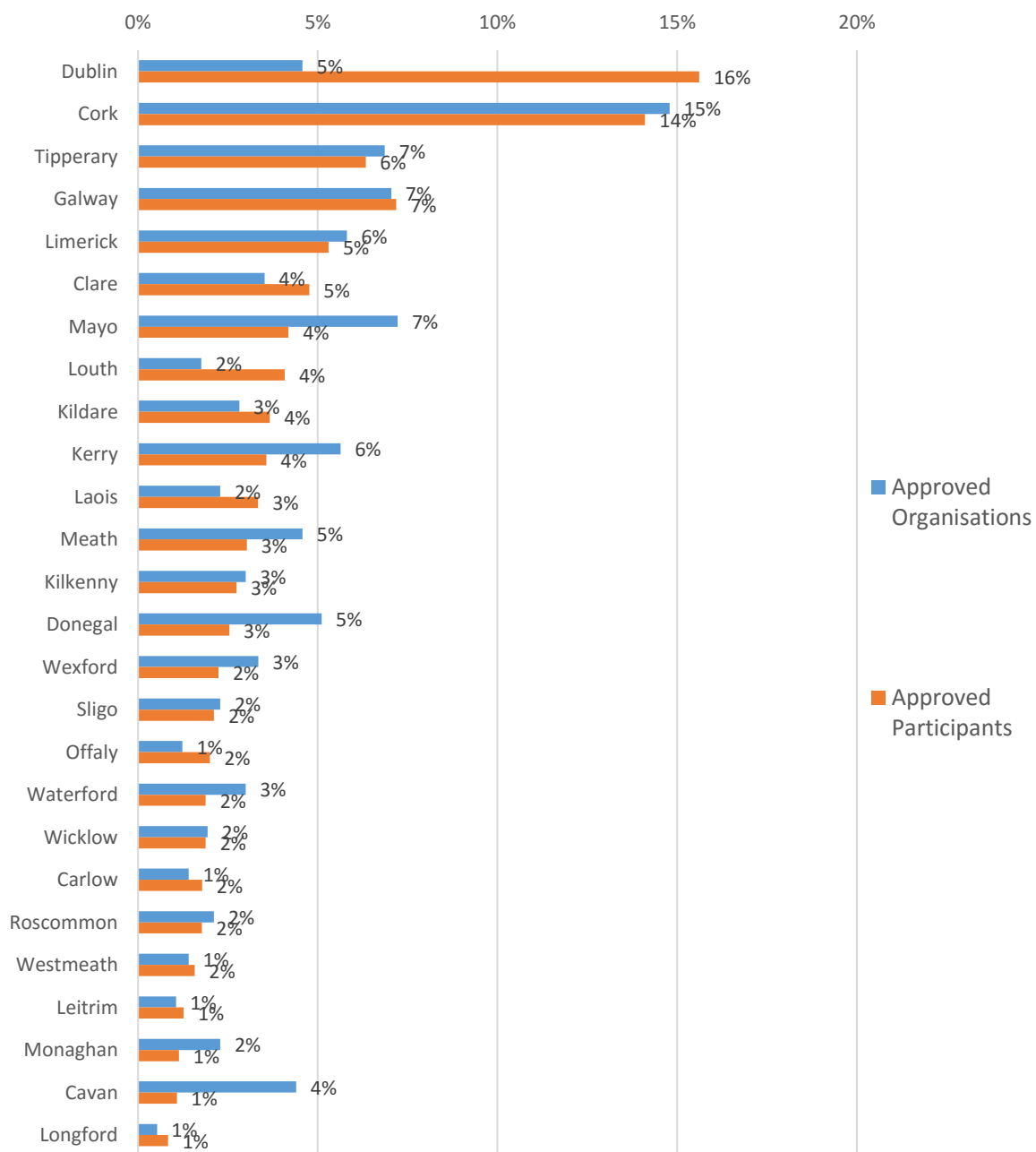
4.1 Percentage of eligible population covered

Table 5 shows the spread of current SAS users per county, as well as showing the percentage of the over 65 population that are currently registered on the scheme.

Nationally, 1% of Irelands over 65 population are registered SAS[5] participants. The percentage of Irelands over 85 population covered is as high as 17%. While Dublin and Cavan recorded the highest number of organisations per county, they were both among the bottom three counties in terms of the percentage of their eligible population covered.

