



National Disability Insurance Scheme

Supporting young children and their families early, to reach their full potential

November 2020 | Version 1.0 | [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)



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1. Introduction

1.1 Improving the NDIS

We want to strengthen the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Community and sector consultation is important to us.

In our [Participant Service Charter](#), we committed to empowering participants by including people with disability and the community to help us develop and test our processes.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has released a suite of discussion papers. We want your feedback about these papers:

1. Consultation paper: access and eligibility policy for independent assessments
2. Consultation paper: planning policy for personalised budgets and plan flexibility
3. **Consultation paper: supporting young children and families early, to reach their full potential**

A full report outlining the research, recommendations and background on the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) reset is also available for stakeholders interested in understand the detailed project activities.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has also released an Information Paper to explain the proposed changes to the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (the NDIS Act) and what these changes will mean for participants. This paper is called 'Improving the National Disability Insurance Scheme – DSS information paper'.

We look forward to hearing your views on the future of the NDIS.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA or the Agency) is having an open discussion about the way it supports young children and their families.

We want to hear from families, carers and the disability, early childhood and education sector on how we can deliver a more evidence based, high quality and timely approach to supporting families with young children.

The NDIA developed the current NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention approach (the ECEI approach) in 2016 as the first national approach to early childhood intervention, as the NDIS was rolling out across Australia.

It acknowledges the early years as important in a child's development and supports children with developmental delay, disability and their families to achieve their best outcomes.

More than 70,000 young children and their families in Australia are now benefiting from supports delivered through the ECEI approach.

We also know families need the NDIA to have well defined and simple processes. They need clear understanding of where to go to get help, to reduce the confusion and frustration that may be felt during what can be an uncertain time.

To better understand the issues, and resolve them, the NDIA consulted to determine how we can continue to improve the way we support young children and families.

We found there was opportunity to improve on delivery of best practice, as inconsistent implementation can limit young children and their families getting the benefit from the best outcomes.

We consulted with families and carers, members of the early childhood sector, early childhood experts, the NDIS Early Childhood partners and providers of early childhood services.

The review found that the implementation of the ECEI approach needed to be reset so that it fully delivers on the original strategic intention (which remains valid) of ensuring children and families can identify and receive best practice supports, and in particular that young children can benefit early from intervention supports. As we reset the implementation of the ECEI approach, we will build on what we know is working well.

The consultation has informed 23 proposed recommendations to reset the ECEI approach, which we will outline in this paper.

1.2 How we plan to support young children and families in the future

The implementation reset of the ECEI approach and this consultation paper is just the first step of how we plan to improve the support families and young children receive through the NDIS. Starting in late 2021 we aim to gradually build on the existing national approach to deliver a world leading model that delivers evidence based, high quality and timely supports to young children and families.

Stage	Description	Timeline
1	Release and consult on ECEI Implementation Reset	November 2020 to early 2021
2	Release and consult on interventions for children on the autism spectrum paper	December 2020 or January 2021 to early 2021
3	Commence implementation planning and service design of recommendations relating to improved guidance on developmental delay definitions and autism supports	December 2020 to early 2021
4	Implement changes relating to improved guidance on developmental delay definitions and autism supports	Early 2021
5	Finalise remaining ECEI recommendations	Mid 2021

Stage	Description	Timeline
6	Commence implementation planning and service design of new Early Childhood approach	Mid to late 2021
7	Commence implementation of new Early Childhood approach	Late 2021 into 2022

The NDIA will work with families and carers, members of the early childhood sector and key stakeholders over the coming 6 months to consult, design and implement a range of improvements including:

- The commencement of consultation in late 2020 on how independent assessments will be tailored to children under 7 years of age¹, noting the selected tools have been identified in an updated [Tools paper Appendix](#). Many of our Early Childhood partners already undertake assessments with young children, however, we need to understand how their role will change when using independent assessments to support decisions on access to the Scheme and developing plans with funded personalised budgets.
- A consultation paper will be released in December 2020 or January 2021 with new guidance about what is considered ‘reasonable and necessary’ when making decisions around support for children on the autism spectrum. This guidance and paper will be based on evidence found in the [Autism Cooperative Research Centre \(Autism CRC\) 2020 report](#). The Agency will undertake specific consultation with the Autism community and sector to inform the future approach.
- The Agency has commenced work with sector experts to develop improved guidance on thresholds for developmental delay. An information paper outlining the outcomes of this work will be released in early 2021.

