

NDIS Pre-Planning Tips

You are the expert on your family member. As you know your family member best, you are best placed to know what is important to their life and how they are best supported. Have confidence when you shape the plan. Do not underestimate your [natural authority](#) as a family. So stand your ground.

Get help from others. To broaden your ideas, enlist the support of family and friends to help. What do other think is important to your family member? What do they consider are their interests/hobbies? What do they think would be meaningful in their daily lives? One helpful strategy may be a [circle of support](#). [This video](#) shows what can be achieved with the help of a circle of support.

Think of valued roles that your family member can have and how they can be supported. One of the goals of the NDIS is to “support the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability.” Take advantage of this new opportunity. For example, if your family member loves soccer, find a way for them to become a member of their local soccer club or their favourite professional club. For more ideas, see the [Resourcing Families website](#) and the 2016 conference, [Tailor Made: A life as individual as you - John Armstrong and Meg Sweeney](#).

Don't get pushed into being agency managed. Self managing your family member's plan is your choice and can give you more flexibility than an Agency managed plan. You have a right to self-manage the NDIS plan outright or if you want the choice and control over services but need some help with the administration, you can choose to part self-manage and part plan manage. This is a right, not something you have to prove you can do. See [this animated clip](#) from NDIS. If you are being questioned by the Local Area Coordinator, be assertive (but not aggressive) about your “choice”. This article from Plan Management Partners provides a [useful guide to Plan Management](#).

Speak “NDIS” language. NDIS planners need to make a case for every support they include in a plan. Try to make it easier for them to justify the supports your family member needs, by using the right terminology and focusing on outcomes. This can result in better supports for your family member. The [NDIS Price Guide](#) is the best tool for learning the lingo: read it, use it and save it to your desktop for constant use.

Have goals that result in clear and positive outcomes. Tailor the plan to your family member's needs specifically. Be able to explain why the goal is important. That is, why it is reasonable and necessary support in your family member's life. You may need to clearly justify why something should be included in your family member's plan. For example, Sarah's goal was to have extra reading support as it was an important life skill for living independently and as preparation for vocational skills for future employment. Sarah received funding for a communications mentor to help him achieve this goal. Ordinarily, this would be viewed as being in the domain of the Department of Education, but it was linked to her goal and she could justify why it was important for social, community and employment reasons. Providing a weekly calendar of all activities can help paint a clear picture of the goals and daily supports required.

Once you receive your plan, shop around. Remember you and your family member with disability are now in the driver's seat, with all the rights that come with being a consumer. If you are unhappy with your service provider, let them know directly and try to work in partnership to solve things internally first. If it does not work out, as you now have a service agreement in place on behalf of your family member, you have the right to report the service provider to the Department of Fair Trading, the NSW Ombudsmen and/or the NDIA. Push back as a consumer and demand you receive the service you agreed to. We have prepared a [Troubleshooting Guide](#) for you. The more people that complain and hold service providers to account, the better off the market place will be.

You can change your mind. If you are unhappy with your family member's plan or have a change of circumstance, you can [apply for a review](#).

Keep developing your family member's goals with each new plan. Revisit planning ideas to continue to improve and nurture the goals and vision around your family. For example, Jason in the first year of the NDIS plan, Jason had a goal of being able to live independently in the future. He started a part-time lawn mowing business on the weekends as he is still at school. In the second year of his NDIS plan, Jason has a goal to expand his business and has requested a business mentor to support him to achieve this new goal. See [Planning Tools](#) on the Resourcing Families website.

Information provided from Local Area Coordinators (LACs)

Family Advocacy can share the following information from a recent workshop run by LACs:

- If you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or another cultural background, you can request to have an LAC from your culture.
- Expect a phone call, followed by a planning meeting. After the plan is received, you can use your LAC for initial support around plan provisions/services. You can also contact your LAC throughout the year if you need assistance. The feedback we are getting from families is that the quality of your LAC varies, and that they are often too busy to provide you with a proper follow up after your plan is received.
- Ensure you have the evidence to support your claims. Should you require equipment, you will need usually three quotes as well as supporting documentation by your doctor or therapist.
- You cannot receive a print out of your plan meeting. Apparently, there are multiple online forms that are submitted which prevent this. We are lobbying the NDIA to change this. In a recent survey we conducted, over 93 per cent of families believed a draft of the plan was a necessary part of a quality planning process. Until this is implemented, make sure you ask the LAC to see what is being typed in to the portal. It is your information and your goals going into the portal and you have a right to know how that is being communicated.
- Support Coordination is for people with intellectual disability, communication barriers, people with no informal supports, cultural considerations and people in remote locations. It seems to be that it is only for complex situations where the participant has little informal support.
- LACs and planners can liaise as necessary. So if you have supports that have been missed or the wrong management option was selected by the LAC, you can contact the LAC direct to fix errors quickly rather than having to go to a review. This will obviously depend on the issue.