Table 5 SAS Participants coverage by county of residence

County	Over 65 population	SAS participants	% of over 65 population covered
Laois	9033	288	3%
Clare	16281	411	3%
Tipperary	22980	546	2%
Louth	15122	352	2%
Carlow	6897	154	2%
Leitrim	5037	109	2%
Galway	31465	619	2%
Sligo	9826	182	2%
Kilkenny	12817	236	2%
Limerick	25581	457	2%
Cork	68340	1216	2%
Mayo	20735	361	2%
Offaly	9956	172	2%
Kildare	20370	316	2%
Roscommon	9911	153	2%
Kerry	22155	308	1%
Meath	19461	261	1%
Longford	5519	72	1%
Westmeath	10578	136	1%
Monaghan	8145	98	1%
Waterford	15963	162	1%
Cavan	9657	93	1%
Donegal	23162	219	1%
Wexford	20447	193	1%
Wicklow	17444	162	1%
Dublin	150402	1346	1%
Grand Total	**587284**	**8622**	**1%**

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[5] The over 65 population by county of residence was sourced from 2016 census data.

5 Participant Information

The number of approved participants rose to 8,622 by the end of 2016. This section provides details of individuals supported under the Seniors Alerts Scheme from September 2015 to December 2016. Including a breakdown of participant demographics, eligibility, reasons for applying and the types of equipment requested.
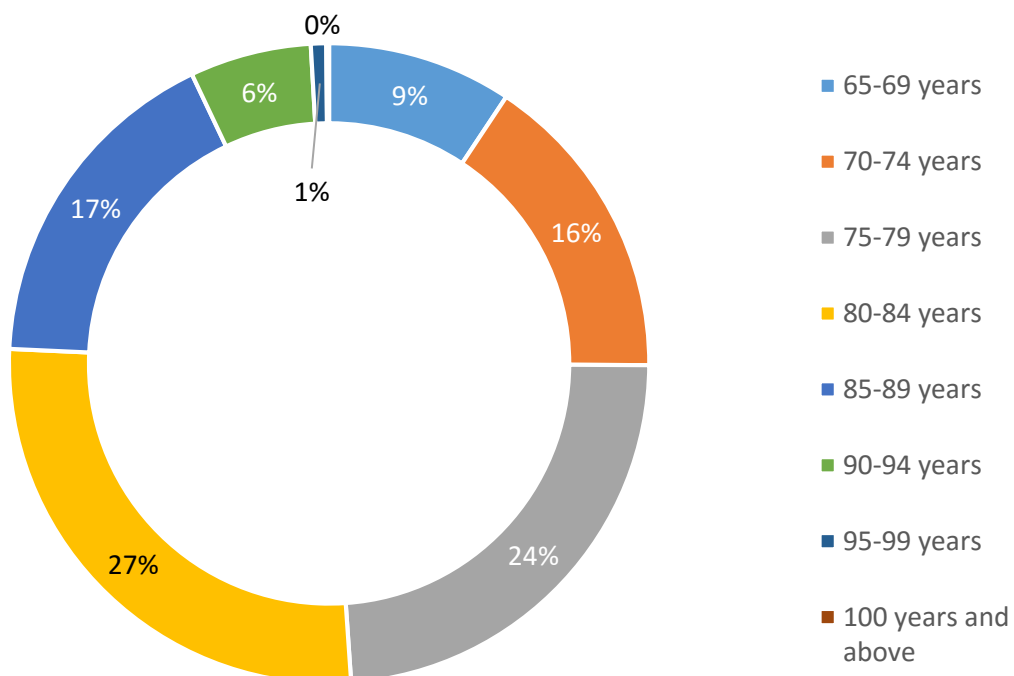
5.1 Participant demographics

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of SAS participants by gender. Two thirds of all SAS participants identified as female. **Figure 3** shows that over half of all participants were aged 80 or over. This highlights how SAS targets support towards participants in older age demographics.

Figure 2 Approved participants by gender

Female; 67%	Male; 33%

Figure 3 Approved participants by age-band

- 65-69 years
- 70-74 years
- 75-79 years
- 80-84 years
- 85-89 years
- 90-94 years
- 95-99 years
- 100 years and above

5.2 Eligibility Criteria

The following section will provide an analysis of the different combinations of reasons participants become eligible for SAS support. Eligibility is based on three main criteria.

- Participants must be aged 65 or older,
- Participants must be of limited means or resources,
- Participants must either live alone, OR, live with another eligible person.

Figure 4 shows the percentage of participants by their living status. 68% of scheme participants were recorded as living alone, of those, approximately 25% were in receipt of a "Living Alone Allowance".

Figure 4 Approved participants living status

Living Alone; 68%	Living with another eligible person; 32%

Figure 5 shows the percentage of participants by their source of income.

There has been little change in the income makeup of SAS participants since the December 2015 reporting period. Almost 80% of SAS participants relied on a single income, with the majority of scheme participants in receipt of either a contributory or non-contributory state pension.

