Transcript

Group Based Supports Pricing Arrangements Transition

Provider Information Session Part 2 – Direct Supports and Centre Capital Costs

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Welcome to our second session on the Group based supports pricing arrangements transition. This is part 2 of a series of 4 presentations, where we focus on Direct Supports and Centre Capital Costs. My name is Julia, and I’m a part of the Social and Community Participation team, with the NDIA.

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I would like to acknowledge that this session is being hosted on the traditional lands of the Kaurna people. We pay our respect to Elders both past, present and future. I also extend that acknowledgement and respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who might be viewing this session.

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Now just a disclaimer. This material is general in nature.

Information provided in presentations by the National Disability Insurance Agency is considered to be true and correct at the time this presentation has been recorded.

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This presentation series has been designed to help you as providers in your transition to the new pricing arrangement for group and centre-based activities. This second presentation will give more detail around the direct support charges, and Centre Capital Costs. We have also recorded a series of 3 other presentations, so please don’t hesitate to review these sessions if you’d like more detail. All of these presentations can be accessed via our website.

Now it’s important to mention that these presentations aim to complement the resources that are already available on the NDIS website. This includes our key reference document, the Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits document, or the PAPL, as we sometimes refer to it. The 2023-24 document has been released and came into effect from the 1st July. Now in addition, our team has created a provider guidance document. And both of these resources are available on the pricing page of the Agency’s website. So I would encourage you to spend some time reviewing these resources, in addition to this presentation, to further develop your understanding of the pricing changes.

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So in this presentation, I will cover these key areas.

First I’ll start with an overview of the pricing changes, as our introduction.

Then I’ll go through the direct supports, and how to calculate the direct support rate.

Then I’ll provide a summary of the other costs, associated with group-based supports.

I’ll then go through some case scenarios, to illustrate how the various rates are applied.

From here, I will then discuss the Centre Capital Costs associated with group and centre-based activities, and provide some further case scenarios around this item.

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So to begin, I’d like to briefly discuss the history of these pricing changes, just to give you a little bit of context. So back in 2020, the new pricing was introduced for group-based supports. And since this time, providers have been able to use either the new pricing model, or retain use of the former pricing, which was known as “transitional pricing”. Now implementation of the new pricing has not been strictly enforced so far, given the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic. We’ve allowed numerous extensions to providers implementing the new model, as we could appreciate that there were challenges in the sector. However the final deadline to implement the new pricing is approaching. All providers MUST transition to the new pricing model for group-based supports by the 31st December 2023. So the transitional pricing cannot be used for supports that are delivered from the 1st January 2024. And I want to stress that the deadline will not be extended again.

Now the Agency wants to help providers as they make this transition, which is the role our team. So in addition to the resources I’ve already mentioned, other steps that the Agency has taken to support providers include the following:

* So the first is making some amendments. We heard feedback during consultation in 2022, and that resulted in some changes to the pricing arrangement. So the Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits document online included these changes from the 5th May 2023.
* The Agency has also established a dedicated team to support this change. This includes a specific inbox to help providers with any queries about the transition. And you’ll see the email here, which is [group.supports.transition@ndis.gov.au](mailto:group.supports.transition@ndis.gov.au)
* And finally, our team is developing some resources for intermediaries and participants. We’re working on these at present, and hope to make them available as soon as possible.

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So for information about Group-Based supports (and the claiming rules) please refer to page 28 of the PAPL. Now for information about the Direct face to face supports (including the relevant line items) please refer to page 60 of the PAPL.

So direct face to face line items are based on the Disability support worker cost model. And this has not changed from that former transitional pricing model. There are 2 categories, the standard support (which is level 1) and high intensity supports (which is level 2).

Now previously under the transitional pricing, there were around 180 line items to choose from! And now there are only 20. So this line item rate is per group, not per participant. And so therefore this line item (or the group rate) is divided by the number of participants in the group.

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So now I’ll explain the direct support rate in a little more detail. This is that face to face time that participants spend attending group-based supports. The first task is to select the correct hourly rate from the PAPL. As I mentioned earlier, standard intensity supports are highlighted on page 60, and high intensity supports on page 61. Now the rate from the table is chosen based on the day and time of the support, whether TTP applies, and the location.

Now this line item is the hourly rate. And this rate is divided by the number of participants in the group. And this is a point which highlights why it’s very important for you as providers to think about how your groups are structured, and how many participants are in each group.

Then the hourly rate for each participant is determined.

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So now that we have this hourly rate, we then need to determine if there’s any other costs that might relate to a participant attending a group-based support.

Now as discussed on the previous slide, we’ve now got this hourly rate for the direct face to face time for a participant. If this group-based support meets the criteria for claiming Centre Capital Costs, and we’ll go into this in more detail shortly, this would be added to the hourly rate. Now details about whether Centre Capital Costs can be applied are also explained on page 30 of the PAPL.

This amount, in that top row, is then multiplied by the hours that a participant attends the group-based support. This gives us the session cost.

