

A close-up photograph of two Black women smiling warmly at the camera. The woman on the left has curly hair and is wearing a pink top. The woman on the right has straight hair and is also wearing a pink top. They are both looking directly at the camera with bright, happy expressions.

Accessing the NDIS:

A guide to eligibility and how to get started.

Leap in!



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Introduction.

The NDIS is big, there's a lot to navigate, and it can be a bit daunting – especially when starting out and you 'don't know what you don't know!'

Here at Leap in! plan management, we want to help people with disability who are eligible for the NDIS get accepted into the scheme.

If you, a friend or a family member are thinking about accessing the NDIS for the first time and you're not sure where to start, this is the ebook for you. Find out more about getting ready for the NDIS, applying, and what comes next.

Accessing the NDIS is filled with tips, explanations and tried-and-tested approaches that will give you more confidence about applying for the NDIS.

We've drawn on our experience with the NDIS and suggestions from people who have been through the process themselves. It's designed to guide you through each step in detail and provide you with more information.

And as always, if you have questions please reach out to one of our experienced crew on 1300 05 78 78 or email us at crew@leapin.com.au.



Top tip:

Putting together all the information you need to access the NDIS can be time-consuming, but it's worth it to get the supports you need.



01

What is the NDIS?

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides people with permanent disability with information, connection and funding for disability-related supports.

It is designed to help people get the support they need to improve their skills and independence over time.

The NDIS takes a lifelong approach to funding supports and services. It can also connect you to information and supports from other organisations and government agencies.

The NDIS also provides early intervention supports for children and their families.

The scheme is available for people with disability in every Australian state and territory who meet the eligibility and disability criteria.



How does the NDIS work?

Once you have applied for the NDIS, if your request is accepted, you will get an NDIS Plan.

An NDIS Plan is a written agreement outlining the 'reasonable and necessary' NDIS supports that the NDIS may provide to help you achieve your goals. 'Reasonable' means fair, and 'necessary' means related to your disability. Each plan is unique to you and your circumstances and is likely to last between 6 months and 3 years.

Your NDIS Plan could provide funding split across several different categories. It will include financial help to cover some costs directly associated with your disability and be flexible enough to allow you to change supports as your needs change.

NDIS and NDIA: What's the difference?

The **NDIS** is an abbreviation for the National Disability Insurance Scheme that supports a better life for hundreds of thousands of Australians with disability.

The **NDIA** is the National Disability Insurance Agency, an independent government agency responsible for implementing the NDIS.



02

What does the NDIS cover?

The NDIS provides funding for a wide range of supports and services to help people with disability live more independently and achieve their goals.

NDIS supports are services, activities or items funded by the NDIS to assist you in daily living, build your skills and help you participate fully in the community.

These supports are tailored to your individual needs and goals, addressing the impact of disability on your life.

The NDIS has introduced lists that define:

- What you can spend your NDIS funding on (NDIS supports)
- What you cannot spend your NDIS funding on (not NDIS supports).

What is an NDIS support?

An NDIS support directly relates to your disability and meets funding criteria. Examples include:

- **Daily personal activities:** Help with everyday tasks to promote independent living at home/community
- **Development of daily care and life skills:** Training activities to increase independence
- **Household tasks:** Essential tasks you can't do yourself
- **Supports to participate in work/community:** Assistance for attending appointments, shopping, recreation or employment
- **Therapeutic and allied health supports:** Physiotherapy or speech therapy improving your functional capacity
- **Assistive technology (AT):** Devices/equipment aiding daily activities
- **Early intervention supports (early childhood):** Supports for children (0–9 years) and their families
- **Personal mobility equipment:** Mobility aids and equipment
- **Home and vehicle modifications:** Improvements for accessibility at home or in vehicles.



What is not an NDIS support?

The NDIS does not cover expenses like:

- Rent/mortgage payments
- Standard household/garden items, appliances, tools
- Utilities: water, gas, electricity
- Internet devices, mobile phones/tablets and related accessories, data plans
- Holidays: cruises, packages, accommodation, airfares
- Pets or companion animals (excluding assistance animals funded by NDIS)
- Diagnostic assessments/screenings
- Prescription/non-prescription medicines, sunscreens, vitamins, weight-loss products
- Treatments for addictions, disorders (drug/alcohol/gambling)
- Clinical mental health treatments provided by mainstream health services
- Home security and general maintenance
- Sexual services
- Alcohol, illegal drugs, cigarettes, vapes, cannabis, stop-smoking devices.

You can find out more about the NDIS [supports list](#) on the NDIS website.

Categories of NDIS funding components.

An NDIS funding component (previously known as a budget category) is a specific amount of funding allocated within your NDIS Plan for a particular type of support or a group of supports that are considered reasonable and necessary.

The main funding components are:



Core: For everyday activities and supports



Capacity Building: For building skills and independence



Capital: For one-off purchases such as assistive technology or home modifications



Recurring: Regularly paid directly to you by NDIS without claims required (currently only transport category for everyday travel needs).



03

Eligibility and disability requirements.

To access the NDIS, you must meet the eligibility criteria and the disability requirements.

Eligibility criteria.

You may be eligible for the NDIS if you meet the following:

1. You're aged between 9 and 65

Children younger than 9 and their families can be supported through the Early Childhood Approach

2. You live in Australia, are an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or hold a permanent visa or special category visa (SCV)

New Zealanders living in Australia are only eligible for the NDIS if they are an Australian resident or SCV holder

3. You meet the disability requirements, early intervention requirements, or both

Eligibility is focused on how a disability affects your ability to actively participate in work and society.

Disability requirements.

