**Questions raised at DHS Disability Services forums**

*The following questions have been raised at DHS Disability Services in 2023. They are provided in a question-and-answer format to help explain the transition process to receive services directly under the NDIS.*

**What if we receive our NDIS plan and the funding does not represent the needs of our family member?**

The NDIA make a funding decision based on information provided in the Functional Capacity Assessment, and any supporting information provided to them during the planning process. If all the relevant information has not been shared, this may result in an inaccurate funding. When we receive client’s NDIS plans, we do a quality check to ensure it matches the current needs of each client and identify if there are any areas not covered. An example is if a client has been funded for share housing, when we know they need to live alone, we will raise this information with decision-makers and help you to raise this with the NDIA. We are not contacting the NDIA independently of decision-makers, as they are owners of the plan. We are seeking to support you in practical terms to be guided through.

Please contact us if you are concerned you feel your friend or family member does not have funding that represents their needs. We can support you with information and evidence available, so you can further discuss support needs with the NDIA.

**Is there an interim step to go back to the NDIA if you are not happy about a funding decision, without raising a formal complaint?**

An informal review of an NDIS decision is referred to as a Section 48, of the NDIS Act. Please contact us if you are concerned your friend or family member does not have funding to represent their needs.

A formal review of an NDIS decision is referred to as a Section 100, of the NDIS Act. If you decide to undertake this process because you don’t believe the NDIS plan reflects support needs, please let us know you are doing this.

We can make sure all supporting information we have is available to you and support you through this process with the NDIA.

**I have a planning meeting with NDIA but have not received a copy of the Functional Capacity Assessment, should I have been provided with a copy of this?**

DHS Disability Services have engaged external Occupation Therapists to undertake these assessments, and they are shared with NDIA, and you as the decision-maker. If you have not received this, please let us know and we can follow this up for you.

Before you attend your planning meeting with the NDIA they will provide you with a Home and Living Support letter that you will discuss during this meeting. Your Support Coordinator can attend this meeting with you, if you would them like, to ensure you have all the relevant details, and support you during this process. Please invite the Support Coordinator to participate in this meeting.

**Is it best to have an internal support coordinator?**

When your NDIS plan includes funding for Support Coordination you will have the option to access this from DHS Disability Services.

As a long-term provider of disability supports in South Australia, we have had many decades of experience and knowledge in providing disability services to South Australians. This includes a coordination function, placing the client at the centre of their support needs and making sure they have access to care and activities so they can live their best life.

As a registered NDIS provider, and with the certainty about the continuation of service delivery into the future, we bring this expertise to the Support Coordination function. Your DHS Disability Services Support Coordinator has the skills and expertise to deliver effective, positive outcomes for the people we support and help the achieve their personal goals in their NDIS plans.

Ultimately the choice of who provides services is yours. If you would like DHS Disability Services to be a provider of Support Coordinator or other service areas, you can speak to us at your Service Agreement meeting that will be happening in June and July.

**We have noticed a lot of fees charged by our plan manager, they seem excessive, is this reasonable?**

If you are concerned funds have been taken when they shouldn’t have, you can raise it with the NDIA, and they may investigate this.

**Our family member has received an amount of funding in their NDIS plan for Community Nursing Support, what does this mean?**

Under the NDIS there are disability related health supports funded that cover a whole range of health needs, but they must be directly related to the participant’s disability and the reason they are needed is because the person with a disability is unable to manage it themselves

Nursing supports provided under the NDIS is a community model. This means that a lot of the time a nurse will oversees the care plan, and where it is safe the support can be delivered by a support worker with the oversite of a nurse. The needs of the client is always a priority and what is safe and appropriate for them, everything is detailed in their care plan.

**Once we have shared our family member’s NDIS plan and the Home and Living Support letter with DHS Disability Services, what is the next steps?**

After DHS Disability Services has received a client’s NDIS plans and Home and Living Support letter, we will be in contact with families and decision makers to discuss the services we can provide and then create a Service Agreement. These will be shared with clients and decision-makers in June and July.

**Our family member wears arm restraints for her safety, and they can come on and off multiple times per day. With new reporting requirements for Restrictive Practices, will each time they go on and off need to be recorded?**

If there is a practice that is used regularly, it would be listed on the client’s support plan as a regular practice and each individual case would not need to be reported separately. It would be reported at the end of the month that it is used daily.

**My family member lives with three other people. Will there be options for the coordination of group activities under the NDIS?**

The support we provide for each client is specific to their individual needs and their NDIS plan. Where there is a desire for a group activity in a home there would need to be conversations with the service coordinator to facilitate this. This could be relevant for a trip to a football match, or a specific social outing. Many of our clients currently participate in group activities like these.

**We are concerned about what our child’s Home and Living Support letter means for them and the new staffing ratio. Disability support housing options are limited in regional areas and we worry what the future holds.**

There is a commitment under NDIA continuity of support and transition principles which is designed to consider the current needs and arrangements of the participant and if the plan doesn’t match current needs, a discussion will need to occur so transition to longer term supports can occur. Please stay in regular contact through this process and we can support you through this process with the NDIA.

**Under the NDIS Plan, if new equipment is needed how will we get that? And who trains the workers in how to use the new equipment?**

If a client has a need for new equipment, or has equipment which is broken, if funding is available within the NDIS plan’s Capacity Building and Capital budget, that can be used for an AT assessment to prescribe new equipment. If new equipment is provided, usually funding will also be provided for fitting and training of staff for use of equipment. If there is not funding in the NDIS plan for an equipment assessment or equipment, a change of circumstance should be lodged with NDIA to request this. Funding should also be included in the plan for repairs and maintenance of any equipment.