Figure 5 Approved participants by source of income
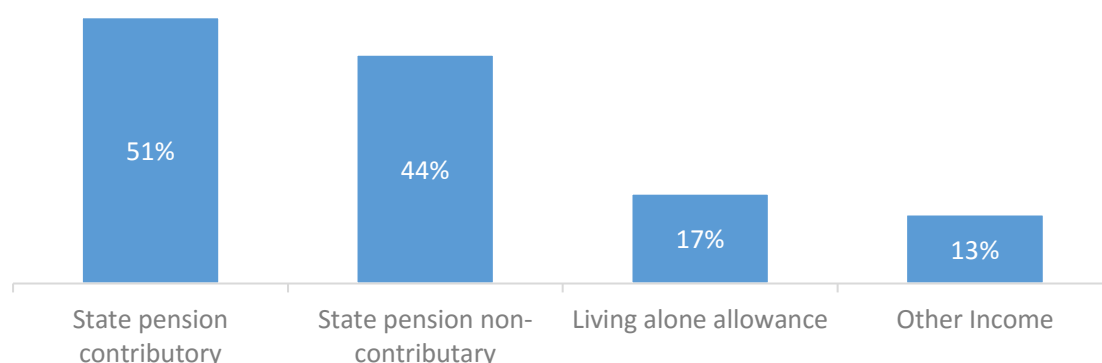
5.3 Reason for accessing

There were a number of possible reasons participants could choose for applying to the SAS. **Figure 6** details the most commonly selected reasons for accessing SAS. The majority of programme participants chose "Existing Health Condition" as their reason for seeking SAS equipment (55%). Participants who selected living alone as their living arrangement were more likely to choose "Fear of Crime", or "Feel isolated", than other scheme participants. Participants living in rural areas[6] were also more likely to choose "Feel isolated", or "Fear of Crime", than participants living in urban areas.

Figure 6 Approved participants by their reason for accessing SAS

Legend:
- Existing Health Condition
- Fear of Crime
- Feel Isolated
- Past Victim of Crime
- Peace of Mind
- Protect Home

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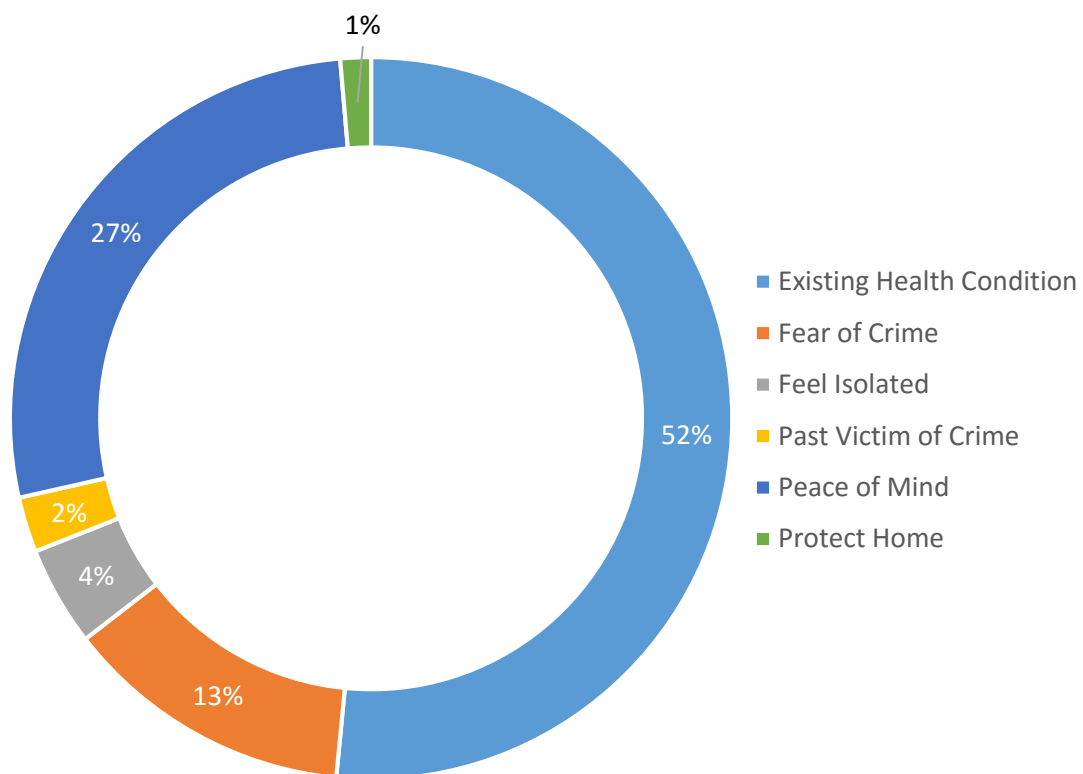
[6] Urban / rural classifications are assigned by the CSO. A full breakdown of SAS organisations and participants by their locations urban / rural designation is included in Appendix 1.