To meet the disability requirements, the NDIS must have evidence of all of the following:

- You have a disability attributable to one or more impairments
(*This means your disability and impairments are linked.*)
- Your impairment is likely to be permanent
- Your impairment means you have a substantially reduced functional capacity to do one or more daily life activities, such as moving around, communicating, socialising, learning, self-care, or self-management
- Your impairment affects your ability to work, study, or take part in social life
- You'll likely need NDIS supports for your lifetime.

**Top tip:**

If you're over 65 years of age, supports are available via the Australian aged care system. If you turn 65 while on the NDIS, you can choose to stay with the NDIS or transition to the aged care system.

'Impairments' and the disability requirements.

When considering disability, the NDIS assesses whether there's any reduction or loss in your ability to do things because of an 'impairment.'

An impairment is a loss of or damage to your body's functioning.

The NDIS will look at:

- Your body's function
- Your body structure
- How you think and learn.

To meet disability requirements, the NDIS must have evidence your disability is attributable to at least one of these impairment types:

- Intellectual – how you speak and listen, read and write, solve problems, and process and remember information
- Cognitive – how you think, learn new things, use judgment to make decisions, and pay attention
- Neurological – how your body's nervous system functions
- Sensory – how you see or hear
- Physical – the ability to move parts of your body.

You may also be eligible if you have a psychosocial disability ([see chapter 5](#)).

Even if your condition or diagnosis is permanent, the NDIS will check if your impairment is permanent too.



Early intervention requirements.

Early intervention typically refers to early access to support, which helps reduce the functional impacts of an impairment. Early intervention can be for both children and adults and may only be needed for a short time.

To meet the early intervention requirements, the NDIS must have evidence of all the following:

- You have an impairment that's likely to be permanent, or the applicant is a child younger than 6 with developmental delay
- Early intervention will benefit you by reducing your need for supports in the future
- Early intervention will benefit you by either reducing the impact your impairment has on your functional capacity, supporting your informal supports to build their skills to help you, or preventing the deterioration of your functional capacity or improving it
- The early intervention supports you need are NDIS supports.

There are different requirements for children younger than 6 with developmental delay to meet early intervention requirements.

For more details, check out the NDIS [operational guideline](#) on the NDIS website.

How does the NDIS assess whether a disability is permanent?

A permanent disability means a disability that's likely lifelong and has a substantial impact on your ability to complete everyday activities.

The NDIS may consider:

- Any reduction or loss in your ability to do things because of an impairment
- Whether the impairment is likely to be permanent after all available treatment options have been pursued
- If there are any medical, clinical, or other treatments likely to remedy the impairment.

If you meet the relevant eligibility requirements, the NDIS can fund supports that help reduce or overcome the impact your disability has on your daily life.



Top tip:

The NDIS doesn't fund diagnosis or medical treatment. If you're currently undergoing treatment related to your disability, discuss it with your doctor or medical professional before applying for the NDIS.

Substantially reduced functional capacity.

Communicating the functional impact(s) of a disability is an important part of the NDIS access process. It's essential to include information and evidence about how your disability impacts your life.

The NDIS considers six different life skill areas:

1. Communicating:

How you express wants and needs through speech, writing, or other non-verbal methods; how well you understand people and how well others understand you

2. Socialising:

Connecting with people, the ability to make friends and actively participate in society, and how you cope with feelings and emotions in social situations

3. Learning:

How you learn, understand new things and use new skills



4. Mobility:

How easily you get around at home and in the community and how you get in and out of bed or a chair

5. Self-care:

Taking care of basic daily needs, such as personal care, bathing, dressing and eating

6. Self-management (if older than 6):

Organising your day, managing your finances, making decisions for yourself and solving problems.

Your impairment substantially reduces your functional capacity if you usually need disability-specific supports to participate in or complete these tasks.

Taking longer to complete an activity, participating in a modified way or being unable to work solely due to a mental health condition typically does not meet the requirements of substantially reduced functional capacity.

Good to know:

- The NDIS is not means-tested and doesn't take into account your income or assets (such as a home) when determining eligibility
- The NDIS is not considered income, so it doesn't affect your Disability Support Pension (DSP) or reduce other support payments you may receive from Centrelink
- While the NDIS intends to provide lifetime support for people with permanent disability, your support needs may increase or decrease over time. If you no longer meet the disability requirements, your access may be revoked.



04

Support for young children: The Early Childhood Approach.

The Early Childhood Approach (ECA) helps children younger than 6 with developmental delay, or children younger than 9 with disability, and their families access the right supports.

You don't need to apply for the NDIS to access supports under the early childhood approach. Some children and their families can access early connections and supports outside of the NDIS. If your child gets early connections they might not need NDIS supports in the future. Others will be assisted to apply for the NDIS, depending on their individual needs.

Good to know:

Children do not need a diagnosis to get help.

An introduction to early connections.

Early connections are for children younger than 9 with delays in development or disability, and their families and carers.

Early connections are intended to link families with appropriate supports to help children develop skills for participating in everyday activities, building strong foundations for the future.

Supports available through early connections may include:

- Links to mainstream (government) and community services, such as early childhood services, health services, and family support services
- Practical information relevant to a child's development
- Connections with other families
- Early supports tailored to a child's needs.

**Top tip:**

Early connections are not the same as having an NDIS Plan.
Children don't have to be eligible for the NDIS to access early connections.
Early connections are also available more broadly within the community, regardless of citizenship or visa status.

What to do if you have concerns about your child's development.

If you have concerns about your child's development, speak first to a health or education professional, such as your GP, occupational therapist, child healthcare nurse or early childhood educator.

These professionals can connect you with an **Early Childhood Partner (ECP)**, an organisation with expertise working with young children experiencing developmental concerns or disability, and their families. You can also contact an ECP yourself – no referral or diagnosis is needed.

