Leap in! ebook series



Support workers:

What they do, how they're funded and how to find the right one.

Leap in!



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The NDIS is going through a significant period of change. Some reforms are already underway. Others are still being designed, with dates and details to be confirmed.

To keep up to date, save our NDIS changes page to your favourites and subscribe to our weekly NDIS newsletter.

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01 What is a support worker?

What you need to know.

- A support worker helps you do the things you want and need to do in your daily life – funded by your NDIS Plan
- The relationship can range from a few hours a week to daily support, depending on what you need and what's in your plan
- Support workers can be registered or not with the NDIS.

The short version.

A support worker is a person you pay, through your NDIS Plan, to support you with activities in your everyday life.

That might mean help building the skills to cook dinner, catch a bus or manage your own routine. It might mean someone to help you get to an appointment or take part in an activity where you need support to participate. For many people, it means hands-on help with personal care – showering, dressing, meals – whether that's a couple of hours each morning or support across much of the day.

What it looks like in practice.

Two people might both have a support worker and the support they receive may look completely different.

Every morning. A support worker comes to help with getting dressed, breakfast and getting out the door. Consistent, reliable support that makes daily life work.

Most of the day. For someone with higher support needs – personal care, meals and routines that hold things together across the whole day.

A few hours on a Saturday. Help getting to a sporting activity or navigating a busy environment like a shopping centre – support that makes it possible to get out and take part.

A young adult leaving school. Someone who helps them learn to use public transport, manage their schedule or get comfortable in a new workplace.

A parent stepping back. A support worker who helps your child with the things you've been doing – personal care, getting out, building skills – so they can start developing independence with someone other than family.

The right arrangement depends on what you need, what's in your plan and what you're working toward – whether that's building new skills or maintaining the daily support that keeps things on track.

Registered and unregistered.

When you start looking for a support worker, you'll hear these terms. A registered provider has been through the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's registration process. An unregistered provider hasn't – but that doesn't mean they're unqualified. Many experienced support workers work independently rather than through a registered organisation.

Who you can use depends on how your plan is managed. This may change as the rules around registration are changing as part of broader NDIS reforms. Chapter 3 has the full detail.



Tip: Start with a clear picture of what you'd like help with. That makes it easier to find someone whose skills match what you need.

Pete's story: Building a career as an independent support worker.

Pete started working as a support worker in 2019 after looking for more "holistic satisfaction and enjoyment" than he was getting from his previous job.

What he found surprised him. "It also gave me better pay, more flexible hours, more chances to be creative, and it's been so much fun."

After gaining a Certificate IV in Disability, Mental Health and Training and Assessment, Pete became a fully independent support worker through Mable in late 2021.

He believes successful support work comes down to understanding what matters to each person and creating genuine value for them and their carers.

Some of Pete's most memorable moments have included helping clients return to higher education, perform at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, work on passion projects, build positive psychosocial engagement and better understand themselves and their behaviours.

"Being an independent support worker has been so rewarding."

His advice for anyone considering support work is to first understand their own values, morals and what it means to live authentically.

"If supporting others to grow and overcome obstacles while working on your own terms appeals to you, then being an independent support worker through Mable will probably be your calling."

"For me, it's given me a whole new career. Mable has given me the avenue to advertise, connect, service contracts, and maintain my growing list of clients."

Pete's story is courtesy of Mable.

More info on this topic.

What is plan management?

NDIS Worker Screening Check



02
What you can use a support worker for.

What you need to know.

- For many people, day-to-day support at home is the most important thing a support worker does
- Support workers also help with community activities, skill building and working toward other goals in your plan
- Different activities draw from different parts of your NDIS Plan and some of those budgets are changing.

Day-to-day support at home.

For many people, this is the most important thing a support worker does – the practical, hands-on help that makes daily life easier and more manageable. This would be funded by the Core Assistance with Daily Life part of your NDIS Plan.

It can cover personal care, meal preparation, household tasks, managing medication and health routines. For some people, that's a support worker for a couple of hours each morning. For others, it's structured support across most of the day.

When you start with a new support worker, walk them through how you like things done – your morning sequence, your preferences, what time you like to be ready. The more specific you are upfront, the faster they'll get it right.

In their own words.

"The support team helps you get out in the community and do what you want... when someone's sick, you've got someone else to rely on."

– Luke, Mable client.