1.3 How you can help

Improving the NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention approach (the approach, ECEI approach) is a long-term piece of work that requires significant effort and collaboration with families, carers, early childhood practitioners, providers, the NDIA and our Early Childhood partners.

Before the Agency makes changes to policies, procedures and operational guidelines, we want to make sure the changes will genuinely make a difference to the lives of young children and their families.

¹ The NDIA’s ECEI Approach is currently for young children under the age of 7 years, although the ECEI Reset is proposing to increase the age limit from under 7 to under 9 years of age. However, for the purposes of independent assessments, the age for ECEI remains under 7 years old until the ECEI Reset consultation is finalised and the recommendations approved.

1.3.1 Sharing your personal feedback

This consultation paper outlines the 23 proposed recommendations, identified through the review and consultation and which form the basis of the reset to the ECEI approach.

We are looking for feedback on these recommendations and have developed a series of consultation questions aimed to focus feedback on the areas where consultation is of most value.

The recommendations include processes and systems changes to improve the experience and outcomes for families and young children.

This paper is also available in Easy Read.

To make a submission and give your feedback on this discussion paper:

- Use the submission questions at the back of the paper to guide your response.
- All submissions can be made through the [NDIS website](#).
- Submissions close at 10am ADST Tuesday 23 February 2021.

In addition to this public consultation paper, the NDIA will conduct further engagement and consultation over the next 6 months. We will then use the feedback from the consultation to finalise the recommendations and incorporate them into the service design. The revised Early Childhood approach will be delivered from late 2021.

To help you understand some of the key terms and concepts in this paper, the following definitions have been developed. A full glossary of terms can be found at the end of the document.

1.4 What is early childhood intervention?

Early childhood intervention is the extra support given to young children who need it, early in their life, to help them build their skills so they can take part in everyday activities.

It is especially beneficial for young children who are susceptible to, or experiencing, developmental delay or disability.

It also provides parents and families with knowledge, skills and specialist supports to meet the needs of their child, optimise child development and participate in family and community life.

1.5 What is evidence based best practice?

International research and evidence shows us young children and families gain the best outcomes if the support and services delivered include:

- The family's intimate knowledge and understanding of their child, and the central role they play in the child's life.
- The familiarity of home and community settings to deliver therapy and support, using play, learning, routines and natural interactions.
- The collaboration of family members, friends, carers, educators, therapists and providers working together as a team and sharing their knowledge and experience.
- Built knowledge and understanding of family members, friends, teachers and therapists who spend the most time with the child and have the greatest impact on their development.
- Customisation and respect of cultural, language, social and family values and beliefs.
- Practice of meaningful involvement of children in family, home and community settings.
- Appropriately qualified professionals who deliver high quality, consistent, evidence based best practices.
- Celebration and support of families and children to reach goals, milestones and achievements.

The above best practice principles are based on current evidence and research. Further changes are likely as more research is undertaken within Australia and internationally.

1.6 What is Short Term Early Intervention (STEI)?

Consistent with best practice, Short Term Early Intervention (STEI) is a program of supports delivered by Early Childhood partners that are designed to build a family's capacity to support their child develop skills that will help them take part in daily activities.

Supports can be in the form of group, individual or parent programs, capacity building therapy, and other activities used to build a child or family's capacity in environments familiar to them.

It is delivered by our Early Childhood partners as part of the initial supports they offer families when they first make contact, depending on the needs of the child and the family.

When delivering STEI, the Early Childhood partners get to know and understand the child and family and the impact of the child's developmental delay or disability.

Once the supports are delivered, a child may no longer need the NDIS and will therefore go on to develop their skills through mainstream supports, for example through their school or kindergarten. Some children may also require longer-term supports by becoming a participant in the Scheme.