ECP teams typically include professionals like occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists and speech therapists.

How can an Early Childhood Partner help?

Your ECP can:

- Assess the potential effectiveness of early childhood supports
- Provide recommendations for early intervention
- Connect you with useful local services, such as community health centres, playgroups, peer support groups, or early childhood development programs
- Advise on financial supports, like Centrelink and Carer Allowance
- Find specialised early intervention support for your child – for example, speech pathology or occupational therapy
- Help you apply for the NDIS (if appropriate) and assist in developing your child's NDIS Plan, if their application is successful.

To find an early childhood partner, visit the NDIS website or call the NDIS on **1800 800 110** if no ECP is available locally.



Getting the right support for your child.

The types of support available depend on the child's age and developmental concerns.

Age and developmental concerns	Supports
If your child is younger than 9 with developmental concerns (delays not fully meeting NDIS criteria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECP may offer early supports and connections to mainstream and community services (not the NDIS) • May include parent workshops, strategies for skill-building, parental/carer support for transitions, connecting families or services • Usually lasts 3-6 months (maximum of 12 months).
If your child is younger than 6 with developmental delay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child may meet NDIS developmental delay criteria, the ECP may recommend and assist in applying for the NDIS • If they don't meet NDIS criteria, early supports and connections (as above) may still be offered.
If your child is under 9 with global developmental delay or a known disability diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They receive early supports until age 9 • ECP may recommend applying for NDIS access and help with this process. Your child may receive both mainstream and NDIS supports.



Definitions:

- *Developmental concerns:* Delays in a child's development that don't fully meet the NDIS definition of developmental delay but still affect everyday activities compared to other children their age.
- *Developmental delay:* The NDIS considers a developmental delay present when a child younger than 6 finds everyday tasks significantly more challenging than other children their age, requiring extra support.

What happens when a child turns 9?

The Early Childhood Approach is available only until a child turns 9. Eligible children aged 9 and over who receive early supports must transition to the NDIS. This transition isn't automatic and varies according to circumstances.

Your ECP can help you apply for the NDIS if your child has received a diagnosis and is likely eligible. Keep in mind potential delays in the public system between diagnosis and receiving confirmation – allow extra time.

For children over 9 who haven't previously received early supports, contact a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), who can help connect you to supports and determine if the NDIS is suitable.



Eligibility for the NDIS requires a diagnosis and evidence of significant, permanent disability, usually provided by a paediatrician or specialist.

If your child has autism alongside conditions like ADHD, clearly document how autism specifically impacts daily life and functional challenges. ADHD alone usually doesn't qualify for NDIS due to difficulty meeting permanent disability criteria.

A child's first NDIS Plan is generally basic, lasting around 6-12 months. Effective budget management is important to ensure funds last the plan's duration.

Good to know:

- Early childhood supports don't replace parental responsibility. Typically, parents transport children to appointments/activities and support them there
- The NDIS doesn't fund everyday items (like nappies) unless the child's disability requires additional supports compared to other children their age.



Top tip:

Many parents opt to initiate private assessments, diagnoses, or therapy while receiving early childhood connections. Medicare may provide rebates for certain services. If you have private health insurance, check your coverage.



05

Accessing the NDIS if you have a mental health condition.

'Mental health condition' is a broad term referring to symptoms caused by various factors, including life events and genetics.

Having a mental health condition doesn't automatically mean you're eligible for the NDIS. Eligibility is based on the impairment or impact your mental health condition has – not simply the diagnosis itself.

To access the NDIS with a mental health condition, you must provide evidence of the following:

1. You have a mental health condition
2. The mental health condition causes an impairment
3. The impairment is permanent
4. The impairment causes a disability substantially reducing your ability to perform everyday activities.

What is psychosocial disability?

A mental health condition can result in the loss or damage to mental functions, such as perception, memory, thinking and emotions. This type of impairment is referred to as a **psychosocial disability** – one arising from a mental health condition.

The NDIS provides support for mental health conditions only if they meet the definition of psychosocial disability.



Examples of when someone might be eligible for the NDIS due to psychosocial disability include:

- You've participated in treatment and received support from mental health clinicians and clinical teams
- Treatments intended to reduce the impacts of your mental health condition have not fully remedied your impairment
- You've tried other treatments recommended by your treating professional without full improvement
- Despite ongoing treatment, your mental health condition continues to significantly impact your ability to function and is likely to be permanent
- You likely need ongoing support to increase your social and economic participation
- You require lifelong support.

Evidence of psychosocial disability.

A psychologist, doctor, mental health nurse, or support worker needs to complete an [Evidence of Psychosocial Disability Form](#) which can be found on the NDIS website.



This should include:

- How long they have treated you
- Confirmation you have a mental health condition
- Information about any hospital admissions
- A description of impairments against the six functional capacity areas: communication, social interaction, learning, mobility, self-care and self-management
- Confirmation of impairments likely to be permanent
- Medication, treatments, and interventions trialed or currently underway
- An assessment of your life skills.

Good to know:

Some mental health supports are provided through the mainstream health system rather than the NDIS, such as state mental health services.



Top tip:

The NDIS does not fund clinical treatments for mental health conditions. When completing your application, focus clearly on how the condition impacts your daily life and highlight how the NDIS can support you to build capacity or develop skills to achieve your goals.



Summary: Accessing the NDIS with a mental health condition.

1. You have a mental health condition:

A lifelong condition caused by factors like life events or genetics. This includes mood, anxiety, personality, psychotic or compulsive disorders.

2. You meet the general NDIS eligibility criteria:

- Under 65 years old
- Australian citizen, permanent resident or special category visa holder residing in Australia
- Have a disability that is permanent or likely to be permanent, resulting in impairment.

