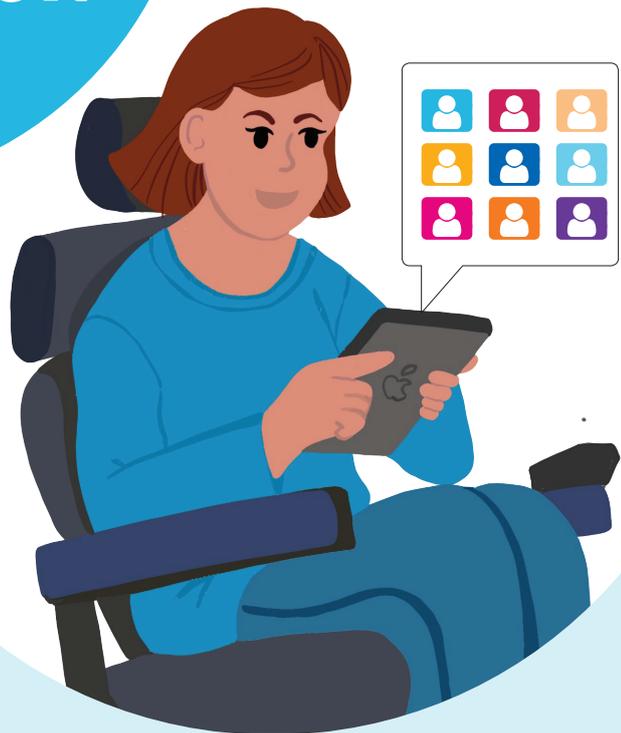


CHOOSING A SUPPORT COORDINATOR



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Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the many people who contributed to this resource for their time and insights including Cath Mahony, Caytlin Weir, Jason Anderson, Kate Skene, Liz Ellis, Luke Nelson, Melanie Schlaeger, Paulene Bates, Samar Bain and Tom Butler.

The production of this UpSkill resource was supported by the Gandel Foundation.





How to use this guide

This guide is for NDIS participants or a person assisting or acting on their behalf, such as a family member, friend or guardian.

In this guide we use the term 'you' and 'yours' when referring to an NDIS participant.

The Summer Foundation's UpSkill team has created this guide to help you choose a support coordinator who has the right skills, experience and values to work with you. We have included ideas for important things you might want to know about your support coordinator (such as their experience or skills in a particular area) and questions you might want to ask them. There is space for you to write the things that are important to you and questions you might want to ask before you choose a new support coordinator.

We have included a Glossary at the end to help explain the meaning of some commonly used NDIS words and phrases.

What is support coordination?

Support coordination is a support funded in your NDIS plan. A support coordinator helps you build your capacity. This means they help you develop your knowledge, skills and confidence in managing your NDIS support and making connections with the community. A support coordinator might work independently, or work for a small, or large, service provider.





How can a support coordinator help you?

"My support coordinator always made sure that if I wasn't happy with somebody that I can say, 'I don't want to work with them. I'm not comfortable.'" – Samar

A support coordinator can help you:

- Think about your goals and dreams for the future, and make a plan to reach your goals
- Understand the NDIS and how you manage your funding (self managed, plan managed and/or agency managed)
- Helps you figure out supports that work best for you
- Develop your knowledge, skills and confidence to have choice and control over your supports and your life
- Find service providers who will meet your needs and can help you achieve your goals
- Negotiate with service providers to make the most of your NDIS funding and assist you with service agreements, service bookings and the NDIS portal
- Find mainstream and community services that can help you
- Connect you with your community and groups where others share your interests
- Find solutions when problems arise or if there is a crisis
- Build your knowledge and skills to coordinate your own supports with confidence



"My support coordinator knows me well, has good knowledge of my plan and the NDIS rules, but doesn't stick rigidly to what is and isn't funded – they think creatively about how to do what is important to me." – Cath

What other help might you want from your support coordinator?

Specialist skills and knowledge

You might want your support coordinator to have special skills, knowledge and experience so they can best assist you to reach your goals. This might be knowledge about your disability or skills and experience in working with people in a particular situation.

This could include special skills, knowledge, and experience working with people who:

- Are leaving residential aged care and moving into their own home
- Are involved in the justice system
- Have a progressive disability
- Are looking for a home of their own
- Are exploring and designing Individualised Living Options (ILO)
- Need new assistive technology



"My support coordinator is a big part of my support. They helped me get onto the NDIS, get SDA, organise my move and build a good support worker team. At first I was a bit hesitant, especially at my first meeting. But then she walked me through what to expect with the NDIS, the process, what we'd need to do and how we'd do it." – Samar

What special skills and knowledge would you like your support coordinator to have?



