

# SOURCE

Magazine

FOR KIDS, TEENS + YOUNG ADULTS

ISSUE 05

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

**Leap in!**

## AUTISM & THE NDIS

A GUIDE TO FUNDING  
AND SUPPORT OPTIONS



**INSIDE GUIDE 5**

How to apply

Everything you need to  
know about funding

Support at school  
and work





# Welcome

## SOURCE Magazine

Navigating the NDIS can be a challenging journey for many families of autistic children, teens, and young adults. From understanding eligibility to determining what supports are available, and how to make the most of your child's plan, there's so much to consider. Parents, carers, and autistic individuals often find it difficult to know where to begin, what to ask for, and how to ensure their child's needs are met effectively. That's why we've partnered with Leap in! to bring you this easy-to-follow guide, designed specifically to help families navigate the NDIS with their autistic child or young person in mind.

This issue covers everything you need to know about autism and the NDIS, from funding options and therapy supports to assistive technology and the transition from school to work.

With real-life stories and expert insights, this guide is here to support you in creating a future filled with opportunities for your child, no matter where they are on their journey. We hope it brings clarity, confidence, and practical strategies for making the most of the NDIS and ensuring your child gets the support they deserve.

**5**  
NDIS  
eligibility  
& access

**6**  
How to apply  
for the NDIS

**7**  
NDIS  
supports  
explained

**8**  
What the  
NDIS may  
fund

**12**  
How the  
NDIS funds  
assistive  
technology

**14**  
What doesn't  
the NDIS  
cover?

**16**  
Therapy  
supports  
explained

**19**  
Sheldon's  
story

**20**  
The support  
coordinator  
advantage

**22**  
Supports  
for autistic  
children at  
school

**24**  
Supports  
for autistic  
people at  
work

**28**  
The early  
childhood  
approach



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At Leap in!, we use identity-first language when referring to autism and autistic people. We've made this decision based on feedback from our community. We understand different people have different preferences, and we recognise and respect every individual's right to choose how their identity is described.



## A message from Leap in!

At Leap in!, we speak with many families who are navigating the NDIS for their autistic child or young person. One thing we hear regularly is how helpful it can be to have clear, practical information to help them feel supported and informed every step of the way.

That's exactly why we've teamed up once again with Emma and the amazing team at Source Kids to bring you this special Autism e-magazine. It's filled with insights, guidance and stories designed specifically to help parents and carers navigate the NDIS for their autistic child or young person.

Whether you're exploring NDIS eligibility, figuring out which supports are funded or learning how to make the most of your child's plan, navigating important life transitions like starting school, preparing for work or living independently, this e-mag offers practical tips alongside real-life wisdom from families just like yours.

Autism and autism parenting doesn't come with an instruction manual. But there is an amazing community of families and resources available who are ready with information and heartfelt advice to help you along the way. And remember, if you ever have questions about the NDIS or need guidance, our Leap in! plan managers are always ready to help – just reach out.

**Andrew Kiel**

**CO-FOUNDER & CEO  
LEAP IN!**

# Need help to make sense of your child's NDIS Plan?

## Book your free Unpack Your Plan Session!

In your **one-on-one** session we'll:

- help you understand the funding in your NDIS Plan
- explain all the budget categories
- discuss the kinds of supports you can use
- share tips and tricks about how the NDIS works.

**With us, it's all about you.**

We support you to navigate the NDIS with confidence, armed with the knowledge you need to get the most from your child's plan.

And, we take care of NDIS admin and paying invoices to give you more time to focus on the things that matter to you and your family.

Call today to make your booking or scan the QR code to register your interest and we'll call you!



**We're proud to partner with  
Source Kids.**

# Leap in!

Call us on **1300 05 78 78**  
Visit **leapin.com.au**





# NDIS ELIGIBILITY AND ACCESS



**To access the NDIS, your child or young person will need to meet two types of requirements: eligibility and disability. Recent updates to NDIS rules in October 2024 have slightly changed how these work, so it's good to understand what they mean for your child.**

## MEETING THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

**Your child may be eligible for the NDIS if they meet these requirements:**

- 1** | They're aged between 9 and 65. Children aged younger than 9 and their families can be supported through the Early Childhood Approach.
- 2** | Live in Australia and are an Australian citizen, permanent resident, or hold a Special Category Visa (SCV)
- 3** | Meet the NDIS disability or early intervention requirements.

The NDIS looks at how your child's disability affects their daily life. This includes how easily they can join in with everyday activities, learn new things or take part in social and community activities.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DISABILITY REQUIREMENTS

To decide if your child meets the NDIS disability requirements, the NDIS looks at how their disability affects daily life, rather than just their diagnosis. They will ask for evidence to show that:

- Your child has a permanent disability that significantly affects daily activities
- Your child's condition impacts their ability to take part in everyday tasks, social activities or schooling
- Your child will likely need ongoing support throughout their life.

## WHAT DOES THE NDIS MEAN BY 'IMPAIRMENTS'?

When the NDIS looks at your child's disability, they're considering if it's caused by an 'impairment'. This means something that reduces or changes the way your child's body or mind works, making it harder for them to do everyday things.

The NDIS uses the term to understand clearly how your child's disability affects their daily life. This helps the NDIS provide the right support and funding your child needs.

**Impairments usually fit into one or more of these categories:**

**Intellectual:** affects learning, problem-solving and reasoning


**Cognitive:** affects memory, decision-making or thinking clearly

**Neurological:** involves conditions of the brain, spinal cord or nervous system

**Sensory:** affects senses such as vision or hearing

**Physical:** affects movement or physical functioning

**Psychosocial disability:** related to mental health, affecting everyday life and interactions.

For the most up-to-date information on autism and the disability requirements, we recommend visiting the [NDIS website](#). 



## AUTISM AND THE NDIS

An autism diagnosis does not guarantee your child's access to the scheme, as the NDIS will also assess their support needs as they relate to any impairments.



