Transcript

Group Based Supports Pricing Arrangements Transition

Provider Information Session Part 4 – Programs of Support

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Welcome to part 4 of our series regarding group-based supports and the pricing arrangements transition. This session relates to Programs of Support. My name is Julia, and I’m a member of the Social and Community Participation Team at 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’d also like to 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.

Changes in circumstances after the time of presentation might impact the accuracy of this information and the National Disability Insurance Agency gives no assurance as to the accuracy of any information or advice contained.

This material has been assembled in good faith, but does not necessarily reflect the considered views of the National Disability Insurance Agency or indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.

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Now this presentation series has been designed to help providers in your transition to the new pricing model for group and centre-based supports. This fourth and final presentation will give an overview of Programs of Support. Now we have also recorded a series of 3 other presentations, which go into a little more detail about various aspects of the pricing model. We hope that this will make it easier for you as providers to find key information, as you work through your transition. Now 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 our website. This includes our key reference document, which is the Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits document, or the PAPL, as we sometimes refer to it. The 2023-2024 document has been released, and came into effect from the 1st July, 2023. 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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Now to begin, I’ll give an overview of the pricing changes. Then, I’ll explain what a program of support is, and the various rules and requirements for you as providers in relation to a program support. I’ll then provide an example, to finish off our session.

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So 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 is 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 allowed numerous extensions to providers implementing this new model, as we could appreciate there were challenges in this 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. The transitional pricing cannot be used for supports delivered from the 1st January 2024. And this deadline will not be extended again.

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

* The first is making amendments. So we heard some feedback during consultation in 2022, and this resulted in some changes to the pricing arrangement. Now the Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits document online included these changes since the 5th May 2023.
* The Agency’s also established a dedicated team to support this change. And this includes a specific inbox to help providers with queries about the transition. And so the relevant email address to contact for queries is group.supports.transition@ndis.gov.au
* And finally, the team are developing some resources for intermediaries and participants. And we’re working on these at present, and hope to have them available as soon as possible.

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So first of all, to find information about Programs of Support in the Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits document (or the ‘PAPL’), please refer to page 29.

Now Programs of Support were introduced in July of 2020, and can currently include the former transitional pricing, or the new line items. However from the 1st Jan 2024, they must only include the new line items.

Now Programs of Support are not mandatory. They won’t suit all activities, and all participants and suit all providers. They’re just simply an option that can be used if it’s appropriate.

Now as part of the changes to the PAPL on the 5th May 2023, the maximum length of a Program of Support has been increased from 12 weeks to 6 months. Now again, this is not mandatory, but it’s an option where appropriate. And this came about because we heard that in some instances, the 12 week maximum wasn’t working well for perhaps, longer goals, or activities and skills, which take longer to build.

And last of all, there has been an introduction to a 4 week unplanned exit clause.

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Now obviously providers need to offer supports which are tailored to the participant’s goals, interests and needs. And there should be regular conversations about the service offering, to ensure that this remains the case.

Then the Program of Support really focuses on how that support should be delivered.

Now it’s important to keep in mind, that providers should ensure that participants are able to review their Program of Support regularly throughout the program, if it’s longer than 12 weeks in duration.

For a shorter Programs of Support (such as one that’s one month long), this is not a requirement given there would no doubt be conversations to wrap up that program and/or agree to a new one. And this would serve the same purpose.

Therefore overall, when you’re implementing a Program of Support, we want you as a provider to consider how you’ll ensure that your program can remain flexible, to meet the needs of the participants in the group over a period of time.

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Now there are a number of benefits of a Program of Support, to both participants and providers. So here we’ve tried to outline some of these benefits, so that you can decide whether or not a Program of Support might suit some of the participants in your program.

Now for participants, one of the benefits is that the total cost of participation in a program is really clear. They will know, in advance, all of the costs that will be claimed each week. And this includes the direct and indirect costs, such as Non-Face-to Face costs. So for example, a Program of Support across 6 months will allow the participant to map out exactly how much their group-based activity will cost them, as a total inclusive figure.

