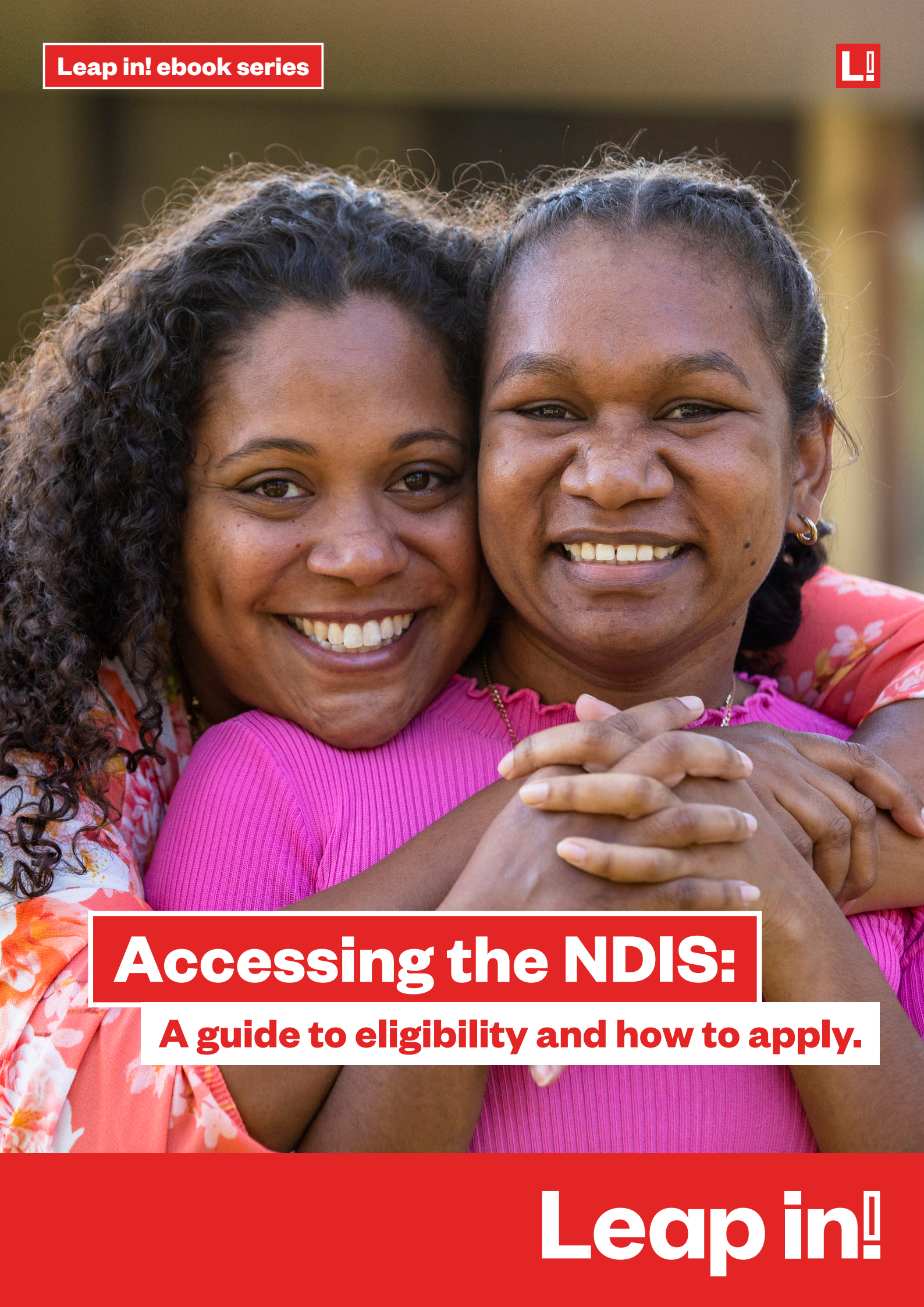


Leap in! ebook series



Accessing the NDIS:

A guide to eligibility and how to apply.

Leap in!



Accessing the NDIS: A guide to eligibility and how to apply.

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The most recent version can be found at leapin.com.au.



Introduction.

The NDIS is big, there's a lot to navigate and it can be a bit daunting. Especially when starting out and you 'don't know what you don't know!'.

Here at Leap in! plan management, we want to help people with disability who are eligible for the NDIS get accepted into the scheme.

If you, a friend or a family member are thinking about accessing the NDIS for the first time and you're not sure where to start this is the ebook for you. Find out more about getting ready for the NDIS, applying and what comes next.

Accessing the NDIS is filled with tips, explanations and tried and tested approaches that will give you more confidence about applying for the NDIS.

We've drawn on our experience with the NDIS and suggestions from people who have been through the process themselves. It's designed to guide you through each step in detail and provide you with more information.

And as always, if you have questions please reach out to one of our experienced crew on **1300 05 78 78** or email us at crew@leapin.com.au.



Top tip: Putting together all the information you need to access the NDIS can be time consuming and frustrating but it's worth it to get the supports you need.



01

What is the NDIS?

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides people with permanent disability with information, connection and funding for disability related supports.

It is designed to help people get the support they need to improve their skills and independence over time.

The NDIS takes a lifelong approach to funding supports and services. It can also connect you to information and supports from other organisations and government agencies.

The NDIS also provides early intervention supports for children and their families.

The scheme is available for people with disability in every Australian state and territory who meet the eligibility criteria.

How does the NDIS work?

Once you have applied for the NDIS, if your request is accepted, you will get an NDIS Plan.

An NDIS Plan is a written agreement outlining the “reasonable and necessary” supports and funding the NDIS will provide to help you achieve your goals. *Reasonable* means fair and *necessary* means related to your disability (see [page 28](#) for more information). Each plan is unique to you and your circumstances and is likely to last for between 6 months and 3 years.

The NDIS provides funding for a range of supports and services in areas such as independence, community involvement, living arrangements, education, employment and wellbeing.¹

Your NDIS Plan could provide funding split across several different categories. It will include financial help to cover some costs associated with your disability and be flexible enough to allow you to change supports as your needs change.



Choice and control.

The NDIS is designed to offer choice and control over the supports you get and how you spend your NDIS funds.

Firstly, you decide on your goals. Then, once you have an NDIS Plan, you decide which supports and services to purchase with your NDIS funds to help you achieve your goals.

Australia has a population of almost **26.3 million**.
4.4 million of these Australians have a disability.

We support the **ndis**

The NDIS provides **592,059** Australians with funding for supports and services.
It is expected the NDIS will support **870,761** Australians by 2030.

