

Psychosocial Disability Access Factsheet 1

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

The purpose of this factsheet is to provide information for people at the beginning of their NDIS journey.

It may help in explaining how the NDIS works with other government systems to support people who experience mental health issues, whether to request NDIS access, and what is involved with the application process.

This resource can be used by mental health service providers, other support people and individuals to better understand the NDIS [eligibility requirements](#).

How the NDIS supports psychosocial disability

The NDIS is designed to support people with disability to increase their independence and fully participate in community and working life.

The NDIS can also connect anyone with disability to services in their local community.

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.

To be eligible to access the NDIS, a person with a psychosocial disability will have an **impairment** that has resulted in disability. Visit the [Do you meet the disability requirements](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

To meet the NDIS disability requirements, you must have a psychosocial disability attributable to an impairment that is, or is likely to be, **permanent**. This means that you have a mental health condition that has resulted in a psychosocial impairment that will likely remain across your lifetime.

You may also be eligible if you need some supports now to reduce your future need for support. Visit the [Am I eligible](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

[Factsheet 3: Lifetime support and recovery for psychosocial disability in the NDIS](#) explains what it means for a person with psychosocial disability to have an impairment that is **likely to be permanent**.

The NDIS does not replace community mental health services or treatment services provided through the health system.

The NDIA wants all people with psychosocial disability in the NDIS to be supported in their personal **recovery** and to live a life that has meaning for them. They will have access to supports that improve **social and economic participation**.

The NDIS can help people who experience psychosocial disability or mental health issues in two different ways

NDIS linkage and connection support

The NDIS can help all individuals with disability or mental health condition/s to connect with other government services, and local community-based supports. This includes doctors, community groups, sporting clubs, support groups, libraries and schools, as well as providing information about what support is provided by each state and territory government.

We do this through an NDIS Partner in the local community known as a local area coordinator.

To find this support please visit [LAC Partners in the Community](#) on the NDIS website.

NDIS funded support

Not all people with a mental health condition will require support from the NDIS.

The NDIS is for people with mental health conditions who have a psychosocial impairment that is likely to be permanent. This means that a person's:

- recovery journey is likely to be lifelong

- impairment/s from mental health condition/s have a significant impact on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

The NDIS calls this psychosocial disability.

The NDIS is designed to fund ongoing psychosocial recovery supports that focus on a person's functional ability.

This includes supports that enable people with psychosocial disability to:

- build their capacity
- increase their levels of independence to undertake daily living activities
- be part of their community
- participate in social and economic life.

Examples of NDIS funded psychosocial support include:

- skill development such as capacity building supports to support you with accessing education or work, building skills and qualifications, and developing work goals
- capacity building supports to help you build more independence and support decision making, for example, help with managing day-to-day tasks, looking after your home, regular help to manage health care needs such as support to manage taking your medication, cooking and eating well
- social skills development to help you build relationships with family and friends, or building social connections and confidence in accessing your community
- building life skills including confidence, resilience, and taking care of your health and **wellbeing**, such as a recovery coach
- social and recreation support if you need help to join social activities, sporting clubs or community groups
- help to find somewhere to live and to manage your rental or home ownership responsibilities, where you need this support because of your disability
- support from allied health professionals like psychologists or mental health occupational therapists, that are directly related to helping you manage or reduce the functional impact of your psychosocial disability. This could include:
 - social and communication skills development
 - behaviour intervention and support.
- help to plan and coordinate your NDIS supports with your mental health treatment and services, such as a recovery coach
- help to transition to a new life stage, where you need this support because of your disability.

An NDIS plan will also integrate with services provided by other government systems which you need to help with your mental health.

To receive funded support from the NDIS you must first apply to access the NDIS and meet the eligibility requirements.

Factsheets 2 to 4 provide more information about eligibility and access.

- [Factsheet 2: Impairment and psychosocial disability in the NDIS](#)
- [Factsheet 3: Lifetime support and recovery for psychosocial disability in the NDIS](#)
- [Factsheet 4: Functional capacity and mental health conditions](#)

Supporting recovery for lifelong impairments

The NDIS will support a strengths-focused and person-centred approach to developing recovery plans with a participant.

NDIS funding offers support to help the participant pursue both short-term and long-term goals of social and economic participation. These goals may change over time, and the plans and supports can also change as needed.

We recognise that mental health conditions are often episodic and fluctuating. This means they may change over time.

We understand there is a need for flexibility in planning and support to respond to changes in need.

