30 September 2020

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has today announced the Independent Assessment tools that will lead to fairer and more consistent decisions for NDIS participants.

NDIA CEO Martin Hoffman said the release is part of the Agency's commitment to deliver a better NDIS experience through the NDIS Participant Service Charter and Service Improvement Plan, announced last month.

'We have made significant advances with the NDIS, but the recently-released Improvement Plan sets out 51 actionable improvements designed to ensure the Scheme is delivering as it was always intended,' Mr Hoffman said.

'Ensuring every Australian with disability has access to free independent assessments using internationally recognised assessment tools will lead to more equitable decisions when it comes to access to the Scheme and planning decisions.

'By using the right assessment tools administered by allied health professionals, together with the opportunity to engage with and hear directly from participants, we can make better decisions and ensure people receive the right supports at the right time.'

Mr Hoffman said the release of the assessment tools was part of the Agency's commitment to sharing information and discussing independent assessments with participants, families, carers, allied health professionals and the wider sector before they roll out next year.

The Selection of Assessment Tools paper released today outlines the NDIA's process for identifying, evaluating and selecting the most appropriate tools for independent assessments.

Today's release follows publishing of the NDIS Independent Assessment Framework earlier this month, which was developed in consultation with academics, allied health professionals and other experts from the disability sector and outlined clear criteria for assessment tool selection.

The NDIA evaluated more than 100 assessment tools to ensure those selected demonstrate strong evidence of reliability and validity, are practical, and work together to consider both a person's capacity, their environment and daily life experiences.

To ensure the suitability of assessment tools for the broader disability population, the NDIA:

- sought internationally recognised, standardised assessment tools aligned to the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Functioning (ICF), Disability and Health,
- gathered information on assessment tools already used by the disability sector,
- consulted leading academics and the disability sector insights on the available assessment tools,

- spoke to assessment tool authors and health care organisations,
- consulted with external stakeholders from disability organisations and academics working in disability research and presented the assessment tools to them to seek feedback.

In addition, Autism CRC conducted a scoping review of specific assessment tools consistent with the ICF and suitable for children and young people with autism spectrum disorder and other neurodevelopmental disabilities to inform the program.

The NDIA also trialled independent assessments and select assessment tools in a pilot between November 2018 and April 2019, with summary learnings from the pilot also released today.

‘We know from the Productivity Commission recommendation in 2011, and supported by findings in the Tune Review, that independent assessments are the right approach,’ Mr Hoffman said

‘The pilot is just one of the ways we have captured information that will help inform the implementation and delivery of independent assessments.’

Further research will commence in advance of the national rollout as part of an ongoing evaluation, including recommencement of a second pilot that was postponed earlier this year due to coronavirus restrictions.

The second pilot will recommence in October to continue testing how the Agency implements independent assessments, and further test operationalisation of the tools selected for the toolkit.

The Agency will also continue to evaluate the assessment tools over time, to make sure they are working as intended for the NDIS.

Read about Independent Assessment Toolkit and Independent Assessment pilot.

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