How do I choose a support coordinator?

“Choose a support coordinator you feel comfortable sharing your hurdles with and know they have the fire within them to find a reasonable solution.” – Caytlin

When you are choosing a support coordinator it is helpful to feel you are making an informed choice about the person who will work with you.

It is also important that your support coordinator:

- Understands that people with disability have the same rights as all people
- Communicates with you in the way that you prefer and shares information in a way that you can easily understand
- Is clear in how billing works, the work they are doing for you and how they will charge you
- Is respectful and sees that you are your own person with your own preferences
- Supports you to make your own decisions about your own life
- Is efficient and does what they said they will do in a timely way
- Helps you build your knowledge, skills and confidence to coordinate your own supports



“It’s hard because there’s no guidelines on how to get the right support or who you can call to connect you to the right support. When the NDIS came along I didn’t know what to do. I remember thinking it’s here, but how the hell do I get somebody to help me to manage it all. It was quite daunting.” – Samar

Are there any other questions I should be asking?

It might be helpful to consider the following:

How much funding do you have for support coordination?

Sometimes the NDIA does not provide much funding for support coordination. You will need to work with your support coordinator to decide who does what. There might be more of an emphasis on you or your informal support doing some of the coordination. You can discuss with your support coordinator how to make the most of your funding for support coordination.

How will you and your support coordinator communicate with each other?

- Do you prefer email, phone or face to face communication?
- Do you need information broken down into smaller chunks?
- Would you like a family member or other trusted person to join you for meetings?
- Do you need regular contact or once in a while?

Do they charge for travel?

If so, you might want to discuss how much it will cost for them to come to you to meet. Maybe you could hold your meeting in their office or another convenient place or have a video call instead.

How will they bill you?

It does not matter how your support coordination funds are managed, your support coordinator should provide you with an invoice or 'statement of service' which details the work they have done and how much you will have to pay from your NDIS funds.



What if they want to see your NDIS plan or know how much funding you have?

Sometimes support coordinators will ask to see your plan or want to know how much funding is in your plan. This can help them understand how much help you will need and how much time they might need to spend with you. You do not need to show them your plan if you are still choosing your support coordinator.

Once you have chosen a support coordinator, they will need to see your NDIS plan so they can best help you.

Will they help you to prepare for plan reviews?

If your support coordinator is providing information to the NDIA, how will you contribute and will they share this information with you?

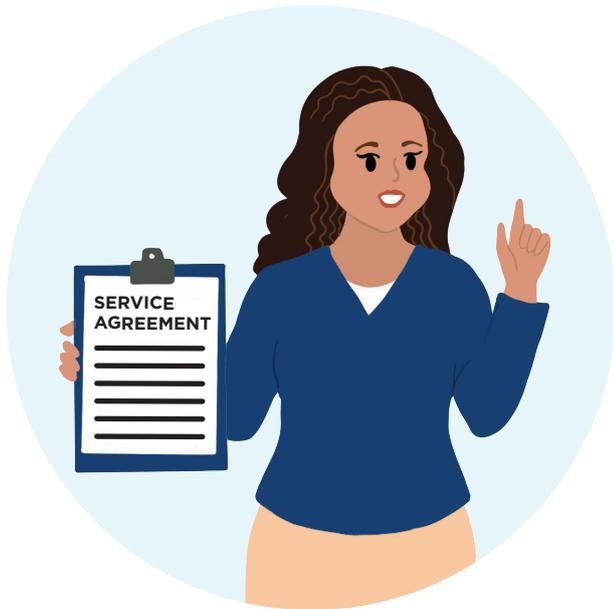
Can they help you with a change of circumstances or a review of an NDIS decision if it is needed?

If you do not think your plan is right, or your circumstances change, will your support coordinator help you lodge a review with the NDIS?

What if you are not happy with the service?

You can ask about how you can provide feedback.

What are some other questions you would like to ask when choosing a support coordinator?



What is a service agreement?

"They [the service provider] gave me a service agreement that was really long and not easy to understand. Later they said I should have known something because it was in the service agreement. Yeah, like on page 56!" – Mel

Service agreements are important because they show what both you and your support coordinator have agreed to do when working together. But, sometimes they are long and complicated.