Now in the second half, bottom half of the slide, we need to then consider any Non-Face-to-Face costs. So these are outlined in the PAPL on page 17. Now if these are relevant and approved by the participant for a particular session, they will be added to the session cost, and this will determine that individual session cost for that participant.

So as you can see here, the individual participant session cost is made up of a number of factors, and it will be unique for each participant and might vary depending on the group size, the location, the time, and any Non-Face-to-Face tasks.

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So as an example, let’s use the standard, weekday, daytime, national rate without TTP for group-based supports on page 60. This line item is $65.47. Therefore, if we’ve got 3 participants in a group, supported by one support worker, the hourly rate for their direct time is $65.47 divided by three. This would equate to $21.82 per participant, per hour, for their face-to-face time attending the group.

Now if the session is 5 hours, the session cost for each participant would be $21.82 multiplied by 5 hours, which equals $109.12.

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Now a common frequently asked question to our team, relates to the provision of 1:1 self care during a group-based support. Now this question is often asking whether or not the group ‘charge’ should be applied for the whole duration of the activity, or whether the participant shouldn’t be charged when they’re away from the group activity to attend to their care needs.

Now in answering this question, we often encourage providers to consider the needs of participants attending the group, which will no doubt vary. So it might be appropriate for a provider to charge for both the group session time, and the 1:1 self-care time simultaneously. But things to consider, if you’re taking this approach, include things like:

* Whether or not the activity is actually resourced and available to the participant when they leave the group for that self-care task. So for example, if a participant required 30 minutes for this task, is the group activity available to them during that 30 minutes? And what if the participant, say, only took 20 minutes on one occasion, for the self-care task? It would be expected that they could return to the group task for that extra 10 minutes.

Now any approach you take must be clearly communicated to the participant (and included in a Program of Support where relevant). The appropriate supporting documentation needs to be retained as evidence of support delivery.

So here in this example, we have a participant called Jake, who’s attending a group-based support every Wednesday and Thursday, for 6 hours. He is part of a group of 3 participants, during day time hours. And he requires 1:1 support for his self-care needs, which take approximately 30 minutes, twice a day. So, to calculate the costs of Jake’s support, the provider would actually calculate the session costs, as you can see here in the green table. So that direct time, when he is part of a group, equates to $130.94. Then we’ve got that direct time, which is the 1:1 self-care, which comes out at two lots of 30 minutes (or one hour in the day), which is $65.47. So the total session cost for Jake attending this session, would be $196.41, per day.

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So now I’m going to move to the Centre Capital Costs, which as I said earlier, these can be found on page 30 of the PAPL. Now we know that some social and community participation supports are delivered in centres. And these are often different to typical community centres, as they might be designed as accessible spaces for those with higher support needs.

Now the PAPL explains that providers who incur running and maintenance costs in relation to a centre, may claim a Centre Capital Cost. And this is when a group-based support is wholly or partially delivered in a centre. Now it’s important to note that the centre must be available for use for the entire duration of the activity.

Now we know that eligibility for Centre Capital Costs has been a bit of a common question amongst providers, and so a good rule of thumb is to think about whether or not you’re currently claiming for centre-based group activities in the transitional pricing. The intent of this item (the Centre Capital Cost) is much the same as the centre-based group activities that were previously selected in the transitional pricing model. So hopefully that helps guide you, when you’re thinking about this line item.

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So here’s is an example of how to apply Centre Capital Costs, if the group is partially using a centre during the day. So in this scenario, we have a group of participants who are attending a centre twice a week for 5 hours a day. The provider claims the Centre Capital Costs for the duration of the program.

Now the groups decides that they’re going to spend 2 hours each Wednesday at a local reserve. And this is in order to meet participant’s goals around photography.

Now in this situation, the provider can claim Centre Capital Costs for the full day on Wednesday, even though the participants are spending some time away on an outing. This is because the centre is available to the group to use during the day if it’s needed. So if we imagine that perhaps one week at the relevant time, it was raining. The participants are likely to want to remain at the centre and undertake some alternative activities at the time, instead of going out. And the centre is resourced and available for them to use if it’s needed.

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So to recap, the former transitional pricing cannot be claimed for any supports delivered on or after the 1st Jan 2024.

I do want to emphasise again that there are no further extensionsplanned, so we encourage you to continue or to complete your transition as soon as possible, in preparation for the 31st December deadline.

Now the modelling underlying group-based supports has not changed, it’s only the way that it’s claimed. So that new direct rate is per group, it’s not per participant.

So you might find that your services fit really neatly into the new pricing, or you may need to reconsider some elements of how you offer your services, to NDIS participants.

Now a reminder that Programs of Support now have a maximum length of 6 months, but these are not compulsory and they can be shorter.

And finally, the NDIA will continue to support the transition, including the provision of some resources for some other stakeholder groups. So please keep an eye on our website, for more information in the future.

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So here are our contact details, if you’d like to get in touch. In particular, please note our email address: [group.supports.transition@ndis.gov.au](mailto:group.supports.transition@ndis.gov.au) and feel free to email us with any questions.

Thank you for watching this session, and please remember that we do have 3 other sessions in this series, which provides an overview of the group-based supports pricing changes. And you can find these on our website.