5.4 Knowledge of SAS

Figure 7 shows the primary sources of participant's SAS information.

The majority of scheme participants first learned of the Seniors Alert Scheme through interaction with a Private Health Nurse, a Health Centre or the HSE. The majority of participants in rural areas chose Community/Neighbourhood watch groups as their source of information showing the difference that living in an urban or rural area has on their sources of information. Over 80% of participants who chose Local papers / Newsletters as their source were living in urban areas.

*Figure 7 Approved participants by their source of SAS information*
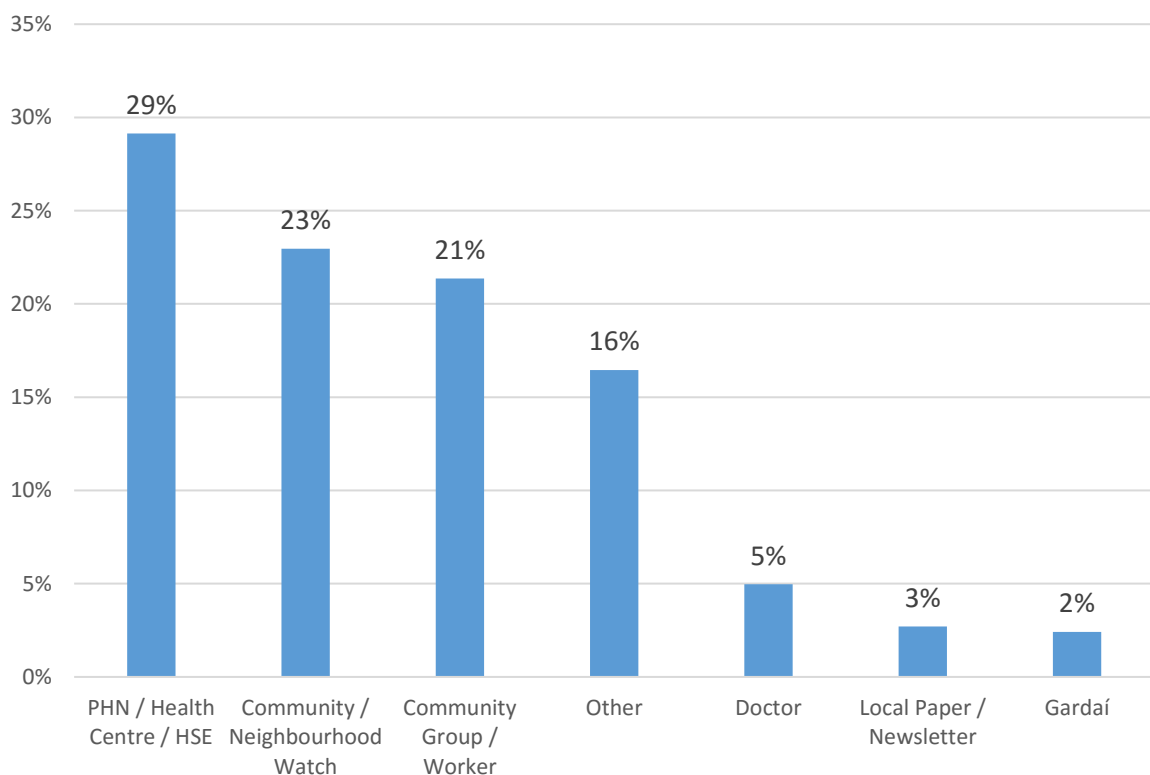
5.5 Type of equipment accessed

SAS equipment consists of two items, a pendant, which holds the alert button, and a base unit, which sends a call to a monitoring team once the pendants alert button has been pressed. The bases will differ depending on whether the participant has a landline or not. Participants who do not have a landline are given a wireless GSM base which links the pendant to the monitoring centre.

Figure 8 shows the most commonly accessed equipment through the SAS. A pendant accompanied by a base with a landline connection was the most commonly accessed equipment type over the course of the programme; followed by pendant only for use with a landline and a base and a pendant using GSM technology. Approximately 90% of participants choose either a pendant, or base & pendant with a landline connection. This suggests that 10% of participants may live in accomodation without a landline connection. Ancedotally we are aware that the removal of the land line rental subisdy for pensioners has been a factor in moving people towards the GSM technology. Only 10% of total equipment orders requested a GSM pendant or a GSM base and pendant. The average cost for a base and pendant, regardless of whether it has a landline or GSM connection, was approximately €180. The average cost for a pendant was €36.