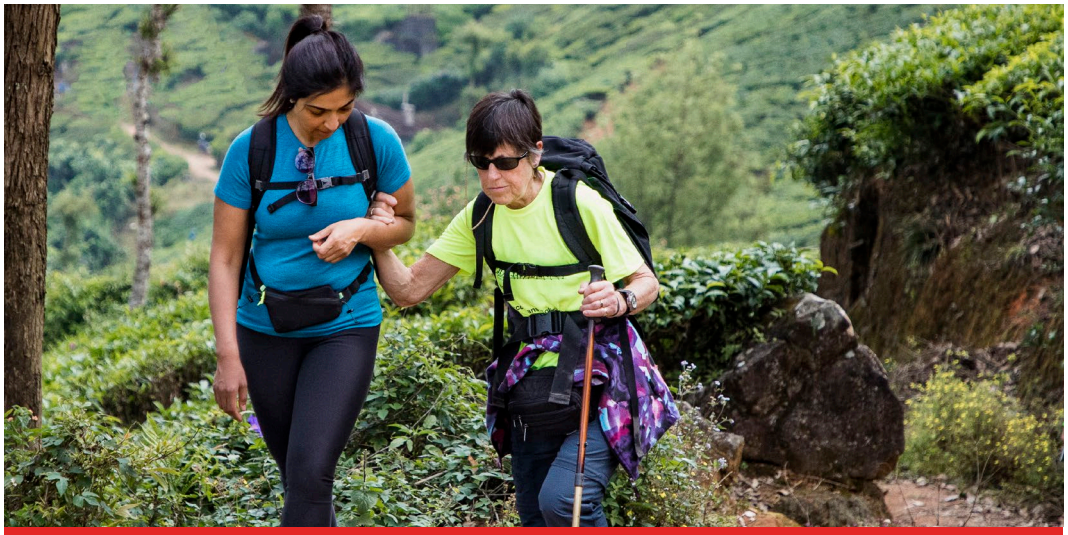
Getting out and taking part.

If you need assistance to participate in the community because of your disability, a support worker can help – whether that's physical access, transport, communication support or help navigating unfamiliar environments. This is funded from the Core Assistance with Social and Community Participation part of your NDIS Plan.

A support worker is funded for community participation because your NDIS Plan recognises you need support to take part. The activity should connect to a goal in your plan. If a support worker takes you to an activity they are supporting you with, they may be able to invoice for their travel time and a contribution towards their fuel expenses.

Physical activity and sport.
If staying active is one of your goals, a support worker can help you get to the gym, a pool, a park run or a sporting activity – with support for physical access, navigating the environment, managing sensory challenges or building confidence in a new setting. They can also help you build a regular routine around it.

Social and cultural activities.
If social connection or community involvement is a goal in your plan, a support worker can help you get to a community event, visit a museum or local art gallery – providing the transport, logistics or communication support you need to be there.



Outdoor activities.
Community gardens, bushwalking groups, fishing – a support worker can help with transport, physical tasks or provide the support you need to take part safely. If building your confidence in new environments is a goal, outdoor activities can be a practical way to work on it.

Creative interests.
Art classes, photography, music, film – if developing a skill or increasing your social participation is a goal, a support worker can help you get to a class, manage equipment or materials and support you to participate in a group setting where you might otherwise find it difficult.

Social and Community Participation funding is changing.

From October 2026, Social and Community Participation budgets are being progressively reset as plans are reassessed or renewed. For some people, that may mean less funding than they've had in the past.

A note about funding periods.

All new and reassessed NDIS Plans will include funding periods. Instead of receiving all your funding at the beginning of your plan, you'll get smaller portions in stages. Each portion is released at the start of a funding period. When one period ends, the next portion becomes available.

If your plan includes funding periods, check how much Social and Community Participation funding you have per funding period, divide it by your support worker's hourly rate and you'll get a rough number of hours for that period. From there, you can work out how many hours each activity takes per week and see what fits.

Travel and holidays.

The NDIS doesn't fund holidays, but if you need a support worker because of your disability and you're going on a trip, the NDIS can fund the support worker's time while they're with you. Your holiday costs – flights, accommodation, food – are yours, the same as they would be for anyone.

Travel support can use a significant chunk of funding, so talk to your plan manager before you book to confirm what's covered and how it affects the rest of your budget.

Building skills and independence.

Support workers also help with longer-term skill building – working toward doing things more independently over time. That could mean learning to cook a few basic meals, practising using public transport, budgeting, navigating a new workplace or getting comfortable in social situations.

Pick a specific skill you want to work on, find a support worker who's good at teaching it and building your confidence with it and make it part of your regular sessions. Track your progress because it's useful evidence at your next plan review. It shows the NDIA that the funding is building your independence, which is exactly what Capacity Building is designed for.

What a support worker can't be funded for.

Entry fees and tickets. The support worker's time is funded, but the activity cost isn't.

Food and drinks. The NDIS doesn't pay for meals.

Everyday living costs. Rent, groceries, utility bills.

Things that aren't connected to your NDIS Plan. The support needs to relate to your disability and your plan.

In October 2024, the NDIS introduced two lists that set out what is and isn't an 'NDIS support'. Check them on the NDIS website.