Now it’s really important to understand that participants don’t lose their choice and control when they’re signing up for a Program of Support. They’re encouraged to meet with you as their provider to tailor the program and suit their goals and interests. Now a Program of Support won’t necessarily be identical for everyone in the group, it can be tailored as needed.

Now for you as providers, there are a number of benefits too. To begin with, it makes claiming easier. So the claims will be the same each week, there won’t be those week to week variations that might occur in other circumstances.

Secondly, the short notice cancellation rules don’t apply, which makes it easier for you as providers to claim and recoup your costs, even if participants don’t attend.

And as I highlighted earlier, Programs of Support can be tailored for participants. And this can lead to ideal outcomes for both participants and providers when designing a Program of Support. Now an example here, is ensuring that suitable amounts of Non-Face-to-Face time can be claimed for a participant who might require additional behind the scenes tasks, compared to say, another person in a group. Now it wouldn’t be suitable for all of those participants in that group to have the same Program of Support in place.

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So in terms of documentation, the details regarding a Program of Support must include:

* What the program is
* The length of that program
* The exit rules
* And the intended outcomes for the program

Now the notice period for a Program of Support is 2 weeks.

As I said earlier, short notice cancellation rules DO NOT apply for Programs of Support. So providers can charge for supports under a Program of Support if the participant doesn’t attend. Now if participants are absent more than typical, providers are encouraged to proactively contact them and were possible, try and re-engage them with the program.

Now 4 consecutive weeks of non-attendance would be considered an unplanned exit (unless that participant has notified otherwise). Now after this time, providers are no longer able to claim for the Program of Support. Now this is important to ensure that participants are not charged despite their lack of attendance, for you know, months and months at a time. And their lack of attendance might perhaps indicate that that the support is no longer right for them.

Now we’ve just mentioned here at the bottom of this slide, that Programs of Support may not suit all participants. So for example, if you are supporting participants who experience frequent attendance issues, a Program of Support may not be the best way for them to access their supports. So please consider the needs of all participants, when determining your service offering.

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Now here we have an example of a Program of Support for a participant.

In this example, the participant attends a group-based program for 6 hours a day, 3 times a week. They have goals around independent living skills and would like to undertake some activities in the community. So they have an arrangement in place that allows for the participant to be supported in a larger group when doing creative activities, but then a smaller group when they’re learning independent living skills. In addition, they then require 1:1 support when they’re out in the community. So this arrangement takes into account the participant’s specific needs in different settings and during a variety of tasks or scenarios.

Then in addition to the direct support, the participant and provider agree to the following indirect costs:

* So Non-Face-to-Face will include a total of 1 hour and 20 minutes, per week. Now this accounts for 10 minutes of set up and packing down the centre based creative activities. 40 minutes of time in relation to the independent living skills, and then 30 minutes for the work related to the community excursions. So this example illustrates how providers need to be able to explain how Non-Face-to-Face costs are calculated and applied to each participant.
* And then last of all, the Centre Capital Costs, which can be applied in this instance for all 18 hours of support.

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Here are the calculations based on this example.

The direct support associated with the group of 5, equates to $13.09 per hour, per participant.

The direct support associated with the group of 2 equates to $32.75 per hour, per participant.

The direct support time associated with the 1:1 community excursions, equates to $65.47 per hour.

Then the Non-Face-to-Face time for the week equates to $78.56, and the Centre Capital Costs are $43.92.

So this is a total of $790.27, which would be applied each week for the duration of the Program of Support.

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So in summary, the former transitional pricing cannot be claimed for any supports that are delivered on or after the 1st January, 2024.

There will be no further extensionsplanned, so we really encourage you to continue or complete your transition as soon as possible, in preparation for the 31st December deadline.

Now that new direct rate is per group, it’s not per participant.

Now 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. And this includes whether or not a Program of Support is right for you.

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 more resources for some other stakeholder groups. So please keep an eye on our website for more information coming soon.

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So to finish off, here are our contact details. If you’d like to get in touch our email is best, which is group.supports.transition@ndis.gov.au.

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