Figure 8 Approved participants by type of equipment accessed through SAS
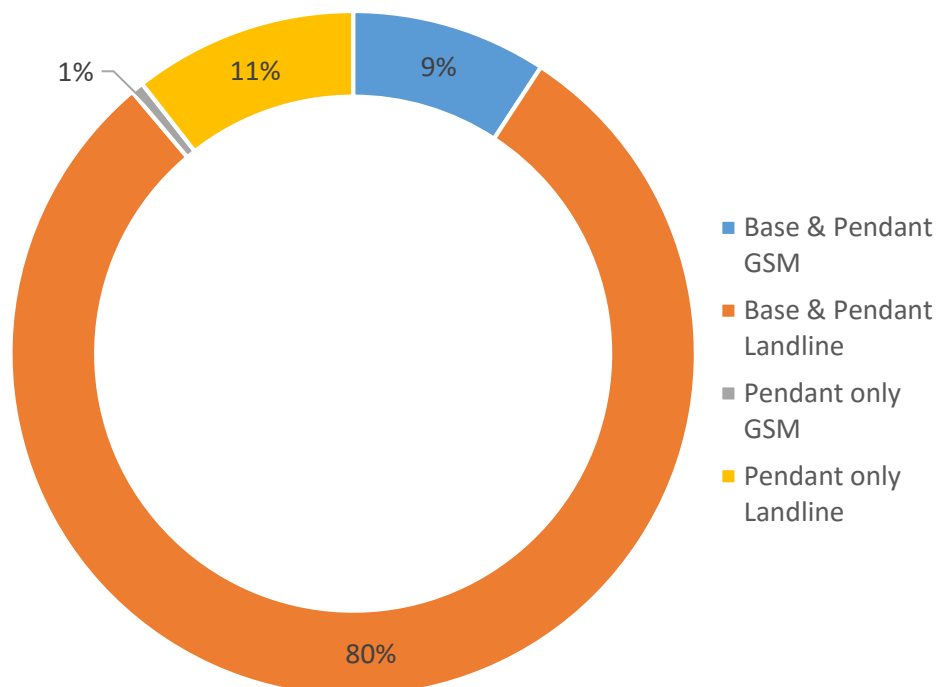
5.6   Equipment cost

There are five primary firms contracted with to supply and install SAS equipment nationally:

- Care Direct 24/7 Ltd and Tunstall (UK) Limited Consortium
- Emergency Alarm Services (Emergency Response Ltd & Alarm & Medical Services Ltd) consortium
- TASK Ltd
- Gar-Sec Systems Ltd
- Task Ltd/TeleAlarms Europe GmbH (consortium)

Each supplier provides cover across a number of counties[7]. Although the cost of supplying and installing equipment varies slightly from supplier to supplier, **Table 6** shows that there is very little difference between the average cost of a base and pendant (landline) and a base and pendant (GSM). Reusing a base from returned stock reduced the cost by approximately €105.

Table 6 Average cost of new and reused SAS equipment

Equipment type	Average cost of equipment PLUS installation
Base & Pendant GSM	€180.16
Base & Pendant Landline	€179.16
Pendant only GSM	€36.67
Pendant only Landline	€36.67
Equipment order fulfilled from existing stock	**Average cost of equipment PLUS installation**
Reinstalled Base & new Pendant GSM	€73.50
Reinstalled Base & new Pendant only Landline	€74.27

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[7] A complete list of which counties each supplier covers has been included in Appendix 2.

6 Organisation Information

During the application process, community and voluntary organisations were asked to specify their organisations nature and legal structure to help Pobal assess their eligibility to become SAS administrators. Approximately 15% of all approved participants were associated with larger charities and organisations with national reach such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (8%), Family Carers Ireland (4%), and The Carers Association Ireland (3%). A further 256 (3%) participants were associated with Local Development Companies (LDC's) and 153 (2%) with Family Resources Centres (FRC's)

6.1 Legal structure

Figure 9 shows the percentage of community and voluntary organisations by their specified legal structure as well as the percentage of participant applications they submitted and the installations they completed.

The majority of organisations delivering the SAS identified as unincorporated organisations (67%). The second most common category was companies limited by guarantee (21%) followed by trusts (7%) and limited companies (3%).

Companies limited by guarantee had on average the highest number of approved participants[8] (34).