Case study: Zoe's story – in her own words.

"I've been on the NDIS for a little over a year now. And while I have experienced struggles with it, being able to access support workers was a game-changer.

Before support workers, my life was very different. I live with multiple mental and physical disabilities, including chronic pain, chronic illness and chronic fatigue – a combination which makes existing incredibly difficult.

I struggled to work and manage my medical admin, let alone things like going grocery shopping, cooking, washing clothes and bedding, and cleaning. These became things I couldn't do – because I had such little energy, and every tiny ounce of it had to go towards my work to afford to pay my bills. Some days, I was in too much pain to move. Other days, I was too tired to work out how to plug my phone into its charger.

I felt so much shame I couldn't do these things for myself. But that's ableism speaking, because not having capacity is not shameful. We can't all do the same things. We don't all have the same energy or pain levels, and just because someone else can do it doesn't mean we can – and we shouldn't push ourselves to keep up with non-disabled expectations.

I was so anxious about letting support workers into my house and my life. I've had many bad, judgmental experiences, but I can safely say my main support worker is a gift. I feel so lucky to have someone who can help ensure my house and clothes are clean, that I can eat nutritious food, and that she can take the burden off almost all of my household tasks.

She gets my medication for me, takes me to medical appointments, helps me with both everyday and medical admin, and supports me to try new hobbies. She's dropped me off and picked me up from the airport so I can be a keynote speaker in another state, and taken me to events I wouldn't otherwise have had the capacity to go to.

It really has changed my life – and it's wild that just a few hours of support a week can do so much. It feels like such a gift. No one should be struggling the way so many people are, especially those with invisible and dynamic disabilities and chronic illnesses. Everyone should be able to access support, because support workers can truly make such an enormous difference."

Zoe Simmons is an award-winning disabled journalist, copywriter, speaker, author and advocate. The views and opinions expressed here are Zoe's own and don't necessarily reflect those of Leap in! and Mable. Courtesy of Mable.

More info on this topic. Mable Can-Do guide: Working in film
NDIS support categories explained



03
The NDIS rules on support workers, in plain language.

What you need to know.

- The NDIA sets the rules about what's funded and how much providers can charge. These rules apply to everyone on NDIS
- Support worker funding sits in different parts of your plan depending on what the support worker is doing with you
- Whether you can use a registered or unregistered support worker depends on how your plan is managed.

Who sets the rules.

The NDIA sets the rules about what your NDIS funding can be used for and how much providers can charge. These are published in the NDIS Pricing Schedule (updated each financial year) and the NDIS support lists (which set out what is and isn't an NDIS support). Your plan manager, support coordinator and providers are all required to work within and apply these rules at all times.

Where support worker funding sits in your plan.

Funding category.	What it covers.	Example.
Core: Assistance with Daily Life.	Personal care, household tasks, daily routines at home.	A support worker who comes each morning to help you get ready for the day.
Core: Assistance with Social, Economic and Community Participation.	Getting out and taking part in community, social or economic activities where you need support because of your disability.	A support worker who provides the transport, access or communication support you need to attend a community event or get to work.
Capacity Building: Increased Social and Community Participation.	Building specific skills toward doing things more independently.	A support worker helping you learn to catch public transport.

The category names can be confusing, but what matters in practice is knowing which part of your plan each type of support draws from – because each has its own funding amount and can run out independently.

Registered and unregistered providers.

Registered providers have been through the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's registration process – audited against practice standards with formal obligations around worker screening, complaints handling and incident reporting.

Unregistered providers aren't required to complete the NDIS registration process. They still need a current NDIS Worker Screening Check where required and must meet their legal obligations, but they aren't monitored in the same way as registered providers.

How is your plan managed?

The providers you can use will depend on how your NDIS Plan is managed.

Self-managed. You can use registered or unregistered providers. You manage invoicing and claiming.

Plan-managed (like Leap in!). Registered or unregistered providers can be used. Your plan manager handles provider invoices, claiming and payments.

NDIA-managed. Generally only registered providers can be used. The NDIA pays providers directly.

Plan management gives you access to a wider pool of support workers – including independent workers who aren't registered but may be a good fit for what you need.

What's changing with registration.

From July 2026, mandatory registration is rolling out for SIL and platform providers. From July 2027, it expands to those who deliver personal care, daily living supports and supports in closed settings, with all affected providers expected to be registered by December 2030.

If you currently use an unregistered support worker for personal care or daily living support, they may need to become registered over the next few years to continue providing these supports.

What support workers cost.

The NDIA sets maximum prices through the NDIS Pricing Schedule. Hourly rates depend on the type of support, time of day and day of the week. Weekday daytime rates are the lowest, while evenings, weekends and public holidays attract higher rates. Registered providers must charge within the NDIS Pricing Schedule. Unregistered providers can set their own prices, although many charge similar rates.