As of March 2023, there were **95,773** children younger than 7 with an NDIS Plan and an additional **13,573** supported by the Early Childhood Approach.²

As of 31 December 2023.

NDIS and NDIA: What's the difference?

The NDIS is an abbreviation for the National Disability Insurance Scheme that supports a better life for hundreds of thousands of Australians with disability.

The NDIA is the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), an independent government agency responsible for implementing the NDIS.



02

NDIS eligibility and access criteria.

You may be eligible for the NDIS if you meet the following requirements:

1. You are aged between 9 and 65. Children aged younger than 9 and their families can be supported through the early childhood approach (see [page 24](#) for more details).
2. You live in Australia, are an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or hold a permanent visa or special category visa (SCV). New Zealanders living in Australia are only eligible for the NDIS if they are an Australian resident or SCV holder.
3. You meet the disability requirements (see below).

Eligibility is focused on how a disability affects your ability to actively participate in work and society. The NDIS does not consider the cause of the disability. It does consider whether providing supports now will reduce your future needs.



Top tip: If you are over 65 years of age, supports are available via the Australian aged care system. If you turn 65 while on the NDIS, you can choose to stay with the NDIS or transition to the aged care system.

Meeting the “disability requirements”.

To access the NDIS, you need to meet both the eligibility and disability requirements. To meet the disability requirements, the NDIS needs evidence of all of the following:

- Your disability is caused by an impairment
- Your impairment is likely to be permanent
- Your permanent impairment substantially reduces your functional capacity
- It affects your ability to work, study or take part in social life
- You’ll likely need support under the NDIS for your whole life.



For more details, check out the NDIS operational guideline [Do you meet the disability requirements?](#)

Types of conditions.

The NDIS has developed lists of conditions to provide an idea of whether you're likely to meet the requirements, along with additional information or assessments that may be required.

List A conditions: These conditions are likely to meet the disability requirements. Only evidence of a diagnosis is required, along with assessment against any criteria outlined under the list. For example, Angelman syndrome or spinal cord or brain injury resulting in paraplegia, quadriplegia or tetraplegia.

List B conditions: Conditions that are likely to result in a permanent impairment but as the result can be variable, the NDIS will usually require more evidence, typically a functional capacity assessment done within the last 12 months. For example intellectual disability, motor neurone disease and multiple sclerosis.

List C: For people in Western Australia receiving disability supports under existing programs to gain faster access to the NDIS. For example, community residential, day options and Supported Community Living.

List D: Conditions for children under 7 who do not require further assessment to access the NDIS early childhood approach. For example, global developmental delay, cerebral palsy and spina bifida.



Top tip: The NDIS doesn't fund diagnosis or medical treatment. If you are currently undergoing any treatment related to your disability, discuss with your doctor or medical professional before applying for the NDIS.

How does the NDIS assess whether a disability is permanent?

A permanent disability means a disability that is likely to be lifelong and has a substantial impact on your ability to complete everyday activities.

The NDIS may consider:

- Any reduction or loss in your ability to do things because of an impairment
- Whether the impairment is likely to be permanent after all available treatment options have been pursued
- If there are any medical, clinical or other treatments likely to remedy the impairment.



If you meet the relevant eligibility requirements, the NDIS can fund supports that can help reduce or overcome the impact disability has on your daily life.

Substantially reduced functional capacity.

Communicating the functional impact/s of a disability is an important part of the NDIS access process. It's essential to include information and evidence about **how your disability impacts your life**.

The NDIS considers six different life skill areas:

- 1. Communicating:** How you express wants and needs through speech, writing or other non-verbal methods.
- 2. Socialising:** Connecting with people, the ability to make friends and actively participate in society.
- 3. Learning:** How you learn, understand and learn new things, and use new skills.
- 4. Mobility:** How easily you get around at home and in the community, how you get in and out of bed or a chair.
- 5. Self-care:** Taking care of basic daily needs such as personal care, bathing, dressing and eating.
- 6. Self-management:** Organising your day, managing your finances, making decisions for yourself and solving problems.³

You will likely have substantially reduced functional capacity in an area if you cannot do most activities related to one of the life skill areas above without support.

Taking longer to complete an activity, participating in a modified way and not being able to work because of a mental health condition do not meet the requirements of substantially reduced functional capacity.



Top tip: Not sure how to describe the functional impact of your disability? Try using the *Impact of Disability* area in the Leap in! app. The Leap in! app makes it easy to record your information and keep everything in the one place, the perfect tool for preparing for your NDIS application.



03

How to apply for the NDIS.

Applying for the NDIS is about providing confirmation and evidence that you or someone you care for meets the eligibility criteria to get NDIS supports.

Starting the process.

To start the process, contact the NDIS call centre on **1800 800 110**. They will refer you to an NDIS partner to assist you. The NDIS partner will be a local area coordinator or an early childhood partner depending on the age of the person applying for the NDIS.

The NDIS partner will help you collect the information and evidence needed to apply for the NDIS. This includes verifying your identity, residency status and disability. You'll also need to provide information about your functional capacity.

To help you prepare for this process, it's helpful to collect some relevant information:

- Reports and assessments
- Evidence of diagnosis
- Proof of identity and other relevant documents.

If you are likely to be eligible for the NDIS, the NDIS partner will work with you to gather the information and enter it into the NDIS computer system. If not, they can connect you with other community and mainstream supports.

Your NDIS partner will advise if there are any additional forms that need to be completed and who needs to complete them. For example, you may need information from your doctor or allied health professional.



Top tip: The NDIS will use the information you provide to create your first plan so it's important to provide detail about your disability, functional capacity and support needs to get a plan that suits you needs.

For people in areas without NDIS partners.

If there is no NDIS partner in your area, you can still get help to apply to the NDIS by calling **1800 800 110**. Someone may be able to help you apply over the phone.



Top tip: While the NDIS previously encouraged people to complete an access request form to apply for the NDIS, people are now encouraged to call the NDIS first so someone can assist you to apply.

Leap in! Presents webinars.

Leap in! Presents is a series of free webinars that explore and unpack aspects of the NDIS.