# How to apply for the NDIS

## STARTING THE PROCESS

1. Call the NDIS on 1800 800 110. They will connect you with an NDIS partner who can help you apply on your child's behalf. This partner will either be a Local Area Coordinator or an Early Childhood Partner, depending on your child's age.
2. The NDIS partner will help you gather the information and evidence you need. This includes verifying your child's identity, residency and disability, as well as showing how your child's disability affects their daily life.
3. To prepare for this process, it's helpful to collect some relevant information:
  - Reports and assessments
  - Evidence of diagnosis
  - Proof of identity and other relevant documents

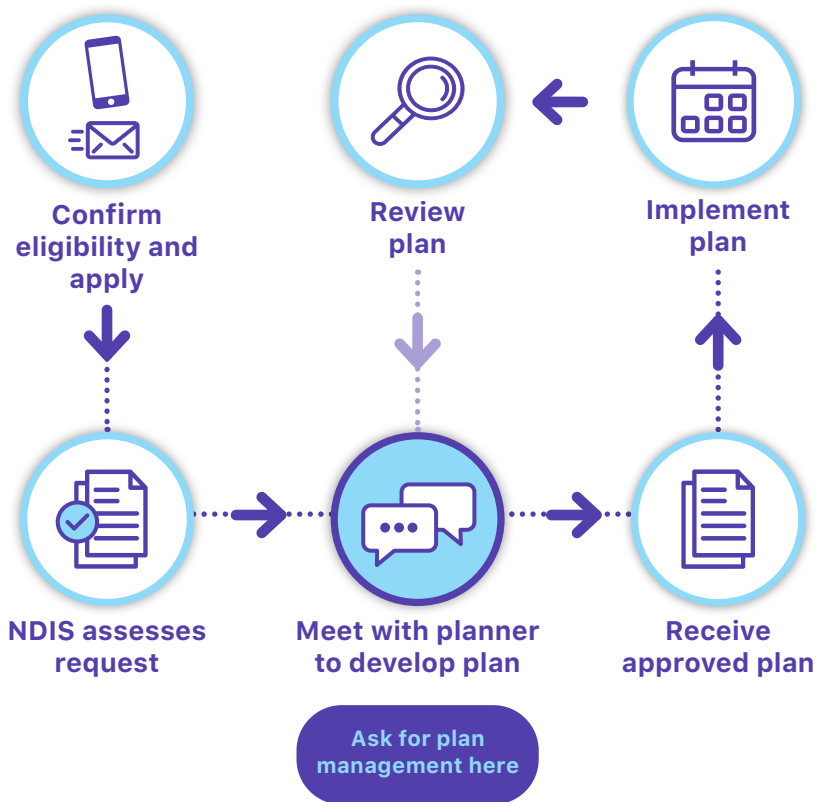
If your child is likely to be eligible for the NDIS, the NDIS partner will help you enter the necessary details into the NDIS system. If your child is not eligible, they can connect you with other local and mainstream supports.

## FOR PEOPLE IN AREAS WITHOUT NDIS PARTNERS

Don't worry if there's no NDIS partner in your area, you can still get help to apply to the NDIS by calling 1800 800 110.

**Applying for the NDIS for your child is about providing evidence that your child meets the eligibility and disability criteria to get NDIS supports.**

## The NDIS journey



## >> TOP TIP

The NDIS uses the details you provide to create your child's first plan. Include as much information as possible about their disability, daily needs and level of support to ensure their plan meets their needs. 📌

# NDIS SUPPORTS

**EXPLAINED**

The NDIS has introduced new lists that explain what you can and cannot buy with your child's or young person's NDIS funding. Most items on these lists are not new, but they do help clear up confusion about a few areas.

## The two lists cover

1. What you can spend your child's NDIS funding on (*what IS an NDIS support*)
2. What you are not allowed to spend your child's NDIS funds on (*what is NOT an NDIS support*)

In addition, the NDIS will only fund supports related to the 'impairments' (a term the NDIS has introduced) that led to your child's acceptance onto the scheme.

This means you can only spend money in your NDIS Plan on supports that relate to the impairment identified in the initial application to the NDIS.

## SUPPORT CATEGORIES

Funding in your child's plan is split into support categories, which are sometimes called support budgets. These are Core supports, Capital supports, Capacity Building supports and Recurring supports.

Some funding can be used flexibly and without a quote. Some supports may require a quote. You may also have what are called 'stated supports' – this funding must be spent on the specific item listed in your child's NDIS Plan.

In each support budget, there are a series of categories. The NDIS defines the types of services and supports that you can purchase from each category.

**Core supports** provides funding for things that help with everyday activities and your child's disability-related needs. For example, it might pay for continence products or shower stools. It might also include low-cost technology like communication apps.

**Capacity Building** is for supports that help your child learn new skills and become more independent. These supports should connect to your child's goals, such as taking part in community, social and recreational activities. If they're a teenager or young adult, it can be used to help them prepare for work and help them find a job.

**Capital supports** fund high-cost Assistive Technology, equipment, home or vehicle modifications. This budget is the least flexible. It must be spent on specific items listed in your child's NDIS Plan.

**Recurring supports** (PACE plans only) are paid to you on a regular schedule, so you do not need to make a claim. Currently, the only Recurring supports category is Transport. It covers the cost of transport (like taxis or rideshares) if your teen or young adult cannot use public transport due to their disability. ⑤




## Watch VIDEO

Have you heard about the New NDIS Support Lists?

Have you heard about the New NDIS Support List?



Leap in!

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a white polo shirt with 'Physiotherapy' written on it and dark pants, is crouching down. She is smiling and looking towards a child whose arm is visible on the right. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a gym or therapy room.

# WHAT THE NDIS MAY FUND

**Navigating the NDIS can be tricky, especially when you're looking for supports and services for your autistic child. From building life skills to accessing therapies and managing transitions, the NDIS can fund supports that empower autistic children, teens and adults to lead fulfilling and independent lives.**

## **DAILY LIVING SKILLS**

The NDIS may fund support to help your child learn everyday skills. This could include things like getting dressed, brushing teeth, preparing meals or support with personal hygiene.

Your child might get help from a support worker or you might receive training to better support your child at home. The goal is for your child to become as independent as possible.

The NDIS provides this funding when a child needs more help than other children their age. This extra support may also be provided when early childhood services (like schools or daycare) can't fully meet your child's needs.

Many autistic children and teens get NDIS funding for daily living skills, especially as they become more independent during their teenage years. This support might help your child to communicate clearly, join social activities or manage personal tasks.





**FROM OUR  
COMMUNITY**

**"It is common for young children to have very little funding for Core supports in their NDIS Plan. Parents and families are generally expected to provide almost all the care and support a young child needs including providing personal care, taking them to appointments and staying with them while they do activities."**  
– **Jemma B.**

## THERAPY AND ALLIED HEALTH SUPPORTS

These supports can help your child learn new skills like motor skills, understanding emotions, executive functioning, language and communication. They also help increase independence and improve social interactions.

## EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

For children under nine (including children aged 0–6 with developmental delay), the NDIS may fund early intervention. This can improve skills in communication, motor tasks, cognitive abilities and socialisation. Services may include therapy delivered by allied health professionals such as speech pathologists or occupational therapists.

## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents and carers often play a key role in caring for and advocating for their autistic child. You may be able to use some of your child's plan funding for structured training programs. These can help you learn more about autism or gain skills to better support your child. They also give you a chance to connect with other families.

## SUPPORT COORDINATION

A Support Coordinator is a trained professional who can guide you through the NDIS, find the right supports and coordinate services. They also offer ongoing support as you work towards building your child's independence and life skills.

## SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Going out in the community and joining social activities is an important step in building independence for autistic children. The NDIS may fund supports to help your child access community, social, cultural or recreational activities.

It's common for autistic teens to have Increased Social and Community Participation funding in their NDIS Plans to help them form interest-based friendships and be active in the community in a way that feels safe and supported.

**FROM OUR  
COMMUNITY**

**"Through my NDIS Plan I get support workers dropping by twice weekly. Having some company and social interaction with people my age helps improve my communication skills and be more confident when going out in the community."** – **Henry J.**

## INDIVIDUALISED LIVING OPTIONS (ILO)

ILO is a funding package that can help your young adult (aged 18 and over) choose where and how they live, with the flexibility to design their own support arrangements, rather than being placed in a traditional group home setting.

ILO may be right if your young adult needs at least six hours a day of formal or informal support at home and wants to explore new housing options. This funding can include personal care, support workers for daily tasks like shopping and other services.


## SOCIAL SKILLS AND COMMUNICATION

Developing social and communication skills can be helpful for autistic people to navigate social interactions and build meaningful relationships. The NDIS may fund supports such as communication devices or speech therapy to improve these skills.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Managing money is an important life skill for anyone preparing for independent living. The NDIS may fund training and development that helps your young adult learn to budget and handle finances responsibly.

## EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

If your young person wants to work, the NDIS may fund supports that prepare them for employment or help them find or keep a job. This may include support with moving from school to work or from further education to work. 

# ASK A ~~Plan Manager~~ MUM!

*Autism – the lived experience  
of a parent of autistic kids.*

Dee Thomson is the Leap in! Learning and Development Specialist and a neuro-divergent mum parenting two autistic children. We recently asked her to answer some of our Members' most commonly asked questions about autism.



## »» WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK MY CHILD IS AUTISTIC?

If you are concerned about your child's development, it's a good idea to start a conversation with an early childhood professional. This could be an early childhood educator who works with your child and can share their observations, or a GP who focuses on child development and discusses development milestones.

Often early observations can include delays in either speech or communication, a difference in how your child plays and engages with you and their peers, and struggles with behaviour, which may indicate that your child is experiencing distress.

There is a lot of information available, and some good sites to start your research include Autism: What Next? and Reframing Autism.



## I HEAR A LOT ABOUT AUTISTIC BOYS. WHAT ABOUT GIRLS?

This is now an area that has significant focus.

Previously, diagnostic criteria were based on how boys present. However, our autistic girls don't present autism in the same way. For example, autistic girls are often experts at masking. What this means is that from a very young age, they are observing and copying their peers and their family to fit in.

Parents talk about how their child is 'perfect' at school and around other people however, when they get home to their safe space, they may become really dysregulated and release their frustrations.

Parents of boys may find getting a diagnosis to be a fairly straightforward process, but this isn't always common with girls, who are often diagnosed later.

For either autistic girls or boys to thrive, it is important they have timely access to diagnosis and supports to help them understand their own identity and needs. This strength-based approach can help them learn to advocate and understand themselves.

If you would like more information on autism in girls and women, these two resources are great places to start – Autism Awareness Australia and Yellow Ladybugs.

## MY CHILD HAS AN AUTISM DIAGNOSIS. WHAT'S NEXT?

If your child isn't with the NDIS, it's time to work out if they are eligible. You can use our *Accessing the NDIS* ebook or attend one of our webinars to understand the process.

I also recommend getting your child onto waiting lists now for therapists.

There will be a lot of messaging around

the urgency of things that need to be done. My advice is to stay calm and take it step by step – this is a marathon, rather than a sprint.

The first priorities are to ensure your child can communicate and to ensure you have an understanding of how to meet their sensory needs. The rest will come. Your child will need support that you will be able to connect them with, and this support will change as they develop.

There is a world of information available (overwhelmingly so!).

When you are ready and as you need, there are some wonderful courses to help parents of newly diagnosed children. Most are online and can be done on demand.

Reframing Autism is an Australian autistic-led organisation providing lived experience content and neuro-affirming information with short courses available for

low or no cost, including the autism essentials.

If this sounds like something you'd like to investigate, you can learn more at [reframingautism.org.au/service/about-courses](https://reframingautism.org.au/service/about-courses).

## WHAT ABOUT GETTING DIAGNOSED LATER IN LIFE?

Parents often tell us that through the process of observing, researching, and understanding autism traits to support and understand their child's needs, there is a sense of recognition as they identify their own reactions and responses to situations, communication and environmental factors such as noise, smells, and other sensory preferences.

Seeking an autism diagnosis later in life can be both empowering and validating. For some, it helps explain years of feeling misunderstood or uncomfortable in situations others didn't struggle with. Diagnosis can provide language and

understanding of sensory reactions or communication differences that can occur.

Others may find that a diagnosis brings a renewed sense of self-compassion and a stronger connection to their child's experiences. Connecting with others who've gone through this journey or exploring resources like Autism Awareness Australia and Reframing Autism, can be invaluable.


Whether it's to understand themselves better, build a supportive network, or advocate for neurodiversity, these parents often find that discovering their own autistic identity becomes a meaningful part of their family's story.

## WHAT IS IDENTITY-FIRST LANGUAGE?

How people identify is highly personal and to be respected. The use of language is very powerful, and the discussion on how to refer to our community is certainly a passionate one.

There is an ever-increasing proportion of our community preferring to use identity-first language, and using identity-first language has been embraced by the Autism CRC (Cooperative Research Centre), which published the National Autism Guidelines recently.