Case study: Chelsea meets her goals with Short Term Early Intervention

Six-year-old Chelsea (not her real name) received Short Term Early Intervention support from her local Early Childhood partner. This allowed Chelsea to do activities to develop her concentration, attention and language skills.

The Early Childhood partner was able to put supports in place to help Chelsea, which she only needed for a short time. In fact, Chelsea's language skills have developed so much, her school principal recently presented her with an award for reading.

Chelsea's Short Term Early Intervention supports had such a positive impact on her, she has not needed ongoing support or access to an individually funded NDIS plan.

2. Improving the NDIS

The NDIS provides a single, national approach to provide support for people with disability, their families and carers. It is designed to provide funded support for people with a significant and permanent disability. It also gives them choice and control over who and how their disability related services and supports are delivered and how they want to pursue their goals.

The specific ECEI approach is a model of delivery differentiated from the general Scheme. It enables young children and their families to receive the right level and mix of best practice support, at the right time and for the right duration, through a family centred approach.

2.1 Areas for improvement

The implementation of the current ECEI approach, despite its intentions of being consistent with best practice, needs resetting to make it more specific for young children and their families, and genuinely gets the best outcomes.

Increasing understanding around the ECEI approach, (i.e. what is evidence based, best practice and early intervention, and how they translate to better outcomes for children), means families and the broader early childhood sector would clearly see the pathway to support.

This affects the:

- speed at which early intervention support is delivered
- quality of information families are given to help make decisions about the right mix of supports for their child, and
- quality of support and services delivered to the child.

Some families and young children that are experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability are not receiving appropriate, best practice support early enough. This is creating long-term impacts that are otherwise avoidable.

Confusion about the roles and importance of the programs and supports delivered by other organisations in the broader early childhood sector, means families believe that an individual NDIS funded plan is the only or best option.

This mindset discounts the local and state/territory services and programs that have been proven to deliver significant benefits for children and families.

Young children who have received support early and have met their outcomes or goals, should celebrate their success and be supported to transition out of the Scheme. Yet, we are finding that very few children who no longer need the Scheme, are successfully supported to transition to the next stage of their life. Low transition rates potentially undermine a number of key insurance principles of the Scheme.

The NDIS is available for every eligible Australian when they need it. We take a lifetime approach, investing in people early to build their capacity to pursue their goals. As outlined in Section 25 of the NDIS Act (2013), the purpose of early intervention is to reduce the “future need for supports in relation to disability” by helping people to achieve greater outcomes later in life in terms of participation in education, community, and the workforce.

2.2 Planned improvements

The rights of the child, recognising the important role the family plays, guide the proposed reset of the ECEI approach. It frames the approach in terms of evidence based, best practices, specific to young children.

The main aim of resetting the implementation of the approach to supporting families and young children, is to enable it to:

- fully support evidence based, best practice
- focus on and support the role and influence of parents and caregivers, and
- support children to participate meaningfully in all aspects of their lives.

The future state of the Early Childhood approach will see:

- young children supported through the Early Childhood approach for longer by increasing the age limit from under seven to under nine years of age
- a more family centred, teamwork approach to support children
- greater access to support earlier, without the need for diagnosis, eligibility or access to the Scheme
- more tailored and graduated pathways with a mix of best practice support options from across the broader early childhood sector
- greater clarity and transparency around the approach, and in decision making
- more equity and consistency of decision making for all families regardless of location, background or socioeconomic status
- culturally respectful and customised approaches
- better support for young children and families who have met their goals and outcomes and are transitioning to the next stage of life
- more genuine and meaningful participation for children in their family and community, and
- greater understanding of the broader early childhood sector and the importance of all players.

Case study: Tiana transitions out of the Scheme after meeting her goals

Tiana (not her real name), aged four years, had challenges with social skills, following instructions and regulating her emotions. Tiana's maternal and child health nurse referred the family to the local Early Childhood partner. The partner supported the family to request access to the NDIS for Tiana, and connected them with a local playgroup and story time sessions at a nearby library.