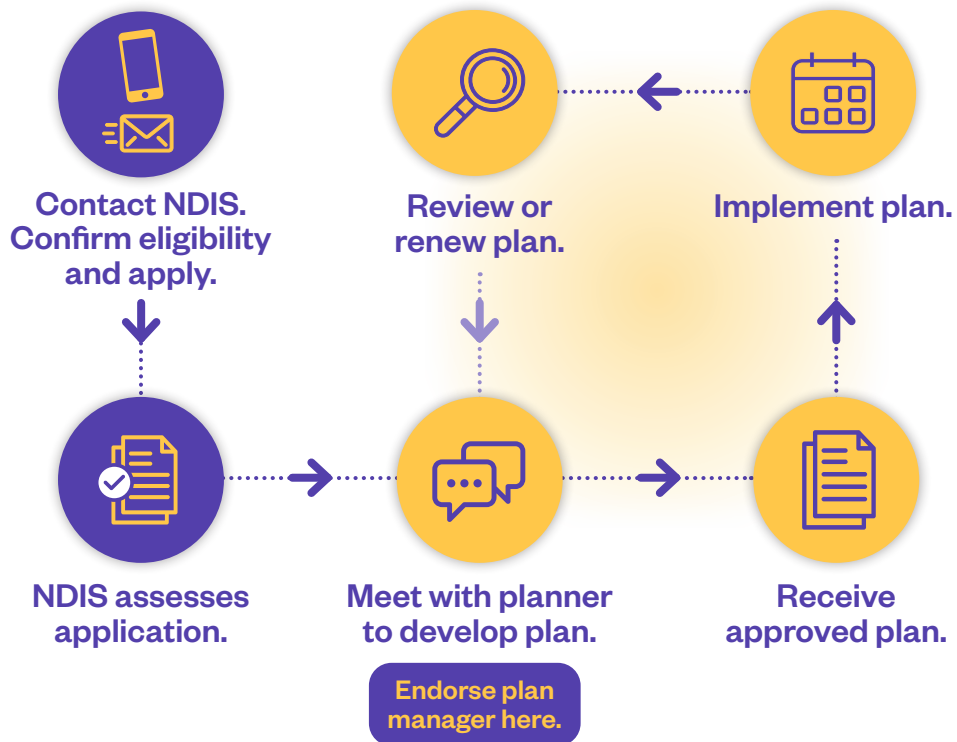
They are designed to provide information and insights to help people navigate the NDIS and for participants to get the most from their budgets and NDIS Plans.

The webinars are presented by Leap in! Learning and Development Specialist, Dee Thomson. Dee has over 14 years experience in learning and development. She specialises in breaking down complex concepts into engaging and accessible learning, and has a particular interest in disability and all things autism.

View all of our upcoming events on the [Leap in! Presents page](#) of our website.



The NDIS journey.



The steps in the process.

While every person with disability is unique, the steps in joining the NDIS are generally as follows:

1. Contact the NDIS. They will connect you with an NDIS partner who can help you apply if you're likely to be eligible.
2. NDIS assesses your application.
3. If your application is accepted, prepare for your first NDIS Plan meeting.
4. Meet with a planner to create your NDIS Plan and endorse your plan manager if you have opted to have one.
5. Receive your NDIS Plan.
6. Implement your plan.
7. Review or renew your plan.



Information needed to apply for the NDIS.

The NDIS will require information and supporting documents that confirm age, residency and disability or need for early intervention. Everyone has to supply this information for an NDIS application to be considered.

Leap in! has collated some valuable tips to share from our community. Keep this information alongside while working with your NDIS partner.

Information about you.

You must be able to supply evidence of age, residency and where you live.

Age:

- Automatically through your Centrelink record, or
- Supply a copy of your birth certificate, passport page containing photo, proof of age card or driver's license.

Residency:

- Automatically through your Centrelink record, or
- Supply a copy of your birth certificate, Australian Citizen or naturalisation certificate or foreign passport which includes a valid Australian permanent residency visa or protected special category visa.

Address:

- Automatically through your Centrelink record, or
- Proof of age card or driver's license.

Privacy and consent.

If you're registered with Centrelink, it's easier to consent to the NDIS verifying your age and residency through Centrelink – there's less paperwork that way.

Be sure to use the **same name** on your NDIS application that is on your Centrelink record.

Information about your disability.

This is really important. The NDIS will want some details about your disability or disabilities to ensure you're eligible. Be sure to include your main disability as well as any others that have a significant impact on your life.

- Be sure to describe your main disability as well as any others that have a significant impact on your life
- If you have a mental health condition in addition to a primary disability, you'll need to get a diagnosis before contacting the NDIS
- If you acquired your disability through an accident, you'll need to provide details about any compensation received or pending.

Providing evidence of disability.

Your NDIS partner will explain exactly what you need to provide. You will likely need to ask a treating professional for evidence, reports or assessments. If you already have these, you can take them along to the meeting with your NDIS partner to make the process faster.



Top tip: See types of evidence on [page 19](#) for more details about assessments the NDIS may require for different types of disabilities.

Providing evidence of functional capacity.

Remember how we spoke about the six different life skill areas? This is where you need to provide evidence of how your disability impacts your life in one or more of these areas.

We recommend creating a schedule of your daily needs from Monday to Sunday.

The schedule should include everything you need to maintain a quality of life and that helps you to reach your goals. Examples include:

- Therapy assistance such as occupational therapy, speech therapy and physiotherapy
- Assistance from support workers, how much time they spend with you and the tasks they do
- Any other support you need because of your disability such as help with the washing and ironing, cleaning or yard maintenance
- Support you get or need from family and/or friends such as assistance at home, with personal care or getting around. For example, a friend coming to pick you up every Wednesday for a community activity.

It's also useful to note down items you need because of your disability.



Top tip: Need more information about types of therapist and how they can help? Read some of our stories: [Occupational therapy](#), [speech therapy](#), [physiotherapy](#) and [podiatry](#).

Then consider... what's next?

- Are any of your community, mainstream or informal supports likely to change in the next 12 months? For example, a family member no longer being able to take you to a community activity.
- Do you have an injury or condition which means you may need more support over time?
- Are there items you don't have that would make your life easier?
- How can the NDIS help you to build skills and independence now to help you access employment, get out in the community or reduce your future support needs?





Getting evidence from a treating professional.

The NDIS will require evidence from a supporting health professional. This needs to be someone who is relevant to your disability and who is currently treating you or has treated or assessed you recently.

Who is a suitable health professional?

- Someone who is currently working with you or who has recently worked with you for a significant period of time (at least six months)
- A professional with expertise and understanding of your primary disability such as a paediatrician, psychologist or occupational therapist
- A person who understands your diagnosis and the functional impact you experience daily.

Specialists and allied health professionals are likely to have completed this process before and be familiar with the requirements which makes things easier.



Top tip: The form indicates that you can ask your general practitioner/doctor for this evidence. However, Leap in! Members told us they had better success with access requests when evidence was supplied by a specialist or allied health professional who knew them. If you're working with an LAC or ECP, they can provide guidance on the best approach.

Evidence of disability.

