

NDIS Tip Sheet 7 – Preparing for Your first NDIS Plan

Preparing for Your First NDIS Plan Meeting

The Profile section (About Me) of your NDIS Plan is in essence a 'summary' of the key things about your life. Tips one to four below are aimed at assisting you to draft this section and your goals to give to your Planner as it forms your *Participant Statement*.



Preparing your Participant Statement - My Profile

1. List everything you have and do now

The NDIS needs to know what you are using currently to support you in your life.

Make a list of ALL the supports you use 'now', including:

- hours and type (e.g. Day Service; Attendant Care) of support you currently receive from each different organisation
- any other supports you use e.g. continence program, equipment servicing
- things that you pay for yourself e.g. social groups, transport

This list is a vital part of your discussion with your planner. If the supports on the list are working well for you and they are needed due to your disability, then you probably will want to request the NDIS to fund them in your NDIS Plan (package of funding). [Note: VALID has templates for all the activities recommended in this Tip Sheet in a 'Word' format that you can type in your own info]

2. What is missing in your supports?

You may have a quick answer to this question and if so, then write it down. Other people will not be able to easily identify what supports are missing i.e. 'the gaps', so here are some questions that may assist you think about what is missing

- What would make a difference in your (or your family member's) life?
- Is there a problem you don't know how to fix or something you wish you could change?
- Think about what you would purchase if you were given funding for further support?

3. Help the Planner get to know you and your situation

In addition to key information from 1. and 2. above, it is beneficial for the Planner to have enough information about you to assist them understand your life and what does and doesn't work for you (or your family member).

The NDIS will want to understand where you live and who supports you, so include:

- Who do you live with?
- Does anyone provide you with unpaid or paid care and support? If so, at what times of the day and how (in what way)?
- Some of your 'history' is often useful especially where you/your family member lack support in an area(s).
- Outline what things have worked and what hasn't worked for you

Provide an outline of what you do in your everyday life:

- Some information on your daily life, such as, getting ready for the day?
- What you do during the day and where?
- How do you get to activities or into the community?
- What activities do you do or you'd like to do, for leisure or socially?
- Are there any issues that family/carers are dealing with, which require solutions?
- What are your favourite activities and why?
- Are there things you want to do with your life?

My Goals

4. What things do you want to do with you time and your life?

A key part of your NDIA plan are the goals. Many people aren't used to living according to goals. However, in order to get the right funding in your NDIS Plan, you need to have appropriate goals. Some tips about writing your goals:

- Goals should be about what you want in your life, not necessarily about the services you want. i.e. we are used to having 'service related' goals, e.g. to have 35 hours of in-home support; to have 24 nights of respite
- Try not to be too specific, as it can lock you into activities or timeframes that restrict you and therefore reduce your flexibility: e.g.
I want to do swimming in the community on Mondays.instead be broad 'I would like to do activities in the community that I enjoy'
- Aim at making your goals achievable, or at minimum, 'measurable', as the NDIS wants to be able to 'measure' whether the funding is producing 'outcomes'. e.g.
I want to move out of home in twelve months. instead 'I want to work towards moving out of home into my own flat'
- Most people have a couple of short-term goals and maybe 1 or 2 long-term goals, so it is beneficial to develop your goals so that they are comprehensive, to ensure that you cover all that you need funded.

My Funded Supports

5. Why do you need support?

It is crucial to assist the planner to understand what support you need and why you need the support, so that they will approve your requests. Therefore, it is often useful for you to think about how you can 'justify' your need for the type and amount of supports you are asking for, that is, why is what you ask for 'reasonable and necessary' for the NDIS to fund. Some tips that may assist you with this:

- Make what you require clear and easy for the planner to understand. Discussion can be forgotten, but written information can be taken with them for reference. e.g.
 - give the planner a copy of your 'now' list from point one above, plus the list of 'gaps' from point two and/or
 - create a table of the whole week (email VALID for the Word templates) that indicates what hours of support you receive, the time of day and from what organisation. This makes it easy to see the whole picture of what is in place and what the gaps are.

- Think about the reasons you require the supports you're asking for and remember that the NDIS will only fund support that is related to your goals, e.g.:
 - How is the support crucial in order for you to reach your goals?
 - Is the support required for safety reasons?
 - What could or will happen if you don't have the support?
- The NDIS will not fund a support unless it is related to the participant's disability. So, make it clear how the support you are asking for is directly linked to your disability. Sometimes you may have to 'join the dots' for planners who are new to the disability system. e.g.