Your support coordinator is obliged to provide you with a service agreement in language that you can understand. Your service agreement should be written in:

- Plain English (without difficult words or jargon) *or*
- Easy English with pictures to help you understand

Your support coordinator should talk through your service agreement so you can ask questions about what it all means.

Key things to look for in your service agreement

- A 'schedule of supports'. The schedule of supports should detail what services and supports your support coordinator will provide, and their fees for the services they will provide. It is important to know how many hours your support coordinator thinks they will use and how much it will cost from your NDIS plan
- The amount of money the support coordinator will take in a 'service booking' (for people who are agency managed)
- Information about how they will let you know what work they have done for you
- What they will charge you for phone calls, email, research
- How often will they send you an invoice or 'statement of service'
- What the travel costs will be if they visit you at home or in the community

- Any other costs or fees you need to know about
- How they will get paid. This will depend on whether your support coordination budget is self-managed, plan managed or agency managed
- Your responsibilities and your support coordinator's responsibilities
- Information about what happens if you or your support coordinator don't meet the agreed responsibilities
- Cancellation policy and cancellation fees
- Information about how long the agreement goes for and how it can be changed or ended
- Feedback and complaints process
- Whether you will need to pay Goods and Services Tax (GST) or if the service is GST free

Remember the service agreement is an agreement between you and your service provider. This means you can ask that the things you expect, and agreed to by your support coordinator, are written into the service agreement or schedule of supports.



"The support coordinator needs to inform the person that they don't have to stick with them or any other service or worker if they are not happy with the service. They need to tell them what would be involved in them changing support coordinators, ending the service agreement, maybe even supporting them to find someone new." – Cath

How can I find a support coordinator?

Word of the mouth. Ask your peers who they recommend for support coordination.

Use the **UpSkill Provider Directory**, created to help you find individual support coordinators in your area: summerfoundation.org.au/upskill-provider-directory

Other provider finders:

Clickability: clickability.com.au/

My Care Space: mycarespace.com.au/

Next steps

Before you start working with a new support coordinator you might want to ask the questions you think are important, such as those you may have written down in this guide.



You can ask questions by:

- Email. This gives you a written record of their response
- Meet them for a coffee and chat. This will give you a sense if they are a good match
- Phone or an online meeting. This will give you a good idea if they are right for you

Helpful resources

Summer Foundation and Housing Hub resources

Where to find the right support - The Housing Hub

www.housinghub.org.au/resources/article/where-to-find-the-right-support-for-your-move

Paulene's life-changing support coordination experience - Summer Foundation

www.summerfoundation.org.au/paulenes-life-changing-support-coordination-experience

NDIS resources

Support Coordination - NDIS

www.ndis.gov.au/participants/using-your-plan/who-can-help-start-your-plan/support-coordination

Making a Service Agreement - NDIS

www.ndis.gov.au/participants/working-providers/making-service-agreement

Other resources

What to expect from your Support Coordinator - by VALID

www.valid.org.au/what-expect-your-support-coordinator

Glossary

Agency-managed: This means your support providers claim payment directly from your NDIS funding. You can only use registered providers when you are agency-managed. You can find more information about this here: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/creating-your-plan/ways-manage-your-funding/ndia-managed-funding>

Conflict of interest: This is when the interests of the support coordinators or provider compete with your interests. Conflicts of interest happen all the time. It is important that your support coordinator tells you about any conflicts of interest they may have. An example of conflict of interest is when a support coordinator recommends other services they provide.

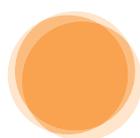
Plan managed: This is when a Plan Manager makes payments for you from funding in your NDIS plan. You can find out more about plan management here: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/creating-your-plan/ways-manage-your-funding/plan-management>

Schedule of supports: A schedule of supports (sometimes just called a 'schedule') is part of a service agreement with a provider which details the support they will provide and the fees they will charge.

Service booking: If your NDIS plan is agency managed, a service booking puts aside funding in your budget to pay NDIS registered providers for supports or services to be delivered. You need an agreement with a service provider before they make a service booking. Find out more about service bookings here: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/working-provider/connecting-participants/managing-service-bookings>

Self-managed: Self management is when you manage your NDIS funding. This means you make payment requests in the NDIS portal and pay your providers directly. Being self-managed gives you the flexibility and choice to decide what supports you buy to achieve your plan goals. Find out more about self-management here.

Statement of service: This is sometimes called an 'activity statement'. It provides you with information about the services and tasks your support coordinator might do for you. This might include a record of time you have met plus times when they have done research or other work for you.



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