

# Conflicts of interest – Support coordination

This fact sheet is for participants and providers and will explain:

- the role of a support coordinator in the NDIS
- conflict of interest
- support coordination scenarios
- what good practice looks like
- what participants can do if they identify a conflict of interest

## The role of a support coordinator in the NDIS

[Support Coordinators](#) help National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants make the best use of the supports in their NDIS plans. They should also help participants identify and manage conflicts of interest.

## Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a person or organisation has an opportunity to put what will benefit them (their own interests) ahead of the interests of the person they are supporting.

These conflicts may be:

- actual – it happened or is happening

- potential – it might happen
- perceived – it seems like it has happened or might happen.

### **Examples of conflicts of interest:**

- A support coordinator providing other NDIS-funded supports.
- A support coordinator pressuring a participant to choose a provider or a service that may not be right for them.
- A support coordinator referring a participant to supports and services provided by their own organisation, friends or family members, without giving other options.

## **Support coordination scenarios**

### **Scenario 1**

Pablo is an NDIS participant who has a cognitive disability. Jessica has been his support coordinator for several years and they have developed a close relationship by building trust and rapport.

Pablo contacts Jessica to say he is not happy with his current supported independent living (SIL) arrangement. Jessica tells him her organisation also provides SIL supports, and she is aware of some properties with availability. She offers to show Pablo through. Jessica also tells him there is a lot of interest in the properties and she doesn't want him to miss out and puts pressure on him to make a decision.

Pablo is curious to look at other housing options and talks to his family, letting them know Jessica wants him to decide quickly. They ask Pablo if Jessica suggested any other options and point out that because Jessica works for the same organisation it could be considered a potential conflict of interest.

After talking with his family, Pablo agrees that Jessica has not acted in his best interests and has not given him alternatives to the ones offered by her organisation. Jessica has also failed to give him time to make an informed decision that is free from influence.

## **Outcome 1**

With Pablo's consent, his family reach out to Jessica and her manager to discuss their concerns. They explain Pablo would like to explore other options. Jessica and her manager understand and agree that alternative options outside of their organisation should be provided. They also agree they need to declare any potential conflict of interest where their organisation has a connection or relationship to the housing options given. This will allow Pablo to make an informed decision free from influence.

## **Outcome 2**

With Pablo's consent, his family reach out to Jessica's manager to discuss their concerns. Unfortunately, their complaint is not well received and after consideration, they decide to contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to report the conflict of interest and potential breach of the [NDIS Code of Conduct](#).

Pablo decides to change support coordination providers and continues to look at other SIL options in the local area.

## **Scenario 2**

Sumit is a participant and receives support coordination services. While signing a new service agreement he mentions to his support coordinator that he is looking for an occupational therapist (OT) to help him buy a walking aid and other equipment to help him be more independent and mobile in the community.

Sumit's support coordinator tells him their organisation also offers OT services and signs Sumit up. The following week, Sumit meets with Amara, the OT, to discuss his needs and requirements. During the appointment, Amara seems distracted as her phone continues to ping with notifications. Sumit feels she is not listening to him and is rushing through the appointment. Two days later Sumit receives an email from Amara with a recommendation for a walking aid that Sumit has previously trialled and had explained to Amara did not meet his needs.

## **Outcome 1**

Sumit contacts his support coordinator to say he was not comfortable with the service provided by Amara. The support coordinator offers Sumit other therapy provider options. Sumit considers his options and chooses a therapy provider that meets his needs.

The support coordinator acknowledges that they should have disclosed the relationship and recorded the potential conflict of interest.

## Outcome 2

Sumit contacts his support coordinator to discuss his concerns. Unfortunately, his complaint is not well received and, after consideration, he decides to contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to report the conflict of interest and potential breach of the [NDIS Code of Conduct](#). Sumit decides to change support coordination providers and continues to look at other OT options in the local area.

## What good practice looks like

All providers, including support coordinators, must act with integrity, honesty and transparency. This means they should disclose any real, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest when offering and delivering supports.

Support coordinators are expected to:

- recommend and provide supports and services that would best suit a participant's needs
- where possible, provide at least 3 or more support or service options
- declare and avoid any real or perceived conflicts of interest
- keep accurate and up to date records of management of a conflict of interest and provide copies to all parties involved
- avoid engaging in, participating in, or promoting 'sharp practices', or practices that are unethical, unscrupulous or not in the interests of participants
- comply with the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* and state and territory privacy laws.

The [Conflicts of Interest declaration form](#) can help providers document how they manage of conflicts of interest.

The [What is a provider?](#) page on the NDIS website can help participants decide whether a provider is a good fit for them.

All providers, including support coordination providers, should be transparent when offering supports and services delivered by their own organisation. This includes offering alternative options outside of their own organisation to allow participants to make an informed decision that is free from influence. Support coordination providers should also disclose any real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest when offering supports delivered by their own organisation.

The [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) promotes safe and ethical service delivery by setting out expectations for the conduct of both NDIS providers and workers.

## What participants can do if they identify a conflict of interest

If you identify a conflict of interest or are concerned that your support coordinator is not acting in your best interests, you should talk to someone you trust, such as your nominee, family member, friend or decision supporter.

You can also talk to your My NDIS contact, whose name is on your NDIS plan. They can help make sure you are safe.

You should also read any documents you received from your provider when you signed up for supports and services such as your service agreement or intake pack to identify steps or options outlined by your provider to discuss the conflict.

You may want to talk directly to your support coordinator to explain your concerns. You can seek support from an advocate or someone you trust to help you have this conversation.

### Ask questions

You can ask your support coordinator questions such as:

- Do you have a conflict of interest policy or procedure document for me to read?
- Can you provide a list of alternative provider options?
- Do you or your organisation have a connection or relationship with the providers you have recommended?

### Make a complaint

- If you are concerned about the quality or safety of your current NDIS supports you may make a complaint on the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#) website or by calling them on 1800 035 544.
- If you feel your NDIS funding has been misused, you can [report suspicious behaviour](#) to the NDIA.
- If you are at immediate risk of harm, or have concerns about a person's wellbeing, call 000 at once.

## National Disability Insurance Agency

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

Telephone 1800 800 110

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

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