Identity first language is a way of speaking that reflects that being autistic is a core part of a person's identity. With identity first language, you'll hear someone say they're autistic or support autistic children. Alternatively, with non-identity first language someone may say they are on the spectrum, a person with autism etc.

If you're looking for more information on this subject, you can find it here: [aspect.org.au/about-autism/fact-sheets](https://aspect.org.au/about-autism/fact-sheets) [autismcra.com.au/language-choice](https://autismcra.com.au/language-choice) 

Did you know that over 60% of the Leap in! team have lived experience of disability. That means we get it, and we're here to help. If you're looking for an NDIS plan manager, please call 1300 05 78 78 or email [crew@leapin.com.au](mailto:crew@leapin.com.au).

# HOW THE NDIS FUNDS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The NDIS may fund AT to help your child with everyday living, communication and community involvement.

## HOW THE NDIS FUNDS AT

### LOW COST AT (UP TO \$1,500 PER ITEM)

**Budget:** Core supports (Consumables)

**Details:** You can buy items costing up to \$1,500 without a quote. These items are easy to set up and can often be bought from everyday suppliers.

**Examples:** Flipbooks, flash cards, picture boards and continence products.

### MID COST AT (\$1,500 TO \$15,000)

**Budget:** Capital supports

**Details:** Items in this range do not need a quote but you will need to show some evidence or a cost estimate at your planning or review meeting. These AT options may need more setup to work well for your child.

**Examples:** Communication devices, power wheelchairs and pressure care mattresses.

### HIGH COST AT (OVER \$15,000)

**Budget:** Capital supports

**Details:** Items over \$15,000 need an assessment from a professional AT advisor and a quote. You may have to show that your child tried the item and it worked well. These items are more complex and might need custom setup.

**Examples:** Custom-made wheelchairs, complex communication devices and certain prosthetics.

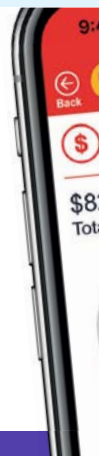
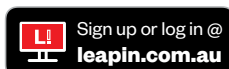


## Top tip

An AT assessor can help you choose the best item for your child. To find an AT assessor, you can contact the NDIS, use the myplace participant portal or speak with your allied health professional.

## Download Australia's leading NDIS app.

Keep all your NDIS information in one place. Get ready for your NDIS Plan or Plan Review meeting and track your NDIS budgets.



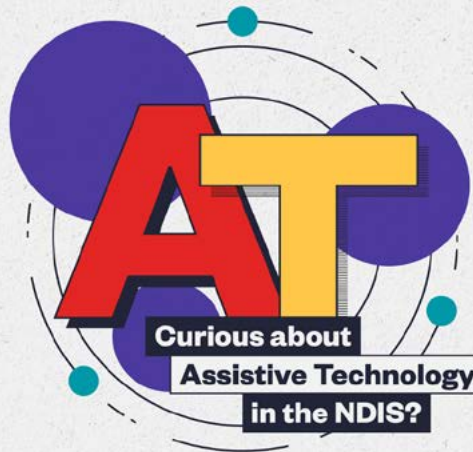




## Watch VIDEO

Curious about  
Assistive  
Technology in  
the NDIS?

Leap in!



## AT and risk

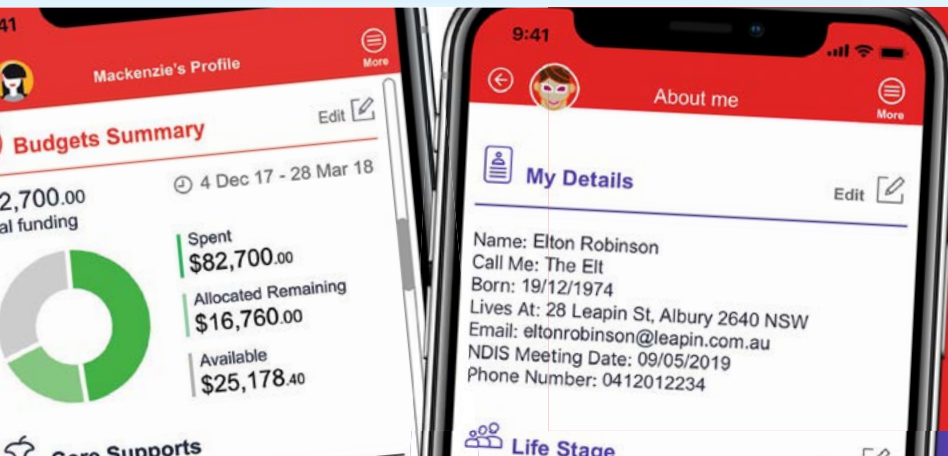
The NDIS also looks at the level of risk. Some items are higher risk if they can cause harm or need expert help to use safely. These items require a different approval process.

### *Low risk AT*

These items will not usually cause harm, are easy to find and can be set up without professional help. Examples include continence aids, pencil grips, wobble stools or modified cutlery.

### *Higher risk AT*

These items are more complex, may cause harm if not used correctly or require professional advice and set up. For example, a communication device that needs setup and support from a speech pathologist.



# Leap in!

Call 1300 05 78 78  
Visit [leapin.com.au](http://leapin.com.au)

# What doesn't THE NDIS COVER?

**Some items are not considered NDIS supports because they are everyday expenses that people without disability would normally pay for themselves.**

## **THESE INCLUDE**

- Everyday items like toiletries and cleaning products
- Food or groceries
- Medications
- Mental health early intervention or clinical mental health supports such as acute care or ongoing rehabilitation
- School, TAFE or university fees
- Rent or mortgage payments
- Standard household and garden items, appliances, tools and products
- Water, gas and electricity bills, council rates, land taxes and levies
- Water filters, purifiers or aerators
- Internet devices including modems, routers, landline phones, mobile phones, mobile phone accessories, tablets and sim cards
- Cruises, holiday packages, holiday accommodation and airfares
- Animals (other than NDIS-funded assistance animals) including pets and companion animals
- Ongoing repairs or home maintenance
- Motor vehicles (though the NDIS may fund vehicle modifications)
- Entry fees for cinemas or attractions
- Supports provided by other government or mainstream services like hospital care, community mental health, unemployment benefits or child care
- Items likely to cause harm to your child or other people.

## **Recent changes to NDIS funding for some common supports.**

The recent changes to the NDIS mean some items that you may have previously purchased with your child's NDIS funds are now considered outside the scope of NDIS supports, so you cannot use their funding for them.





