



Preparing for your NDIS Plan





Thorne Harbour Health is one of Australia's largest LGBTI community-controlled organisations – providing services and advocacy for the wellbeing of our LGBTI communities and people living with HIV. Established in 1983, the organisation was founded to lead the community response to HIV and AIDS. Today, Thorne Harbour honours that legacy as it responds to a broad range of issues affecting our gender, sex, and sexually diverse communities – including sexual health, family violence, mental health, alcohol and drug use, and trans health.



Inclusion Designlab is Inclusion Melbourne's centre for policy, research and development, and quality. Its vision is to bring together people with a disability, community organisations, government, and the world's leading disability researchers to develop cutting-edge models of practice, choice and citizenship.

It does this by developing, trialling, and implementing new systems of support and communicating its insights through a range of media. Inclusion Designlab is also a significant contributor to public policy and inquiries. Its focus areas include LGBTIQ+ inclusion, oral health, voting, political citizenship, and access to justice.

Visit www.inclusiondesignlab.org.au for more information.



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Navigating the NDIS

Navigating the NDIS can be a difficult process. It can feel overwhelming, especially when you come across complex language or you feel that your support needs are not being understood. It is important you feel ready for your NDIS journey and prepared to get the most out of your NDIS planning meeting.

Your goals, needs and preferences are central to NDIS planning. This may include your desire to live as a proud LGBTIQ+ person who experiences genuine inclusion in the LGBTIQ+ community. Your NDIS plan will contain money in it – funds – that you can use to pay for supports that will help you reach your goals and live a better life.

This guide is about simplifying the terms used by the NDIS and explaining how to prepare for NDIS planning meetings. It will break down common words used by the NDIS and what they mean as well as how to prepare and express your goals, supports needs, evidence and current weekly schedule to your NDIS planner.

This guide was developed by a team of LGBTIQ+ people with disability as part of a project funded by the NDIA's ILC program. The project was focused on building the self-advocacy capacity of LGBTIQ+ people with disability.

Steps of the Process



Part 1. Accessing the NDIS

There are a few ways to access the NDIS.

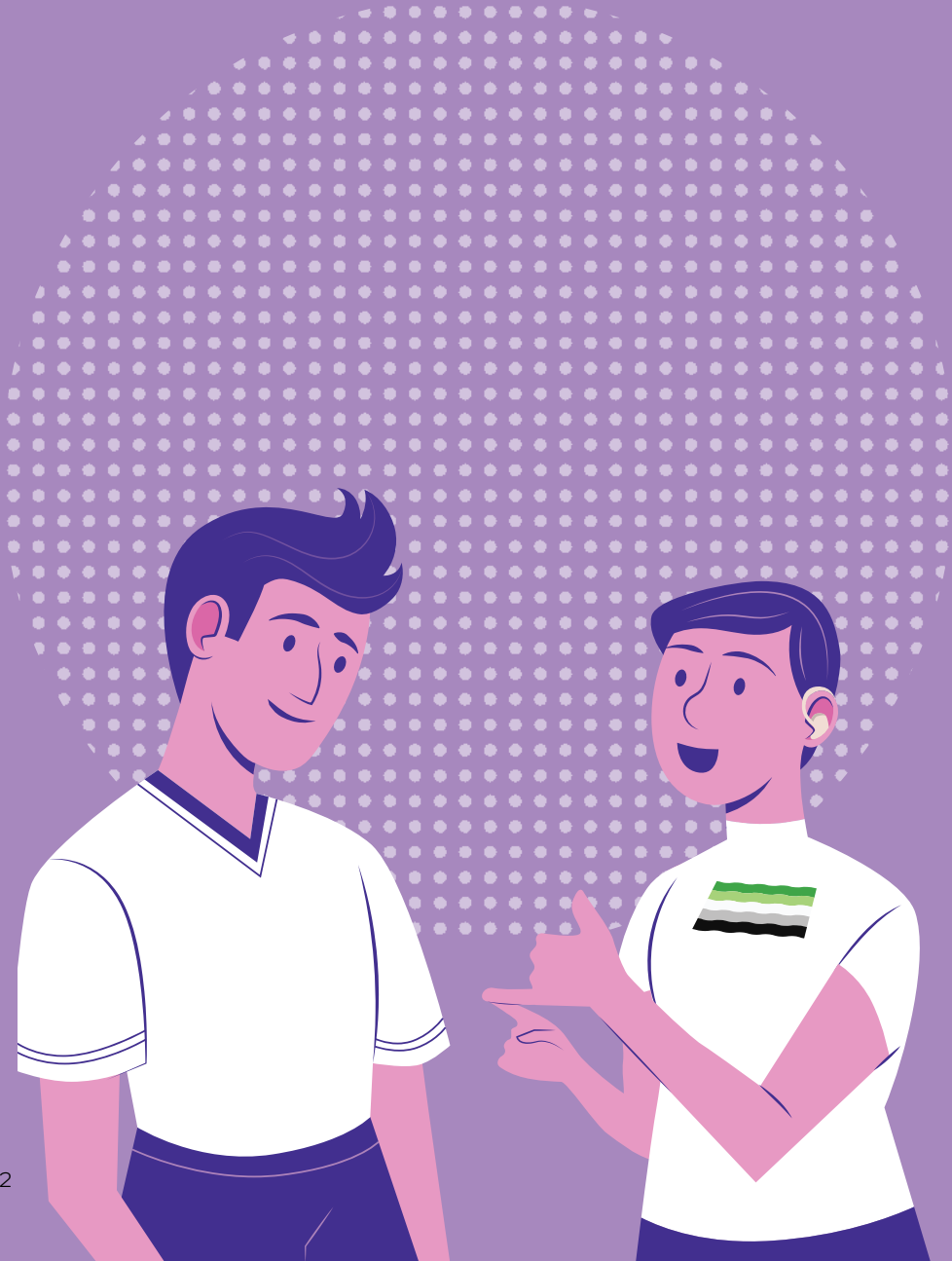
- 1. Automatic access:** If you receive disability support services or funds already, like the Disability Support Pension then the NDIS will call you to ask more eligibility questions or arrange your planning meeting.
- 2. Restart the process:** If you have already received your phone call but chose to delay your meeting, you can call the NDIS on 1800 800 110 to start the process again.
- 3. Access request:** If you have never received disability supports before, you will need to complete an Access Request. Go to ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply to do this. This webpage has details about the different ways to apply:
 - ▶ online form
 - ▶ phone call
 - ▶ TTY service
 - ▶ Speak and Listen, or Relay Service