According to the NDIS, **good evidence** of disability is:

- Recent (in the past 12 months)
- Completed by a treating health professional who is relevant to your primary disability
- Confirms your primary disability

- Confirms the impact of your disability on the different areas of your life
- Describes previous treatments and outcomes
- Describes future treatment options and expected outcomes of those treatments.⁴

There are also **different requirements for evidence** depending on your primary disability.

Current or previous treatments: The NDIS will want to be satisfied that any relevant treatments or interventions have already been explored. Include any surgery, therapy, treatment, medication or other interventions that you have tried.

Available evidence-based treatments: If your condition may be effectively treated with certain evidence-based treatments and you have not tried them your medical professional will need to explain why.

Existing assessments.

You'll need to provide information about any assessments that have been completed for and/or with you.



Top tip: Providing copies of existing assessments helps you get a quick and accurate eligibility decision and may reduce delays caused when you have to provide more information.

Evidence of functional capacity.

This is where your healthcare professional provides an overview of your functional capacity and the impact of your disability on one or more of the six functional areas.

To meet the eligibility criteria your disability must have a significant daily impact on one or more of the following areas.

- **Mobility:** Moving freely using your body and limbs to undertake daily activities
- **Communication:** Expressing wants and needs through speech, writing or other non-verbal methods
- **Social interaction:** Connecting with people and behaving within expected limits
- **Learning:** Remembering information and learning new skills
- **Self-care:** Taking care of basic daily needs such as bathing, dressing, eating
- **Self-management:** Organising your day to day activities and making decisions for yourself.

This is the time to bring out the daily schedule you have created or use the *My Disability* section of the [Leap in! app](#).

When asking your treating professional to complete and NDIS application information, be sure you have discussed the impacts of your disability with them and be clear about what you think will help.

- If assistance is required for you to complete activities, provide detail about why and the type of assistance
- Be clear if you cannot perform an activity even if assisted by another person and/or assistive technology
- Use real examples and provide as much information as possible
- Any current use of assistive technology such as walking, vision or hearing aids or adaptive equipment (although this alone is not enough to demonstrate substantially reduced functional capacity).

Describing what it's like on your “worst” day.

The NDIS access request form asks medical practitioners to describe the impact of disability on your day-to-day life, rather than when you need the most or least support.

However, we recommend being honest about the impact of your disability which includes your worst days and the obstacles you face. Don't sugarcoat anything. What are the little things that could make a big difference if you could change them? This information is also important for your ECP or LAC. It will help them to understand how disability affects your everyday life.



Top tip: The NDIS is more likely to fund items that help you to achieve your goals. If an item or support is essential for your needs, use terms like “need” and “require” instead of “want” and be sure to explain why you need it.

Application and NDIS Plan timelines:

- Once the NDIS has all the information and evidence needed to determine if you're eligible, they must make a decision if you can join the NDIS and tell you within 21 days
- When the NDIS requests more information or an assessment report relevant to your application, it must be provided to the NDIS within 90 days or the application is considered to be withdrawn
- The NDIS has to start preparing your NDIS Plan within 21 days after your access request is accepted



- The NDIS must approve a plan within 56 days for participants aged 7 and over or 90 days for participants aged under 7.⁵

What happens next?

The NDIS will contact you and let you know if you are eligible for the NDIS, how they made the decision and any next steps.

If you are eligible:

- The NDIS will use the information you provided in your application to start creating your NDIS plan
- The next step is a planning conversation with your NDIS partner
- You can use the Plan ready section of the Leap in! app to help you get ready for this meeting
- You can also book a free pre-planning session with one of the Leap in! Crew.

If you are not eligible:

The NDIS will explain the eligibility criteria you have not met. You may be asked to provide additional information or reports.

A local area coordinator or early childhood partner can still connect you with supports and services in the community if you are not eligible for the NDIS.

You will not get a reminder about when additional information is due, so be sure to mark any dates in your calendar. Send information via email to avoid postal delays and keep a copy of the email for your records.



Top tip: If the NDIA does not receive information within the required time, it will automatically consider your application withdrawn and you have to start the process again.



Assessments for certain types of disability.

For each primary disability, the NDIA requires treating health professionals to use standard assessment processes that are considered “best practice”.

See the table below for the treating health professional who needs to undertake the assessment and the types of evidence required.

Primary disability	Treating health professional	Disability evidence (in preference order)
Acquired brain injury	An ABI health professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age over 17: Care and need scan (CANS) • World Health Organisation disability assessment schedule (WHODAS) 2.0 (17 years and over) or PEDI-CAT (16 years and under).
Autism	Psychologist, occupational therapist or speech therapist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders 5th edition (DSM-V) 2. Vineland adaptive behaviour scale (Vineland II) 3. WHODAS 2.0 or PEDI-CAT depending on age.
Cerebral palsy	Occupational therapist, physical therapist, paediatrician or physiotherapist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gross motor functional classification scale (GMFCS) 2. Manual ability classification scale (MACS) 3. Communication function classification system (CFCS).
Deaf or hard of hearing	Audiologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age over 17: Hearing impairment responses and groupings guide • Age 16 and under: PEDI-CAT • Other: Hearing acuity score.

Primary disability	Treating health professional	Disability evidence (in preference order)
Intellectual disability, developmental delay, global developmental delay, Down syndrome	Psychologist, occupational therapist or speech therapist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DSM-V 2. Vineland II 3. WHODAS or PEDI-CAT.
Multiple sclerosis	Neurologist or disease steps trained nurse examiner	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disease steps 2. Patient determined disease steps (PDDS) 3. Other: Expanded disability status scale (EDSS).
Psychosocial disability	Psychiatrist, GP, psychologist (in limited circumstances). Other health professionals can supply supporting evidence.	<p>A statement from a treating health professional including information about how long they have been working with you, evidence of the mental health condition, treatments explored and the impact on your everyday life.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Life Skills Profile (LSP-16) 2. Health of the Nation Outcomes Scale (HoNOS) 3. WHODAS.
Spinal cord injury	Neurologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, recreational therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level of lesion or 2. American spinal injury association impairment scale (ASIA/AS) 3. WHODAS or PEDI-CAT.
Stroke	Neurologist	Modified Rankin Scale (mRS).
Blindness or low vision	Ophthalmologist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over 17: Vision impairment questionnaire 2. 16 and under: PED-CAT 3. Visual acuity rating.
Other	Occupational therapist, speech therapist, physiotherapist, social worker	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. WHODAS 2. WHODAS 2.0 3. PEDI-CAT.

Source: [NDIS types of disability evidence.](#)



04

Accessing the NDIS if you have a mental health condition.

Mental health can be one of the most complicated and confusing aspects of the NDIS. But if a mental health condition causes a permanent impairment that has a severe impact on your ability to undertake everyday activities, you may be eligible for the NDIS.