Once Tiana met access to the NDIS, the Early Childhood partner supported the family to connect with their key worker, James. James regularly came to the local playgroup with Tiana and her mum. He helped Tiana's parents to implement strategies at home to assist with Tiana's social skills. At first James visited the family at home weekly. As Tiana's parents began to feel more confident and were implementing the strategies in between sessions, James reduced his visits to once a month.

After two years in the Scheme, Tiana now has friends from the playgroup and at her new school. She is able to follow instructions and gets along well with her teacher and class. Tiana's parents feel confident in supporting Tiana's development. Tiana's mum has developed friendships with other parents, and can talk with them for support.

James and Tiana's family recently celebrated that Tiana no longer needs access to the NDIS. The Early Childhood partner and James supported the family to transition out of the NDIS. Through this transition the family connected with a local swimming pool, which she now attends after school and where she is making new friends.

3. Recommendations

The proposed recommendations include changes to key operational guidelines and practices, and include longer-term complementary recommendations. The proposed recommendations address the three stages of the early childhood pathway as well as following overarching areas:

- early support, including whether a child is eligible for the NDIS or not
- planning and implementation of best practice supports, and
- support to transition when ready for the next stage of life.

3.1 Overarching recommendations

Recommendation 1: Explain, rename and promote the NDIS Early Childhood Approach – and stop using the term “gateway” – so families understand and follow a clear pathway with a mix of early childhood support options available.

Recommendation 2: Clearly and consistently, communicate the intent of the new Early Childhood approach and the Agency’s support for best practice, so families understand how the approach informs positive outcomes for young children.

Recommendation 3: Develop and publish new Early Childhood-specific Operating Guidelines – so our decision-making processes and best practice evidence are transparent and implemented consistently by partners and NDIS planners.

Recommendation 4: Create a distinct delegate/planner workforce that is exclusively focused on young children and their families, to improve the way families are supported.

Recommendation 5: Continue to work with federal, state and territory governments to identify gaps and strengthen the role of mainstream services, so all young children receive support from the appropriate system when they need it.

Recommendation 6: Consider a range of mechanisms that will enhance compliance of providers with the *NDIS Practice Standards on Early Childhood Supports* and increase awareness by families of providers that adopt that best practice framework.

Recommendation 7: Improve sector wide understanding of how to identify families and young children experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability and tailor culturally appropriate services and resources so they can benefit from early interventions support.

Recommendation 8: Implement tailored methods of delivering supports for young children and their families living in remote and very remote areas to strengthen access to services.

Recommendation 9: Implement a tailored Independent Assessments (IAs) approach for young children to support consistent access and planning decisions.²

- Specifically, we are planning to:
 - Commission Early Childhood partners to administer Independent Assessments for young children rather than use a separate IA Assessor workforce
 - Use IAs for young children above one years of age
 - Use the following tools (as outlined in an appendix to the previously published [Independent Assessment Tools Paper](#)):
 - Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) **OR** Ages and Stages Questionnaire -Talking About Raising Aboriginal Kids (ASQ-TRAK)
 - PEDI-CAT (Speedy) **OR** PEDI-CAT ASD (Speedy)
 - Vineland-3 Comprehensive (Interview Form)
 - Young Children's Participation and Environment Measure (YC-PEM) for children under 6 years
 - Participation and Environment Measure - Children and Youth (PEM-CY) for children 5+ years.

3.2 Recommendations for early support (including NDIS access)

Recommendation 10: Increase Early Childhood partner capacity to identify and help young children and families from hard-to-reach communities or those experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability, so they can connect to – and benefit from – early intervention supports.

Recommendation 11: Increase Early Childhood partner capacity to connect families and young children to local support networks and services in their community.

Recommendation 12: Increase Early Childhood partner capacity to provide Short Term Early Intervention (STEI) support to eligible young children and families for longer.

