

# Getting the most out of the NDIS: Your step-by-step guide



The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has opened up a new and exciting world of possibilities - but as with any new system, there's a lot to think about. We're here to support you through the whole process, which is why we've created this simple step-by-step guide full of useful tips to help you get the most out of this opportunity.

## Step 1: Preparing for the NDIS

- **Check your eligibility.** Finding out if you qualify is easy. Simply go to [www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-access-checklist](http://www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-access-checklist) to check you meet the access requirements.
- **Do your homework.** With so much information out there about the NDIS, it can be a little overwhelming - but it's important that you understand the process and what you can achieve. Don't only rely on the media, Facebook or others for your NDIS info: check out the information we've provided as well as the NDIA's own resources for a good introduction to the topic. You can even watch a video of current recipients sharing their stories about how NDIS is improving their lives.
- **Start your planning early.** Don't wait until your first planning meeting with the NDIA to start thinking about your plan. Prepare yourself by filling in our pre-planning booklet or following our preplanning workshops to make sure you're ahead of the game. Don't forget to list all the supports you currently receive and take this with you to your meeting. If you don't tell the NDIA about all the supports you currently receive (like personal care, nursing and in home support) they won't know about them and might not include them in your NDIS Plan.
- **Talk to us.** Not clear on something? We're here to answer any questions you might have. Need to discuss your current situation or the services you want in the future? We're all ears. The more you share with us, the better we can support you through this process so don't hesitate to pick up the phone.

## Step 2. Talking to the NDIA for the first time

- **Be prepared.** If you've received a letter or invitation from the NDIA, read it thoroughly and contact us or the NDIA straight away if there's anything you don't understand. We're happy to help you prepare too - just contact us if you'd like help getting ready for that all-important first meeting.
- **Keep a note of important information.** If you receive a phone call from the NDIA, remember to ask and record the caller's name and details so you can contact them again if necessary. It's also important to make sure you're sent confirmation of your appointment details by the NDIA.
- **Don't discuss details over the phone.** Always ask for a face-to-face meeting with an NDIA planner. This will help make sure you get all the supports you need in your NDIS Plan.

## Step 3. Your first NDIA meeting

- **Take a support person.** It helps to take someone with you who knows you well and can support you. Ask that person to take notes of the meeting or, if attending on your own, make notes yourself.
- **Don't forget your supporting information.** Remember to bring all your documents with you - this includes your pre-plan and list of current services. It's also useful to write down a list of questions in advance as a memory-jogger for the meeting.
- **Communicate your needs clearly.** Try and be as specific as possible about your goals in life, the supports you need and what you think should be in your plan. This is your opportunity to make some important changes to your life, so don't be afraid to ask questions and check what is and isn't eligible for funding. Make sure that the planner really understands what you want to achieve in life and how you want to achieve it. If you're unclear about anything, ask for clarification.

## Step 4. Receiving your NDIS Plan

- **Read through your plan.** Make sure you read through your NDIS Plan carefully. Does it include all the supports you need? Are the goals listed correct? Is anything missing? If you feel something is incorrect or missing you will need to contact the NDIA. It's important that you're able to tell what is incorrect and why and how you'd like the plan changed. This may trigger a review of your NDIS Plan.
- **Get a second opinion if needed.** If you have any questions, need to clarify anything or want further assistance about your plan, you can contact us or the NDIA.
- **If you already receive services from providers, contact each one of them.** It's important that you let your current service providers know you have received your NDIS Plan, so they can continue to deliver the services under the new system.

## Step 5. Activate your plan - Choosing how you want to organise your services

- **Enlist the help of a Support Coordinator.** If you need multiple services, you may find it easier to ask a provider to be your Support Coordinator rather than doing it all yourself. Choose a provider who you trust and have a good relationship and has experience in this area.
- **Research your options.** If you decide to coordinate your supports yourself, make sure you have a good understanding of you NDIS Plan, the supports you need and how they will be provided. Before committing to providers, do some research to check whether they're the right fit for you and your needs.

## Step 6. Activate your plan - Organising your services

- **Talk to your existing and new service providers.** Before you are able to receive NDIS supports, you will need to enter into a Service Agreement with your chosen service providers. It's important that you start talking to them as soon as you receive your NDIS Plan, as a Service Agreement can take a number of weeks to set up. Don't worry, you will still receive your existing services during this time, it just means those providers will need to back-date their Service Agreements with you.
- **Make your needs heard.** The more communication you have with your service providers, the better they can tailor their services to you. Talk them through what you want to achieve so that you're all on the same page and specify who you'd like to deliver your services and how.
- **Double check your service agreements.** Once you've organised your services, you'll receive service agreements from each provider. Make sure that you understand exactly what's included in each agreement and what the conditions are. If there's anything you're not happy with, talk to them about it before you sign the agreement.

## Step 7. Receiving your services under the NDIS

- **Keep notes.** We recommend that you keep track of the supports you receive for future reference - simply note them in a diary or digital calendar.
- **Stay in touch.** Unhappy with your supports or service provider? Don't suffer in silence: contact your provider so they can fix the situation. The NDIS puts you in control of who delivers your supports so if you're not happy with the support you're getting, you can change it. Always let your providers and

the NDIA know of any life changes that could affect your plan or services, such as moving home or a change to your health, or if there are any issues with the funding of your supports.

- **Change in circumstances.** If your circumstances change you may need your NDIS Plan reviewed for example, your living arrangements or family supports change. To start this process, you will need to contact the NDIA to let them know your circumstances have changed.

## Step 8. Preparing for your annual review

- **Yearly review.** Every year the NDIA will review your NDIS Plan to make sure it is meeting your needs, helping you achieve your goals and reflects your current circumstances.
- **Think about your goals.** Have your supports helped you achieve your goals? If so, what new goals might you have for the coming year? If not, why? Are there supports that would be more appropriate for you? If you can, write down your thoughts.
- **Make a list of any changes.** Your needs and personal circumstances may have changed over the year, so it's natural to have to make adjustments to your plan. Before your review, make a note of any changes in your circumstances and any changes you'd like made to your Plan. It's important you are able to explain why you need those changes and how they will help you achieve your goals and meet your support needs.



To find out more about the NDIS and the services Blue Care is offering, please call our friendly team on 1300 77 80 81 or look at [www.bluecare.org.au/disability](http://www.bluecare.org.au/disability)