“Mental health condition” is a broad term that refers to symptoms that may be caused by a range of things including life events and genetic factors. A mental health condition can be temporary or lifelong. It can include mood, anxiety, personality, psychotic and compulsive disorders.

If you have a mental health condition you are not automatically eligible for the NDIS.

You must provide evidence that:

1. You have a mental health condition
2. The mental health condition causes an impairment
3. The impairment is permanent, and
4. The impairment causes a disability that substantially reduces your ability to do everyday activities.



Top tip: You must provide evidence of a mental health condition to access the NDIS. While the mental health condition does not have to be named, including a diagnosis is helpful.

Psychosocial disability.

A mental health condition may cause loss of mental function – such as loss or damage to perception, memory, thinking and/or emotions.

Such an impairment is referred to as a “psychosocial disability” – one which arises from a mental health condition. The NDIS will only provide support for a mental health condition if it can be considered a psychosocial disability.⁶

As with any application to join the NDIS, you'll need to demonstrate that your disability results in substantially reduced functional capacity in one or more of the six life skill areas.

If a psychosocial disability is not your primary disability, you may also be able to access support for your psychosocial disability if you complete the **evidence of psychosocial disability form**, which is available on the NDIS website.



Top tip: The NDIS does not fund treatment for mental health conditions. When completing your application, focus on the impact of the condition on your daily life and how the NDIS can support you to build capacity or develop skills to achieve your goals.

Evidence of psychosocial disability.

Your psychologist, doctor, support worker or mental health nurse will need to complete an **evidence of psychosocial disability form**.

This includes information such as:

- How long they have treated you
- Confirmation you have a mental health condition
- Information about any hospital admissions
- A description of any impairments against the six functional capacity life skills areas
- Confirmation of impairments that are likely to be permanent
- Medication, treatment and interventions trialled or underway
- An assessment of your life skills.

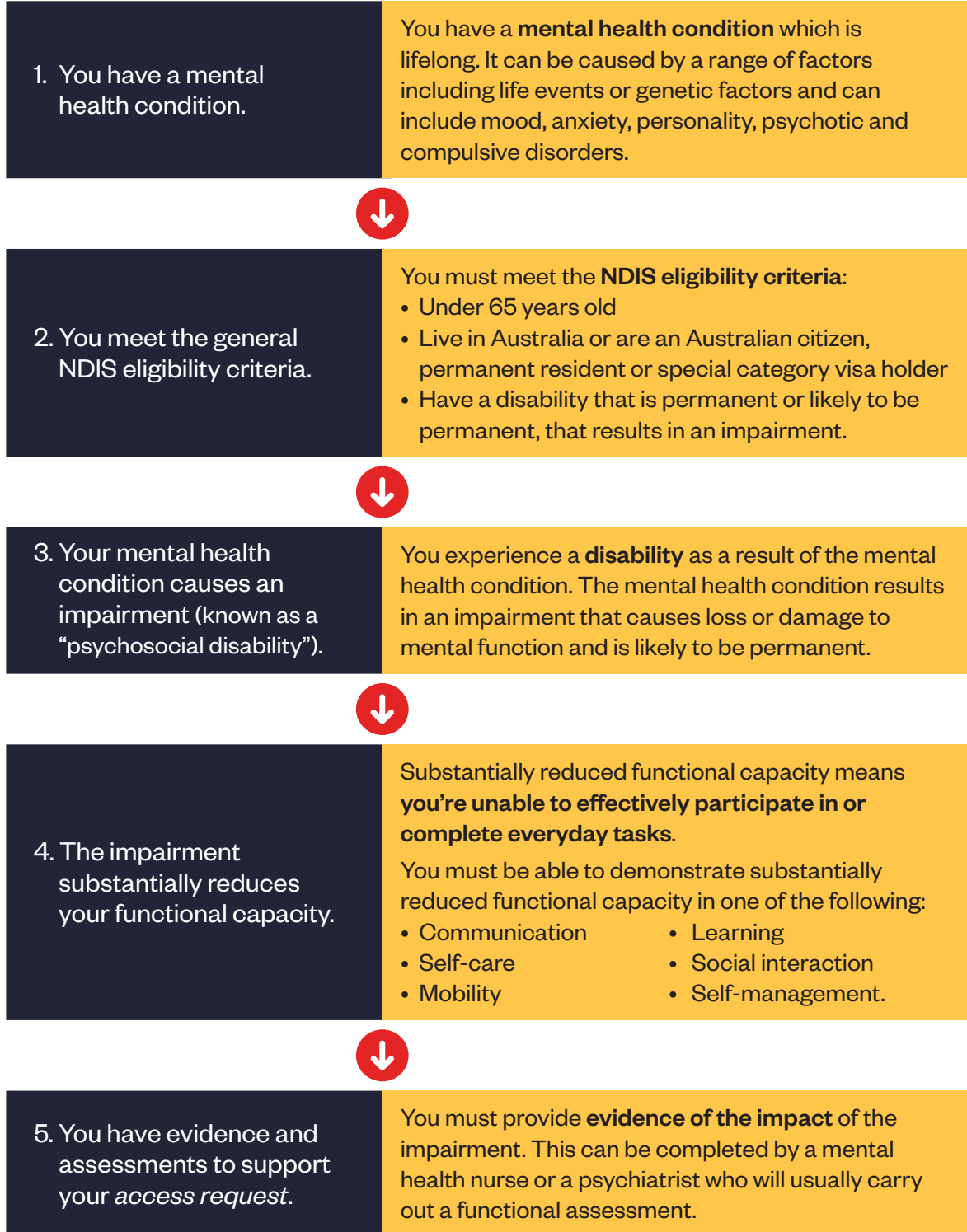
Good to know.

Some mental health supports are supplied through the mainstream health system, not the NDIS, such as state mental health services.

For more detailed information, refer to our ebook **Mental health conditions and the NDIS: A guide to access and supports**, which can be found in the [ebooks and emagazines section](#) of the Leap in! website.



Accessing the NDIS when you have a mental health condition.





05

Support for young children: The early childhood approach.

The national early childhood approach (ECA) provides support to ensure children aged under 9 get the best possible start in life.

The early childhood approach helps children younger than 6 with developmental delay or children younger than 9 with disability and their families get the right support.⁸

You do not have to apply for the NDIS to access supports under the early childhood approach. Some children and their families can access early connections and supports outside of the NDIS. Others will be assisted to apply for the NDIS, depending on individual needs.

Children do not need a diagnosis to get help.

An introduction to early connections.

Early connections are for children younger than 9 with delays in their development or disability, and for their families and carers.