Recommendation 13: Clarify the interpretation of the developmental delay criteria under Section 25 of the NDIS Act (2013) to improve the consistency and equity of Agency decision-making. Establish thresholds for key criteria using Independent Assessments.³

Recommendation 14: Increase the age limit for children supported under the Early Childhood Approach from 'under 7' to 'under 9' years of age, to help children and families receive family centred support throughout the transition to primary school.

² The NDIA's ECEI Approach is currently for young children under the age of 7 years, although the ECEI Reset is proposing to increase the age limit from under 7 to under 9 years of age. However, for the purposes of independent assessments, the age for ECEI remains under 7 years old until the ECEI Reset consultation is finalised and the recommendations approved.

³ Specifically, establish clear definitions and thresholds for the criteria 'substantial delay in functional capacity' and 'extended duration'.

Recommendation 15: Use the early intervention criteria, under Section 25 of the NDIS Act (2013) to make decisions around access to the NDIS for all young children.

3.3 Recommendations for planning and implementation

Recommendation 16: Increase Early Childhood partner capacity and flexibility to tailor the level of support provided to families to implement a child's plan and more quickly connect to the right supports and services.

Recommendation 17: Introduce a 'capacity building support in natural settings' item in the NDIS Price Guide to encourage families and early childhood providers to prioritise supports delivered at home or other natural settings.

Case study: Matt benefits from delivery of therapy in a natural setting

At 4 years old, Matt (not his real name) had challenges communicating his wants and needs, building friendships and regulating his emotions. He didn't have friends at childcare and usually played alone. He often struggled when his parents dropped him off to the centre. Matt's childcare educator referred Matt's family to their local Early Childhood partner. The partner supported the family to request access to the NDIS.

Once Matt met access to the NDIS, the Early Childhood partner connected the family with key worker, Julie. Julie visited the family at home, attended childcare with Matt, and sometimes went with the family to Auskick. Julie focussed on supporting Matt's social skills at childcare and Auskick, as well as his relationships with his siblings at home. Julie let Matt's parents know what strategies were in place at childcare and supported them to implement the same strategies at home and Auskick.

Matt now has a group of 5 friends at childcare and a close friend at Auskick who he loves playing with. He also enjoys going to childcare, and can use words to communicate his feelings. Matt still needs some assistance in a few areas of his development, however he now loves playing with his siblings. Matt's parents say it has been so valuable for Julie to work with the whole family together at home.

Recommendation 18: Publish new guidance about what is considered 'reasonable and necessary' when making decisions around support for children on the autism spectrum, based on evidence found in the Autism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) 2020 report.

Recommendation 19: Empower Early Childhood partners to provide families with clear advice about the best providers for their child and situation so families can make more informed choices.

Recommendation 20: Undertake further ongoing research and study on the outcomes of young children after receiving early intervention support, to inform future policy and operational changes.

3.4 Recommendations for transitions

Recommendation 21: Improve the existing annual progress review process for young children, to support families to celebrate the achievement of reaching their goals and outcomes, and transition out of NDIS supports to the next stage of their lives.

Recommendation 22: Ensure providers are using the recently introduced 'provider outcomes report', as a mandatory measure to evaluate the effectiveness of their supports and services.

Recommendation 23: Offer families of young children a 'transition out' plan for up to 3 months' duration, to support them to transition to the next stage of their lives, if they are no longer eligible for the NDIS.

4. Consultation questions

The NDIA is working to finalise the design of the new Early Childhood approach. We are committed to working with families, carers, people with disability, the disability community and other stakeholders to get these changes right.

We would value your feedback on the proposed improvements to the NDIS Early Childhood approach. You can provide general comments on the paper, or answer the following questions. Feel free to respond to all of them or just a few.

4.1 General questions

- Do you have any specific feedback in relation to:
 - the increased focus on STEI outside of access to the Scheme
 - the proposed increase in age range for the EC Approach from under 7 to under 9 years of age,
 - the desire to see more successful transitions from the Scheme to the next state of life.
- How can we help families and carers better understand some of the terms the NDIA, and Early Childhood partners use such as:
 - best practice
 - capacity building
 - natural settings, and/or
 - evidence.