# But, what about...

## SENSORY EQUIPMENT?

Sensory equipment refers to items that may support your child's life or motor skills or engage the senses. Many autistic children find these items helpful for regulating sensory sensitivities by providing calming or stimulating input. However, the NDIS will not fund items considered everyday expenses like non-disability-specific children's toys. These remain the responsibility of parents. Under the updated NDIS supports list, standard unmodified recreational tools like toys or balls are not considered NDIS supports and cannot be bought with NDIS funds.

**TOP TIP: It's important to obtain approval from the NDIS before you purchase sensory items with your child's NDIS funding as they may not be covered.**

## ASSISTANCE ANIMALS, PETS AND COMPANION ANIMALS?

The NDIS defines an assistance animal as one that is trained by an accredited provider to help with tasks your child cannot do because of disability. It must meet the usual NDIS 'reasonable and necessary' criteria. The NDIS also checks whether the animal:

- Offers support directly related to your child's disability
- Helps your child pursue their NDIS goals
- Is effective and good value
- Meets the accredited assistance animal definition
- Performs at least three tasks your child cannot do
- Has passed the public access test.

### FROM OUR COMMUNITY

"Your occupational therapist can help assess and identify tools and supports that may be beneficial for you. They can also support you to trial sensory items and write reports that show if they have been effective for your needs." – **Ashley K.**

## NDIS SUPPORTS RELATED TO ASSISTANCE ANIMALS?

If your child's plan includes an assistance animal, funding may also cover training, extra care and maintenance costs such as:

- Assessing, matching and providing an eligible assistance animal
- Dietary needs
- Grooming
- Veterinary services including worm treatments medication and vaccinations
- Annual reviews for accreditation.

## WHAT ABOUT PETS?

The NDIS will not fund pets or companion animals that do not meet the assistance animal criteria. Caring for a pet is considered an everyday expense, not a direct disability support for your child.

## What are replacement supports?

In some cases, you can request a replacement support for items the NDIS usually will not fund. You must get official approval from the NDIS before buying a replacement support. If you purchase it first, you risk paying for it yourself. Two categories qualify:

### 1. Standard commercially available household items.

You need clear proof that your child requires this item because of their disability. The item should let them complete an entire activity without extra support or AT.

### 2. Smart watches tablets smartphones or an app used for accessibility or communication.

This applies when your child needs one of these devices for communication or accessibility. For example, if your child has complex communication needs and a tablet is their only way to communicate, then this device may be approved if it is the best solution.

A replacement support is not an extra support. It replaces an existing NDIS support or combination of supports in your child's plan.

## Some common questions - will the NDIS fund it?

**Swing sets:** No. They are seen as regular play equipment that many families already own or can access publicly.

**Trampoline:** Not usually. Since trampolines are commonly found in the community at low cost, the NDIS does not see them as a disability-specific expense.

**Weighted blankets:** No. The NDIS considers weighted blankets high risk because evidence suggests they may cause harm. It will not fund supports that can harm your child or others. ⑥



# THERAPY SUPPORTS

## EXPLAINED

Accessing therapy supports can make a difference to many aspects of daily life. These professional services target communication, behaviour, social interaction, sensory needs and other areas of development or wellbeing. They are provided by qualified therapists or allied health practitioners. The goal is to help increase quality of life, build independence and improve interactions with others. Because every autistic experience is different, some or none of these therapy supports may suit your child. Also, some therapy supports are not considered NDIS supports so the NDIS will not fund them. If you are unsure, check with your Local Area Coordinator.

### THERAPY SUPPORTS THAT MAY BE FUNDED BY THE NDIS

These are therapy supports that use evidence-based approaches to help your child improve or maintain their functional capacity in areas such as:

- Language and communication
- Personal care
- Mobility and movement
- Interpersonal interactions or psychosocial functioning
- Community living

This includes assessments from health professionals for support planning and review when needed. Funding for these supports, delivered by qualified therapists, usually comes from the Capacity Building – Improved Daily Living budget in your child's NDIS Plan.

### THERAPY SUPPORTS THAT AREN'T FUNDED BY THE NDIS

The NDIS will not cover therapy supports if they are not evidence-based. Examples include:

- Alternative or complementary therapies or medicines
- Crystal therapy
- Tarot card reading, psychics, mediums and clairvoyants
- Cuddle therapy
- Reflexology
- Aromatherapy
- Sound therapy
- Yoga therapy
- Wilderness therapy
- Animal therapy
- Hair therapy



## FROM OUR COMMUNITY

"Be sure to keep enough funding in your budget for your OT or therapist to write a report to support your plan reassessment. This can help you get the right funding for your needs in your next NDIS Plan." – **Lyn D.**

words to communicate. A speech therapist, also called a speech pathologist or speech and language therapist, can assist with speech, communication, listening, understanding and social skills.

If your child needs communication support due to disability, you can often use Capacity Building – Improved daily living funding for a speech therapist.

### PHYSIOTHERAPY

Physiotherapists or physical therapists treat and guide people to improve mobility, posture, sensory integration, strength and balance. They can offer a range of supports for autistic children to boost physical movement skills and wellbeing, and to join sports or community activities.

### PSYCHOLOGY

Psychologists can be important for mental health support, but the NDIS only funds them in certain cases. The NDIS may fund mental health supports that:

- Are not clinical in nature
- Relate to an ongoing psychosocial disability
- Focus on building functional capacity and independence.

#### How psychologists can help your autistic child:

- Understanding neurological differences
- Building interoception (awareness of internal body signals)
- Understanding emotions
- Working on executive functioning
- Improving emotional regulation skills
- Helping you understand autism and learn advocacy
- Coordinating with other mental health supports and services.

## Good to know

Some autistic children have sensory challenges with food, restricted eating or trouble meeting nutritional needs. A qualified dietitian can help with these challenges. If your child needs nutritional assistance due to disability, Dietetics is an NDIS support that can be funded under Capacity Building – Improved health and wellbeing, provided it meets the reasonable and necessary criteria.

### BEHAVIOUR SUPPORTS

Behaviour support helps you understand and manage challenging behaviours by exploring what causes them. These behaviours might include hitting, biting, entering someone's personal space or damaging property.

**Specialist positive behaviour support** is an NDIS support provided by professionals with expert skills. A behaviour support practitioner can identify triggers and teach ways to manage challenging behaviours. They usually create a behaviour profile that tracks types, frequency and patterns over time, often with a parent impact statement.