You can ask someone to help you do this if you need to.

If you need to produce evidence, you can use the advice in **section 2** of this guide to help you. If your Access Request is approved, preparing for your meeting will be easier because you will have already done a lot of the work!

NDIS access can be tricky if you have never received disability support services or funds before. If you need help, call the NDIS directly on 1800 800 110. Ask a friend, supporter or advocate to be on the call with you if you need.

This will get you to the point where you can arrange your planning meeting.



Part 2. Preparing for your planning meeting

The NDIS planning process is about **goals** and how to reach them. You can start preparing for your NDIS planning meeting before you organise the date and time of the meeting. You don't need to wait!

Your NDIS plan will include money that you can use to pay for supports that will help you achieve your **goals**. That's why it is really important to spend some time (alone or with a supporter) thinking about what you want to achieve in the short term and the long term. Think about:

- ▶ What your best life might look like if you had all the support you needed.
- ▶ What your hopes and dreams are in areas such as: education, employment, social participation, living independently in the way that you choose, health and wellbeing, recreation, getting involved in your community, and relationships.
- ▶ What your current weekly schedule looks like. Write down all the supports you need in order to live your life at the moment. What's missing?



Once you've thought about the above points, ask someone to help you write out 4 or 5 sentences that clearly express these goals.

For example, your goal may be:

“ I'd like to have the equipment, supports and services to safely access more LGBTIQA+ social events. ”

REMEMBER when organising your planning meeting:

- ▶ You are allowed to ask for a face-to-face, in-person meeting with your NDIS planner
- ▶ You are allowed to choose a date, time and location that suits you. Allow plenty of time for preparation
- ▶ You can provide as much additional evidence or background information as you like
- ▶ You can bring a person with you to support you

Depending on your disability, this goal then supports your need for a wheelchair, communication device or other assistive technology to access the community safely. It may also help you get a support worker who can aid you in accessing events or could link you to a psychologist, or similar services if anxiety and depression are limiting social interactions.

Common NDIS planning terms

The NDIS uses a range of terms that can feel new or confusing. This language may take some time to get used to.

Some examples include:

▶ **Core:** Core funds in NDIS plans can be used to pay for basic supports for accessing the community or getting help at home. This includes funds for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), or support workers, and support to help you at home. Home supports are sometimes called 'supported independent living' supports.

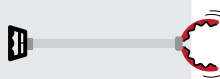
▶ **Consumables:** Funds for consumables will appear under **Core** in your NDIS plan. These funds can be spent on items that are essential to daily life. For example, catheters, continence equipment and low-cost items such as reaching and grabbing aids or fidget devices.

▶ **Capacity Building:** Funds for capacity building can be used for skill building, support coordination (if you need help booking your supports), and therapeutic supports like occupational therapy, physiotherapy, behaviour support, mental health support, and more. Capacity building funds are sometimes temporary.

▶ **Capital:** This includes funds for assistive technology and specialist equipment like wheelchairs or car modifications. It also includes adjustments to your home.

You may need core supports, consumables or assistive technology to reach your goals so it is important to understand what these words mean. If you are ever confused about what something means, you can ask a supporter, friend or advocate to explain it clearly.

See 'Evidence', later in this section, for more information about gathering evidence to support your request.



LGBTIQA+ goals: Visibility in your plan

It can be difficult for the NDIS and service providers to understand the unique needs of the LGBTIQA+ community. If you are LGBTIQA+, you may want to include a goal that is specifically focused on your desire to live as a proud LGBTIQA+ person or experience genuine inclusion in the LGBTIQA+ community. This will ensure your rights as an LGBTIQA+ person will be front and centre of your journey through the NDIS.