4.2 Support with achieving goals

- What is the best way for us to check in with families and carers on how their child is tracking to meet the goals for their child?
- Would a mandatory early childhood provider report developed between families and their provider be useful for tracking against their goals?
- How can we better support families to connect with services that are either funded or available to everyone in the community?
- How can we make the process of transitioning out of the NDIS something to celebrate?

4.3 Targeted support

- If you live in a remote or very remote part of Australia, what are some ideas you have on how we can get early childhood supports to work in your community or communities like yours?
- How can our Early Childhood partners and mainstream services best support peer-to-peer connections?
- Are you interested in helping us co-design an approach that would make peer-to-peer networks easier to find and join for people?
- How can we better reach and get support to young children and families who experience vulnerability and remove barriers so they can receive outcomes in line with other children and families?

4.4 Tailored Independent Assessments (IAs) approach

It is recommended that the Agency implement a tailored Independent Assessments (IAs) approach for young children to support consistent access and planning decisions. Specifically, we are planning to:

- Commission Early Childhood partners to administer Independent Assessments for young children rather than use a separate IA Assessor workforce
- Use IAs for young children above 1 years of age
- Use the following tools (as outlined in an appendix to the previously published [Independent Assessment Tools Paper](#)):
 - Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) **OR** Ages and Stages Questionnaire -Talking About Raising Aboriginal Kids (ASQ-TRAK)
 - PEDI-CAT (Speedy) **OR** PEDI-CAT ASD (Speedy)
 - Vineland-3 Comprehensive (Interview Form)
 - Young Children's Participation and Environment Measure (YC-PEM) for children under 6 years
 - Participation and Environment Measure - Children and Youth (PEM-CY) for children 5+ years
- Do you have any feedback on this recommendation and/or any suggestions on how this proposed approach would work best for young children and their families/carers?

4.5 Greater transparency on providers of best practice

It is recommended, from the previous consultation leading to this paper, that a range of mechanisms be considered to enhance providers' compliance with best practice standards and to provide greater transparency on which providers, both registered and unregistered, are following Early Childhood Intervention best practice.

- What mechanisms do you think could help achieve this?
- Who would be best placed to lead the development of, and manage, any additional complementary mechanisms?
- What do you think of the following ideas for potential mechanisms? What are the benefits or concerns with these potential mechanisms?
 - Provide greater information to families about the benefits of using providers registered by the NDIS Commission.
 - Establish an industry-led 'best practice accreditation system'.
 - Establish a 'quality feedback / rating system'.
 - Make registration with the NDIS Commission mandatory for all providers operating in the EC space.
 - Require self and plan-managed participants in the new Early Childhood approach to use only registered providers.

5. Glossary

Term	Definition
Access	Term used when eligibility for the NDIS is confirmed as a result of meeting the Access criteria set out in the Act and Rules.
Applied Tables of Support (APTOS)	Applied principles that have been developed in a range of other service systems to assist governments to further define the funding responsibilities of the NDIS.
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	A condition that affects how a person thinks, feels, interacts with others, and experiences their environment. It is a lifelong disability that starts when a person is born and stays with them into old age. Every Autistic person is different to every other and hence why it is described as a 'spectrum'.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)	People from other cultures outside Australia, or people who speak a language other than English.
Delegate / NDIA Planner	An NDIA staff member who can exercise or perform legislative powers and functions, such as making Access decisions or Plan approvals, according to the particular level of delegation they hold. To approve an ECEI plan, a Delegate must be ECEI skill tagged by completing ECEI training delivered by the ECS Learning & Development team.
Developmental Delay (DD)	<p>A specific description under the NDIS Act (s.9) for a delay in the development of a child under 6 years of age that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental and physical impairments; andb) results in substantial reduction in functional capacity in one or more of the following areas of major life activity:<ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) self-care;(ii) receptive and expressive language;(iii) cognitive development;(iv) motor development; andc) results in the need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services that are of extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