As a guide, here are the 2026-27 maximum hourly rates for standard support at home or in the community. These are the national rates and the limits are higher in remote and very remote areas.

- Weekday daytime – $73.58
- Weekday evening – $81.07
- Saturday – $103.54
- Sunday – $133.50
- Public holiday – $163.46.

Overnight support and high-intensity support are priced differently. Your plan manager or support coordinator can help you check the right rate for the support you use.

These rates are correct at the time of publication (2026-27).

Discussing rates.

Because the prices in the NDIS Pricing Schedule are maximums rather than set fees, rates can be discussed – particularly with independent workers, who set their own.

On a platform, workers usually show their rates on their profiles, alongside reviews and their experience, so you can see what someone charges and

weigh it against what others say before you message them to talk it through. Agreeing a rate is a normal part of setting up the arrangement.

Insurance and a current NDIS Worker Screening Check are the minimum you should expect at any rate. Beyond that, what you pay should reflect the support you get – so if a worker charges at the top of the schedule, it is reasonable to expect the experience and reliability to match. Being clear about rates and what they cover helps both sides start well.

To plan your hours, divide your funding in a category by the hourly rate. That gives you a rough number of hours per funding period. Your plan manager or support coordinator can help you work through this.

How invoicing and claims work.

Plan-managed. Provider sends invoice to your plan manager → plan manager checks it against NDIA rules and your plan → submits claim to NDIA. If something doesn't line up – the rate is above the cap, the service isn't covered or the funding in that category has run out – your plan manager will let you know.

Self-managed. You pay the provider directly → claim back from the NDIA through the myplace portal.

NDIA-managed. Registered provider claims directly from the NDIA.

The 90-day claims window. From 1 December 2026, providers have 90 days from the date of service to submit invoices. This is down from the previous two-year window.

One thing that regularly catches people out: Invoices need to be submitted within the funding period the service was delivered in. If a service is delivered in one plan period but the invoice isn't submitted until the next, the claim may not be paid – even if you had funding available at the time.

What to do next.

Your NDIS Plan shows your funding broken down by support category – you can see the budget amounts in your plan document or in the myplace portal. If you're with Leap in!, check your plan breakdown in the app, call 1300 05 78 78 or email crew@leapin.com.au. Leap in! also offers free 'Understand Your Plan' sessions to anyone on the NDIS – whether you're a Leap in! Member, self-managed or with another plan manager.

More info on this topic. NDIS Worker Screening Check
Understanding your NDIS Plan funding



04 Finding a support worker who's right for you.

What you need to know.

- There are three main ways to find a support worker – through an agency, an online platform or by contracting directly. Each has pros and cons
- Before you start, get clear on what you need – what kind of support, when, where and what matters to you in the person
- Have a conversation before committing. You're not locked in after one meeting.

Start with what you need.

Before you start looking, get clear on what you're looking for. That doesn't mean a formal brief – just a rough idea of the practical things that matter. It can help to write things down so you can refer to your notes when having conversations with workers or providers.

- **What do you need help with?** Personal care, assistance getting out, skill building or a combination.
- **When?** Mornings, weekday afternoons, weekends.
- **Where?** At home, out in the community, both.
- **Does gender matter?** Do you have a preference?
- **Does language matter?** Do you need someone who speaks your first language?
- **What skills matter?** Experience with a particular disability, training in safe lifting and transfers, confidence in community settings.

Ways to find a support worker.

There is no single right way to find a support worker. Different sourcing models suit different people and many Members use more than one. Two things worth weighing up are how much say you have over who supports you, and insurance – how the worker is covered if something goes wrong.

Mable is used below as an example of an online platform. Leap in! and Mable are both part of the Attain Healthtech group of companies.

	Provider agency.	Online platform.	Direct contractor.
What it is.	An organisation that employs or contracts workers and matches one to you.	An online service for finding and connecting with independent workers.	An independent worker you find and engage yourself.
Choice over who supports you.	The agency usually chooses the worker for you.	You choose the worker yourself from a wide pool.	You choose someone you know or who is recommended.
Who handles the admin.	The agency handles rostering, replacements and most paperwork.	The platform handles payments and service agreements. You do the rest.	You and the worker handle everything between you.
Insurance and screening.	The agency's insurance usually covers its workers, and it checks their screening.	Some platforms, like Mable, include insurance cover for workers engaged through the platform and set their own screening requirements.	You check the worker has their own insurance and a current NDIS Worker Screening Check.
Things to weigh up.	Less for you to manage, but less choice of worker.	More choice, with some of the searching left to you.	The most direct relationship, and the most to set up and check yourself.

