

ebook

Autism and the NDIS

Get the most out of the NDIS for your child.



If your child is autistic, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) can provide important support. But understanding how it all works, knowing which supports are right for your child, and how to make the best use of funding isn't always clear.

In this guide, we provide helpful tips and guidance, so you have all the information at hand to make the best decisions for your child throughout their NDIS journey.

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NDIS 101: Understanding the basics

If you have a child with autism, it can affect how they learn, communicate, and solve problems. It can be both a gift and a challenge.

The NDIS provides funding for services that promote independence and help your child achieve important life goals. For example, it can support your child to adapt to new situations, like starting school or a new job.

If you have a caregiver, the NDIS can also help people maintain their own job and responsibilities. In addition, it offers respite support, allowing caregivers to take short breaks from their caring duties when needed.

Choice and control are an important part of the NDIS. The NDIS decides how much funding your child gets in their plan based on what's reasonable and necessary, but you have full choice and control over the supports you use.

Plan Partners are experts in NDIS plan management and support coordination. We have created this eBook to give you helpful insights into how the NDIS works, who is eligible, and how to make the most of your child's funding.



Handy tip

Our Knowledge Centre is filled with helpful tips and guidance relevant to all stages of your child's NDIS journey, so you get the answers you need to make the right decisions.

[Visit our Knowledge Centre](#)

Some important terms to know:

Term	Definition
EC approach	Early Childhood approach is funded by the NDIS and supports children under 9 years of age who have a developmental delay or disability. No formal diagnosis is required, as EC aims to give kids support as early in their life as possible.
NDIS Plan	Your child's NDIS plan contains their goals and how much funding they have. Your child will go through many plans throughout their life as their support needs and goals change.
NDIA	The National Disability Insurance Agency is the organisation in charge of implementing the NDIS. It decides how much funding your child needs and what categories they can spend it on.
Reasonable and necessary	These principles help the NDIA make individual funding decisions for each person. For a support or service to be reasonable and necessary, it must be directly related to your child's autism support needs and not include everyday living costs, like groceries.
Plan manager	A plan manager like Plan Partners saves you time and stress by taking care of all the admin associated with your child's NDIS plan. You keep full choice and control over the supports you use.
Service provider	Any business or individual who delivers a funded support to an NDIS participant is considered a service provider.
Support coordinator	An expert in NDIS plans who can help you understand your plan, what it covers and who supports you to find and connect with the right service providers for your child. Not everyone is eligible for support coordination.

Getting the right NDIS plan for your child

Your child's NDIS plan should include supports that help them build essential life skills.

It contains personal information about them and their short and long-term goals. It shows what funds they've been given by the NDIS and the kinds of supports they can spend them on.

It's important you're happy with the plan your child receives and that it accurately reflects the supports your child will need.



The importance of good evidence to get the right plan

Whether you're applying to access the NDIS for the first time or looking to get a change made to your child's existing plan, you want to provide 'good evidence' to prove why funding is necessary.

The best form of evidence you can present in your planning meeting is a written report from a healthcare professional. We recommend you see a therapist you know and trust to get a formal assessment report you can take to your planning meeting.

Top 4 tips to providing good evidence:

1. Use a recent report: a current report shows the NDIA what support your child needs at this moment in their life.

2. Use standardised tools: assessment tools, like PEDI-CAT, the Carer Strain Index (CSI) and an OT functional assessment, quantify the impact your child's disability has on their life. While they'll never be 100% accurate, they can help the NDIA understand your child's support needs.

3. Be specific: to avoid misinterpretation, use a professional who understands the NDIS and can make specific recommendations about the supports your child needs.

4. Make sure the important stuff stands out: as people are busy and things can get missed, put the key information at the start of each section, and use bold text to highlight important recommendations.

Other evidence you can present

In addition to your reports from medical professionals, you might choose to provide evidence from the following people to show how your child's autism impacts them in different settings:

Teachers

Carers

Family members



Handy tip: Painting an accurate (and honest) picture

It's not always easy talking about your child's disability. But your planner is relying on you and your evidence to understand your child's situation, so be open and honest and don't downplay the challenges they face.

Not happy with your plan?

It can be disheartening when you receive your plan and it fails to reflect your child's needs and goals. Should this happen, there are steps you can take.



1. Talk to your *My NDIS Contact*

First, discuss your plan and why you're disappointed with your *My NDIS Contact*, recovery coach, or support coordinator or plan manager (like Plan Partners). They may be able to explain the decision, clarify how you can use the funding, or help you resolve issues.



