

# Psychosocial Disability Access Factsheet 3: Lifetime support and recovery for psychosocial disability in the NDIS

This factsheet is part of a series about access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for people with psychosocial disability.

It is for people with psychosocial disability who are thinking about whether they should apply for the NDIS. It explains the terms 'permanence' and 'recovery' in the NDIS and how to understand these as a person with psychosocial disability.

To receive NDIS support as a participant, the [NDIS Act](#) says that a person must give evidence their impairment from their mental health condition is likely to be permanent.

This means it is likely to remain across their lifetime.

Saying that you have a psychosocial disability that is 'likely to be permanent' does not change who you are, your experiences, or your ability to live a meaningful and contributing life. It may help show us how your mental health condition affects your life and may help us to support you.

If you become an NDIS participant with psychosocial disability, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will fund reasonable and necessary supports to support you with your psychosocial recovery.

## What we mean by psychosocial recovery

We are committed to supporting a person's recovery. A founding principle of the NDIS Act is:

People with disability should be supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life to the extent of their ability.<sup>1</sup>

Psychosocial recovery is not about living completely free of mental health symptoms.

Recovery means a person is able to:

- regain control of their identity and life
- have hope for their life
- live a life with meaning, whether through work, relationships, spirituality, community engagement, or some or all of these<sup>2</sup>.

This is also known as personal recovery.

## Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework

We are committed to improving the experience of participants with psychosocial disability in the Scheme.

In December 2021, the NDIA released the [Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework \(Recovery Framework\)](#).

The Recovery Framework aims to improve the responsiveness to, and experience of, NDIS participants with psychosocial disability.

It will deliver meaningful change and better outcomes for participants living with psychosocial disability.

We also acknowledge the important contribution of families, friends and peer supports in a person's recovery journey.

## Will you likely need NDIS support for your whole life?

To become an NDIS participant under the [disability criteria](#), you must be likely to have an impairment that is permanent, or likely to last for your whole life.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 4, NDIS Act 2013.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation, "Guidance on community mental health services: promoting person-centred and rights-based approaches." 2021.

This means your mental health condition is likely to have a lifelong impact on your ability to function.

NDIS supports help you:

- build or maintain your functional capacity and independence
- work, study or take part in social life.

If your needs change over time or they only change sometimes, we may still consider your impairment is permanent, or likely to be. We think about your whole situation to answer this question.

When we decide if you will likely need support under the NDIS for your whole life, we think about:

- your life circumstances
- the nature of your support needs
- whether the NDIS is best to meet your needs, or other government and community services.

You may also be eligible for the NDIS under the [early intervention requirements](#) if you need some supports now to reduce your future need for support. You can visit the [Am I eligible](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

## Lifelong impact of mental health conditions

Living with a mental health condition may be lifelong, but the impacts of the **impairment** may not.

Your impairment also must meet the NDIS eligibility requirements. For example, you may have an impairment caused by a chronic health condition which may be best managed or treated through the health system.

If this is the case, we may decide that your impairment does not meet the eligibility requirements under the NDIS.

We need evidence that the impairment caused by the mental health condition is likely to remain across a person's lifetime. However, this does not reflect on whether a person has achieved their best possible version of personal and emotional wellbeing.

You may have periods in your life where there is a smaller impact on your daily life. This could be because your impairment is episodic or fluctuates in intensity. But your impairment can still be likely to be permanent due to the overall impact on your life, and the likeliness that it will impact you across your lifetime.

## Permanent impairment

Your impairment will likely be considered **permanent** if your treating professional gives the NDIA evidence showing there are [no available and appropriate treatments](#) that could remedy the impairment.

[Factsheet 6: Providing evidence for NDIS eligibility](#) has more information about giving evidence to the NDIA.

The NDIA does not need all treatments or interventions to be completed to consider an impairment is likely permanent. But applicants must have explored the following:

- Periods of treatment and support with mental health clinicians and clinical teams.
- Ongoing treatment to reduce the impact of your mental health condition which has not remedied the impairment.
- Tried other treatments recommended by treating professionals that may help.
- Despite all the treatment you have had and will continue to receive, your mental health condition continues to impact on your ability to function and the impact is likely to be permanent.

On your recovery journey, you may have positive changes in your mental health and wellbeing. But you may still need ongoing supports to function in everyday life.

If an impairment is permanent, the NDIA asks that clinicians provide clinical rationale to support that an impairment is likely to remain across a person's lifetime.

## Impairments that are not permanent

If a treating clinician does not know the likely impact of treatment or intervention, the impairment caused by the mental health condition is not considered 'likely to be permanent'.

This means the person is unlikely to be eligible for the NDIS.

People unlikely to be eligible can still ask a local area coordinator about supports available in their community. Local area coordinators can help people connect with supports in their local area including:

- community groups
- recreational activities such as sporting clubs
- performing arts groups
- other social networks.

Local area coordinators can also help people:

- understand how the NDIS works with other government services
- connect to supports like education, health and transport. Visit the [local area coordinators](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

## How the NDIS supports recovery

People who meet the NDIS eligibility criteria are known as NDIS participants.

The NDIS will support a strengths-focused and person-centred approach to developing recovery plans with a participant.

NDIS funding offers support to help the participant pursue short-term and long-term goals related to social and economic participation. These goals may change over time, and the plans and supports can also change as needed.

We recognise that mental health conditions are often episodic and fluctuating. This means they may change over time.

If a person has a mental health condition that is episodic and fluctuating, they can still access the NDIS. But they must also meet all the requirements to become an NDIS participant.

We understand there is a need for flexibility in planning and support to respond to changes in need.

We review NDIS plans regularly and adjust them based on individual [reasonable and necessary](#) requirements.

## Psychosocial recovery coach (recovery coach)

Recovery coaches are a funded support for participants with psychosocial disability in an NDIS plan.

Recovery coaches help people with psychosocial disability to increase independence as well as social and economic participation. They help people:

- take more control of their lives
- better manage complex challenges of daily living.

A psychosocial recovery coach also works with a participant to:

- build capacity and resilience
- identify, plan, design and coordinate different supports

- plan and maintain engagement through times of increased support needs
- provide coaching to build on strengths, knowledge, skills, resilience, and decision-making.

More information is available in the [Psychosocial Recovery Coach information](#) factsheet on the NDIS website.

## National Disability Insurance Agency

[ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)

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