Not sure which model suits you? If you have a support coordinator, they can help you weigh the options. If you don't and you'd like to talk it through, call the Leap in! Crew on 1300 05 78 78.

Tip: You don't have to choose just one model. Some people use an agency for regular weekday support and find an independent worker through a platform for weekends.

How Leap in! can help.

Leap in! Connect helps you understand your plan and find providers so you can get supports in place. Whether you're looking for a support worker for the first time or need a different one, we can help you explore your options. You don't need to know exactly who you're looking for before you get in touch – just tell us what you need help with.

It's included in your Leap in! plan management, at no extra cost. To find out more, call the Leap in! Connect team on **1300 44 78 78**.

Through a provider agency.

An agency employs or contracts support workers and matches them to you. It handles rostering, replacements and most of the admin, and its insurance usually covers its workers. You typically have less say over who you get, in exchange for less to manage yourself. For some people, particularly when support needs are high or consistent, that trade is worth it.

If you have SIL or SDA in your plan.

If your plan includes Supported Independent Living (SIL) or Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), you can still choose who provides your day-to-day support. Some people prefer to keep their support workers separate from the provider of their accommodation, so one decision does not depend on the other.

If this matters to you, it can help to have a support coordinator who is independent of your accommodation provider, so the advice you get about your supports is not tied to where you live.

Finding a support worker through an online platform.

An online platform lets you search for independent support workers yourself, look at their profiles and message them before deciding. You have total control over who supports you. Mable is one example of an online platform.

About Leap in! and Mable.

Leap in! and Mable are part of the same group of companies, Attain Healthtech. We've used Mable in this guide as the example of an online platform, because that's one way to find an independent support worker and we know them well.

Mable is one option among several platform providers and this guide lays out the alternatives. The choice is always yours.

We think Mable does good work. Independent workers often have lower overheads than traditional agencies, so you can get more hours from your funding. Through the Mable Foundation and its community partnerships, Mable also backs inclusion and helps build local support in regional and rural areas.

How platforms handle safety and insurance.

Platforms set their own requirements for the workers on them. On Mable, support workers must pass identity and background checks and hold the screening required for the type of support they provide. Support that is booked and paid through Mable includes insurance cover for the worker. That cover applies to work arranged and paid through the platform, not to work arranged outside it. This is worth knowing if you ever move to a direct arrangement with a worker you first met on a platform.

Finding the right fit.

One thing platforms are built for is matching on the details that matter to you. The right match makes a real difference. When a support worker shares your interests, understands your background or simply gets on well with you, support feels less like a service and more like time spent with someone who understands you.

Because you search and choose yourself, you can match on more than what someone can do – you can match on who they are. For example:

- A worker who speaks your language or shares your cultural background
- Someone with particular qualifications or real experience with your disability
- A fit on personality, interests or age – for instance a younger worker a young adult can connect with
- Someone who shares a hobby or passion, so support time can double as time doing something you enjoy.



We recently heard an example from a support coordinator: For one Member whose goal was to get their driver's licence, the support coordinator searched a platform for someone with the right background and found a former driving instructor. Alongside regular community access support, the worker brought years of driving experience and patience to every session. The Member recently passed their test and now has their licence.

Continuity and building a team.

It's natural to want consistency in who supports you. One thing worth knowing is that continuity doesn't have to mean the same worker every time. Any worker can be sick, take leave or have other commitments.

For a lot of people, the answer is a small team of trusted workers rather than relying on one person. You keep a regular worker you know well, with one or two others who can step in when needed, so your support carries on when things change.

We've heard from a support coordinator that this is one of the ways they handle continuity. One young adult they support has a regular worker who knows his routines and how he likes to communicate, plus a second trusted worker he's comfortable with. Having a small team means he keeps his preferred worker, and still has support and flexibility when his regular worker isn't available.

Contracting directly with a support worker.

Some people find a support worker through an agency or a platform to begin with, then decide to contract with them directly. Others start this way – through word of mouth, a family network or a local disability group.

People often move to a direct arrangement once they have found someone who works well for them. It can mean a closer working relationship and, for the worker, a larger share of the rate. It also means more is up to you to organise and check.



It's worth knowing that you generally can't use NDIS funding to pay a family member as your support worker. The NDIA only approves this in exceptional circumstances, and it has to approve it in writing first.

If you contract directly, put a few things in place so both of you are protected:

- A service agreement setting out what you have both agreed – see below for what to include
- A current NDIS Worker Screening Check, which you can ask to see
- The worker's own insurance, as they will not be covered by an agency or a platform
- A backup plan for when your worker is sick or on leave.

Contracting directly is not only about a worker getting more fees from each hour. If a worker charges at the top of the schedule, it is fair to expect the quality that goes with it – screening, insurance, relevant experience and reliable support.

