

Understanding NDIS language

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has its own language and often uses specific terms. When accessing the NDIS, you will come across different terms and language, some of which is different to other services and pathways you have accessed.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has its own glossary and language resources, but there can still be confusion around different words and language used during the NDIS journey.

Please note that this guide is not a full list of all NDIS language, which may change over time. Instead it explains and provides information on some of the most used terms that will help you to understand the NDIS.

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Why is it important to understand the language of the NDIS?

Families, support people, or young people who are plan nominees (including young people who manage their own plans) will need to understand the NDIS language to navigate the system. Knowledge and understanding of the system and the language used helps you to ask for the supports and funding you need in your NDIS plan.

The NDIS may also interact with other services you use, including health or education services. The language used may not be the same, but some services will be connected.

Will the NDIS language and processes change?

The NDIS is always growing and changing. From time to time, the NDIA may change or update the language used around the NDIS. For the most up-to-date language, please continue to check the NDIS website.

Common acronyms found in the NDIS

Some terms will be more commonly referred to by their acronyms. You will see these acronyms across CYDA's resources and in many other places. If a term is referred to by its acronym, we have included it in brackets.

Explaining NDIS language

People who use or work with the NDIS

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA): The NDIS is the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which is delivered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The NDIA allocates funding and makes decisions about the NDIS.

Participant: The NDIA refers to people who access the NDIS as participants. Service providers have their own terms, and may refer to you as a participant, a customer, a client, a person supported, or in another way.

Plan nominee: A plan nominee manages the plan for an NDIS participant, typically if the participant is under 18 or if their disabilities mean they need a nominee.

Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI): The Early Childhood Early Intervention Coordinator will be the person who works with families of children aged 0 to 6 to find supports and services. An ECEI is not directly employed by the NDIA. Each state has organisations who deliver this service. You might see these organisations referred to as allied partners or partners in the community.

Local Area Coordinator (LAC): LACs are allocated to NDIS participants from 7 to 65 years old. Their role is to help people use the NDIS, including setting goals and organising supports. Like ECEI, a LAC is not directly employed by the NDIA. LACs are employed by different organisations in each state.

Support worker (SW): Support workers provide support to the participant in a variety of ways, including support with personal tasks and care, support to access the community, or therapies to build capacity. Some support workers will need qualifications to deliver services. Support workers can be people you know but cannot be family members.

Senior Planner: A Senior Planner is a person directly employed by the NDIA who has the expertise and knowledge in disability and high level of coordination skills required to support NDIS participants with complex needs. A Senior Planner is different to a Local Area Coordinator in that they have the authority to approve funding directly. Local Area Coordinators cannot approve funding as they are not directly employed by the NDIA.

Services and supports relating to the NDIS (not an exhaustive list)

Assistive technology (AT): Assistive technology is technology that provides disability related support, including with communication or mobility. Some assistive technology may be considered low risk and can be purchased directly. Other AT may require quotes to be sourced and sent for approval before the technology can be purchased.

Support coordination/support coordinator (SC):

Support Coordination services exist to help connect you with the supports and services you need to achieve your goals. Any NDIS participant can request support coordination services regardless of the way their plan is managed. Support coordination is delivered by a support coordinator.

Not everyone who asks for support coordination will receive it. It does not always have to be requested by the participant as the ECEI, LAC or Planner can also advise and decide when this service is needed. The NDIA also determines the number of hours of support coordination funded in a participant's plan.

Support coordination may be funded when:

- The participant does not have many informal supports
 - The participant has complex needs and is dealing with different systems, e.g. both the NDIS and the mainstream health system
 - The participant is new to the NDIS and will receive support in their first plan
 - The participant is undergoing significant life change
 - The participant is likely to develop the skills and confidence needed to be able to navigate the NDIS independently.
- This is an example of support connection.

Support coordination is available in three different levels of funding:

- Support Connection: temporary support to help participants connect with informal and formal supports. For many participants with access to ECEI, a LAC or a Planner, support connection may not be considered necessary and funded.
- Support Coordination: support to help you understand, implement and use your plan, and can also help you collect information and prepare for plan reviews. Support coordination can be an ongoing service for those who need it.
- Specialist Support Coordination: Specialist support coordination is the highest level of support and is available for participants with complex situations or needs. A Specialist Support Coordinator has additional experience and qualifications to help support you with using your NDIS plan.

Short Term Accommodation and Assistance (STAA):

Short Term Accommodation and Assistance refers to temporary accommodation support for people with disability. STAA can mean taking a short break in another location or having extra support within your home. Outside the NDIS, you may hear or use the term 'respite'. You should use STAA as the preferred term when requesting or discussing this support.