2. Contact the NDIS

Call the NDIS at 1800 800 110 to request a funding breakdown and more details on your plan's supports. It's best to do this soon after receiving your plan. They can also provide written reasons for their decisions.



3. Request an internal review

If you don't agree with your plan, you can request an internal review. This means someone who wasn't involved in creating your plan reviews if the decisions made align with the NDIS rules.

Getting a new plan as your child grows

The NDIS will review your child's plan every now and then to make sure it's still relevant. This is called a plan renewal.

When your child is young, this will likely be every 12 months or less, because they're going through so many changes.

The NDIS will contact you before your child's plan ends to see whether it continues to meet their goals and has enough funding for their support needs. If this is the case, your child's plan may be renewed with the same budgets and support categories.

If your child's plan needs to be changed, let the NDIS know and they'll arrange for a formal review. This is a chance for you to have your say about your child's NDIS plan and to get a new one that reflects your child's evolving needs and goals.

Handy tip: Plan reviews

Preparation is key when it comes to formal plan reviews if you want an NDIS plan you and your child are happy with. Make sure you take plenty of notes and good evidence to show how your child's needs have changed and what supports are needed.

Be specific about details, such as how many hours of therapy your child needs per week.



Your child's NDIS journey

Your child's support needs and goals will change throughout their NDIS journey. As they shift into adult life, their NDIS plan should evolve with them.

While everyone's NDIS journey is different, there are generally four stages.

There's likely to be multiple milestones and plans within each of these stages, but you can use these as a general guideline with some of the typical goals and supports for each stage.

Early Childhood (EC): 0-9 years old

The early childhood approach is about giving you and your child the right supports to enable them to have the best possible start in life.

Typical goals

- Develop language and communication skills
- Develop social skills
- Develop gross motor skills

Typical supports

EC supports are generally Capacity Building therapies, like speech therapy and OT.

Primary School: 9-12 years old

As children develop and start school, their goals tend to focus on building their skills and independence.

Typical goals

- Develop independence
- Make new friends
- Develop communication skills

Typical supports

Supports for this age group generally include Capacity Building therapies and improved relationships.

Secondary School: 12-18 years old

The teenage years see a focus on preparing for adult life and entering the workforce.

Typical goals

- Find and maintain a job
- Build capacity to travel independently

Typical supports

Supports for teenagers often include Assistance with Social & Community Participation, making friends, developing social skills and Finding and Keeping a Job.

Adulthood: 18+ years old

As people enter adulthood, life typically stabilises. Supports such as therapies that are a big fixture of plans in younger years, tend to drop off.

Typical goals

- Move into own place
- Find and keep a job
- Maintain independence

Typical supports

Improved Living Arrangements and Assistance with Daily Life are common supports at this age.

What supports are funded by the NDIS?

The NDIS funds “reasonable and necessary” supports that meet your disability support needs.

Handy Tip:

To learn more about how reasonable and necessary works check out our article.

[Read our article](#)

What’s Reasonable and Necessary?

To be considered reasonable and necessary, a support or service:

- ✓ must be related to your disability.
- ✓ must not include day-to-day living costs not related to your disability, such as groceries.
- ✓ should represent value for money.
- ✓ must help you achieve your goals.
- ✓ should consider the help you receive from other government services, your family, and networks.



4 main types of support budgets

The NDIS has four main types of support budgets: Core, Capital, Capacity Building and Recurring supports.

Core supports

Are the basic things your child needs to live their life. Funding for Core Supports can be flexible, which means you can generally use one Support Category's funds to pay for another support (provided they're both Core Supports).

For example, this might be funding for a support worker to help your child take part in social and community activities, or a stay in specialist Short Term Respite (STR), which can give both you and your informal support network a well-earned break.

Capacity building supports

Are designed to help your child develop the skills to become more independent and work towards their goals. They include therapies (Improved Daily Living Skills), exercise physiology (Improved Health and Wellbeing) and plan management (Choice and Control).

Unlike Core supports, Capacity Building supports aren't flexible, which means you can only use funds for the specific support category they're allocated to.

Capital supports

Are larger, one-off items that support your child in their daily life. They can include assistive technology, like communication devices, or modifications to make your home more suitable for you to live in. You'll generally need to present a quote for these more expensive and specialised items.

Recurring supports

This funding is for recurring transport, which is everyday travel needs. Use it for whatever transport works best for you, like public transport, taxis, or other options that suit your lifestyle. This funding option is only available to those on PACE and is managed exclusively through the NDIA directly (not Plan Partners).