Registration rules for support workers are changing – see Chapter 3. If you contract directly with a worker for personal care or daily living support, they may need to become registered over the next few years to keep providing it.

What to check before you start.

Experience and skills. Have they done the kind of support you need? If you need personal care, have they done it before? It is okay to ask directly – most workers will be upfront about what they're experienced in.

Availability and reliability. Can they do your days and times? What's the backup plan if they're sick or on leave? Reliability is an important part of finding the right fit, so it is worth asking about early.

Communication style. Do they listen? Do they ask how you like things done? Do they talk to you, not about you? You'll get a feel for this in the first conversation.



Worker screening. All support workers should have a current NDIS Worker Screening Check. You can ask to see it. If they will be supporting a child, they may also need a Working with Children Check, depending on your state or territory. If they're through an agency, the agency should have this in place.

Insurance. If you found your support worker through an agency or a platform like Mable, insurance is likely covered. If you found them independently, check that they have their own.

Quality markers for an independent worker. With an independent worker you are doing more of the checking yourself, so it is worth being thorough. A quality independent support worker will have current screening and insurance. They will be clear about their experience, open about availability and backup and comfortable talking through rates and what they include.

Having the first conversation.

The first conversation is as much for you as it is for them. Be specific about what you need – walk them through a typical week, what support you need, when, where and how you like things done. Use your list from earlier in this chapter to guide you.

Ask practical questions. Have they worked with someone with similar support needs? How do they handle changes to routine? What do they do if something isn't working?

Agree on the basics upfront. How you'll communicate, how much notice is required for cancellations and what happens if either of you wants to change the arrangement at some point.



You're not locked in. Most people try a few sessions before deciding whether the fit is right.

Setting up a service agreement.

Once you've decided to go ahead with a support worker, put a service agreement in place. This is a written agreement between you and the provider that sets out what's been agreed – so both sides are clear.

A service agreement should cover:

- What support will be provided, how often and when
- The hourly rate and any other costs
- The cancellation policy – including how much notice is needed and whether short-notice cancellations attract a charge (the NDIS has specific rules on this)
- How either of you can change or end the arrangement
- How complaints or issues will be handled.

If you're working with a provider agency, they'll usually have a standard service agreement. If you're engaging an independent support worker, you may need to set one up yourself.

A service agreement isn't a locked-in contract. It's a reference point. If something changes or something isn't working, the agreement is what you go back to.

If you're looking on someone else's behalf.

If you're finding a support worker for a family member or someone you support – involve them in the process as much as possible. That might mean looking at profiles together, having them sit in on the first conversation or a short trial session before committing.

If your family member can't participate in the selection process, think about what matters to them – their routines, their preferences, what makes them comfortable or uncomfortable – and communicate that clearly to the support worker from the start.



More info on this topic.

Mable: Find a support worker

Leap in! Connect: Help finding support



05
Building independence and navigating transitions.

What you need to know.

- Support workers can play a key role during transitions – building independence, leaving school, starting study or work
- The parent or carer role shifts during these times too. A support worker can make that shift easier for everyone
- Start early. The skills your young person builds with a support worker now are the ones they'll use later.

Starting to build independence.

For teens and young adults, a support worker can be the person who helps them start doing things on their own – separate from family. That might mean catching public transport, managing a morning routine, going to a social activity without a parent or learning to handle money.

This works best when it starts before a major transition, not during one. If your young person is going to leave school in a year or two, now is the time to start building the skills they'll need.

A practical approach: Pick one or two specific skills and build them into the support worker's regular sessions. Track how it's going, because that progress becomes useful evidence at the next plan review – it shows the NDIA that the funding is building independence.

The parent or carer shift.

As your young person builds confidence and independence, your role begins to change. Instead of making every decision or organising every support, you're there to help them make informed choices and build the skills to direct their own supports over time.

This approach, often called 'supported decision-making', recognises that people with disability should be supported to make decisions about their own lives wherever possible. That shift can take time and it's normal for it to feel like a big change for both of you.

What young people think a support worker is.

A lot of teens and young adults have a picture in their head of what a support worker looks like and it's usually not someone they'd want to be seen with. The stereotype is often someone older, clinical or carer-like, rather than someone your young person could genuinely connect with.

The reality is different. Support workers come in all ages, backgrounds and with all kinds of interests. Some are into fitness. Some are musicians. Some work on motorbikes. Mable has a great video of Eddie and his support worker fixing bikes together – something they both love!



Video from Mable. Meet Scott and Eddie.

The right support worker isn't someone who makes you stand out. They're someone who makes it easier to do the things you want to do – get to the gym, navigate a new workplace, manage your own routine. When the fit is right, a support worker is a real asset.