School Leaver Employment Support (SLES): Funding for support to transition from school to employment with the goal to help participants develop skills and confidence to gain employment. SLES funding is available to Year 12 school leavers who are eligible for or currently receiving NDIS funding. This support is offered for up to two years. SLES is not the only pathway option for a school leaver and is limited to participants in Year 12, so it is important to think about other available supports.

Complex support needs pathway: NDIS participants with complex support needs are considered under this pathway, including children and young people. The NDIA decides who accesses the NDIS under the complex support needs pathway.

Some examples of people who may be eligible for complex needs support include:

- People with psychosocial disability
- People with multiple family members with disabilities
- Participants experiencing homelessness or incarceration
- Participants experiencing domestic violence or abuse
- Participants with profound disabilities and complex support needs
- Participants who are also involved with other systems, such as children living in out of home care, the child protection system, health services or the criminal justice system
- Participants who have limited or no informal supports.

If you are accessing the complex support needs pathway, you may be eligible for specialist support coordination services. Support coordinators help you to find the supports you need and to use your NDIS plan. A specialist support coordinator has additional experience and qualifications to support people with complex needs to use their NDIS plans.

Functional Capacity Assessment: The NDIS uses assessments to understand the impact of a person's disability on their life and how they function. It looks at areas such as mobility, self-care, communication, social interaction and self-management. The assessment can be completed by an occupational therapist (OT) who will make recommendation for the supports a person needs. Depending on the person, supports may include home modification, therapy, assistive technology or equipment, or ways to build capacity.

For children and young people up to 20 years of age, the PEDI-CAT is a functional capacity assessment that looks at the impact of their disability in comparison to their same aged peers.

The assessment measures:

- Daily activities, e.g. getting dressed, eating, tasks around the home
- Mobility: e.g. standing and walking, running and playing
- Social/Cognitive development: e.g. communication, self-management
- Responsibility: e.g. organisation and planning, taking care of daily needs, health management and staying safe.

A functional assessment can be used to identify developmental delays or to track progress and improvement. You may be required to provide progress reports as part of your plan review. This assessment may be able to be funded by the NDIS. If functional assessments are required, it is recommended to discuss this with your LAC, NDIS Planner or ECEI contact.

The NDIS does not determine funding solely on functional capacity assessment reports. Other sources of information including reports from health or allied health partners and family impact statements help to determine the outcome of your NDIS plan.

The NDIS provides the following guides:

[PEDI-CAT frequently asked questions](#)

[Providing evidence of disability for children](#)

[Independent Assessment Pilot \(IAP\)](#)

Supported Independent Living (SIL): Supported Independent Living funding provides support to people in their homes so they can live as independently as possible. SIL support is usually provided on a 24/7 basis and often includes support with personal care, daily life skills, and accessing the community.

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA): Specialist Disability Accommodation funding helps provide specialist homes for some people with disability. SDA is for NDIS participants with high support needs, and only a small proportion of participants will receive this funding.

For more information on SDA eligibility and requirements, see the [NDIS Specialist Disability Accommodation](#) page.

NDIS plans and funding

NDIS plan: The NDIS plan contains a participant's goals and the funding for supports and services the participant needs to achieve them. The funding is divided into three parts:

Core funding

The core categories are:

- Assistance with daily life: assistance with everyday needs, household cleaning or yard maintenance, respite, in-home support
- Consumables: everyday items you may need e.g. continence products, assistive technology (under a certain cost) and minor repairs for assistive technology
- Assistance with social and community participation in groups or individual: support to attend social or community activities
- Transport: funding to help you travel to work, studies or community and recreation activities
- Support coordination: to help you connect with support providers and use your plan

Capacity building funding

The categories of Capacity Building are:

- Improved daily living skills: assessment, training or therapy to increase community participation, skills and independence e.g. OT, speech therapy, physiotherapy, psychological services, therapy assistants, or training for parents and carers
- Improved living arrangements: help to find and maintain an appropriate place to live
- Increased social and community participation: development and training to increase your skills to participate more in community activities, e.g. attending camps, classes or vacation activities with capacity building components.
- Finding and keeping a job. E.g. School Leavers' Employment Supports (SLES)
- Improved relationships: support to develop positive relationships with others, e.g. psychological services to help manage behaviours
- Improved health and wellbeing: to maintain or improve health or wellbeing
- Improved learning: to support your learning goals, e.g. to support you to transition from school to higher learning
- Improved life choices: plan management to help you manage your NDIS plan
- Support Coordination: to help you connect with providers and use your plan

Capital funding

- Home modifications: changes to your home or living situation, e.g. hand rail or ramp installation and Specialised Disability Accommodation (SDA)
- Assistive technology: technology that supports you to live your life, e.g. wheelchairs, communication devices, items for personal care.

Core support funding is flexible, which means you can use the funding you have in any of the subcategories under this support. If you are partially self-managing your NDIS plan and have different subcategories of Core funding managed in different ways, you will not be able to use Core funding flexibly in this way.