They're intended to connect families with the right supports to help the child develop skills to take part in everyday activities, building strong foundations for their future.

Early connections are not the same as being on the NDIS. Children do not have to be eligible for the NDIS to access early connections.

Early connections are also available for a wider range of children in the community regardless of citizenship or visa status.

They can include connections to:

- Mainstream (government) and community services such as early childhood services, health services and family support services
- Practical information that is relevant to the child's development
- Other families
- Early supports.



If a child is eligible and the family chooses to apply for the NDIS, assistance can be provided through early connections.

What to do if you have concerns about your child's development.

If you have concerns about your child's development, speak first to a health or education professional such as your GP, occupational therapist, child health care nurse or early childhood educator.

They can connect you with an early childhood partner (ECP), an organisation with experience and clinical expertise working with young children with developmental concerns or disability and their families. You can also contact an ECP yourself. No referral or diagnosis is needed.

ECP teams often include people who have experience and expertise working with young children including occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists and speech therapists.

An early childhood partner can:

- Assess the potential for effectiveness of early childhood supports
- Provide recommendations for early intervention
- Connect you with useful services in your area such as community health centres, playgroups, peer support groups or early childhood development programs
- Advise on financial supports such as Centrelink and carer allowance
- Find specialised early intervention support for your child – for example, speech pathology or occupational therapy
- Help you apply for the NDIS if relevant and help develop your child's NDIS Plan if their application is successful.

To find an early childhood partner, visit the NDIS website. If there are none in your area, contact the NDIS on **1800 800 110**.



Top tip: There are waiting lists for children's therapy supports in many locations due to a shortage of qualified staff so if you think your child needs support, see an ECP early.

Getting the right support for your child.

The types of support available depend on the child's developmental concerns and age.

Age and developmental concerns	Supports
<i>If your child is younger than 9 and the information shows they have developmental concerns*</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ECP may offer early supports and connections to mainstream and community services (not the NDIS) • May include parent workshops, building capacity of mainstream services to support your child, strategies to help your child build skills, support for parents and carers preparing for transitions or connecting with other families or services • Usually last for 3-6 months or a maximum of 12 months.
<i>If your child is younger than 6 and there are delays in their development**</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child may meet the NDIS developmental delay criteria, the ECP may recommend applying for access to the NDIS and can assist with this process • If they don't meet the developmental delay criteria, they may be offered early supports and connections (as above).
<i>If your child is under 9 and has global developmental delay or a known disability diagnosis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will receive early supports to the age of 9 • The ECP may recommend applying for access to the NDIS and assist with the application process. In this case the child may receive both mainstream and NDIS supports.

* **Developmental concerns:** Delays in a child's development that don't fully meet the NDIS definition of developmental delay. They may impact everyday activities the child can do compared with other children the same age.⁸

** **Developmental delay:** The NDIS may consider that a child has a developmental delay when they are younger than 6 and have a delay that means the child finds it much harder to do everyday things that other children their age can do. A child with developmental delay needs lots of extra help to do everyday things.⁹

What happens when a child turns 9?

The early childhood approach is only available until a child turns 9. Eligible children aged 9 years and over who are receiving early supports must transition to the NDIS. This process is not automatic and differs depending on the situation.

Your ECP can help you to apply for the NDIS if your child has obtained a diagnosis and is likely to be eligible. Keep in mind that in the public system, there can be delays between diagnosis and receiving confirmation in writing so it's worth allowing some additional time.

For children over the age of 9 who have not received early supports, it's best to contact a local area coordinator (LAC) who can connect you to supports in your area and help determine if the NDIS is right for your child.

Eligibility for the NDIS requires a diagnosis and evidence of significant and permanent disability. The best person to provide this is a paediatrician or specialist.

- If your child is diagnosed with a condition on List A (see [page 7](#)), an assessment is not required. You may be asked to complete a change of situation or change of details form to transition from early childhood approach to the NDIS
- If your child is diagnosed with a condition on List B (see [page 7](#)), an assessment is required
- Assessments should be completed prior to submitting an access request.

If the child is autistic and has ADHD, focus on the impact of the autism on their daily life and any functional challenges. ADHD is not usually covered by the NDIS because it can be hard to meet the criteria for severe and permanent disability.

A child's first NDIS Plan is usually quite basic and will likely last for 6-12 months. It's important to manage their budget effectively to ensure funds last for the length of the plan.

Good to know.

- Early childhood supports do not replace parental responsibility. Parents are generally responsible for transporting their child to appointments or activities and supporting the child while they are there.
- The NDIS will not fund everyday items that all babies or children need such as nappies unless the child needs supports because of a disability that other children their age don't.



Top tip: Many parents choose to get started with private assessments, diagnosis or therapy while receiving early childhood connections. Medicare may offer rebates for some items. If you have private health insurance, check what may be covered.



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Types of supports the NDIS may fund.

The NDIS funds reasonable and necessary supports connected to disability to help you:

- Pursue goals and aspirations
- Increase independence
- Participate in the community, work or study
- Develop capacity to connect with and be part of the community.

Reasonable and necessary is the funding criteria used by the NDIS. Simply put, *reasonable* is something that is fair and *necessary* is something you need because of your disability.

The main categories of supports are called “support categories”. Depending on your needs, you may receive funding in one or more support categories.

Having a basic understanding of the types of supports the NDIS can fund will help ensure you include relevant information on your NDIS access request.

Core supports.

Core supports provide funding for activities that help you in your everyday life:

- *Assistance with daily life* includes help in the home, cleaning, cooking, yard maintenance and support with personal care such as getting dressed.
- *Assistance with social, economic and community participation* can include someone to assist with activities that help you connect and socialise. The cost of the activity may not be covered, just any additional support or adaptive items you need.
- *Consumables* can help cover everyday items and services such as a shower chair or mobility aid.

- *Transport* helps to cover costs associated with specialised schooling or education programs or reaching your place of employment if you are unable to use public transport because of a disability.
- *Home and living* covers supports to help you live as independently as possible.



Top tip: The NDIS is currently transitioning to a new system called PACE. Under the system, there are some new support categories. The information on these pages reflect the new categories. For more details, visit [Support categories and PACE](#).

Capital supports.

Capital supports provide funding for equipment, home or vehicle modifications, and are split into two categories. The NDIS is very specific in what this funding can be used for and it must be used as it is allocated.

- *Assistive technology (AT)* covers any device that allows you to do something that you wouldn't be able to do without it or increases the ease or safety of things you do. This budget includes vehicle modifications.
- *Assistive technology maintenance, repair and rental* which covers short-term rental and trial of AT as well as repair and maintenance costs.
- *Home modifications* are any changes you need to make to the structure, layout or fittings of your home to ensure you can move around safely.
- *Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)* funds a specially designed house for people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs.