If your young person is resistant to the idea, that's worth taking seriously rather than pushing through. Exploring profiles together – on a platform like

Mable, where you can filter by age, interests and location – can shift the picture from "carer I don't want" to "actual person I could work with."

It can also help to start small. A couple of hours a week building a specific skill or accessing an activity your young person is interested in – with a support worker who has the right experience – is a lower-pressure way to start than jumping straight into daily support.

School to study or work.

When the school routine ends, everything changes – transport, structure, expectations, environment. A support worker can help build the specific skills a new routine needs.

Getting to study or a new workplace. Practising the route, building a transport routine, navigating an unfamiliar campus or workplace. A support worker can do this alongside your young person until they're confident enough to do it independently.

Building workplace skills. If finding and keeping a job is a goal in the NDIS Plan, support workers can help with practical preparation – interview practice, workplace routines, understanding workplace expectations, building confidence with colleagues. This is funded through Capacity Building.

Managing a new schedule. Moving from a school timetable to a less structured week takes adjustment. A support worker can help your young person plan their week, manage their time and build the habits that keep a new routine running.

Disability Employment Services (DES) provides a different kind of support – focused on job placement and in-work support from the employer side. A support worker and DES can work alongside each other, but they do different things.

Tip: If your young person is approaching 18 or leaving school, the Leap in! Turning 18 and the NDIS ebook covers transition planning in detail – including what changes at 18, decision-making and how to prepare for the shift. There are two versions available: One for young people and one for families and carers.

Case study: Oliver and Steph on what independence really means.

Oliver, a 29-year-old comedian with cerebral palsy, began using Mable in 2022 and has since built a support network of 11 workers. It's his regular Tuesday sessions with Steph that have made the biggest impact. "I probably wasn't aware how much I was struggling until I started getting support to help cook meals, hang out washing, or even just vacuum the house," Oliver says.

Steph's approach is to stay intuitive to what someone needs: "Sometimes that's being social, sometimes that's helping them around the house, sometimes that's just being a friend and a companion. And even just asking them, too, what their goals are."

Their relationship is built on honesty. "You've always been honest from the start. You were honest in the support you could provide me. But I also was honest in what I needed," Oliver tells Steph. "That honesty then led to trust." That foundation, along with a fair bit of humour and banter, lets them tackle challenges with confidence.

For Oliver, independence has looked different at different life stages. It once meant moving out and going to university – now it's about contributing as a husband and parent. "As a parent and husband, how can I contribute to the household?" he says. Steph agrees that as responsibilities shift over time, independence stays an evolving journey rather than a fixed destination.

Oliver sums it up simply: "Independence is different to everyone. For me, it's about knowing who you are and being comfortable with that." His advice for anyone new to seeking support: "Be succinct in your job ad and don't be afraid to be direct about what you need."

From Mable's Independent Thoughts series. Courtesy of Mable.

More info on this topic.

Watch: Eddie and his support worker
Turning 18 and the NDIS ebook
Mable Can-Do guide: Working in film
School Leaver Employment Supports



06
Keeping it working: Managing the relationship.

What you need to know.

- Not every match is the right one straight away. That's normal
- Set expectations early and check in regularly
- If it's not working, you can change it. You're not stuck.

Set expectations early.

The first few sessions are where the relationship takes shape. Be clear about what you need, how you like things done and how you want to communicate. If there are things that matter to you – punctuality, how they interact with your family, how they handle unexpected changes – say so upfront rather than hoping they'll figure it out.

If something isn't right – they're late, they do things differently from how you've asked, the approach isn't working – raise it early. Small issues are much easier to fix than ones that have built up over weeks.

Check in regularly.

Even when things are going well, it's worth checking in every few weeks. Has your routine changed? Have your needs shifted? Is the support still matching what you need?

This doesn't need to be a formal review – a quick conversation is enough. If you have a support coordinator, they can help with this too.

In their own words.

"We work really well with each other. There's a lot of give and take in the relationship."

– Pam, Mable client.

If it's not the right fit.

Sometimes a support worker just isn't the right match. People's styles, communication and energy don't always click and that's fine.

If you're with an agency, talk to them about trying a different worker. If you found the worker independently or through a platform, you can end the arrangement and start looking again. Your service agreement (see Chapter 4) sets out how to do this – including the notice required. If you self-manage, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has guidance on managing provider relationships.

It is worth raising concerns early rather than letting them build over time. A support relationship that isn't working well may not improve on its own, but changing it is usually straightforward once you decide to.

Need a different support worker or provider?

Leap in! Connect can help you explore your options, understand your plan and find providers for the support you need. It's included in your Leap in! plan management, at no extra cost. To find out more, call the Leap in! Connect team on **1300 44 78 78**.

Keeping records.