3. Your mental health condition causes an impairment ('psychosocial disability'):

You experience disability because of your mental health condition. The condition results in an impairment causing loss or damage to mental functioning, likely to be permanent.

4. The impairment substantially reduces your functional capacity:

You must demonstrate substantially reduced capacity in one or more of these areas:

- Communication
- Social interaction
- Learning
- Mobility
- Self-care
- Self-management.

5. You have evidence and assessments to support your access request:

You must provide clear evidence of your impairment's impacts. A mental health nurse, psychiatrist or psychologist usually completes a functional assessment.



06

How to apply for the NDIS.

Applying for the NDIS involves providing confirmation and evidence that you, or someone you care for, meets the eligibility criteria to receive NDIS supports.

Starting the process.

To start the application process, contact the NDIS call centre on **1800 800 110**. They will refer you to an NDIS partner who can assist you. The NDIS partner will be a Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or an Early Childhood Partner, depending on the age of the person applying for the NDIS.

The NDIS partner will help you collect the information and evidence needed to apply. This includes verifying your identity, residency status and disability. You'll also need to provide information about your functional capacity.

To help prepare for this process, it's helpful to gather some relevant information beforehand:

- Reports and assessments
- Evidence of diagnosis
- Proof of identity and other relevant documents.

If you're likely eligible for the NDIS, the NDIS partner will work with you to gather and enter the required information into the NDIS system. If you're not eligible, they can help connect you with other community and mainstream supports.

Your NDIS partner will also advise if there are additional forms to complete and who should complete them. For example, you might need information from your doctor or allied health professional.

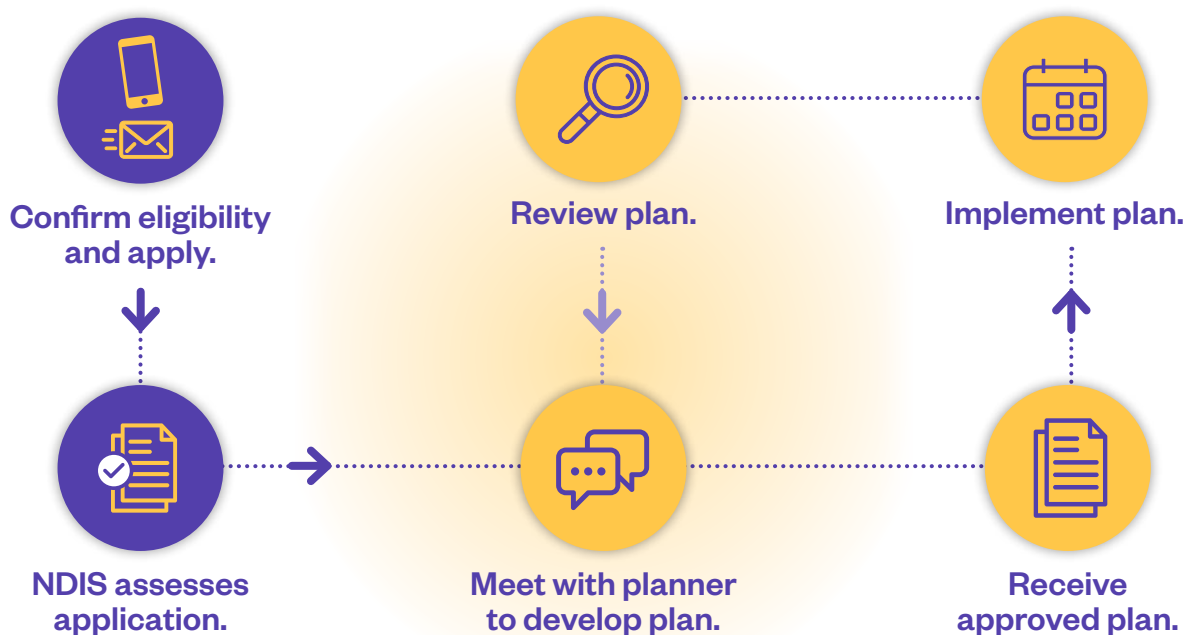
**Top tip:**

The NDIS uses the information you provide to create your first plan, so it's important to provide detailed information about your disability, functional capacity, and support needs to get a plan that suits your needs.

For people in areas without NDIS partners.

If there is no NDIS partner in your area, you can still get help by calling **1800 800 110**. Someone may be able to help you apply over the phone.

While the NDIS previously encouraged people to complete an Access Request Form, people are now encouraged to call the NDIS first, so someone can assist you directly with the application.

The NDIS participant journey.

Steps in the NDIS application process:

1. Call the NDIS on 1800 800 110:

They'll connect you with an NDIS partner who can help with your application

2. The NDIS assesses your request:

The NDIS evaluates your application and supporting evidence to determine if you meet the access criteria. You'll receive a letter informing you whether your application is successful or if more information is required

3. Meet with an NDIS planner to develop your NDIS Plan:

If your application is approved, an NDIS planner or Local Area Coordinator (LAC) will contact you to arrange a meeting. During this meeting, you'll talk about your current supports, daily activities, goals and the support you need to achieve them. Together, you'll create a personalised NDIS Plan outlining the supports and services required. This is also where you choose how to manage your plan – self-managed, plan-managed via a plan manager like [Leap in!](#) or NDIA-managed

4. Receive your approved plan:

You'll get a copy of your approved NDIS Plan, either in person, by mail or through the NDIS myplace portal. Read your plan carefully and note the funded supports and components

5. Implement your plan:

Find and engage providers who can deliver the support outlined in your plan, such as support coordinators, therapists, support workers, or equipment suppliers

6. Review your plan:

Keep track of how your supports help achieve your goals, noting any changes in your needs. Before your plan ends (usually after 12 months), you'll have a review meeting to discuss what's working and what might need adjusting.