Plan reviews

Plan review: If you have a plan with the NDIS, this will be reviewed at the end of the plan to see how the participant is progressing with their goals and to identify any changes in needs or circumstances. Traditionally NDIS plans have been for twelve months, but participants can now request plan durations up to three years if support needs are unlikely to change.

For children and young people accessing the NDIS and undergoing transitions and life changes, a longer plan duration may not be suitable. If you are interested in a longer plan, you can discuss this with your LAC or Planner.

The NDIS has produced the following resources around plan durations and reviews:

[Longer plan durations of up to 3 years](#)

[Reviewing your plan and goals](#)

Plan reviews are different from a review of a reviewable decision (internal review). All NDIS participants will have plan reviews and can request a review at any time due to change of circumstances. An internal review (known as a review of a reviewable decision) is a request to review a decision made by the NDIA, which may or may not be related to an NDIS plan.

Light touch review: When you have an NDIS plan and need to make a small change, you can request a light touch review. Changes addressed in a light touch review are not related to funding, goals or living arrangements. Examples of using a light touch review include noticing an administrative error in your plan or wanting to change the way your plan is managed. A light touch review has the same legal effect as a plan review under section 48 of the NDIS Act. You can request a light touch review at any time.

Review of a reviewable decision (RoRD): If you are unsatisfied with a decision made with the NDIA and are affected by the outcome, you can ask for a review of a reviewable decision. Reviewable decisions include your acceptance to the NDIS and unsuitable NDIS plans. The NDIS participant, plan nominee or applicant has three months to request an internal review from the notification date of the reviewable decision. You might also see this called an internal review.

The following page on the NDIS website has the full and most current information on requesting an internal review:

[Internal review of a decision](#)

Plan gap: A plan gap is the time between two plans after the expiry date. If an NDIS plan is about to expire within seven days, a 28-day extension will automatically apply and will keep extending until the new plan is approved. NDIS participants can now claim available funds from the previous plan for 90 days after a new plan has been approved.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT): The Administrative Appeals Tribunal reviews decisions made by the NDIS when an internal review is requested. If you are unhappy with the outcome of an NDIS internal review, you can escalate to the AAT for an external decision. In some circumstances, the AAT may review a case that has been waiting a long time for a decision by the NDIS.

Concepts important to the NDIS

Choice and control: Choice and control is an important concept in the NDIS. The intent of transitioning to the NDIS was to give participants more choice in, and control over, who supports them, the goals they want to set, and how they want to achieve them.

Reasonable and necessary (R&N): The NDIA uses the “reasonable and necessary” criteria to determine the supports and services a participant should have in their plan. The following criteria are available in the [NDIS Guide to Self-Management](#) and form the basis for justifying the use of a support or service: and form the basis for justifying the use of a support or service:

- Must be related to a person’s disability
- Must not include day-to-day living costs not related to your disability support needs, such as groceries
- Should represent value for money
- Must be likely to be effective and work for the participant, and
- Should take into account support given to you by other government services, your family, carers, networks and the community.

What is reasonable and necessary for one participant may not be reasonable and necessary for another. The NDIA will take into consideration the individual circumstances of the child or young person and their family when making a decision.

Parental responsibility: Parental responsibility refers to all the duties, power and responsibilities that parents have in relation to their child. These exist for children with or without disability.

The NDIS will fund any extra supports related to a child or young person’s disability, but will not fund any task that is considered a parental responsibility. Many families of children and young people with disability have been declined funds for support and services with the argument of parental responsibility. You may need to provide evidence, such as reports from therapists or specialists, to demonstrate the reasons for the support requested and how it is disability related.

The [Review of the NDIS Act](#) report recognises the importance of the family-centred approach and the additional supports families may require. Families with children and young people with disability may benefit from additional services such as in-home support, respite and capacity building. The report recommends that the criteria of reasonable and necessary for children and young people recognise and provide additional supports for families.

For more information, the following resources are available: The Independent Advisory Council of the NDIS has a report about what is reasonable and necessary support across the lifespan. This document can help provide some clarity around what you can request and the support needs at different ages. You can also use this document to prepare specific questions about your child’s needs to discuss with your ECEI, LAC or NDIS Planner.

[Reasonable and Necessary Support across the Lifespan: An Ordinary Life for People with Disability](#)

Other resources to help you understand the NDIS

The NDIS have produced an [NDIS Glossary](#) which is also available in Easy Read and Auslan.

Disclaimer: CYDA’s In Control Our Way resources have been created to support families of children and young people with disability to self-manage their NDIS plans. Information provided is intended as a general guide and may not contain the most recent information and updates. CYDA is not responsible for decisions made by the NDIA or its partners in the community. For the most current information on the NDIS, refer to the NDIS website. These fact sheets are current as of September 2020.

View the full set of In Control Our Way resources at: cyda.org.au/



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