Keep a simple record of what your support worker does and when. It doesn't need to be detailed – just enough to track what's being provided against what's being invoiced. This protects you if there's ever a discrepancy and it's useful evidence at plan reviews to show how you've been using your funding.



07 Your right to safe and respectful support.

What you need to know.

- You have the right to support that is safe, respectful and in your control
- A good support worker respects your choices. Being pressured, controlled or made to feel unsafe is not okay
- If something isn't right, you can raise it, and there are clear steps you can take.

What good support looks like.

Support is meant to work for you. You choose who supports you, how they help and what you work on together. A good support worker listens, respects your decisions and helps you do the things you want to do. They don't take over and they don't make choices for you.

Every NDIS worker has to follow the NDIS Code of Conduct. It applies whether a worker is registered or not, so the same standard holds however you found them. Among other things, the Code says workers must respect your choices and privacy, provide support safely and with skill and take steps to prevent and respond to any form of exploitation, neglect or abuse.

That is what you are entitled to. It is also a useful benchmark – if the support you are getting doesn't match it, you're right to expect better.

Signs something might not be right.

While most support relationships are positive, it helps to know what to look out for so you can act early if something isn't right.

Some things are not okay in a support relationship. For example:

- Being pressured to spend your funding a certain way, or on things you don't want
- Being asked to pay for things that aren't yours to pay for, or to hand over gifts, loans or extra cash
- Being asked to approve hours or sign timesheets for support that wasn't provided
- Being discouraged from speaking to your family, friends, plan manager or support coordinator
- Being made to feel you can't say no or that you'll lose your support if you speak up
- Being kept out of decisions that are about you
- Feeling unsafe, uncomfortable or not listened to.

Some of this may be abuse, neglect or exploitation, even when it isn't obvious. If any of it is happening, it's not something you have to put up with.

What you can do.

If something doesn't feel right, you have options. You don't have to be certain first, and you don't have to work it out on your own.

Start with whoever you engaged the worker through. This is often the quickest way to sort something out.

If you found the worker through an agency, tell the agency. They have a complaints process and can look into it or arrange a different worker.

If you engaged them through a platform, report it through the platform. Mable, for example, has a Trust and Safety team you can reach by phone, email or online form, along with tools to block and report a worker. Mable looks into reports and, for serious matters, reports them to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

If you contracted directly with the worker, there is no organisation in between. Raise it with them if it feels safe to, or use the steps outlined here.

If it isn't dealt with properly, you can take it further. You can also start here if you would rather not go back to the worker or provider.

- Talk to someone you trust – a family member, a friend, your support coordinator or the Leap in! Crew on 1300 05 78 78
- Contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission on 1800 035 544 – it is free, and you can ask someone to help you make a complaint about a worker
- Call the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline on 1800 880 052 if you or someone you know has experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation – free and confidential, and they can help you find an advocate.

Your safety comes first. If you don't feel safe or comfortable, go straight to the NDIS Commission or the Hotline. In an emergency, or if you are ever in danger, call 000.

An independent advocate can speak up with you or on your behalf, at no cost to you. If you would like this kind of support, the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline can help you find one.

Changing or ending a support arrangement is your right, and doing so does not affect your NDIS Plan or your funding. If you are not sure what to do, the Leap in! Crew can talk it through with you.



More info on this topic.

NDIS Code of Conduct

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission: Making a complaint

Leap in! Knowledge Centre



08
More info and next steps.

There's a lot in this guide and you don't need to take it all in at once. Support workers are one part of your plan and finding the right fit can take time. Come back to it whenever you need to.

Whatever your next step – finding a support worker, getting to know your funding or sorting out something that isn't working – here is where to go.

Leap in! – Call 1300 05 78 78, email crew@leapin.com.au or visit leapin.com.au for help with your plan, your funding or finding support.

Leap in! Connect – helps you understand your plan and find providers so you can get supports in place. Call 1300 44 78 78, email crew@leapin.com.au or visit leapin.com.au/find-supports.

Leap in! 'Understand Your Plan' sessions – Free for anyone on the NDIS. Book through leapin.com.au.

Mable – Browse support worker profiles at mable.com.au. Leap in! and Mable are both part of the Attain Healthtech group.

Mable Can-Do guides – Practical guides showing what support workers can help with, from the gym to live music to creative interests.

NDIS website – ndis.gov.au for the latest on reforms, the NDIS Pricing Schedule and the NDIS support lists.

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission – ndiscommission.gov.au for worker screening, provider registration and making a complaint about a provider or worker.

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline – Call 1800 880 052 for free, confidential support if you or someone you know has experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation. They can also help you find an advocate.

Leap in!

Call **1300 05 78 78**
Email **crew@leapin.com.au**
Visit **leapin.com.au**

L! people BEFORE profit guarantee



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.

Attain healthtech

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

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