Top tip: NDIS Plan rollovers.

Sometimes, your new NDIS Plan isn't ready before your current one ends. When this happens, your plan automatically rolls over – meaning it's extended for up to 12 months so your supports can continue without interruption.



Information needed to apply for the NDIS:

The NDIS will require supporting documents to confirm age, residency and disability or need for early intervention. Everyone must supply this information for their application.

Leap in! has gathered some valuable tips from the community. Keep this information handy while working with your NDIS partner.

Information about you:

You must supply evidence of your age, residency and where you live.

- **Age:** Automatically verified through Centrelink or provide a copy of your birth certificate, passport page containing your photo, proof of age card, or driver's licence
- **Residency:** Automatically verified through Centrelink, or provide a birth certificate, Australian citizenship/naturalisation certificate, or foreign passport with a valid Australian permanent residency visa or protected special category visa
- **Address:** Automatically verified through Centrelink, or provide proof of age card or driver's licence.

Privacy and consent:

If registered with Centrelink, consent to NDIS verifying your age and residency through Centrelink – this makes the process easier. Ensure your name matches your Centrelink record.

Information about your disability:

This is crucial. Include detailed information about your main disability and any others significantly impacting your life.

- Clearly describe your primary disability and others affecting you
- If you have a mental health condition in addition to another disability, obtain a diagnosis before contacting the NDIS
- If your disability is due to an accident, provide details about any compensation received or pending.

Providing evidence of disability and functional capacity:

Your NDIS partner will explain what's needed. You'll likely need reports, assessments, or evidence from a treating professional. Provide detailed information about how your disability impacts daily life in areas such as communication, socialising, learning, mobility, self-care and self-management.

Getting evidence from a treating professional.

The NDIS requires evidence from a treating health professional to support your application. This professional should be relevant to your disability and currently treating you or have recently treated or assessed you.

Who is a suitable health professional?

Your evidence should come from a professional who:

- Is currently working with you, or has recently worked with you over a significant period (at least six months)
- Has expertise and understanding of your primary disability (such as a paediatrician, psychologist, or occupational therapist)
- Understands your diagnosis and the functional impact you experience daily.

Specialists and allied health professionals often have experience completing this process, making it easier for you.

Evidence of disability.

According to the NDIS, good evidence of disability:

- Is recent (within the past 12 months)
- Is completed by a treating health professional relevant to your primary disability
- Confirms your disability
- Confirms the impact of your disability on different areas of your life
- Describes previous treatments and their outcomes
- Outlines future treatment options and expected outcomes.



Top tip:

Leap in! Members reported better success with access requests when evidence was provided by a specialist or allied health professional familiar with their circumstances, rather than a general practitioner or doctor. If working with an LAC or EOP, they can guide you on the best approach.



Current or previous treatments.

The NDIS wants assurance that relevant treatments or interventions have already been explored. Include details of surgery, therapy, treatment, medication or other interventions you've tried.

Available evidence-based treatments:

If your condition might be effectively treated with certain evidence-based treatments you haven't tried, your medical professional must explain why.

Existing assessments.

You'll also need to provide information about any assessments completed with or for you.

When asking your treating professional to complete NDIS application documentation:

- Discuss the impacts of your disability thoroughly
- Clearly describe what type of assistance you require to complete activities and why
- Clarify if you cannot perform an activity even with assistance from another person or assistive technology
- Use real-life examples and provide as much information as possible
- Include details about any assistive technology currently used, such as walking aids, vision or hearing aids or adaptive equipment (although this alone doesn't necessarily demonstrate substantially reduced functional capacity).

Assessments for certain types of disability.

For many disabilities, the NDIA requires treating health professionals to use standard assessment processes considered 'best practice'.

Below is a clear breakdown of primary disabilities, the relevant treating health professionals, and the types of evidence required (listed in order of preference):

Primary disability	Treating health professional	Disability evidence (in preference order)
Acquired brain injury	An ABI health professional	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Age over 17: Care and Need Scan (CANS) 2. WHODAS 2.0 (17+), PEDI-CAT (16 and under).
Autism	Paediatrician, psychologist, psychiatrist, occupational therapist, or speech therapist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed (DSM-V) 2. Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale (Vineland II) 3. WHODAS 2.0 or PEDI-CAT.
Cerebral palsy	Occupational therapist, physiotherapist, paediatrician	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gross Motor Functional Classification Scale (GMFCS) 2. Manual Ability Classification Scale (MACS) 3. Communication Function Classification System (CFCOS).
Deaf or hard of hearing	Audiologist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hearing impairment responses and groupings guide (17+) 2. PEDI-CAT (under 16) 3. Hearing Acuity Score.



Primary disability	Treating health professional	Disability evidence (in preference order)
Intellectual disability, developmental delay, global developmental delay, Down syndrome	Paediatrician, psychologist, occupational therapist, or speech therapist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DSM-V 2. Vineland II 3. WHODAS or PEDI-CAT.
Multiple sclerosis	Neurologist or Disease Steps trained nurse examiner	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disease Steps 2. Patient Determined Disease Steps (PDDS) 3. Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS).
Psychosocial disability	Paediatrician, psychiatrist, GP, psychologist (in limited circumstances), other supporting professionals	<p>Statement from treating health professional about duration treated, evidence of mental health condition, treatments explored, and daily impacts.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Life Skills Profile (LSP-16) 2. Health of the Nation Outcomes Scale (HoNOS) 3. WHODAS.
Spinal cord injury	Neurologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, recreational therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level of lesion OR American Spinal Injury Association Impairment Scale (ASIA/AS) 2. WHODAS or PEDI-CAT.

