16 November 2017

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has announced the initial pilot of the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant pathway will commence in mid-December in two NDIS regions in Victoria.

The announcement follows the NDIA's release of a new participant and provider pathway on 18 October 2017, which is designed to improve the experience people and organisations have with the ground-breaking NDIS.

NDIA Chief Executive Officer, Robert De Luca, said the first step in implementing the new pathway would use a mix of new and existing NDIS sites and partner networks to test key parts of the new pathway.

"The pilot will start in Victoria North and Victoria East in partnership with Brotherhood of St Laurence and Latrobe Community Health Services - two established Local Area Coordination (LAC) partners with considerable NDIS experience who are well positioned to help us test and refine the changes we're making," Mr De Luca said.

"The pilot will focus on the following stages of the new pathway – learning about the NDIS and how it fits in the broader system of supports, understanding current supports and preparing for planning, creating a plan to achieve goals and receiving an approved plan.

"Having learned from the past, elements of the new pathway will be progressively piloted and tested over the coming months before being rolled out nationally. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we refine and implement the new pathway."

As previously announced, central to the new participant pathway is the delivery of face-to-face engagement for all NDIS plan development, where it is the individual's preference. This builds on the recent move to increase in person pre-planning conversations across the country.

Some of the key features that will be initially piloted in the Victorian sites include:

- Pairing participants with a consistent point of contact based on an individual's needs – in most cases, this will be a LAC
- A re-designed plan to make it easier for participants to see how their goals have been recorded and linked to community, other government services and funded supports
- Face-to-face planning meetings with a LAC, the participant and an NDIA planner to finalise their NDIS plan
- Participants being able to see a working version of their plan as it is being developed and having the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback during the planning meeting, to allow for any queries to be discussed and addressed before the plan is finalised.

The initial pilot is expected to be completed by the end of April 2018. Improved features will then be rolled out nationally as soon as possible after that.

“Piloting new aspects of the pathway will allow us to measure the impact of key improvements with different groups of participants and partners, understand areas where improvements are needed and refine tools prior to rolling them out across the country,” Mr De Luca said.

The NDIA is also testing features that can be rolled out nationally over the coming months without the need to pilot, bringing more immediate improvements to the participant experience including:

- A simpler and quicker process to make minor changes to a plan
- Providing participants with the option to allow their providers to view their plan in the portal so providers can better understand their goals and tailor their services accordingly.

Tailored pathways are continuing to be developed for people with psychosocial disability, children, people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and participants with more complex needs. When designed, these tailored pathways will be progressively piloted and tested in other NDIS regions.

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