Figure 9 Organisations with submitted applications and approved participants by legal structure

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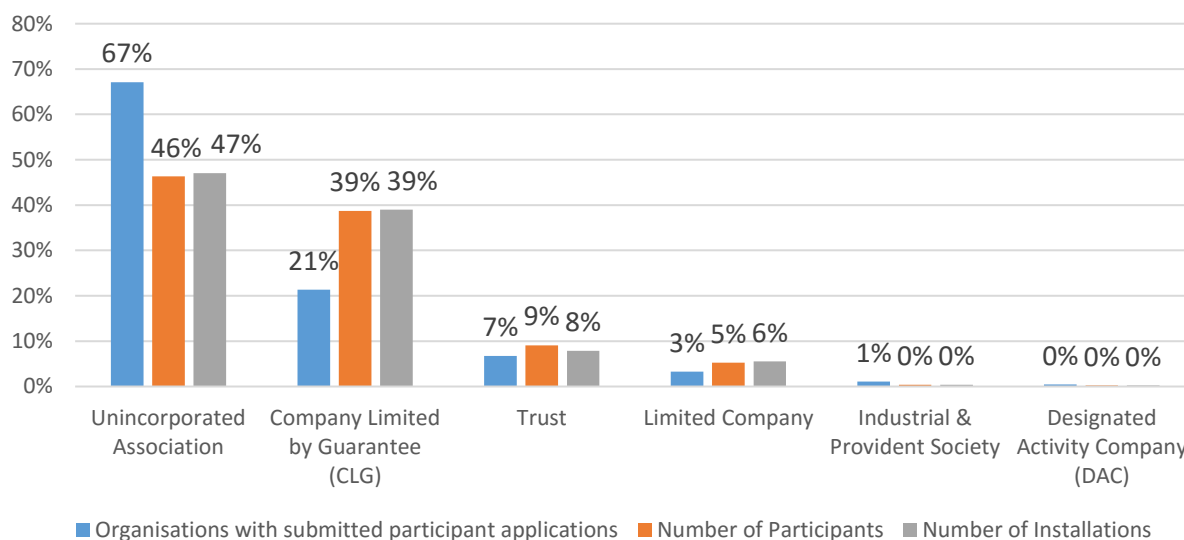
[8] The average number of participants to organisations was calculated using the number of organisations that had submitted a participant application, not the total number of approved organisations.

6.2 Nature of organisation

During the application process, organisations were asked to specify the nature of their organisation. **Figure 10** gives a breakdown of approved organisations on the basis of this. 55% of all approved organisations classified themselves as community alert / neighbourhood watch groups with less than 3% identifying as social services/carer groups.

While only 17% of organisations identified themselves as social services / carers groups this category recorded the highest average number of participants to organisations followed by senior citizen / active retirement groups. This is possibly indicative that while carer organisations and retirement groups were less numerous than other types of organisations they enjoyed greater access and trust to eligible people in their localities.

Approximately 6% of all approved organisations were larger charities and organisations with national reach such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (2%) and The Carers Association Ireland (2%).

Local groups and community alert / neighbourhood watch groups were the only organisations to record higher percentages of serviced participants in rural rather than urban areas. While they had the lowest average number of participants to organisations, lower than 10, lower averages of participants to organisations may be appropriate in rural areas due to their wider population distribution. Currently we lack information on the number of paid and unpaid workers available to work on SAS applications in each organisation to work on SAS applications. This information could explain why there is such a disparity in the average number of participant applications processed by different organisation types.

Figure 10 Organisations by nature of organisation
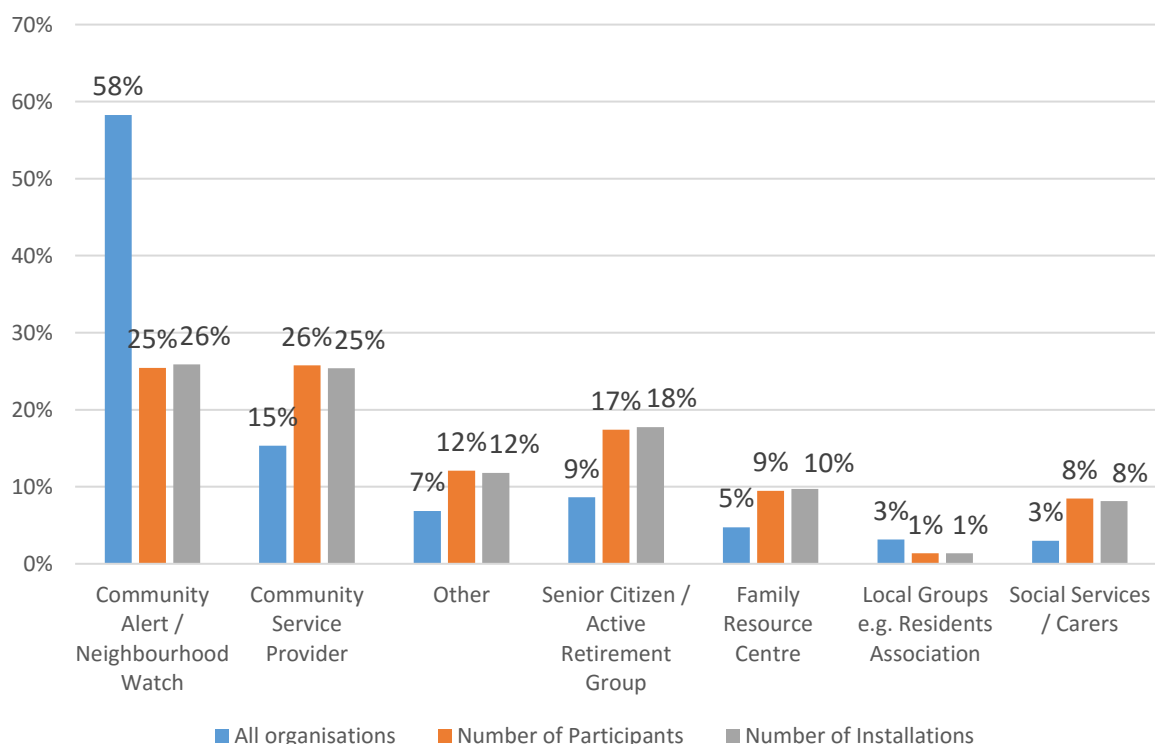
7 Support Queries

