

# Psychosocial Disability Access Factsheet 2: Impairment and 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 explains what we mean by impairment related to mental health conditions or psychosocial disability.

While the NDIS recognises people with mental health condition/s are impacted by their condition, not everyone who has a mental health condition will experience psychosocial disability.

To be eligible to access the NDIS, a person with a psychosocial disability will have an impairment caused by a mental health condition/s that has resulted in disability.

## Impairment

An impairment is a loss or significant change in at least one of:

- your body's functions
- your body's structure
- how you think and learn.

To meet the NDIS disability requirements, you must have a psychosocial disability attributable to an **impairment** that is, or is likely to be, **permanent**. This means that you'll likely have your impairment for your whole life.

Having an impairment that is, or is likely to be, permanent means you have reduced capacity for daily life activities and tasks due to the functional impact of your mental health condition.

It also does not matter if you have one impairment or more. Visit the [Do you meet the disability requirements?](#) webpage on the NDIS website for more information.

The NDIS provides funding to eligible people with disability to:

- gain more time with family and friends
- achieve more independence
- access new skills, jobs or volunteering in their community
- an improved quality of life.

While we recognise that someone living with mental health condition/s is impacted by their condition, not everyone who has a mental health condition will experience psychosocial disability. However, we can still help everyone access other government services in their area, as well as local or community supports.

The NDIA has a strengths-focused approach to recovery and psychosocial disability.

This means that while a person may have an impairment related to a psychosocial disability across their lifetime, it does not stop them from pursuing their optimal level of personal, social and emotional wellbeing.

## Mental health diagnosis

NDIS support is based on the impairment, or impact, of a mental health condition, not the diagnosis itself.

When applying to the NDIS, we prefer a specific mental health diagnosis, but it is not essential. This means you need to give evidence of a mental health condition to access the NDIS, but you do not have to name the condition.

You also need to give evidence that your impairment from a mental health condition is:

- likely to be permanent
- needs support best offered by the NDIS and not through another service system.

We decide if a person meets the eligibility requirements for the NDIS not on what the diagnosis is, but:

- how the impairment impacts a person's function in day-to-day life
- their capacity for carrying out activities and social or economic participation.

No specific mental health diagnosis will automatically meet or not meet the NDIS access criteria. We base our decisions on individual circumstances, particularly the impact that a mental health condition has on a person's day-to-day life.

For example, if you have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, we will base an NDIS access decision on the impact of the condition on your day-to-day life. It will not be based on the schizophrenia diagnosis.

It is helpful if you share your schizophrenia diagnosis with the NDIA. But if you prefer not to or do not identify with your diagnosis, it is fine to apply for the NDIS stating you have a mental health condition. However, sharing a diagnosis with the NDIA will make it easier for us to see if you meet the eligibility requirements.

## Is your impairment likely to be permanent?

We need evidence that you will likely have your impairment for your **whole life**.

You may have times in your life when there is less impact on your day-to-day life. This is because your impairment may be episodic or fluctuate in intensity.

This means your impairment may change over time.

Your impairment can still be permanent due to the overall impact on your life, and the possibility that it will impact you across your lifetime.

Even when your condition or diagnosis is permanent, we will check if your impairment is permanent too. For example, you may not be eligible if your impairment is:

- temporary
- still being treated
- there are remaining treatment options that are worth pursuing.

Generally, we will consider whether your impairment is likely to be permanent after all available and appropriate treatment options have been pursued. Visit the [Do you meet the disability requirements?](#) webpage on the NDIS website for more information.

## How to know if you may be eligible for the NDIS

You may be eligible for the NDIS under the disability requirements if you meet all the other access criteria which include:

- Your impairment is likely to be permanent.
- Your capacity to do everyday activities is substantially reduced by your impairment.
- You are likely to need support under the NDIS for your lifetime.

Visit the [Does your impairment substantially reduce your functional capacity?](#) page on the Our Guidelines section of the NDIS website for more information.

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

## Information to provide at access about your impairment

The NDIS is respectful of your right to privacy. When applying for the NDIS, the NDIS **does not** need information about:

- personal details relating to trauma or abuse
- information that identifies specific scenarios that may cause distress.

## Co-existing substance use issues

If you want to access the NDIS with a psychosocial disability, we need to know that the impairment is because of a mental health condition.

We need to see evidence that shows a person's substantially reduced functional capacity is because of a likely to be permanent impairment. It must also be present even in times of abstinence from substance or alcohol use. If that is the case, a person can meet the NDIS access requirements regardless of any co-existing substance use issues.

This evidence is usually:

- confirmation by a specialist neuropsychiatrist or neuropsychologist; or
- confirmation following abstinence from substance or alcohol in a controlled setting. This will most likely be as a hospital inpatient.

Someone thinking about applying to the NDIS may still be accessing or planning to access treatment for co-existing substance use issues during access and throughout any ongoing relationship with the NDIS, as long as they have provided the evidence as described above.

We do not fund treatment for co-existing substance use issues. You can access this through mainstream services, usually with alcohol and other drug (AoD) services.

## Psychosis

Psychosis can be referred to as an experience where a person has problems interpreting the world around them. What clinicians refer to in clinical settings as 'psychotic disorders' includes a range of diagnoses, some of which may be brief in nature.

People who experience psychosis may be eligible for NDIS support if they meet the eligibility requirements. But people experiencing early episodes of psychosis may be best treated through another service system.

Support for young people experiencing an early episode of psychosis or at risk of developing psychosis is available through the [headspace Early Psychosis program](#).

## National Disability Insurance Agency

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