Mental Health Access Snapshot Series

Snapshot 1 – General information about how the NDIS can support your mental health

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a new way of supporting people who experience disability because of mental health issues, to be part of their communities and the workforce. The NDIS can assist people to make their own decisions and be aware of their options (choice and control). The NDIS supports people who experience disability to exercise their rights to the same opportunities as others within the community.

The NDIS is able to link people with disability to services within the community and/or provide funding for people to get individualised support e.g. support with daily activities; support to enjoy community/work life relevant to individual interests and needs.

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

How will the Mental Health Access Snapshots series support me?

This snapshot series has been developed to provide information, in a written format, for people requiring more detailed and technical information about how the NDIS access requirements work in a mental health context. It is envisaged that the snapshots will support mental health service providers, other support people and individuals requiring more detailed and technical information, to better understand the NDIS access requirements. The snapshots can be used to inform conversations with potential participants about how 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.

What is the NDIA?

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is an independent government agency that delivers the NDIS.

The NDIS helps people who experience disability because of a mental health issues in two different ways:

1.   NDIS support for all Australians (general support)

All Australians who experience disability can be assisted by the NDIS to link to other government services, and local or community-based supports. This assistance is provided by an NDIS Partner in the local community known as a Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or by the NDIA directly depending on the area you live in. To be linked with an LAC partner in your community, or to receive assistance from NDIA direct, please contact the NDIA using the details at the end of this document.

The NDIS also has a role in supporting inclusive communities where everyone can build and pursue their dreams and vision for a good life.

Snapshot 5 provides more details of how the NDIS works with other services to support your mental health.

2. NDIS individualised support

An individualised NDIS package (known as an NDIS plan) is suited to people with severe and persistent mental health issues (that will likely remain across the person's lifetime and significantly affect day-to-day life). An individualised NDIS plan may include mainstream supports (services provided by other government systems), informal supports (assistance from family, friends, carers and community) and funded support from the NDIS. NDIS funded supports generally provide assistance to carry out daily activities which are part of your community life and work e.g. support to get up and dressed, have breakfast and go to work or head out to your planned activities.

To receive individualised support from the NDIS you must first apply to access the NDIS. When a person is granted access to the NDIS they become an NDIS participant. Snapshots 2-4 provide more details of the access requirements.

How do I know whether general support or individualised support is best for me?

If your disability is likely to remain and will keep having a major impact on your capacity to carry out everyday tasks on a day-to-day basis without support, you may be eligible for an individualised NDIS plan and you should request access to the scheme. Otherwise you may be better suited to requesting general support from NDIS to assist you to connect to other community and government services.

If you are currently receiving mental health services, it may be best to talk your current service provider first. You and the provider can talk about which type of support best suits your needs. If you decide to apply for individualised NDIS support, your provider may be able to discuss with you the best time to apply and assist you with your request to access the NDIS. They can also discuss with you what may happen to your existing supports.

If you don't have a provider who can assist with the information you require, contact the NDIA. If an LAC is available in your local area, the NDIA will put you in touch with your local LAC who can link you to community and mainstream services and/or assist you to request access to individualised NDIS support. If an LAC is not yet available in your area the NDIA will provide assistance.

More information about accessing the NDIS can be found at the reimagine today website a resource to support people living with mental health issues to navigate the NDIS.

How does the NDIA decide who will become an NDIS participant (access individualised funding and have an NDIS plan)?

People who experience disability because of mental health issues, and are likely to be eligible for individualised NDIS support will:

- have explored treatment options as indicated by your clinician, to resolve the mental health issues (clinical recovery) and any ongoing treatment is recovery oriented; and
- be likely to need lifelong support to participate in the community and/or work.

Everybody else will have access to support from LACs to receive help in connecting to mainstream and community services.

ndis.gov.au

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

What do you mean by 'likely requires lifelong support to participate in community and/or work life'?

People who are eligible for an individualised NDIS plan generally need assistance (and will continue to need assistance throughout their life) to carry out key everyday tasks in at least one these areas:

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

Assistance includes things like physical assistance, guidance, supervision or prompting. To qualify for individualised support a person will:

- usually not be able to do most tasks within one of the areas listed above; and
- without support, have substantially reduced capacity to function in one of these areas.

Importantly the NDIA looks at both what a person can and cannot do. For example, someone who has substantially reduced capacity in self-management may be able manage their own small budget for incidental expenses but need another person's assistance to make major life/financial decisions and budget.

How does NDIS support mental health recovery?

The founding principles underpinning the NDIS are similar to the principles of mental health recovery.

The NDIA defines recovery as "achieving an optimal state of personal, social and emotional wellbeing, as defined by each individual, whilst living with or recovering from mental health issues".

NDIS supports recovery and will tailor a support package to individual needs. If eligible for individualised NDIS support, it is anticipated that you will be provided with a commitment to lifetime support with your ongoing recovery journey.

What evidence do I need to provide to request access to the NDIS?

The NDIA accepts evidence in the way you chose to send it. Useful information includes:

- past and current treatment/interventions you have undertaken (including information about planned treatment/interventions)
- assessment forms (e.g. application for Disability Support Pension) completed by your support provider or clinician; and
- how your disability affects you on a day-to-day basis, which can include functional assessments such as World Health Organisation Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS) and Life Skills Profile 16 (LSP-16).

What do the NDIS Access requirements include?

- You must be under 65 years of age when you apply.
- You must meet the residency requirements e.g. be an Australian citizen, hold a permanent visa or hold a special category visa (SCV).
- You must meet the disability criteria.

Can anybody help me with this process?

The NDIA welcomes your family, community supports, existing support providers, carers, and friends to be part of the process, if that is what you would like.

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

Myth Busters

I have an episodic condition therefore I cannot access the NDIS

False. Many NDIS participants experience episodic conditions resulting in disability. An episodic condition is not a barrier to accessing the NDIS.

I need to provide information about my 'worst days'

False. The NDIA needs to know how the impairment/s from your mental health issues impact your day-to-day functioning. If your mental health issues are episodic, the NDIA will need to know about how you function between episodes (not on particularly good or bad days).

To meet the NDIS access requirements I need to prove I've exhausted all treatment options

False. There is no requirement that all known treatments have to be completed. The NDIA needs to know what treatments/interventions have been explored – ones that you have tried and ones that you and your clinician have decided not to try – and why the impairment will remain even when treatment continues.

The NDIS will replace Community Mental Health Services

False. The NDIS will not replace community-based support or medical/clinical care for people living with mental health conditions

The NDIS can provide support to increase independence, be part of your community, and participate in work.

Please also see Access Snapshots 2 – 5 for further information

Contact the NDIS

Phone: 1800 800 110

Email: enquiries@ndis.gov.au

Visit: NDIS Website