**Can DHS Disability Services staff support my child if they are in hospital?**

Disability Support officers funded from NDIS plans are not permitted to work in hospitals unless specific approval from NDIA has been provided to allow this to occur. In some circumstances where the patient has very complex communication or behaviour support needs, NDIA may approve for the workers funded by NDIS to provide support in hospital for a short period of time.

**Can regional families seek a face-to-face NDIA Planning session?**

Yes. It is your right to have a face-to-face meeting with an NDIA Planner.

**How much notice time can the NDIA provide for planning sessions - is 2 weeks’ notice possible?**

Yes, two weeks’ notice is reasonable. It is also important that families have time and feel prepared for these sessions.

**How will costs such as home maintenance and garden care be managed under this NDIS?**

If home modifications or gardening as a goal are not included in NDIS Plans and therefore an individual receives funding support, these are individual expenses to pay. The DHS Managed Client Fees arrangement includes gardening care as a component of the coordinated expenses.

**NDIA Feedback – shared with the NDIA**

I recently had our Planning meeting with the NDIA and the whole meeting was about getting my family member’s profile correct. Although they had all his information, I had to explain it all to them again. It was not a discussion about the actual plan at all, we didn’t get to that.

5 weeks ago, we attended our family members planning meeting and were given very little flexibility in times of available times for face to face meetings. We had no options for meetings in the middle of the day, which would have been a lot more suitable and manageable to take my family member with a disability along and reducing stress. I feel they are encouraging more people to undertake phone, rather than face to face interviews. Once we did have our appointment, the meeting was very good.

We have had our planning meeting with the NDIA, which went well. It has been more than 28 days and we have not received our NDIS plan. I have sent two emails to the NDIA generic email address, which took over 2 weeks to receive a reply from my plan manager. It's frustrating that although you've been allocated a plan manager, yet you can't make direct contact with them with an enquiry.

**Questions asked relating to DHS Disability Services:**

**What training do staff receive to help clients eat a meal in case there is a chocking concern?**

We want to make sure people have the right support at the right time in the right place. Choking and food provisions is something that we take will extremely seriously and all of our staff undertake mandatory training in this area.

Each of our clients have a support plan that our staff are required to refer to and deliver services in line with. This breaks down how supports are to be delivered, their likes and dislikes, and can include other service plans like speech pathology and dietetics etc. This ensures our clients receive the best care according to their individual needs and preferences.

If you do have any concerns about this, we encourage you to raise this with your area manager who is present today.

**What is DHS Disability Services doing to address staff turnover in houses?**

We want to stand out in the industry as an employer of choice, with a skilled and passionate workforce who share our values. We employ our staff as permanent employees of the SA Government and have a big focus on providing ongoing training and development opportunities across allied health and nursing areas. We want to ensure our workplace is enjoyable, provides leadership opportunities and staff receive support from their manager and stability in their roles.

There is a lot of moving parts currently in this workforce space, our aim is to build the right team around our clients who have specific skillsets to support all our clients and those with complex needs. We are committed to continue to build a consistent team around our clients and minimise agency and casual staff arrangements. We also are working to have regular staff to cover for planned and unplanned leave.

We want to make sure we employ the right staff and retain our quality staff. We are still working through this process and recruiting approximately 30 people every 3 months. We have recruited over 30 people across the service, and we are working to build great culture in every team and house.

**During staff handover time from one staff member to another, if there is multiple staff in a house information gets lost as it is a verbal exchange with one person only.**

Handover can be handled differently by each house and that is something we are working on making more consistent and standardise across the service including times, style and structure. In addition to handover, client’s support plans with detailed information are checked by staff on every shift as our client’s safety and wellbeing is our priority at all times.

**When will DHS Disability staff receive training to work with clients who have a Positive Behaviour Support Plan?**

When a client’s NDIS plan has been approved and there is a Positive Support Plan in place, all staff who works with that client will receive specialised training from a Positive Behaviour Practitioner. This has already begun happening across the service. If an agency staff or casual staff works in a house, detailed information is shared with them to follow in a client’s support plan.

**What is happening with transport? Having access to a vehicle has been an important part of our child’s support.**

DHS Disability Services is currently undertaking a review of how we use vehicles and how we deliver the important access to community that service vehicles provide. While this work has not yet been completed, it will be communicated before any changes are made. We want to ensure where clients who have existing transportation provisions, this is continued under the NDIS. Transport is a very important as clients can't access community without transportation, which is an essential function for many clients.

**Are DHS Disability Services planning on employing specialised continence nurses?**

We have a number of clients who have a continence plan and require annual reviews, and it is absolutely our intent to have them in the service and we will be recruiting for them in the near future.

**What will happen with DHS Disability Services into the future?**

DHS Disability Services is a South Australian Government delivered service. The current Government is committed to this, and all our employees will continue to be employed by the South Australian government as part of the Department of Human Services.

As a service, we are working toward being a leader in the disability sector. Having the right staff to provide wrap around supports to deliver a wholistic service to clients, with different levels of complexities so they can live their best life with a familiar and consistent team around them.

**How will increasing costs of home energy be managed in high support homes.**

If a house is on the DHS Managed Client Fees arrangement, this expense is covered by the fee. Otherwise, it is an individual expense covered by a client because energy and utility expenses are everyday living expense, not funded through the NDIS or other disability support funding arrangements.

**What will the Client Trust look like moving forward?**

This is a financial trust that was set up under Strathmont, IDSC days and it is closed to new participants. The Client Trust doesn’t sit under our DHS Disability Services, it sits under the finance area in the Department of Human Services. It operates very similarly to the Public Trust.

If you have questions that relate to a Client Trust matter, you can email DHSClientTrustGroup@sa.gov.au or call 08 8415 4410.