20 June 2025

Quote from attendee:

The experience needs to be fair and supportive. Some people are helpful, but others are not. We need consistency- and trust and transparency are key.

What we talked about

Topic 1: Blue-sky thinking around Support Needs Assessments (SNA)

The group stepped back from current processes to explore fresh, creative ideas for the experience of a Support Needs Assessment. In breakout rooms, parent and carers chose their own discussion topics using research materials as prompts. Facilitators supported only when needed, keeping the conversation parent and carer led.

Topic 2: Exploring the plan handover phase – meeting and discussing your child’s plan

After refining the Support Needs Assessment, the focus moved to the plan handover - how families receive and discuss their child’s plan and budget. Breakout groups discussed what should happen next, what info is needed, the timing of this conversation and the role of the Support Needs Assessor during this phase.

What we heard

Support Needs Assessment

- Parent and carers shared that they would benefit from bringing a trusted support person to the assessment, having access to all evidence used, and receiving a clear, easy-to-read report that explains outcomes and how to request changes. A digital hub could help by storing all relevant information, including details about the assessor.
- They suggested involving staff with allied health or paediatric backgrounds can improve the quality of assessments.
- Parents and carers want part of the process to be structured to include the child’s voice, with materials to help them prepare.

- Having consistent support from start to finish would help families feel more confident and informed.
- Parents and carers want clear communication and transparency from the support needs assessor, especially when decisions are made.

Receiving a budget

- Parents and carers want clear and simple information about how their child’s NDIS budget is decided. They need to understand what evidence matters most, and what rules affect funding, so they can feel confident the budget is fair and accurate. Right now, many feel the process is unclear and inconsistent.
- Parents and carers shared ideas to help make the budget process clearer and easier to manage. They suggested a simple online tool to estimate funding, and examples of typical budgets so families know what to expect.
- They also want clear guides that explain how budgets are decided. A better online summary could show how the money translates into hours of support, helping families plan services for their child.

Plan handover

- Parents and carers want more control and clarity during the plan handover process.
- Being able to bring a support person to the plan handover is also important for emotional and practical help.
- Parent and carers also want to know what to expect in upcoming meetings, with written information provided ahead of time including a checklist of what will be covered in the plan handover.
- They would like a smart booking system with meeting details, documents, and options for accessibility.
- A clear record of past interactions and a known point of contact going forward would help parent and carers feel more supported.

Implementing the Child’s Plan

- Families want to know what to expect when starting to use their child’s plan, how the process works, what providers should do, how therapies help, and how far their budget will go.
- Parents and carers want trusted, clear information when choosing or changing providers. Some prefer to research at their own pace, while others want help from someone who understands their child’s needs.

- They would like a website with provider listings and reviews, tools to manage their budget, and guidance on what to expect from therapies and progress
- Peer support and expert advice would also help them feel more confident during implementation.

What we agreed on

- The ideas and feedback will be added to insights from other co-design sessions working on the ideal children’s pathway in the future.
- A summary of what we have heard will be shared to our broader team of service designers, so they can include it in their work
- Relevant comments will also be passed on to other teams working on NDIS scheme reform to support consistent and informed improvements.

Next meeting

The next Children’s Pathway Parent and Carer Engagement Group meeting is on 11 July 2025.

Who we met with

Twenty parent and carers with a child in the scheme under the age of 9.

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