Using this information, they develop a plan that may include therapy, strategies for managing behaviour, social skills training or other activities.

### FUNDING

Most behaviour supports are funded under Capacity Building – Improved relationships. Under PACE, it appears as Capacity Building – Behaviour support. If your child needs high intensity positive behaviour support or a support worker's supervision due to complex needs, this is funded through Assistance with daily life. **5**

### OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Occupational therapists (OTs) are one of the most common allied health professionals that autistic children on the NDIS see. They take a holistic look at your child's strengths, challenges and needs in everyday tasks and other parts of life.

For many families, an OT is the first allied health professional they see after an autism diagnosis. OTs often develop a sensory profile, working out if your child is sensory seeking or sensory avoiding, then create strategies to meet their sensory needs.

### SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

Speech and language therapy helps people communicate as well as possible. Speech is how we say words. Language is how we use



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# Sheldon's STORY

**Autistic musician Sheldon Riley, shares how an autism diagnosis helped him find his voice.**

**S**heldon Riley is a musician and rising star who uses music to explore all aspects of who he is, including as an autistic person. His songs share an insight into his journey including experience with feelings of being different, overcoming the limitations others set for him and working to achieve his dreams.

Sheldon was first diagnosed with autism at six years old. He shares, "I was told for a long time that I wouldn't be able to execute myself as a normal functioning human being, to get work or have friends or have a partner."

But Sheldon had other plans. He refused to be defined by the limitations other

people set for him and instead chose to embrace his strengths.

He developed a passion for music and performance and found creative writing as a means of self-expression. In fact, one of

the posts he shared on social media as a teenager became the foundation for one of his most celebrated songs.

"You run and hide the break inside

'Til you realise that the light shines bright  
Through those who broke inside"

Sheldon's extraordinary talent first caught the

attention of the world as a contestant on talent-based reality shows where he wowed audiences with his powerful voice and beautiful lyrics.

**“  
He refused to be  
defined by the  
limitations other  
people set for him  
and instead chose  
to embrace his  
strengths.”**

Now Sheldon is one of Australia's most famous neurodiverse artists and he's achieved his ultimate dream, to perform in Eurovision, where he was able to share his personal struggle with being different with the world through the lyrics in his song, Not The Same.

The success Sheldon has found as a neurodiverse artist is a shining example of the possibilities available to autistic people in the entertainment industry. He is confident that the future is rich with more opportunity for those who are willing to do the work to get there.

In a post on Sheldon's Instagram account he shares, "The world will choose difference when given the chance to see it." 🎵





# The Support Coordinator **ADVANTAGE**

If your child is autistic and on the NDIS, having a Support Coordinator can make a big difference in how you use their plan. Support Coordinators are professionals funded by the NDIS who understand how the NDIS works and can guide you every step of the way. They can explain things clearly so you know how to get the most out of the plan.

A Support Coordinator can also help you find supports in your local area. They can reduce stress and free you up to focus on other parts of your life. Keep in mind that Support Coordinators are not advocates. They cannot sign agreements for you or speak for you on official matters.

## How Support Coordinators can help your child on the NDIS

### 1 | Help you understand and use your child's NDIS Plan

Support Coordinators know NDIS budgets and how to plan supports that fit your child's needs. They help you connect the goals in the plan to real-life services, track progress and adjust when needed.





## 2 | Connect you with supports outside the NDIS

A Support Coordinator has strong community connections. They can link you to mainstream services and community groups that are not part of the NDIS.

### **For example:**

- They can connect families with autistic children to community groups, parent support groups or early childhood education.
- They can help autistic teenagers moving from school to further education or employment by combining NDIS and non-NDIS supports.
- They can tell you about mainstream services and how to get a companion card, housing support, Centrelink assistance or a travel concession card.

## 3 | Find alternative supports

Sometimes your NDIS Plan may not fund everything. A Support Coordinator can search for other options if you have low funding or if the NDIS does not cover a certain support.

### **For example:**

If your child has no therapy funding but needs an OT, the Support Coordinator can help you find a mainstream provider with lower fees so you pay less out of pocket.

## 4 | Build capacity and skills

Support Coordinators work with other professionals to find ways for you, your child, and carers to develop new skills.

### **For example:**

- Provide parents with knowledge about supporting autistic children.
- Explain the types of training the NDIS may fund for parents to learn more about autism.
- Help you understand how to use and manage your child's NDIS Plan.
- If a teen is not able to complete school, they can guide you to TAFE and introduce supports there.

## 5 | Work effectively with providers

Finding providers, negotiating costs and handling paperwork can be stressful. Support Coordinators are great partners for selecting providers, writing Service Agreements and sorting out disputes. A service agreement outlines supports, costs and responsibilities so both you and the provider have clear expectations.

### **Support Coordinators can:**

- Bridge gaps between families and NDIS providers by making introductions and sharing details in an accessible way.
- Arrange translation services if you speak a language other than English.
- Conduct reviews, collect feedback and address any issues.
- For children, they can set up meetings with allied health staff or school representatives so everyone understands goals and needs.

## 6 | Prepare for plan meetings

Your Support Coordinator works with you often, so they learn how you communicate, what your child needs and how the plan is structured. As a result, they can help you prepare for plan meetings or reassessments.

### **For example:**

- Gather reports, evidence and documents to support new or continued funding.
- Predict what questions the NDIS may ask and plan your answers.
- Help you explain your child's needs clearly.
- Attend plan meetings with you if needed.
- Make sure the final plan matches what was agreed and follow up if there are concerns.

## How to get Support Coordination in your child's NDIS Plan

If you think Support Coordination could help your family, talk to your NDIS partner. They can guide you through the process of adding Support Coordination to your child's plan. **5**

# Supports for autistic children AT SCHOOL



**Under the National Disability Standards for Education, schools must take reasonable steps to ensure students with disability can join classes and use school facilities like other students, without discrimination.**

**T**he NDIS is designed to provide supports and services that are not funded by other mainstream or government services (including school programs). Since schools often offer some disability supports, the NDIS only pays for certain additional supports.

## **SCHOOL SUPPORTS THE NDIS MAY FUND**

### **→ Self-care**

Extra assistance at school for daily tasks linked to your child's disability, such as eating or toileting. Some self-care supports might be paid for by the school, so it's best to start by asking the school first.