Once you've written down your goals, think about the supports you need to access the community, live independently, maintain education and employment, maintain your health, maintain your relationships and be a proud LGBTIQA+ community member.

These might be:

- ▶ Direct support professionals or support workers to help you access the community
- ▶ Home modifications
- ▶ Therapeutic supports such as psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, behaviour support, and more
- ▶ Direct support professionals to help you live independently at home
- ▶ Direct support professionals or support workers to help you access the community
- ▶ Consumable items that are essential to daily life
- ▶ Assistive technology
- ▶ Transport
Note: Transport is complicated so speak to a person who understands more about the NDIS before your planning meeting.

Reasonable and necessary supports

There are some things to consider when working out the supports you need:

- ▶ They have to be **reasonable** and **necessary**. This means that it is related to your disability, is effective for you, is good value for money, and takes into account support you are given from other services.
- ▶ For assistive technology and mobility aids, sometimes 'standard model' will be easier to get funded than 'deluxe model'. For therapeutic support or direct support professionals, there needs to be a close link between the goal and the type of support.
- ▶ They need to be supports that directly relate to your needs as a person with a disability, over and above the supports currently available to the general community through other funded programs. For example:



- ▶ The NDIS will not pay for a new car, however it may pay for car modifications for accessibility.



- ▶ The NDIS will not pay for dental treatment, however the NDIS will pay for direct support workers, extra support for healthcare planning, carer training and other wraparound supports that will allow you to access dental treatment and maintain oral health at home.



- ▶ The NDIS may pay for mental health support, physio, occupational and speech therapy, however you may first need to demonstrate that you have already exhausted Medicare-funded options for these services (eg. mental health plan, chronic health care plan).

- ▶ They should be cost effective.
- ▶ Make sure the supports will help you reach your goals.
- ▶ Bring evidence (*see next page*)



Evidence

While it would be nice if NDIS planners could take your word on your situation – after all, who knows your disability better than you do! – the NDIS does require evidence before creating your plan.

- ▶ You can bring evidence, quotes, and examples to demonstrate any tricky or unique supports that planners may not be familiar with. This includes evidence, quotes and statements of service from your current supports.
- ▶ You may need to bring some of the following types of evidence with you:
 - ▶ Diagnoses
 - ▶ Letters from a GP. You can also ask the GP to fill out the GP Statement of Evidence Form. (inclusionmelbourne.org.au/resource/gp-statement-of-evidence-form) This may need a longer appointment with your GP.
 - ▶ Reports from specialists for particular needs.



This can be stressful if you haven't had supportive professionals before. If you need to access some other services to help develop evidence, the following services are available for little or no cost:

- ▶ Chronic health care plan: allows 5 visits per year across a variety of specialists
- ▶ Mental health care plan: allows 10 visits to a psychologist
- ▶ Local council supports
- ▶ Your local bulk billing GP

You can ask your GP to write a letter outlining your diagnosis or condition, including your support needs. For more information about this, please contact Thorne Harbour Health or Inclusion Designlab.

Part 3. Getting the most out of your planning meeting

Your NDIS planning meeting will be led by a person called a Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or an NDIS planner. If you have an LAC, they will send your information to an NDIS planner.

- ▶ Bring supportive people with you. They can make sure the meeting stays on track and help you talk confidently about your goals.
- ▶ Have your goals, support needs, evidence, and current weekly schedule in front of you for easy reference.
- ▶ Give a copy of the documents to the planner. You can do this before or during the meeting.

▶ If, after some discussion and explanation, you feel the planner doesn't understand your goals, support needs, circumstances, or identity – including your needs as an LGBTQIA+ person – stop the meeting and request another planner. You have the right to feel comfortable in your planning meeting.



- ▶ You can record the meeting and ask for a copy of what the LAC wants to send to the NDIS planner before it is sent.

The NDIS funds every participant individually. It is best not to compare your plan to other people's plans as what may be suitable for one person may not be suitable for another. What matters is that your plan works for you and that your rights, needs, and goals have been properly considered.

What happens next?

After your planning meeting, the NDIS planner will send your plan to you by email or mail.



If you are not happy with your plan, or your plan does not include the LGBTQIA+ goals or supports you need, you can tell your planner that you want a review.



If you are happy with your plan, you can start using it. If you have questions about how to find LGBTQIA+ friendly services, you can contact Thorne Harbour Health or Inclusion Designlab for more information.

Making a complaint

If you experience problems in your NDIS planning journey, you can make a complaint to the NDIA. You can do this directly by:

- ▶ Filling out the Complaint Form at: [ndis.gov.au/contact/feedback-and-complaints](https://www.ndis.gov.au/contact/feedback-and-complaints)
- ▶ Calling the NDIS on 1800 800 110 telling them you want to make a complaint about your planning experience, your planner or your plan

If you are unhappy with your plan, you have to ask for a review of it. You can do this here: [ndis.gov.au/participants/how-review-planning-decision](https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/how-review-planning-decision) or call 1800 800 110

You can have another person make the call with you or for you.

It is your right to be supported to live as a proud LGBTQIA+ person.



thorneharbour
health*

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