Clinical and Community Mental Health Services

The NDIS does not replace community-based support or medical/clinical treatment and interventions for people with mental health condition/s. Medical and clinical care should not stop once a person is an NDIS participant. For a person's supports to work well, all services need to work together to achieve the best outcomes.

The NDIS can provide support to increase independence and social and economic participation, and to be part of your community. The NDIS works with other service systems to deliver a range of non-NDIS high-quality services required by people with a mental health condition/s.

Please also see [factsheets 2–5](#) for further information.

Accessing supports and applying to the NDIS

If you already receive mental health services, start by talking to your current service provider or treating professional about which type of support best suits your needs, and consider whether the NDIS is for you by reviewing the [eligibility requirements](#).

If you decide to apply for the NDIS, the best way to apply is by contacting [your nearest local area coordinator or local NDIS office](#) who can help you through the application process and be a point of contact.

Visit [Applying to the NDIS](#) on the NDIS website for more information.

You can also visit the [reimagine today](#) website for information about mental health, recovery and applying to the NDIS. This resource also features community hubs with resources specific for families and carers, First Nations, CALD, LGBTIQ+, and remote communities. All the resources were co-designed with people with psychosocial disability from these communities.

The Independent Mental Health Advocacy website has an [NDIS mental health toolkit](#). It provides information for people with psychosocial disability thinking of applying for or accepted onto the NDIS. It was co-designed with people with psychosocial disability.

How the NDIA decides who will become an NDIS participant

People who experience disability because of a mental health condition/s and who may be eligible for an NDIS plan will have to provide evidence that:

- the impairment is, or is likely to be, permanent
- there are no known, available and appropriate evidence-based clinical, medical or other treatments that would be likely to remedy their impairment.

For a person with psychosocial disability, this might look like:

- You have participated in periods of treatment and support with mental health clinicians and clinical teams.
- You have been undergoing ongoing treatment that attempts to reduce the impacts of a mental health condition/s which has not remedied the impairment.
- You have tried any other treatments that are available and recommended by your treating professional for you and your condition.

- Despite all the treatment you have undergone and will continue to receive, your mental health condition continues to impact on your ability to function, and the impact is likely to be permanent.
- You are likely to require support to increase your social and economic participation.
- You are likely to require **lifelong support**.

Individuals who may not be eligible or who decide not to become participants will have access to support from local area coordinators. They can help connect to mainstream and community services.

Factsheets 2 – 4 provide more detailed information about the access criteria.

- [Factsheet 2: Impairment and psychosocial disability in the NDIS](#)
- [Factsheet 3: Lifetime support and recovery for psychosocial disability in the NDIS](#)
- [Factsheet 4: Functional capacity and mental health conditions](#)

You can also visit the [Am I eligible](#) page on the NDIS website for further information.

NDIS access requirements

To become an NDIS participant, you must:

- be under 65 years of age when you apply
- live in Australia, be an Australian citizen, the holder of a permanent visa, or have a Protected Special Category Visa (SCV)
- meet the disability or early intervention criteria.

Visit the [Applying to the NDIS](#) page on the NDIS website for further information.

Mental health diagnosis

NDIS support is based on the impairment or impact of a mental health condition, not the diagnosis.

When applying to the NDIS, we prefer to know if you have a specific mental health diagnosis, but it is not essential. This means you need to give evidence of a mental health condition to access the NDIS, but you do not have to name the condition.

For example, if you have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, an NDIS access decision will be based on the impact of the condition on your daily life. It will not be based on the schizophrenia diagnosis.

It is helpful if you share your schizophrenia diagnosis with the NDIA. But if you prefer not to or do not identify with your diagnosis, it is fine to apply for the NDIS stating you have a mental health condition. However, sharing your diagnosis with the NDIA will make it easier for us to see if you meet the eligibility requirements.

Who can help with the application process

The NDIA welcomes your family, community supports, existing support providers, carers, and friends to be part of the process of applying to the NDIA.

Your [local area coordinator or local NDIS office](#) can help you apply, and also let you know about [community connections](#). They can help you through the application process and be your point of contact. Find your [nearest location](#) on the locations page of the NDIS website.

Please let your local area coordinator or an NDIA staff member know who the important people are to you, and who you would like included in your NDIS discussions.

How the NDIS supports psychosocial recovery

The NDIS will support a strengths-focused and person-centred approach to developing recovery plans.

NDIS funding can provide the kind of support that will help you pursue both short term and longer-term goals related to social and economic participation.

Over time these goals may change and the plans and supports will also change as needed.

