

# NDIS mental health access

This is a plain language factsheet written by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The purpose of this factsheet is to summarise the NDIA's series of five mental health access snapshots for those requiring a brief overview. If you require more detailed information please refer to the original mental health access snapshot series.

## Mental health and the NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is designed to support people with disability to increase their independence and fully participate in community and working life.

People who meet the NDIS access criteria are known as NDIS participants.

People with long-term disability resulting from a mental health condition may be able to become NDIS participants.

## What is a disability?

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has the following definition of disability:

“People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Not everyone with a mental health condition will experience disability. The NDIS is for people who experience severe and long-term disability. This is explained further below.

## What is a mental health condition?

A mental health condition refers to symptoms that may be caused by a number of factors including life events and genetics. Symptoms can range from personality issues, psychotic or compulsive disorders, to anxiety and mood swings. A mental health condition can be temporary or lifelong.

## What is a psychosocial disability?

A psychosocial disability is a disability arising from a mental health condition. A psychosocial disability can result in difficulties doing everyday things such as banking, shopping and looking after yourself. Not everyone who has a mental health condition will have a disability, but for those who do, it can be severe and longstanding and significantly impact on their life and potential recovery.

## What is an impairment?

An impairment as a result of a mental health condition means a person experiences loss or damage to their mental function. Mental functions include the way we understand, think and feel about things.



## Do I need to provide a mental health diagnosis to access the NDIS?

A specific mental health diagnosis is preferred but not essential. You must provide evidence of a mental health condition to access the NDIS, but the mental health condition does not have to be named. NDIS support is based on the impairment, or the impact of the mental health condition, rather than the diagnosis itself.

For example, if you have been diagnosed with Schizophrenia, an NDIS access decision will be based on the impact of the condition on your daily life, not the Schizophrenia diagnosis. It is helpful if you share your Schizophrenia diagnosis with the NDIA, but if you prefer not to or don't identify with your diagnosis, it is ok to apply for the NDIS stating you have a mental health condition.

## In terms of mental health, who is eligible for the NDIS?

To become an NDIS participant, you must:

- be an Australian citizen, or have a permanent or Special Category Visa (SCV) AND
- be under 65 years old when you apply to join the NDIS AND
- live in an area where the NDIS is available.

If you have a mental health condition and want to access the NDIS, you must meet the above criteria and provide evidence that:

- your mental health condition has caused difficulties in your everyday life AND
- the difficulties you experience as a result of your mental health condition mean you will likely always require NDIS support AND
- the difficulties you experience as a result of your mental health issue have substantially reduced your ability to do everyday activities.

The NDIS is not designed to replace community mental health services or treatment services provided through the health system. It is designed to fund practical support for day-to-day living and assistance to access community services.

The [Productivity Commission](#) has estimated that approximately 64,000 of the 600,000 Australians living with severe and persistent mental health conditions will be eligible to access the NDIS once it is fully rolled out. This figure is an estimate only, not a cap on the Scheme.

More information about accessing the NDIS can be found at the [reimagine today website](#), a resource to support people living with mental health issues to navigate the NDIS.

## Recovery and the NDIS

A founding principle of the NDIS is that:

“People with disability should be supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life to the extent of their ability” - *Section 4 NDIS Act 2013*.

Under the NDIS, recovery means a person is able to achieve an optimal state of personal, social and emotional wellbeing while living with a mental health condition.



## How does the NDIS support recovery if a person's impairment must be lifelong?

A person can have a mental health condition that causes a lifelong impairment and still work towards achieving their best state of wellbeing.

## If my support needs reduce, can I still access the NDIS?

Yes. Everyone's journey is different. It is expected the support people require will change over their lifetime. The NDIS aims to build the skills and independence of participants and their participation in employment and their community. NDIS plans are reviewed annually and adjusted based on individual requirements.

## What if my treating clinician isn't sure whether my impairment is likely to be lifelong?

You will only be eligible for the NDIS if your treating clinician confirms that your impairment is likely to remain across your lifetime.