Term	Definition
Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Approach	This is the current approach delivered by the NDIS to support children aged under seven years with developmental delay or disability and their families/carers to achieve better long-term outcomes through support services in their local community, regardless of diagnosis. The ECEI Approach is based on the principles of best practice in ECI and allows for access to timely, targeted and individualised early childhood intervention supports for children.
Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)	The services and supports that children with developmental delay or disability and their families receive during the early years, when the child is developing most rapidly. ECI is delivered for children and families by qualified early childhood intervention teams of allied health professionals and early childhood educators. These teams will usually include allied health professionals such as speech pathologists and occupational therapists but don't usually name the therapy type as child development needs have to be supported holistically.
Early Childhood Partners (EC Partners)	Early Childhood Partners (or EC Partners) deliver services and supports on behalf of the NDIA as Partners in the Community (PiTC) to participants and non-participants under 7 years old and their families/carers. EC Partners have teams of allied health professionals and early childhood educators who are contracted to deliver the ECEI Approach for children and families in the community. The term EC Partner may refer to either the Partner organisation or the staff working within that organisation.
Eligibility Reassessment	An NDIS process undertaken where it is identified that a participant may not meet the eligibility requirements; may need their access status changed from early intervention to disability; or may need their access status changed from disability to early intervention. An EC Partner or NDIA planner completes an Eligibility Reassessment Checklist at every plan review, to determine if a referral for an Eligibility Reassessment is required.
General Scheme	Reference to the approach for participants outside of the ECEI cohort
Goals	Statements to describe the objectives and aspirations of the participant and/or their parent /carer.
Independent Advisory Council (Council)	A Council that advises the Board of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) on the most important issues affecting participants, carers and families. The NDIA Board must consider all advice provided by Council when performing its duties as a governing body of the NDIS.
Independent Assessment (IA)	The NDIA will introduce Independent Assessments in 2021 that will provide measurable insights into a person's capacity to manage daily tasks and activities, through the use of internationally recognised and accepted assessment tools. Independent Assessments use a combination of informal observations and standardised questionnaire assessments to gain a holistic view of the individual's functional capacity as well as personal circumstances (including environment) across different settings and times.

Term	Definition
Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC)	A component of the National Disability Insurance Scheme that aims to build the capacity of people with disability in Australia to achieve their goals and for them to be included in all aspects of community life.
Initial Supports	Initial Supports are provided by Early Childhood partners at the first point of contact with families/carers of children under 7 years of age. The intention of Initial Supports is to assist children with delayed development or disability and their family/carers to access support to learn and develop to their full potential, including to connect with mainstream and community services or to request access to the NDIS if required.
Key Worker	A Key Worker is an early childhood intervention professional such as an Early Childhood Special Educator, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Psychologist or other paediatric allied health professional. The Key Worker is the main person who is working alongside the family/carer to support the child's progress towards plan goals. The Key Worker liaises with their team in the child's life (which can include the parent/carers as well as occupational therapists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers and specialist early childhood educators) and other services (e.g. Early Childhood Education and Care centres) working together when working with the family/carer to support the child.
Local Area Coordinator (LAC)	Local Area Coordinators (or LACs) deliver services and supports on behalf of the NDIA as Partners in the Community (PiTC) to participants and non-participants aged 7 years old and above. LACs supports people with a disability, both participants and non-participants to engage in their community by linking to mainstream and funded supports. An LAC assists people with a disability to actively connect and participant as a valued member of their community. The term LAC may refer to either the Partner organisation or the staff working within that organisation.
Mainstream Services	Goods, services, supports and assistance available to the Australian population, for example, health, mental health, early childhood development, school education, justice, housing, child protection and family support and employment services. Mainstream services are the first option for service provision for all NDIS participants. For children mainstream services include child health services, playgroup, childcare, early childhood education centres (pre-school, kindergarten).
Natural Settings	Places where children learn and develop everyday abilities and skills, including the home, community, and early childhood education settings.
National Disability Insurance Agency	An independent Commonwealth entity that is responsible for implementing and managing the NDIS.

Term

Definition

(NDIA or the Agency)

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS or the Scheme)

An insurance support scheme of the Australian Government that funds costs associated with disability.