### **→ Teacher training**

Special training for teachers and staff about your child's individual needs, so they can offer the right help in the classroom.

### **→ Assistive technology**

Portable equipment like wheelchairs or personal communication devices that are not standard educational tools (for example, laptops or tablets).

### **→ Therapy supports**

Therapies that are not part of standard

school learning and are agreed on by your family and the school, delivered during school time. Schools might have therapy options you can use before spending your NDIS funds.

## **SCHOOL SUPPORTS THAT THE NDIS DOES NOT FUND.**

**The items below are not funded through the NDIS and cannot be paid for using your child's NDIS funding:**

- Education or tuition fees
- Personalised learning supports for improving academic results
- Aids and equipment needed for educational purposes, such as modified computer hardware, software for learning or Braille textbooks
- Adjustments to school buildings, for example ramps, lifts or hearing loops
- Textbooks and teaching aids (including alternative formats)
- Tutors or scribes
- Services from anyone employed by the school or relevant agency responsible for school education
- Programs for school refusal.





## PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO FURTHER EDUCATION OR WORK

The NDIS can assist if your child needs more help than the school can provide to prepare for a job. School leaver employment supports (SLES) are funded by the NDIS to help students with disability move from school to the workforce.

- SLES can bridge the gap between school and work by building skills and confidence. It is usually available during your child's final period of high school and for up to two years after leaving.
- SLES is customised to your teen's goals and covers all parts of getting ready for work. This can include figuring out the type of work they want to do, learning new skills and starting in a new job.

### Examples of SLES supports

- Work experience
- Writing a resumé and completing job applications
- Preparing for interviews
- Getting ready for the first day at work
- Learning about rights and responsibilities on the job
- Working independently or as part of a team. 6



A young man with short dark hair, wearing an orange t-shirt and blue overalls, is sitting in a workshop. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The workshop is filled with various tools and materials, including a green vise, a yellow level, and a wooden cabinet in the background.

# Supports for autistic people AT WORK

**Is your young person on the NDIS and thinking about work or volunteering? Do they have a goal to earn money, learn new skills or move into open employment? If so, the NDIS offers employment supports that can help with each step of the journey.**

### HOW NDIS EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS WORK

There are many steps involved in building a career. NDIS employment supports can guide your young person from getting ready for work all the way to receiving help on the job or making their next move.

#### **These supports may include:**

- Identifying and developing a career pathway
- Transition to work by developing skills
- Assistance to find and keep a job
- Assessments and counselling
- Career planning
- On-the-job support to work in a chosen role or workplace.

#### **NDIS employment supports can apply in various settings including:**

- Private or government employers
- Social enterprises
- Micro-businesses
- Self-employment
- Volunteering
- Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE).

### EMPLOYMENT RELATED ITEMS THE NDIS MAY FUND

The NDIS can fund different supports to help build your young person's capacity for work. These supports focus on preparing for finding or keeping employment in the open or supported labour market. For example:

- Extra help for a student who needs more assistance than their school provides
- Support for moving from school to employment
- Further education and training for skill-building.

### EMPLOYMENT RELATED ITEMS THAT THE NDIS WON'T FUND

The NDIS does not fund government employment programs or things that employers are responsible for. Specifically, it will not fund:

- Government funded employment programs like Disability Employment Services or Workforce Australia
- Work-specific aids or equipment needed for the job including modified hardware or software
- Reasonable adjustments or workplace modifications
- Employer responsibilities such as recruitment or transport for work tasks.

### FROM OUR COMMUNITY

**"I am making progress in my career with assistance from youth employment support funded in my NDIS Plan. I have an employment mentor supported by NDIS employment assistance who is helping me develop skills like speech writing, public communication, business plan drafting and event coordination to become an advocate for other autistic people." – Connor P.**

### NDIS EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS FOR AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS

#### **1 | Workplace assistance**

Workplace assistance helps your young person explore a career path and can be used in open employment or an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE). It can help them become more job-ready or provide support for study-related goals. Types of help may include:

- Discovering interests and types of work
- Building foundational and communication skills
- Overcoming complex barriers to employment
- Job customisation
- Career planning
- Moving from an ADE to open employment
- Mentoring to understand the roles and responsibilities of running a small business (self-employment)

When funded, workplace assistance appears under Capacity Building in their NDIS Plan.

#### **2 | Specialised supported employment**

This applies when your young person already has a job and needs extra support because of their disability. It might involve help with certain tasks or extra coaching to stay focused, communicate or customise a role. Supports could be individual or in groups and may include:

- On-the-job assessments about the impact of disability on work
- A job customisation program
- On-the-job training
- Support with daily work tasks
- A support worker for mobility or personal care at work
- Extra help for complex needs.

These supports appear under Core – Assistance with daily life in the NDIS Plan. **5**



*More flexibility, less hassle  
– and it doesn't cost you  
anything extra!*





# Self manage with the support of a plan manager?

## Yes, it is possible!

You don't have to choose between self-managing or plan-managing your child's NDIS Plan. You can do both! It just depends on how hands-on you want to be with managing each aspect of their plan.

You might choose to self-manage Core supports so you can arrange your child's daily supports directly, while plan-managing Capacity Building budgets to have therapy invoices paid and tracked for you.

With Leap in! plan management, everything stays connected in the Leap in! app, where you can view claims, payments and budgets in real time – without the burden of chasing invoices or juggling paperwork.

More flexibility, less hassle – and it doesn't cost you anything extra!

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# The Early Childhood APPROACH

Giving children the best possible start in life

**T**he Early Childhood Approach helps children under 6 with developmental delay and children under 9 with disability to get the right supports early so they can build skills, take part in everyday life and have the best possible start.

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Early Childhood Approach can provide supports in two ways.

**1 | Early Connections:** Connect families with the right supports and services to build on their strengths. Early Connections are for children younger than 9 and their families. Children do not have to have a diagnosis or be eligible for the NDIS to access Early Connections.

**2 | NDIS early childhood supports:** Early childhood intervention supports under the NDIS, provided through an NDIS Plan. This requires a diagnosis and the child must meet NDIS eligibility requirements.

## GOOD TO KNOW

- Children don't need to be eligible for the NDIS to get assistance
- It may include community/mainstream (non-NDIS) supports, NDIS funded supports or a combination of both
- Children who don't fully meet the definition of developmental delay but have developmental concerns can also receive support
- No referral or diagnosis is needed
- Some families will be assisted with an NDIS access request, depending on individual needs.

## CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT?

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

They can connect you with an Early Childhood Partner (ECP), an organisation with experience and clinical expertise

working with young children with developmental concerns or disability and their families.

ECP teams often include occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and other relevant allied health professionals.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNER

An ECP will initially meet with you and your family and chat about the following:

- Any concerns about your child's development
- Priorities and goals for the child
- How you currently support the child and where more support may be needed
- Information from available screening tools, assessments or reports
- Any early childhood supports currently received and how well they meet your needs.

An ECP uses observation in familiar settings to understand how the child plays, communicates and helps take care of themselves. They may also use assessment tools to learn more about the child's development to assess their support needs and determine the next steps.

## GETTING YOUR CHILD'S FIRST NDIS PLAN IN PLACE

If your child has been granted access to the NDIS, you will work with your ECP to develop their NDIS Plan. This often comes with a whole new set of questions.

The team at Leap in! can help with this part of the process. We can take you through steps and suggestions for your NDIS Plan meeting like:

- Start to prepare early and give yourself time to think big about what your child would like to achieve
- Make notes and keep a list of examples in the Leap in! app so you have one easy and central place for all of your thoughts and information
- Encourage your key family, friends and/or support workers to join the app and connect with you so they can help with additional information
- Be ready to be as specific as possible to get exactly what you need from your meeting. **5**



# HELPFUL RESOURCES



## **Ask a plan manager: Autism and the NDIS**

Leap in!'s plan manager, Tabitha, answers questions about autism and the NDIS, including eligibility, accessing early childhood supports and practical tips to help your child get the most from their plan.



## **The Essential NDIS guide: an introduction to NDIS basics**

Leap in!'s Essential NDIS Guide is a free ebook that includes everything you need to know to start your child's NDIS journey and make the most of their NDIS Plan.



## **Goal setting and the NDIS: A practical guide**

The goal-setting process is an important part of the NDIS. Leap in! created this ebook to help you navigate your child's NDIS goal-setting journey with confidence.



## **Food for thought: How to avoid meals times becoming a battleground**

Speech pathologist Renee Cansdale shares practical tips to help parents navigate feeding difficulties for children with sensory issues, autism and other neuro-developmental conditions.



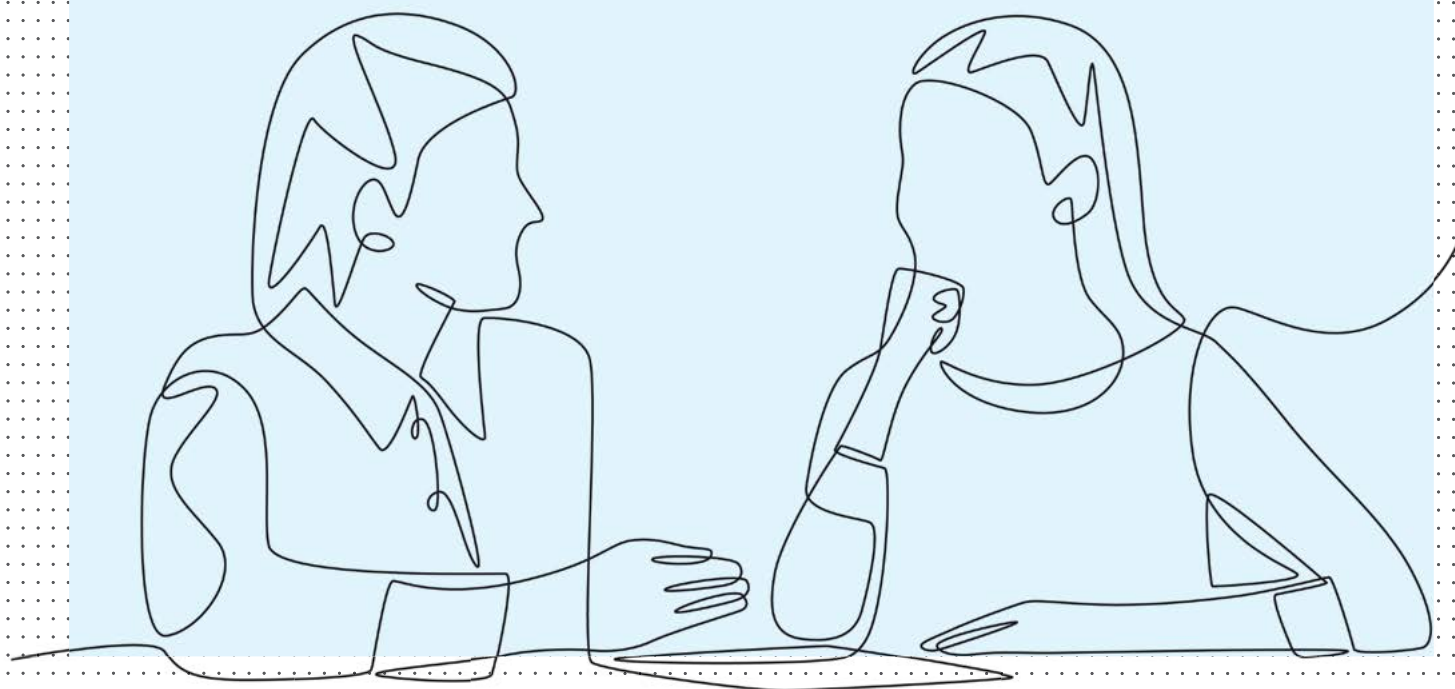
## **Sharing an autism diagnosis in the school years**

Autism parent Nicole Hurley and autistic adult Jackson Trout share valuable insights on how to navigate sharing an autism diagnosis within school communities. They offer practical advice for families and autistic students.



## **Autism & masking**

This article explores what masking looks like, why it happens and how families, educators and communities can create safer spaces where autistic people feel supported to be their authentic selves.





# Navigate the NDIS

## with confidence.

### Introducing the Knowledge Centre.

We know that understanding the NDIS can sometimes be tricky.

That's why the Leap in! Crew have created a free online Knowledge Centre that includes everything you need to know about the NDIS and life with disability.

You'll find:

- NDIS ebook series
- Leap in! and Source Kids magazine series (like this one)
- Latest NDIS news and disability-related stories
- Leap in! Presents webinar series
- NDIS FAQs
- Quick guides and checklists
- Info on disability advocates.

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