Primary disability	Treating health professional	Disability evidence (in preference order)
Stroke	Neurologist	1. Modified Rankin Scale (mRS).
Blindness or low vision	Ophthalmologist	1. Vision Impairment Questionnaire (17+) 2. PEDI-CAT (under 16) 3. Visual Acuity Rating.
Other	Paediatrician, occupational therapist, speech therapist, physiotherapist, social worker	1. WHODAS 2. WHODAS 2.0 3. PEDI-CAT.

(Source: NDIS types of disability evidence.)

Application and NDIS Plan timelines.

- Once the NDIS receives all required information, they must decide on your eligibility within **21 days**
- When the NDIS requests further information or assessments relevant to your application, these must be provided within **90 days** or your application will be considered withdrawn
- The NDIS must start preparing your NDIS Plan within **21 days** after your access request application is accepted
- The NDIS must approve a plan within **56 days** for participants aged 9 and over, or **90 days** for those under 9.



07

Getting help to apply for the NDIS.

As you can see, there's quite a lot involved in applying for the NDIS but the answers to your questions are always available, you just need to know where to look.

Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or Early Childhood Partner (ECP).

Your local NDIS office can put you in touch with a Local Area Coordinator or Early Childhood Partner to help with the application process. Or use the NDIS online search function to find one in your area. This is a free service.

Advocacy services.

An advocate is an independent person who can assist a person with disability to have choice and control and have their voice heard in matters relevant to them. Advocates can help you to understand your rights, address gaps in support and navigate the NDIS as well as other services, among other things!

Search for an advocate on the Disability Advocacy finder at: askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder.

Not all disability advocacy organisations can assist with NDIS access. Some advocacy services only offer assistance with the NDIS appeals process or issues once you have an NDIS Plan. Be sure to check if there is a fee.



Top tip:

If the NDIA does not receive required information within specified timelines, your application will automatically be considered withdrawn, and you'll have to restart the process.



08

You're in! What happens next?

Once you are accepted into the NDIS, the next step is your first planning conversation. This takes place with your LAC or ECP, usually within 21 days.

You will need to take your original identity documents to your first planning meeting so the NDIS can confirm them before getting started on your first NDIS Plan.

Your LAC or ECP will then work together to create a plan for your disability support needs, building on the information you have already provided.

If you're eligible:

- The NDIS uses the information provided to create your NDIS Plan
- The next step is a planning conversation with your NDIS partner
- You can use the [Plan Ready section](#) of the Leap in! app to help prepare for this meeting.
- You can book a [free pre-planning session](#) with Leap in! Crew for additional help.

Preparing for your first NDIS Plan meeting.

Being prepared is the best way to achieve a successful outcome from your planning meeting and get the supports you need.

One of the most important parts of your NDIS Plan meeting will be discussing how your disability impacts different areas of your life. The clearer you are about your needs, the more likely you are to get an NDIS Plan that will help you achieve your goals.



The Leap in! Crew is here to help you get ready for your first meeting. We can assist in the following ways:

- Download the free Leap in! [NDIS Plan Meeting](#) checklist on the Leap in! website.
- Call us on 1300 05 78 78 to book your pre-plan meeting with one of our experienced plan managers
- Get the Leap in! app, available for desktop, Apple and Android. It has a section to help you pull together all of your thoughts and information around the way disability impacts your life. And it's free: app.leapin.com.au/Welcome
- Check out the second ebook in our series, [The Essential NDIS Guide: An introduction to NDIS basics](#) for more detail about preparing for your plan meeting and using your NDIS Plan on the Leap in! website.

NDIS update: Impairment notices.

All new NDIS participants will receive an 'impairment notice'.

An 'impairment notice' is a document issued by the NDIA stating you have a permanent disability or significant impairment. It lists the impairment(s) that meet disability and/or early intervention requirements.

The NDIS will now only fund supports related to the impairments that led to your acceptance onto the scheme. This means you can only spend money in your NDIS Plan on supports that relate to the impairment identified during your initial access request.



09

If you're not eligible. Supports outside the NDIS.

Not everyone who applies for the NDIS will meet the eligibility criteria. If your application is declined, the NDIS will explain the decision and let you know which criteria weren't met. You may be asked to provide additional reports or evidence.

If you disagree with the outcome, you can request an internal review. This means a different team at the NDIA will look at your application. Internal reviews are usually completed within 90 days. If you're still unhappy with the result, you can apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) for an external review.

Even if you're not eligible for the NDIS, you may still be able to access other supports. A Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or Early Childhood Partner can help connect you with community or mainstream services.

Foundational supports.

Foundational supports are new, non-NDIS services designed to help people with disability, including those who aren't eligible for the NDIS. They act as an additional safety net, working alongside:

- The NDIS (for those who do qualify)
- Mainstream services (such as healthcare or education)
- Community supports (like local clubs or groups).



What are they?

Foundational supports focus on community-level assistance and resources, filling gaps that may exist outside the NDIS.

They may include:

- **Information and advice** about disability-related issues, including self-advocacy or peer support
- **Practical help** like in-home assistance or community-based activities for those not on the NDIS
- **Capacity building** for families, carers, or individuals who need extra guidance with day-to-day tasks or longer-term planning.

Are they available now?

Some foundational supports are still in development, so they might not be accessible immediately. Keep an eye out for official announcements – if you're unsure, ask your Local Area Coordinator or planner about any new programs in your area.

Mainstream and community supports.

Most people, with or without disability, rely on mainstream and community services at different points in their lives. These services remain essential for people not eligible for the NDIS – and they're also available to NDIS participants.

The NDIS was created to work alongside government and community services, not replace them. If a support is available through mainstream or community channels, the NDIS generally won't fund it. However, the NDIS may complement these supports where needed.

Mainstream supports.