Capacity Building supports.

Capacity Building supports provide funding for activities that will support you to learn new skills and achieve your goals. This includes occupational therapy to help improve communications so you can become more active in the community and physiotherapy to improve mobility. Support coordination and psychosocial recovery coaches (new) are also included under Capacity Building supports.

Recurring supports.

These are supports the NDIS pays to you directly on a regular basis. This means you don't need to make a claim for these supports. Currently, the only recurring category is Transport – this funding is for everyday transport needs.

What the NDIS does not fund.

The NDIS does not fund supports that can be provided by other government services such as hospital care, dental treatment, community mental health services, child protection and family support services, immunisation, rehabilitation, medication, unemployment benefits and child care.

Other examples of what the NDIS does not fund include:

- Everyday items such as toiletries and cleaning products
- Food or groceries
- Medications
- Diagnosis
- Mental illness early intervention
- School, TAFE or university fees
- The cost of housing – for example rent or mortgage payments
- Ongoing repairs or home maintenance
- Motor vehicles (though it may fund modifications to motor vehicles)
- Entry fees to cinemas or attractions.





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Getting help to apply for the NDIS.

As you can see, there's quite a lot involved in applying for the NDIS but the answers to your questions are always available, you just need to know where to look.

There are a range of options if you need assistance.

Local area coordinator (LAC) or early childhood partner (ECP).

Your local NDIS office can put you in touch with a local area coordinator or early childhood partner to help with the application process. Or use the NDIS online search function to find one in your area. This is a free service.

Advocacy services.

An advocate is an independent person who can assist a person with disability to have choice and control and have their voice heard in matters relevant to them. Advocates can help you to understand your rights, address gaps in support and navigate the NDIS as well as other services, among other things!

- All states: search for an advocate on the [Disability Advocacy finder](#)
- [Queensland advocates](#)
- [Disability Advocate Network Australia](#) (for all states)
- [People with Disability Australia](#)
- [Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service South Australia](#)
- [Advocacy WA](#)

Not all disability advocacy organisations can assist with NDIS access. Some advocacy services only offer assistance with the NDIS appeals process or issues once you have an NDIS Plan. Be sure to check if there is a fee.



Leap in!

Leap in! is Australia's leading NDIS plan manager. We specialise in supporting people with disability and their families at each step of the NDIS process.

If you're just getting started, we can provide useful information and answer all of your questions.

Tried and failed? What happens next?

If your application is declined, the NDIS will usually provide a reason. You may still be eligible for non-NDIS support.

If you disagree with the decision, you can ask for an internal review. Reviews are usually completed within 90 days.

If you still disagree with the decision, you can contact the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and ask for an external review.

Accessing your personal information.

The NDIS has a simple process for accessing information held about you. Complete the NDIS information access request form for information about your NDIS application, including any information provided to support your application and the reasons for the access request decision. You should receive a response within 28 days.

This process can be helpful if:

- Your access request has been declined. For example, you can check they have all the information supplied, or
- You need to check the accuracy or completeness of the information they have about you.

If you need more details, you can access documents or information the NDIS has about you via a freedom of information (FOI) request by emailing foi@ndis.gov.au. Be specific about which documents you want to access. Charges may apply.



08

You're in!

What happens next?

Once you are accepted into the NDIS, the next step is your first planning conversation. This takes place with your LAC or ECP, usually within 21 days.

You will need to take your original identity documents to your first planning meeting so the NDIS can confirm them before getting started on your first NDIS Plan.

Your LAC or ECP will then work together to create a plan for your disability support needs building on the information you have already provided.

Preparing for your first NDIS Plan meeting.

Being prepared is the best way to achieve a successful outcome from your planning meeting and get the supports you need.

One of the most important parts of your NDIS Plan meeting will be discussing how your disability impacts different areas of your life. The clearer you are about your needs, the more likely you are to get an NDIS Plan that will help you achieve your goals.

The Leap in! Crew is here to help you get ready for your first meeting. We can assist in the following ways:

- Download the free [Leap in! NDIS Plan Meeting checklist](#), and work through that step by step.
- Call us on **1300 05 78 78** to book your pre-plan meeting with one of our experienced plan managers.
- **Get the Leap in! app**, available for [desktop](#), [Apple](#) and [Android](#). It has a section to help you pull together all of your thoughts and information around the way disability impacts your life. And it's free.
- Check out the second ebook in our series, [The Essential NDIS Guide: An introduction to NDIS basics](#) for more detail about preparing for your plan meeting and using your NDIS Plan.



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The benefits of using a support coordinator.

A support coordinator is a person who helps people on the NDIS to better understand and use the supports in their NDIS Plan.

About half of NDIS Plans include some support coordination, a figure which has been steadily rising.¹⁰

Support coordinators get to know you, how disability affects your life, the supports you use and your goals.

How support coordinators can help.

Support coordinators generally have excellent knowledge of how the NDIS works and can have various roles and functions depending on your individual needs. They may have expertise in certain areas such as employment, allied health or working with people who have specific disabilities.

They can help you:

- Access the right supports and find the right mix of activities to achieve the goals set in your NDIS Plan
- Connect with providers including community, mainstream and government services
- Connect with the people in your life including family and the community
- Decide when you want to access supports and services and how much to pay for them
- Organise and book vaccination appointments
- Assist with the administration associated with NDIS providers including service agreements, pricing and service bookings
- Evaluate if current supports are working and suggest other supports or services that may be worth trying
- Troubleshoot any issues with implementing your NDIS Plan
- Set up appointment bookings on your behalf and manage any difficult situations that arise with providers.



Top tip: If you're new to the NDIS it's a great idea to ask for support coordination in your first NDIS Plan meeting so you can get help to access supports and achieve your goals.

Support coordination and your NDIS Plan.

Support coordination comes under the Capacity Building budget in your NDIS Plan and can be included in your first NDIS Plan or subsequent plans.

If support coordination is considered "reasonable and necessary" for you, your plan will include one of three different levels of support coordination.

Support connection.

Helps you build your ability to connect with supports to get the most from your NDIS Plan.

Support coordination – coordination of supports.

Assists you to build skills to understand and implement your NDIS Plan. This includes getting the combination of supports right so you can manage relationships, get the services you need and live more independently.

Specialist support coordination (highest level of support).

Helps people with more complex needs to manage challenges with supports and ensure consistent service delivery.

You are only able to fund support coordination if it is stated in your NDIS Plan. If your plan includes support coordination but does not specify the level of support coordination funded, you can purchase the level that suits your needs.¹¹

Support coordination and plan management.