Social and economic participation could include, for example, support to access the community, and fully participate in social and community activities, education, training, and/or work.

The Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework (Recovery Framework)

The NDIA is committed to improving the experience of participants with psychosocial disability in the Scheme. In December 2021, the NDIA released the [Recovery Framework](#).

The aim of the Recovery Framework is to improve the responsiveness to and experience of NDIS participants with psychosocial disability. It will deliver meaningful change and better outcomes for participants living with psychosocial disability.

Psychosocial recovery coaches (recovery coaches)

Recovery coaches are a type of support available to participants with psychosocial disability in the NDIS. The aim of a recovery coach is to support you in your recovery journey.

Recovery coaches provide support to increase independence, and social and economic participation. They help people:

- take more control of their lives
- better manage complex challenges of daily living.

[Factsheet 3: Lifetime support and recovery for psychosocial disability in the NDIS](#) has more information about recovery in the NDIS.

Visit [Psychosocial disability](#) on the NDIS website for more information on recovery coaches.

How to receive assistance if ineligible for the NDIS

If you are not eligible for or choose not to apply for NDIS funded support, you can still get assistance from a local area coordinator.

Local area coordinators can help people connect to mainstream services and local and community-based supports. Local area coordinators have strong connections in community. They can help people connect with supports in their local area including:

- community groups
- recreational activities such as sporting clubs and performing arts groups
- other social networks.

You can use the NDIS website or [contact the NDIS to find a local area coordinator](#) in your area. You can visit the [partners in the community](#) webpage on the NDIS website for more information.

Glossary: Defining key terms the NDIA uses

Functional capacity

The ability to carry out tasks in different everyday situations. Each person's experience of functional capacity is individual to them.

Impairment

An impairment is a loss or significant change in at least one of:

- your body's functions
- your body's structure
- how you think and learn.

For psychosocial disability, an impairment must be about a loss or significant change as a result of a mental health condition or experience of trauma.

Permanent, or likely to be permanent

To become a participant in the NDIS, the NDIA needs to know that your impairment is likely to be permanent.

This means that we need evidence that you'll likely have your impairment for your whole life.

You might have some periods in your life where there is a smaller impact on your daily life, because your impairment may be episodic or fluctuate in intensity. Your impairment can still be permanent due to the overall impact on your life, and the likelihood that you will be impacted across your lifetime.

Even when your condition or diagnosis is permanent, we'll check if your impairment is permanent too. For example, you may not be eligible if your impairment is temporary, still being treated, or if there are remaining treatment options.

Generally, we'll consider whether your impairment is likely to be permanent after all available and appropriate treatment options have been pursued.

Recovery

The NDIA uses the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of recovery to talk about what recovery means for people with psychosocial disability in the NDIS.

Recovery means a person is able to 'regain control of their identity and life, have hope for their life, and live a life that has meaning for them whether that be through work, relationships, spirituality, community engagement or some or all of these.'¹ For every person, this will be unique. This is also known as personal recovery.

Lifelong support

People with disability who meet the [NDIS disability requirements](#) will generally need disability-specific support now and throughout their life to carry out key everyday tasks. The tasks are categorised in at least one or more of these 6 life skill areas:

- communication
- social interaction
- learning
- mobility
- self-care
- self-management.

To be able to access the NDIS a person:

- can't do most tasks in one of the areas listed above; and
- will have substantially reduced ability to function in one of these areas without support.

The NDIA looks at both what a person can and cannot do.

For example, someone who has substantially reduced capacity in the self-management area may be able manage their own budget for small expenses. However, they need support from another person to make major life/financial decisions and budget.

Social and economic participation

The NDIA needs to know that any support you might receive through the NDIS will help you to do activities, which make it easier for you to participate socially and economically.

Social participation means doing things you enjoy, like going out with friends, playing sport or going on holiday. It also means doing the things you need to do, like going to school or medical appointments.

¹ World Health Organisation, "Guidance on community mental health services: promoting person-centred and rights-based approaches." 2021.

Economic participation usually means being involved in things that help you work towards getting and keeping a job. This might be things like volunteering, study, learning new skills or trying work experience. Research tells us that work can lead to health benefits and improve our quality of life. Learn more about the [Health benefits of good work](#) on the Royal Australasian College of Physicians website.

Social and economic participation are important to most people. They are critical to living an ordinary life. Visit [Does the support help you do activities that will help your social and economic participation?](#) in Our Guidelines on the NDIS website for more information.

Wellbeing

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines wellbeing as ‘a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Wellbeing encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose.’

National Disability Insurance Agency

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