Mainstream supports are other government-funded services – like healthcare, education, mental health, or employment – that everyone in the community can access. These supports are often responsible for services not directly funded by the NDIS. Examples include:

- **Healthcare:** GPs, hospitals, and Medicare-funded services responsible for diagnosing and treating illnesses or injuries
- **Education:** Schools, TAFEs, and universities must provide reasonable adjustments (like accessible classrooms or adapted materials) so students with disability can learn on the same basis as everyone else



- **Employment services:** Jobactive or Disability Employment Services helping you find and keep work
- **Housing:** Social or public housing programs run by state and territory governments.

Mainstream services are legally required to make reasonable adjustments so people with disability can participate in the same way as others. Keep in mind that guidelines are continually refined, so check for the latest information on mainstream and community supports.

Community supports.

Community supports come from non-government or local organisations – such as sporting clubs, religious groups, charities or local councils. They may provide:

- Local events, social groups, or practical assistance (like food banks or home-help programs)
- Recreational opportunities or peer-support networks
- Advice or help with everyday tasks and social connections.

Just like mainstream services, community supports should provide reasonable adjustments to ensure you can access their activities or services, even if you don't receive NDIS funding.

Where to get help.

Ask your planner or Local Area Coordinator.

If you're found ineligible for the NDIS or are waiting to find out, you can still talk to an NDIS planner or LAC. They might:

- Recommend mainstream or community programs suited to your needs
- Refer you to newly introduced foundational supports in your area, if available
- Suggest other government services (health, education or employment) to cover specific needs unrelated to disability supports.

Research local services.

Use online directories, ask community groups or contact your local council to learn about mainstream and community supports. State or territory government websites also list disability-related services that might help if you're not on the NDIS.

Because new guidelines are evolving, keep an eye on updates or subscribe to the [Leap in! eNews](#) for the latest information.

Keep an eye on updates.

As governments refine who is responsible for different supports, guidelines may change. If you're unsure whether a particular service belongs to mainstream, community, or NDIS funding, check the NDIS guidelines or contact your planner or LAC for clarification.

Not being eligible for the NDIS doesn't mean you're on your own. Between foundational supports, mainstream services and community organisations, there are many supports to help you live the life you want.

If you ever need guidance connecting with supports outside the NDIS or have questions about your eligibility, reach out to your planner or Local Area Coordinator.



Top tip:

Even if you receive NDIS funding, you're still encouraged to use mainstream and community supports. They can offer a broader, more inclusive experience and connect you with local networks.



How can Leap in! help?

Helping Members navigate the NDIS is at the heart of what we do, and we take this role seriously. We're here to support you every step of the way. We're more than plan managers. We're part of your support crew.

Get ready with confidence.

Along with the information provided in this ebook, you're welcome to call and speak with a member of the Leap in! crew. Our experienced plan managers (many of whom have lived experience with disability) are available to assist you. We can help you set up our free Leap in! planning app or guide you through a pre-planning session to ensure you're ready for your first NDIS Plan meeting. Our team listens carefully and offers personalised advice tailored to your situation.

What to expect in your first NDIS plan meeting.

In your first NDIS Plan meeting, you'll be asked how you'd like to manage your NDIS Plan budgets. Plan management is one of several available options, alongside self-management, NDIA-managed, or a combination of these approaches. Each option has its own benefits, but it's important to know that over half of NDIS participants choose plan management and it's popular for good reason!



When you choose plan management, you'll have someone responsible for claiming and paying your service providers' invoices on your behalf, similar to a bookkeeper. This service significantly reduces your administrative workload, freeing up your time to focus on what really matters.

If you decide you'd like Leap in! to manage your plan, simply request "plan management" during your NDIS Plan meeting. Once you receive your plan, you will need to call the NDIS to 'endorse' us as your plan manager.

Benefits of choosing Leap in! Plan Management.

- You are always in control of how you use your NDIS funds
- You can choose any providers, whether they are NDIS registered or unregistered
- You'll receive assistance to track and manage your NDIS budgets and funding
- Our team takes care of managing and paying your invoices, reducing your paperwork
- You won't have any out-of-pocket expenses, as the NDIS provides additional funds specifically for plan management
- You'll have access to potentially lower rates for some supports, as plan managers are registered NDIS providers.

Leap in! Presents webinars.

Leap in! Presents is a series of free webinars that explore and unpack various aspects of the NDIS.

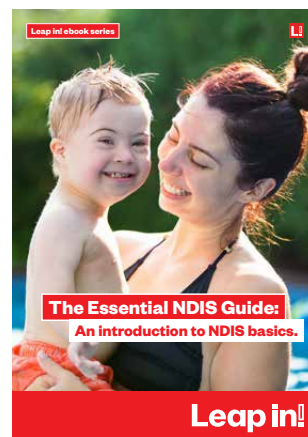
They're designed to provide helpful information and insights to support people navigating the NDIS, and to help participants get the most from their budgets and NDIS Plans.

The webinars are presented by Leap in! Learning and Development Specialist, Dee Thomson. Dee has over 14 years' experience in learning and development and specialises in breaking down complex concepts into engaging, accessible learning. Dee also has a particular interest in disability and autism.

View all upcoming events on the [Leap in! Presents page](#) of the Leap in! website.

Leap in! Ebook series.

Explore our [range of guides](#) on various NDIS topics.





Connect with us.

We understand that there are different ways that you might want to talk to us or find out more information, so we have a range of options to suit your needs:

- **Call us:** 1300 05 78 78
- **Visit our website:** leapin.com.au
- **Chat with us online:** Available on our website, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm AEST
- **TY voice call:** 133 677
- **Speak & listen:** 1300 555 727
- **SMS Relay:** 0423 677 767
- **If you need an interpreter:** call 131 450 and ask them to call Leap in! on 07 3724 0368
- **Email us:** crew@leapin.com.au
- **Contact us via post:** GPO Box 1744, Brisbane QLD 4001

Our office hours are 9am to 5pm AEST, Monday to Friday.