## Can I still access the NDIS if my mental health condition varies over time?

If you require support for everyday activities despite the changes in your mental health condition, you may still be eligible for the NDIS.

## How my mental health condition impacts my life

### What does the NDIA need to know about my everyday life?

To be eligible for NDIS your mental health condition will have a significant impact on your day-to-day life in at least of one of the life areas listed below. The NDIA will consider your ability to carry out everyday activities with and without support in the each of these life areas.

- **Communication:** includes being understood in spoken, written, or sign language; understanding others; and the ability to express needs.
- **Social interaction:** includes making and keeping friends, interacting with the community, behaving within limits accepted by others, and the ability to cope with feelings and emotions in a social context.
- **Learning:** includes understanding and remembering information, learning new things, and practicing and using new skills.
- **Mobility:** refers to the ability to move around the home and community to undertake ordinary activities of daily living requiring the use of limbs.
- **Self-care:** includes a person's ability to look after their own personal care, hygiene, grooming, feeding and health care needs.
- **Self-management:** includes a person's ability to organise their own life; plan and make decisions; and take responsibility.

## How do I show the effect of my mental health condition on my everyday life?

A good way to show how your mental health condition affects you is to ask a mental health professional to complete a [functional assessment](#).

For example:

- Life Skill Profile 16 (LSP-16) - preferred by the NDIA
- World Health Organisation Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS).

You can also provide a personal statement and statements written by family, friends and support workers to explain how you carry out everyday tasks on a day-to-day basis.

Other documentation and formal assessments given to Centrelink or other government departments can also be helpful.

## NDIS and other services

### What are mainstream services?

Mainstream, or other government services, include health, mental health, education, justice, housing, child protection, and employment services. Most Australians use a range of mainstream services throughout their lives.

Mainstream services will continue to fund treatment supports, for example, early intervention services for people experiencing mental health issues and psychology sessions under Medicare mental health care plans. Community mental health services will also continue to offer support services for people experiencing mental health issues.

The NDIA actively works with mainstream and community services to create a strong support system so people with mental health issues get the support they need.

### How can I get assistance if I am not eligible for the NDIS?

If you are not eligible for NDIS individualised support, you can get assistance from a Local Area Coordinator (LAC). A LAC works for an NDIA partner organisation based within the community. These organisations carry out work on behalf of the NDIA. LACs can help people connect to mainstream services and local and community-based supports. You can use the NDIA website or contact the NDIA to find a LAC in your area (details provided at the end of the factsheet).

### What does 'continuity of supports' mean and what happens to my current supports if I am not eligible for the NDIS?

Governments have committed to ensuring people with a psychosocial disability who are currently receiving services are not disadvantaged in the transition to the NDIS.

Continuity of supports means that if you are currently receiving disability or mental health supports and you do not meet the NDIS mental health access requirements, you will still receive supports that are consistent with your current supports.

If you are unsure how this may affect you, you can discuss your situation with your current providers and/or a LAC.



## Who can I talk to if I believe the NDIA got my access decision wrong?

You should first contact the NDIA and ask them to explain the reasons for the decision. If you are not satisfied with the response, you can request an internal review of the decision or reapply with more evidence.

An internal review of the decision is a new decision made by the NDIA that is independent of the original decision.

If you are not satisfied with the internal review decision, you can [contact the Administrative Appeals Tribunal](#) (AAT), an independent statutory body, to have the decision reviewed. The AAT will consider all evidence provided and make their own independent decision.

## More information

National Disability Insurance Agency

[NDIS Website](#)

Telephone 1800 800 110

Find us on Facebook [NDISAus](#)

Follow us on Twitter [@NDIS](#)

For people who need help with English

TIS: 131 450

For people with hearing or speech loss

TTY: 1800 555 677

Speak and Listen: 1800 555 727

Internet relay: National Relay Service

[Relay Service Website](#)