Physiotherapy for someone with mild cerebral palsy (CP) is not about 'treating' CP, but is likely to be aimed at maintaining strength in muscles, which prevents falls and promotes independence especially when the goal is to get into the community more frequently and/or to build independence from paid support.
- The NDIS rules also ask the planner to consider whether the support funded is cost-effective and is appropriate to meet the needs. In specific cases it is useful to:
 - cost out both the option you are requesting and the obvious alternatives; e.g. transport using own vehicle and transport for the same activities using taxis
 - obtain doctors or other relevant professional(s) letters outlining why something you want is the most appropriate support for your needs e.g. an individual swimming exercise physiology program as opposed to group aqua aerobics
- The planner also is required to take into account the needs of 'informal supports', that is, unpaid people supporting the participant, which is often family and friends. So, while the NDIS support is primarily for the participant, the support required by family (e.g. regular breaks; appropriate equipment) to assist the participant is usually considered 'reasonable and necessary', however, this often can depend on what the participant 'goals' are and how they are worded.

6. What will be achieved if you get the support you'd like?

Another way to put your case around what is required (reasonable and necessary) is to outline what 'outcomes' would be achieved if you get the support or things (e.g. equipment) you need.

The government is keen on being able to 'quantify' what results they are getting for the money, so they have built in 'outcome' areas (domains) into the NDIS funding schedule.

So, you can use outcomes as a way of explaining what you want to achieve (your goals) and in this way, you are both clear on what you're wanting and the NDIS has evidence for why the support you've asked for is reasonable and necessary. However, don't be concerned by this, outcomes don't have to be grand things, like becoming a brain surgeon.

- Outcomes can be anything you achieve, so they just need to be meaningful for you. e.g. to participate in an art course in a community house; to be able to continue to safely live in my own home.
- Ideally what you achieve (outcome) should be able to be 'measured' i.e. can clearly say you've achieved it or not. e.g. from the previous dot point, both are easily 'measurable', however something like 'To be happy with my life' is hard to measure'

7. Talk to services

It is useful to talk to the services you currently use. Many services have trained up one of their own staff on the NDIS so that they can assist their clients with preparing for the NDIS. This is a useful resource, so ask your services about getting support. It is also useful to in addition to this, seek some independent information on your range of choices.

Where you have or your family member has high needs or specific support needs, it is even more important to talk to services.

Some things to think about for when you talk to services:

- This may be a service you currently use to find out things like
 - what level of staff is required e.g. standard or high intensity?
 - what type of training do staff require and will the agency (service) provide this as part of their service provision or will you have to pay for it separately with your NDIS funding package
- You also may benefit from talking to services you potentially may want to use to find out about what they can offer and issues like the flexibility of their staff etc.
- You may also want to check if they have staff available to undertake the tasks you would like to purchase, especially for speciality roles like Support Coordination, assessments and complex support.

This is just a start to your considerations when selecting services to purchase support from and the *VALID Tip Sheet 5: Selecting Services* provides much more detailed information on the issues and questions that may be relevant when deciding which agencies are the best match for your needs.

8. Decide on how you would like the funding to be managed

Before your first planning meeting, it is advisable to decide on which type of funding management you would like to use. If you don't let the planner know in this meeting then you are likely to be locked into the fund's management options in the plan for a year, so you can't change your mind.

More information on the three main types of funds management; Agency Management, Plan Management and Self-Management, refer to the VALID DVD series '*Getting NDIS Savvy*' Video Number 6 on the VALID website www.valid.org.au

If you are not happy with your NDIS Plan

At the end of the process when you receive your NDIS Plan, remember if you are unhappy with what has been funded, you have the right to raise this with the planner and/or request a review of decisions made in the Plan - this is outlined in *VALID Tip Sheet 3: Complaints related to the NDIS*

Getting your NDIS Plan into Action

The *VALID Tip Sheet 4: Implementing Your Plan* may be of assistance to you in getting the supports you need confirmed and put into place so they work well for you.

This NDIS Tip Sheet is a resource developed by the VALID Family Team.

For more information contact Christine Scott, email: christine@valid.org.au

VALID office, 130 Cremorne St., Richmond phone: 03 9416 4003 web: www.valid.org.au