Glossary of NDIS terms.

Access request

A request to join the NDIS by providing details about a disability and its impact.

Ages and stages questionnaire

A tool to check the development of children under 5.5 years and find any delays.

Applicant

Someone who has applied for the NDIS but hasn't been approved yet.

Assistive technology (AT)

Equipment or devices that help people with disability do tasks more easily or safely.

Carer

Someone who provides unpaid care and support to a person with disability.

Check-in

A meeting with an NDIS planner to see if a participant's plan is working for them.

Child representative

An adult who can make decisions for a child under 18, like a parent or guardian.

Choice and control

The right for participants to choose and manage their NDIS supports.

Community and mainstream supports/ services

Supports and services available to everyone, like education, health, or social groups.

Community connections

Local Area Coordinators or Early Childhood Partners who help connect people to local services and supports, even if they're not in the NDIS.

Correspondence nominee

A person who can receive mail or make enquiries for a participant.

Developmental concerns

Delays in a child's development that don't meet NDIS criteria for extra support.

Developmental delay

Delays that make it much harder for children to do everyday tasks without extra help.

Early childhood approach

Support for children under 6 with delays or under 9 with disability and their families.

Early childhood partner(s) (ECP)

Local organisations funded by the NDIA to support young children and families.

Early connections

Support for children and families, including practical advice and linking to services.

Early intervention

Providing support early to reduce the impact of disability or delays and build skills.

Early supports

Programs to help families and children with developmental concerns build skills.

Early supports plan

A short-term plan for children under 6 to set goals and track progress (not funded by NDIS).

Eligibility criteria

Rules for joining the NDIS, including age, residency, and disability requirements.

Funding component amount

Money in an NDIS Plan for specific supports or services.

**Funding period**

The time frame for using a set amount of funding in an NDIS Plan.

Global developmental delay (GDD)

Significant delays in two or more areas of development in children under 5.

Goals

Things participants want to achieve with NDIS and other supports, like learning new skills.

Health liaison officer (HLO)

A worker who helps hospital staff and NDIS participants prepare for discharge.

Informal support

Help from family, friends, and neighbours that is unpaid.

Internal review of decision

A review by the NDIA if someone disagrees with an NDIS decision.

Justice liaison officer (JLO)

A worker who helps people leaving custody get the right NDIS supports.

Key worker

An early childhood professional who helps families coordinate services for children.

Lived experience of disability

A person's personal experience of living with disability.

Local area coordination

Help for people with disability to access services and build skills to achieve their goals.

Local area coordination partners

Organisations funded to provide local area coordination services.

Local area coordinators (LAC)

Staff who deliver local area coordination services.

my NDIS app

A mobile app for participants to manage their NDIS Plans.

my NDIS participant portal

An online portal to manage NDIS Plans, supports, and funding.

my NDIS provider portal

An online portal for providers to manage services and claims.

myplace participant portal

A secure website for managing NDIS Plans for older systems.

myplace provider portal

A website for providers to make payment claims for services.

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

The government agency that runs the NDIS.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

A national program providing funding to Australians with disability for supports and services.

NDIS Plan

A document outlining a participant's goals and funded supports.

NDIS planner

An NDIA employee who helps create, update and approve NDIS Plans. Can make funding decisions, unlike an LAC.

**NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission)**

An agency ensuring quality and safety in NDIS supports and services.

NDIS supports

Funded services or equipment to help participants with their disability.

Nominee

Someone appointed to make decisions or act for a participant.

Operational Guidelines/Our Guidelines

Documents explaining how NDIA decisions are made.

PACE

PACE is the new computer system used by the NDIS to manage plans and services.

Participants

People approved to receive NDIS supports.

Partners

Organisations funded by NDIA to help connect people with support and services.

Permanent and significant disability

A lifelong disability that significantly affects daily activities.

Person with disability

Someone with long-term impairments affecting daily life and participation.

Plan-managed funding

A funding option where a plan manager handles payments for supports.

Plan nominee

Someone who helps create or review an NDIS Plan.

Plan reassessment

A process to update a participant's NDIS Plan when changes are needed.

Plan variation

A small change to an NDIS Plan, like updating goals or contact details.

Price limits

The maximum price providers can charge for NDIS supports.

Pricing arrangements

Rules about how and when providers can claim for NDIS services.

Provider

A person or organisation delivering NDIS supports and services.

Provider finder

An online tool to find NDIS-registered providers.

Reasonable and necessary NDIS supports

Supports funded by the NDIS that are related to a participant's disability.

Registered provider

A provider approved by the NDIS Commission to deliver NDIS supports and services.

Remote community connectors

NDIA staff who support culturally appropriate NDIS delivery in remote areas.

Self-management funding

Participants manage their funding and pay providers directly.

Service agreement

A contract between a participant and provider outlining services and expectations.

Support coordinator

A provider who helps participants use their NDIS funding and connect with services.

Total funding amount

The total budget for supports in an NDIS Plan.

Leap in!

Call 1300 05 78 78

Email crew@leapin.com.au

Visit leapin.com.au



Download the award-winning Leap in! app.



The Leap in! Crew acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we work and live. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.



At Leap in! we commit to being a safe and welcoming place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+) people to work and to live as their authentic selves, without judgement, without discrimination and free from harassment.



Leap in! is part of Attain Healthtech, dedicated to helping people attain better outcomes.

Leap in! Australia | ABN 92 622 499 898 | NDIS Provider #4050030846