

NDIS & AUTISM 101

The NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) offers a package of funding for people with a disability, to pay for their disability related therapy and support services.

In **NDIS-Land**, people who have an NDIS plan are referred to as "participants". A participant will set "goals" that they are working towards, along with the ways that they will aim to achieve their goals.

Do you qualify for NDIS?

We have created this resource for Autistic people as this is the cohort of people we service.

In the context of Autism, some people will qualify while others may find it more difficult to gain access.

While we are **opposed** to the idea of "functioning levels", we share this information generally as it is the system that the NDIS currently works with:

"Level 1"

Requires Support...

...but NDIS usually
won't provide it

*(without a functional capacity
report in addition to the autism
report)*

"Level 2"

Requires Substantial
Support

NDIS will likely provide
a funding package

"Level 3"

Requires Very
Substantial Support

NDIS will likely provide
a suitable funding
package

Support needs (i.e. functioning levels) fluctuate over time. For example, someone diagnosed with "level 1" Autism will have a difficult time qualifying for the NDIS even though **sometimes** their support needs might be more aligned with "level 2" or "level 3".

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Applying for NDIS

Head to the NDIS Website www.ndis.gov.au and download an "Access Request Form". Your diagnostician may be able to provide you with this.

Alternatively, call the NDIS on 1800 800 110 and make a verbal access request.

After you submit your application documents you should hear back from the NDIS within 28 days to be offered a planning meeting.

Who is who?

LAC (Local Area Coordinator)

The LAC is usually the person who you meet with to create your plan. The LAC works for an organisation (e.g. Feros), separate to the NDIS, who conducts the planning meeting with you.

The LAC drafts a plan with you and then sends it to the NDIS for approval. When the plan is approved, they should help you connect with services (though they don't usually have a lot of time).

Your LAC might be the same person for the duration of the plan or they might change.

NDIS Planner

The NDIS Planner is the person at the NDIS who reviews the plan that the LAC has drafted and decides whether everything that has been requested is "reasonable and necessary". You never actually meet this person - it happens behind the scenes.

Support Coordinator

Support Coordinators help you to understand your NDIS plan, access supports and keep track of goals and budget funding. They work with you to help exercise your choice and control while staying within the guidelines of, and understanding, the NDIS.

A Support Coordinator is an "extra" support person that some participants have access to within their plans to further support their NDIS journey.

Not everyone is allocated funding for a Support Coordinator.

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Money Management

During the planning meeting the LAC will ask you how you'd like your funding managed. There are three options to choose from:

Self-Managed

You manage your own NDIS plan. You pay for all appointments and claim the money back from the NDIS portal yourself. You are not bound by the NDIS Price Guide and can use any service providers you like. You will need to be mindful that some providers will expect you to pay on the day (before you are reimbursed from the NDIS) so consider whether your personal cashflow will allow for this.

Flexibility ✓✓✓

Effort ✓✓✓

Plan-Managed

A third-party agency pays the bills for you. Your providers send an invoice directly to the third party for payment. You retain some flexibility over your plan but you are bound by the price guide. You choose which plan manager you'd like to use. You can use any service providers you like as long as they charge within the NDIS price limits.

Flexibility ✓✓●

Effort ✓●●

Agency-Managed

You can only access NDIS registered providers. Registered providers claim the funding directly from the NDIS on your behalf. You don't have to do anything, however you are also limited with which service providers you can use.

Flexibility ●●●

Effort ●●●

It is completely your choice how you'd like to manage your funding.

(Unless you have ever been bankrupt or misused funding; in which case you may need to be agency-managed)

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Setting Goals

During a planning meeting, you will set "goals" that you'd like to work towards, along with the ways that you aim to achieve them. **You could have a goal of flying to the moon if you wanted to;** but the NDIS will only fund what they consider to be reasonable and necessary. For example, if you wanted to fly to the moon, they would only fund any disability related barriers that are in the way, but not ACTUALLY going to the moon.

For example, you might want to learn how to be understood by others so that you can communicate with people on your journey to the moon; so they may fund Speech Pathology.

There are lots of possible goals, and lots of different ways that people will reach their goals.

It is important that the participant is involved in setting their goals, even if they are a child.

The LAC will help you, but it is important that the participant has a say in the goals. *(Check out Sunny Spectrum's "Neuro-Affirming Goal Bank" for ideas! *coming soon)*

Why Goals Matter

Goals are like a roadmap for your plan. They help your providers understand what matters to you, what you expect from your plan, and what you aim to achieve.

Everything you pay for with your funding must relate back to your goals.

Quite often we see goals like "I want to improve my social skills" or "I want to have positive behaviours" but what does that actually mean? In the context of autism, we need to consider that an autistic person has social skills already; they just look different, and that behaviour is a form of communication.

So, a more achievable goal might be "I would like to learn to understand the perspectives of other people, and for other people understand me, so that I can have positive social experiences".

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Reasonable & Necessary

The NDIS will fund what is “reasonable and necessary”. There are seven criteria that a support must meet to be funded. **All criteria must be met.**

It can sometimes be tricky with meeting all seven criteria, so often things won't be funded when you might expect them to be. **The more "evidence" you have the better.**

1. Related to the disability

2. It is not a day to day living cost

3. It is safe and won't cause harm

4. It is not an income replacement

5. It is legal (e.g. not a restrictive practice, without a PBS Plan)

6. It is not a duplicate of another NDIS support (e.g. if two therapists working on same thing)

7. It is not the responsibility of another agency (e.g. Medicare)

The NDIS also need to be able to see that the support **will help you to pursue your goals, objectives, and aspirations** outlined in your NDIS plan.

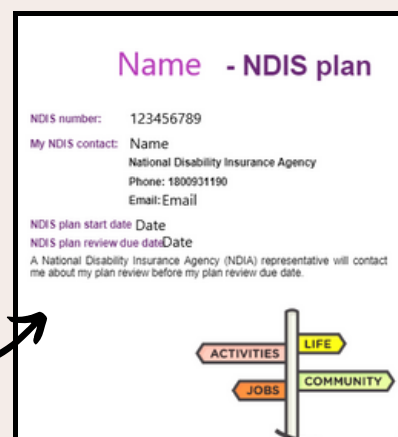
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So you've got a Plan!

...now what?

Your **goals** will be listed in the plan along with how much funding has been allocated and under which category. Each category is intended for different things. **It is important to note that not every plan has access to every category.**

If you have ANY questions, contact your LAC. Their details will be listed on the first page that looks like this



If you chose to have your funding plan-managed... it's time to choose a plan manager.

If you Google "**NDIS Plan Manager**" you will see that there are lots of options to choose from. We recommend that you read some reviews, ask around if you have any friends who have had a good experience with a provider... **or ask us!** We can share the details of some of our preferred providers with you.

If you received funding for a Support Coordinator...

You can now connect with a Support Coordinator. There are lots to choose from! They will help you to **understand** your plan, **connect** with supports that you need, and help you to **make a budget** for your funding (and keep an eye on it!). A good Support Coordinator will help you to exercise your choice, control and find the best services for you.

Support Coordination **isn't always** funded with an NDIS plan, it depends on your situation.

If you didn't receive funding for a Support Coordinator but you need some extra help...

You might be able to speak with a Support Coordinator by using your Core budget to gain some advice and education about how to use your plan.



**Now you can start booking services
and use your NDIS funding**