9 April 2026

> "Strengths" must always be linked to "Enablers." A strength (e.g., I am a skilled cook) is only possible through an enabler (e.g., "because I use an audio device and have had 20 hours of OT).

What we talked about

Topic 1: Feedback from Evidence in Exceptional Circumstances workshop (held in February 2026)

NDIA explained how feedback gathered during the workshop in February 2026 is being built into the new pathway design. The feedback is guiding the Design Hub testing and is being shared with relevant teams to inform designs.

Topic 2: Support Needs Assessment (SNA) resources – workshop

The group talked about resources needed to help Support Needs Assessment (SNA) conversations. Possible topics identified included managing time, responding to challenging moments in a trauma-informed way and participant and staff psychological safety.

These resources aim to help assessors and participants have safe, strengths-based, and easy to understand conversations, while making good use of time.

Topic 3: Working Group discussion

The group discussed work planning, including how the current NDIA focus on roll-out of the new way of planning may affect the group's meeting rhythm.

What we heard

General feedback

- Members raised ongoing concerns about the requirement for evidence and how to pay for evidence if it is not covered in plan funding.

- Members suggested staged assessment processes could be used where specific parts of an assessment or plan needed review. For example, for an update to home modifications, an entirely new assessment may not be necessary if the only intention is to access the next portion of funding to progress home modifications.
- Participants are worried about requesting further supports as they think it could trigger a full review and result in funding cuts. As a result, some participants are using unsafe or unsuitable equipment.

Support Needs Assessment resources workshop

- The group welcomed the shift from deficit-based to strengths-based assessments. However, they cautioned that ‘swinging too far’ into strengths-based may result in plans that don’t reflect participants’ needs. Members called for balance: assessments must consider strengths and limitations. The SNA must focus on how support contributes to quality of life not just the completion of daily living tasks.
- Members saw the assessment resources as a ‘container’ that aids conversations but leaves room for assessors and participants to explore what matters most.
- Participants feel empowered when they are informed and prepared. The group recommended communicating to participants that the SNA is a challenging process and may be a difficult conversation. SNA preparation materials should be shared with participants before their SNA conversation. Information in a range of formats and levels of detail is needed to meet diverse needs.
- There was strong support for assessors to prepare well for an SNA to understand the participant prior to the SNA to support smooth conversation.
- SNAs must be person-centred and outcomes-focused. Participants should be able to set the tempo of conversations (including breaks and multiple sessions if needed) and shape the agenda.
- Assessors need appropriate psychological safety training and professional supports. Participants need to be offered different ways to communicate if they are in distress. Options to postpone sessions or request new assessors should be made clear, along with connections to external wellbeing supports following an assessment or outcome.
- SNA processes and written plans should protect a participant’s privacy. This includes being careful about what information is shared, how it is shared, and respecting the participant’s choices about sharing information with the Assessor and the NDIA when a support person is present.

Working Group discussion

- NDIA explained the current context of the NDIS reform roll-out and how this may temporarily impact the rhythm of group meetings. The NDIA is focused on rapid collaboration activities,

such as in the Design Hub, to refine and validate the new way of planning prior to roll-out. Several government policy decisions, such as the NDIS Rules, are also still pending. The date of next group meeting will be advised in due course.

Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

Related articles

Participant Pathway Experience Co-design Working Group Meeting 15 July 2025

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29 August 2025

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Date
24 February 2026

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