How you choose to manage your NDIS Plan does not impact funding for support coordination.

This means you can be NDIA managed, have a plan manager or self manage and still receive funding for support coordination, providing it is considered reasonable and necessary to help you achieve your goals.¹²



FAQs about applying for the NDIS.

Q. Is the NDIS means tested?

A. No. The NDIS is not means tested and does not take into account your income or assets (such as a home) when determining eligibility.

Q. Will the NDIS affect my disability support pension (DSP)?

A. No. The NDIS is not considered as income so it doesn't affect your DSP or reduce other support payments you may be receiving from Centrelink.

Q. Once I am accepted, does that mean I automatically get the NDIS for the rest of my life?

A. No. While the NDIS is intended to provide lifetime support for people with permanent disability, your support needs may increase or decrease over time. If at any time you do not meet the disability requirements, your access may be revoked.

Q. What happens if my needs change after my NDIS Plan meeting?

A. If your circumstances have changed, such as your address, support needs or the support provided by family members, you need to let the NDIS know.

You can request a change to your NDIS Plan at any time and don't have to wait until your next plan meeting. Depending on the type of change required, the NDIS may decide you need a plan variation or a plan reassessment. A plan variation is a simple change that can be made to your existing plan, such as a change of address or to fix a small technical error.

A plan reassessment generally takes place when you are due for a new NDIS Plan. You can find this date in your current plan. They can also occur if something has changed, such as your living arrangements or you start work for the first time. The NDIS may also review your plan earlier than expected if there is an issue with how your funding is used. The NDIS won't provide additional funding if you have used all the money in your plan and your needs haven't changed.



Q. What happens when I turn 65?

A. If you are already an NDIS participant, you can stay with the NDIS or choose to change to the aged care system. If you enter residential aged care on a permanent basis after you turn 65, you will no longer be eligible for the NDIS. This refers to residential care or nursing in a residential facility that also provides accommodation. If you start receiving home care on a permanent basis after you turn 65, you will no longer be eligible to receive NDIS supports.

Q. I have a psychosocial disability but have good days and bad days. Will I still be eligible?

A. The NDIS refers to this as “episodic”, which means the impact of your disability on your daily life changes in intensity. Many NDIS participants experience episodic conditions. You may still meet NDIS criteria if you have good days as well as bad days. They will consider how you function on good days, bad days and the days in between.

Q. How can I get help to manage my NDIS Plan?

A. Ask for a plan manager like Leap in! during your planning conversation with the LAC or ECP. Plan management is one of the options you have for managing the money in your NDIS Plan. Plan management gives you choice and control over how you use your NDIS budget but with the support of a “plan manager” who helps manage your funds and pays your bills. Anyone can choose to have plan management added to their NDIS Plan and there are no out of pocket expenses. The NDIS adds additional funds to your plan to cover the cost. It’s a great option for people navigating the NDIS for the first time as you’ll have someone to answer all your questions. You’ll need to “endorse” Leap in! as your plan manager so we can pay invoices on your behalf. You can do this at your plan meeting or call the NDIS on **1800 800 110** and ask – it’s that easy!

Q. How long does an NDIS Plan last?

A. First plans are usually for 12 months. After that, if your support needs are unlikely to change, you can ask for a longer plan of up to three years duration. Children are more likely to have shorter plans as their needs can change more often.

Q. Where can I see my NDIS Plan?

A. As soon as your plan is ready, you can log into the **NDIS myplace portal** to see the detail and the amount of money in each budget. You don’t need to wait until you receive it in the mail.

Q. What will my first plan look like?

A. Unless you have complex needs, your first plan is likely to be quite basic. It’s a good idea to write down any additional supports that will help you achieve your goals or support your daily living activities as they come up so you are prepared for your next plan meeting.



How can Leap in! help?

At Leap in! plan management, we know the NDIS. As a NDIS registered plan manager, we can help you navigate the NDIS with confidence, armed with the knowledge you need to get the most out of your or your child's plan.

Get ready with confidence.

In addition to the information provided in this ebook, you are also welcome to call and speak with a member of our Leap in! crew. Our experienced plan managers (many with lived experience themselves) can help you with setting up the free Leap in! planning app or can walk you through a pre-planning meeting to get ready for your first NDIS plan meeting. They really listen and provide great advice.

In your first NDIS Plan meeting.

In your first NDIS Plan meeting you will be asked how you would like to manage your NDIS Plan budgets. Plan management is one of the options available to you (other options include self-manage, NDIA-managed and a combination of types). There are a range of benefits to each of the options, however over half of the people on the NDIS choose plan management and it's so popular for a reason!

Choosing plan management means that you have someone who claims and pays your providers' invoices on your behalf (like a book-keeper). It takes away the administrative function of paying the bills, so you have more time to focus on the things that really matter.

All you need to do to work with Leap in! is ask for plan management in your NDIS Plan and tell your planner that you would like to "endorse" Leap in! as your plan manager.

The benefits of working with Leap in!

In addition to paying your support provider bills, we do a whole lot more...

- Freedom to choose how you use your NDIS funds
- Use the providers you want (NDIS registered or unregistered)



- Get help to keep track of your NDIS funding and budgets
- Someone to manage and pay your invoices
- Less administration and paperwork
- No out of pocket expenses (the NDIS provides additional funds for plan management)
- Cheaper rates for some supports as plan managers are registered NDIS providers.

We put Members first.

Our focus is on continuously improving services for our Members. We're here to help Members get the best value from their NDIS Plans and achieve their goals.

We never treat you like a number and promise to keep you at the heart of everything we do.



Connect with providers.

Leap in! partners with trusted service providers across the disability sector. We can help connect you to the right service provider to suit your needs and meet your goals.

Find them on our [Provider Network Directory](#).

Connect with us.

We understand that there are different ways that you might want to talk to us or find out more information, so we have a range of options to suit your needs:

- Call us: **1300 05 78 78** (AEST)
- Visit our website: leapin.com.au
- **Chat with us online:** Available on our website, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (AEST)
- TY voice call: **133 677**
- Speak & listen: **1300 555 727**
- SMS Relay: **0423 677 767**
- **If you need an interpreter:** call 131 450 and ask them to call Leap in! on 07 3724 0368
- Email us: crew@leapin.com.au
- **Contact us via post:** GPO Box 1744, Brisbane QLD 4001

Our office hours are 9am to 5pm AEST, Monday to Friday.



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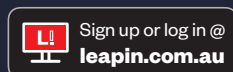
 **1300 05 78 78**

 **crew@leapin.com.au**

 **leapin.com.au**



Download the award-winning Leap in! app.



The Leap in! crew acknowledge 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.