

Psychosocial Disability Access Factsheet 5: NDIS and other services supporting your mental health

This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets on access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for people with psychosocial disability.

This factsheet explains the services that are available if you cannot access the NDIS, and how the NDIS and mental health services work together to support your recovery if you become an NDIS participant with psychosocial disability.

The role of the NDIS

The NDIS provides funding to eligible people with disability to gain more time with family and friends, greater independence, access to new skills, jobs, or volunteering in their community, and an improved quality of life.

We also support people with disability or mental health conditions who do not meet the NDIS eligibility criteria to receive supports outside of the NDIS. We link any individuals who want support with their mental health conditions to services within the community.

It is estimated there are 700,000 Australians living with mental health conditions who would benefit from psychosocial services. Around 290,000 of these Australians need a higher level of mental health support at different times in their life. Not all 290,000 who need support will be eligible to become NDIS participants.

The NDIS does not replace community mental health services or treatments offered through the health system.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is committed to working with mainstream systems to deliver a range of high-quality services for people with mental health conditions.

Mainstream and community supports

There are services outside the NDIS that all individuals can use, whether or not they have a disability resulting from a mental health condition. You can get supports from other services funded by the government like health, mental health, and education, this is called mainstream supports.

There are also other services through community organisations and supports from local councils. We call these community supports.

We can't fund a support if it's better provided by one of these other services. Visit the [Mainstream and community supports](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

NDIS responsibility

People with mental health conditions or disability have the same rights to access to services as everyone else. It is a shared responsibility. All government systems play a critical role in supporting people with disability and mental health conditions.

For people with psychosocial disability, the NDIS is responsible for ongoing functional capacity building supports, and supports for daily living when needed. A goal of the NDIS is full inclusion of people with disability, including psychosocial disability, in community.

The NDIS alone cannot meet all of a person's needs, we need a truly inclusive community to do this. Governments across Australia work together to make it clear what the NDIS and other government services are responsible for.

Read the examples in [Mental health and psychosocial disability](#) on the NDIS website for more information.

How the NDIS works with mainstream services

We create partnerships with mainstream services and the local community. This creates understanding about how the NDIA and other services work together to address gaps in services.

We work with governments to achieve a strong NDIS next to a quality mental health system, so that people with mental health conditions can receive the support they need.

Local area coordinators and how the NDIS supports community inclusion

We help people who may not be eligible for the NDIS to get information about services in their community.

Support is available from [local area coordinators](#) to help people access supports in the mainstream and community sector.

Local area coordination means the NDIS can help every individual find practical support who may need it. It is for anyone who has or might acquire a disability, and people with mental health conditions.

Local area coordinator partners are local groups working with the NDIA. Their staff help people access the NDIS and connect with mainstream services or community supports. Visit the [Contact the NDIS](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

Local area coordinators have strong connections in community and can help people connect with supports in their local area including community groups, recreational activities such as sporting clubs, performing arts groups and other social networks.

You can use the NDIS website or contact the NDIA to find a local area coordinator in your area (contact information is at the end of the factsheet). Visit the [Partners in the community](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

Psychosocial recovery coaches and how the NDIS and mainstream services work together to support participants

Psychosocial recovery coaches (recovery coaches) also have knowledge of community and mainstream services. Recovery coaches help people with psychosocial disability connect with health and mental health services outside the NDIS, to make sure all services work well together and stay connected.

Services that support a participant with their psychosocial disability should be integrated, align with a person's recovery plan, and stay connected along the person's recovery journey. [Factsheet 3](#) has more information about psychosocial recovery (also known as personal recovery) in the NDIS.

Your recovery coach may work with your clinical mental health team and other services to develop a shared recovery plan.

Recovery coaches can:

- offer a lived or learned experience of recovery perspectives that work in with other systems of supports. This includes collaborating with other NDIS-funded providers to make sure supports are aimed at recovery
- help to connect and maintain engagement with the health and mental health service systems
- provide support to build your capacity to access and engage with different service systems, including:
 - health
 - housing
 - education
 - employment
 - financial supports
 - family supports
- support connection with peer support groups and self-help networks
- facilitate a coordinated response between services. This would look like working with the participant to set up shared planning and ensure coordinated responses between services like:
 - mental health
 - physical health
 - justice
 - housing.

More information is available in the [Psychosocial Recovery Coach information](#) factsheet on the NDIS website.

What to do if you believe the NDIA has made a wrong decision about NDIS eligibility

If you don't agree with the decision that you are not eligible for the NDIS, you can contact the NDIA. The NDIA can help explain the decision and what the options or next steps might be.

You can also ask for an internal review. Another staff member, who wasn't involved in the original decision, will check if the NDIA made the right decision. You need to ask for an internal review within 3 months after receiving the decision. Learn more about [reviewing decisions](#) on the NDIS website.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)

You can also ask the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) to review a decision. This is called an external review. There cannot be an external review until after the internal review decision has been made.

You can contact the NDIA to discuss any concerns you have about the process. You can also make a complaint if you are not happy with any part of the process.

For more information about asking for an external review of an NDIS decision, check out the [Administrative Appeals Tribunal](#) website.

Accessing the NDIS to top up a mental health care plan

The NDIS does not fund clinical treatment services or therapy to address mental health symptoms. It funds ongoing functional capacity building supports and supports for daily living when needed.

The NDIS does not require that you have a [Medicare mental health care plan](#), and it cannot 'top up' a Medicare mental health care plan by funding any out of pocket costs or additional sessions, or cover any other out of pocket costs of treatment in the health system. If the only support you need is treatment, you are unlikely to be eligible for the NDIS.

For example, you may not be eligible for the NDIS if:

- your impairment is temporary
- you are still being treated
- there are remaining treatment options that are worth pursuing.

Generally, we'll consider whether your impairment is likely to be permanent after all available and appropriate evidence-based treatment options have been pursued. Visit the [Do you meet the disability requirements?](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

Participants can however access both psychology supports through the NDIS, if they meet reasonable and necessary criteria, and psychology treatment through Medicare.

NDIS funded psychology support

The NDIS funds psychology support for eligible participants if it meets [reasonable and necessary criteria](#).

NDIS funded psychosocial disability supports are non-clinical supports. They must be focused on improving the functional ability for a participant to achieve their goals and on improving social and economic participation.

Medicare funded psychology support

Medicare funded mental health supports generally relate to clinical diagnosis and treatments.

There is no requirement for an NDIS participant to use or exhaust Medicare funded services before receiving psychology supports funded in their NDIS plan.

How the NDIS and Medicare work together

Supports provided through Medicare and the NDIS are usually for different purposes, however, they can work side by side to enable the participant to achieve their goals. For example:

- NDIS funded psychology supports could work to address disability related barriers. It may also build capacity for participants to engage in social situations and participate in employment.
- Medicare funded psychology treatment sessions may be focused on clinical treatment such as ongoing counselling and medication management which is not funded by the NDIS.

Please visit the Our Guidelines [Mental health supports](#) page on the NDIS website for examples of how we would and would not fund psychology supports.

Please visit the Our Guidelines [Reasonable and Necessary supports](#) page on the NDIS website for more information on the reasonable and necessary criteria.

Early clinical treatment services for people with recent experiences of severe mental health issues

As agreed between Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, early clinical treatment services for people experiencing mental health challenges are offered by mainstream services outside the NDIS.

National Disability Insurance Agency

[ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)

Telephone 1800 800 110

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