Pobal received 2,465 SAS queries through their support phone line and email service between 1st of January 2016 and the 31st of December 2016. For the purposes of analysis, queries have been grouped into the following categories.

Table 7 Support query categories and definitions

Query Type	
Programmatic query:	General or programme wide information requests.
System query:	System bugs, password changes, and technical issues.
Application query:	Application requests, paper applications and application status checks.
Participant query:	Queries on participant eligibility and application guidance for potential applicants.
Payment query:	Payment requests, reimbursements, and fee payment policies
Supplier query:	Supplier feedback
Other query:	All uncategorized queries

Table 8 shows the percentage and the average number of supported queries from each category.

Pobal received an average of 205 SAS related queries per month from the 1st of January 2016 to the 31st of December 2016. During September to December 2015 this figure was closer to 400, representing a reduction of almost 50% in monthly call volume between the last 4 months of 2015 and 2016. This may likely be attributed to the availability of other supports such as online tutorials and user guides as well as increasing familiarity among originations with the application process.

Table 8 Support queries by category

| Category	Percentage of total	Average per month
Programmatic query	54%	111
System	24%	49
Application	11%	23
Participant queries	6%	20
Other	2%	9
Payment	2%	4
Supplier	0%	1
Total	**100%**	**205**

8 Peak times

Figure 13 shows the number of support queries received between the 1st of January and the 31st of December 2016.

Support queries in the majority of categories peaked in February with the only significant exception being queries relating to the participant category which did not show any significant numbers until June and did not peak till July. The number of queries received fell by over 30% between January and December 2016.

While the number of programmatic and system queries fell in the second half of the year they still made up the majority during the years second peak, between October and November.

Figure 11 Support queries recieved by month
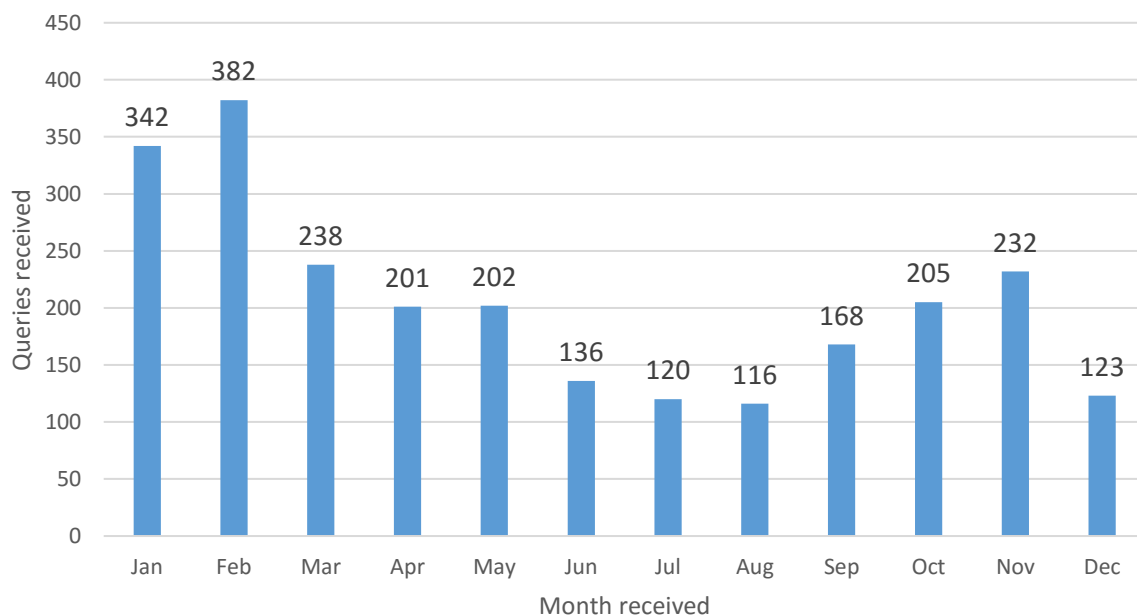
9 Conclusion