Our team's top 5 Core supports for kids with Autism



Coaching and workshops

Practical tips for parents on how to manage the day-to-day needs of your child while promoting positive relationships.



Adaptive clothing

Specially designed garments that are sensory friendly can help reduce the stress of getting dressed.



Speech therapy

If your child finds communicating challenging, speech therapy can help by developing language and non-verbal communication.



Books

Books often use repetitive or rhyming words that capture your child's attention helping them build their language skills.



Flash cards and visual aids

By gamifying the experience and making it fun and engaging, these learning tools can help your child develop their language and communication skills.

Accessing and managing supports

The NDIS lets you choose the help you need but sometimes, it can be tricky understanding all the different types of supports and what's available.

To make things easier, answer the following questions and write down your answers:

- ✓ What supports do you require?
- ✓ When do you need them to start?
- ✓ How many hours of supports do you need?
- ✓ What skills or traits would you like your support worker to have?

Handy Tip:

Read our article, [“How to organise your own team of disability support workers”](#) for help with finding your supports.

Resources to support you

Online care platforms can make finding supports easier, including allied health professionals, and psychiatrists who understand intellectual disability.

Here are a few well-known platforms:



Mable



Clickability



Careseekers

Support coordination helps you understand your plan—what it includes and how to make it work. It's funded by the NDIS, but not everyone can get it.

Check out our article called, [“Am I eligible for support coordination?”](#) to find out if support coordination is an option for you.

How Support Coordination can help you get the most out of your NDIS plan

For many parents, support coordination is an incredibly helpful NDIS support. A support coordinator understands the ins and outs of an NDIS plan and can help you find and connect with local service providers that are the best fit for your child's needs.

They will work closely with you and your child over the course of your journey, ensuring your plan continues to reflect

your child's evolving needs, building your capacity and confidence to navigate the NDIS, and helping you prepare for plan reviews.

Not everyone is eligible for support coordination. If you feel you'd benefit from this support, we recommend you get a letter from a relevant professional explaining why and bring it along to your planning meeting.

Handy Tip: Service Agreements

A service agreement is a written contract between you and a service provider. It protects you should a service provider overcharge or underdeliver on the service as promised.

Both you and your service provider will need to sign the agreement, which explains what support they'll be providing, how much it will cost, when the service will be delivered, and any terms and conditions, including their cancellation policy.

We encourage you to set up service agreements with each of your providers.



3 ways to manage your child's NDIS funding

It's easy to feel overwhelmed or even confused by what choices you have when it comes to managing your NDIS funds. Each choice comes with different responsibilities and levels of flexibility.

Since you'll need to state your choice in your planning meeting, we recommend taking time to consider which option is best for you and your child.

Let's break down the three ways you can manage your NDIS Plan and what they mean. You can choose one of these options, or a combination of each. For example, you might self-manage part of your plan and have the rest plan-managed.

1. Self-managed:

You're solely responsible for managing your admin and funds. This option can be quite overwhelming if you're new to the NDIS, have a busy schedule or complex support needs.

2. NDIA-managed:

The NDIA manages your plan for you. Take in mind with this option, you can only use service providers that are registered with the NDIA and so you lose access to many smaller, local providers who may be a great fit for you.

3. Plan-managed:

A plan manager like Plan Partners takes care of all your admin, including making sure your service providers are paid on time and accurately. All participants are entitled to have a plan manager and it's fully funded by the NDIS at no cost to you. If you'd like to go with this option, be sure to let your *My NDIS Contact* know in your planning meeting.

Who are Plan Partners?

Sometimes, it feels like you're navigating the NDIS all by yourself. It can be confusing and overwhelming. Plan Partners are one of Australia's trusted NDIS plan management and support coordination providers. As your NDIS plan manager, we take care of all your NDIS admin, while you keep full control of your plan and decision making.

Plan management with Plan Partners

Imagine having someone who helps you with your finances, like a bookkeeper. Well, that's what we do as your plan manager. But here's the cool part: we're funded by the NDIS. You still get to decide how to use your NDIS funding, but we take care of all the paperwork—like paying your provider invoices—and we're here to support you to get the most out of your funds.

Support coordination with Plan Partners

With Plan Partners, you get a dedicated support coordinator who knows a lot about the disability sector and the NDIS. Your support coordinator will work alongside you to help you get the most out of your NDIS plan. This includes understanding your supports and how to use your budgets.

To learn more about our services, call our friendly team today on 1300 333 700.

Have a question or perhaps you'd like to sign up for our services?

[Visit our website](#)



 Email
info@planpartners.com.au

 Call us
1300 333 700

 Live chat
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