The Seniors Alert Scheme has expanded over the last 12 months and as of the 31st of December 2016 covers just over 1% of older people aged over 65 in the state. The actual share of eligible persons covered nationally is higher than 1%. However, there is no sufficient data on individuals who had alarms installed prior to the scheme transferring to Pobal.

In 2016, 7,219 alarms were installed with a total cost of €1,263,789.41 covering the equipment and installation. With more than half of recorded participants over the age of 80, and the majority living alone, it would appear that the scheme has continued to reach some of Irelands most vulnerable and isolated older citizens. 52% of participants cited existing health conditions as their reason for accessing the scheme. It should be noted that Pobal only holds information on the number of devices installed. It does not currently have a mechanism for recording if and when these devices are used. Further data on the usage of pendants and base units would allow for far greater analysis of the impacts of the scheme.

The schemes target group has shown itself to be highly capable at administering the programme locally through senior citizen, active retirement and other community and voluntary groups. Going forward, it is important to ensure that these groups are supported while recruitment drives focus on communities that have not yet been reached.

Larger charities and organisations with a national reach also play a role in the scheme administration. They account for 6% of approved organisations and submitted over 15% of participant applications. Family resource centres and local development companies should be encouraged to participate in the scheme on a wider scale. Only three out of 48 local development companies (6%) and less than one quarter of family resource centres (22%) participated in the scheme so far.

Almost one in five queries received in the final three months of 2016 was about new applicants. This implies that there is still a large un-serviced population interested in receiving coverage. Further work is required to ensure that information about the scheme is available to eligible individuals and the groups administering the scheme locally.

10 Appendix 1: Urban / Rural Designation

Table 13 Organisations and participants by Urban / Rural designation

Urban / Rural Distinction	Organisations with submitted Applications		Approved Participants		Average Participants per Organisation
Urban	**214**	**47%**	**6400**	**74%**	**30**
County Borough	30	7%	1027	12%	34
Environs of County Borough	2	0%	39	0%	20
Mixed Urban Rural	52	11%	614	7%	12
Suburbs of County Borough	15	3%	590	7%	39
Towns 1,000 to 5,000	24	5%	438	5%	18
Towns 5,000 to 10,000	14	3%	211	2%	15
Towns 10,000 and over	77	17%	3481	40%	45
Rural	**245**	**53%**	**2222**	**26%**	**9**

11 Appendix 2: SAS suppliers and county coverage

Table 14 SAS suppliers and their respective areas of coverage

Areas covered	Providers
Galway	Gar-sec Systems Ltd Helplink South Alarm & Medical Services
Mayo and Sligo	Care Direct 24/7 Ltd and Tunstall (UK) Limited consortium Emergency Alarm Services (Emergency Response Ltd & Alarm & Medical Services Ltd) consortium Alertline Security
Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Roscommon	Task Ltd Care Direct 24/7 Ltd and Tunstall (UK) Limited consortium Helplink South
Cork	Task Ltd/TeleAlarms Europe GmbH consortium Crime Guard Security Systems Alertline
Clare, Kerry and Limerick	Emergency Alarm Services (Emergency Response Ltd & Alarm & Medical Services Ltd) consortium Gar-sec Systems Ltd
Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford	Task Ltd Tunstall Emergency Response Gar-sec Systems Ltd
Dublin South Central, South East City, South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	Task Ltd/TeleAlarms Europe GmbH consortium Tunstall Emergency Response Kokomo Healthcare Home Safe Home Elderly Security Limited & Top Security Ltd consortium
Dublin North Central, North West, Central Area and Fingal	Task Ltd/TeleAlarms Europe GmbH consortium Emergency Alarm Services (Emergency Response Ltd & Alarm & Medical Services Ltd) Home Safe Home Elderly Security Limited & Top Security Ltd consortium
Kildare, Laois, Meath and Wicklow	Task Ltd Tunstall Emergency Response Home Safe Home Elderly Security Limited & Top Security Ltd consortium Alertline Security
Longford, Offaly and Westmeath	Care Direct 24/7 & Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited consortium Helplink South