



How to Choose a Service Provider

Congratulations! You have your NDIS plan and it is now time to find and choose your service providers. A service provider is a person or organisation that delivers support or a product. Their role is to help you reach the goals you identified when developing your NDIS plan. Good service providers can help you to meet your needs and make your plan work. It is important you take time to find the right service provider. Carefully choosing a service provider could prevent a lot of frustration for you later.

Review your plan and think about the goals you identified. What services and supports will you need to reach them? And which types of providers offer those supports? There is help available to assist you with these questions:

- Your Local Area Coordinator (LAC), NDIS Planner or Support Coordinator (if you have one) can help you source providers in your area.
- You can also ask your GP, paediatrician or other health professional you trust.
- Disability organisations such as ACD Tas can help.
- Consider joining a group to get ideas from other parents. MyTime groups are available in Launceston, Devonport and Hobart, and provide a forum for parents and carers of children with disability to chat over a cuppa. Check out the MyTime calendar for groups and times. (insert hyperlink)
- Take a look at the Raising Children Network's great disability services guide - [Autism & disability services for children | Raising Children Network](#)

Find services in your area.

- If your plan is agency managed you can choose providers that are NDIS registered. Take a look at the NDIS website's [provider finder tool](#).
- If your plan is self-managed or plan managed you can also choose unregistered providers in addition to or instead of NDIS registered ones.
- You can ask your LAC or planner for assistance finding specific providers. You can also ask your Support Coordinator, if you have one.
- It's a good idea to ask people you trust if they have recommendations for providers they have used. Your friends, family or people in your community network might be able to help you with some suggestions, however you should always check the services out for yourself to make sure they are the right fit for you.
- There are some useful online service provider platforms such as Hireup, Mable, and Clickability.

Visit services if possible to determine if they suit your needs and provide the type of service you are seeking. Do they have a good workplace culture? Have a look at their vision or mission statement on their website – do the values they list match the feeling you get when you visit? Do you feel they

listened to you? If they are going to provide you with a service, it is important you get along with them and can communicate with them effectively.

Here are some things you might like to discuss when you meet a service provider:

Service provision:

- Who will your contact be for making bookings?
- Will you have a key worker assigned to you?
- What is the minimum booking time for a shift? (for example, 30 minutes or one hour?)
- How are sessions structured? For example, does a one hour session include 15 minutes for note taking, planning or preparation?
- How much notice do you have to give if you need to cancel a shift without paying any cancellation penalty? If you have to cancel, will they use the time to do planning or preparation of resources?
- How, when and where you would like your supports to be provided?
- How long you will need the supports to be provided?
- Can you vary the Service Agreement to suit your needs?
- When and how will your Service Agreement be reviewed?
- How much notice will you need to give if you decide to break agreement to move to another service?
- What happens if your Service Agreement runs out (for example, if your plan is late getting approved)? Will the service provider still take shift bookings from you?
- Are they willing for you to be involved in selecting staff and can they provide extra training to meet your specific needs if necessary?
- Do staff have the necessary training to support your specific needs (eg. epilepsy training, PEG feeding, manual handling training) and if not, will the service pay for them to be trained?
- Do they welcome your involvement in orientation and training of staff? Can you bring staff of your choice to the organisation?

Accessibility:

- Is the service easy to get to? Is there accessible car parking?
- Are they fully booked and if so, how long is the waitlist? Will they contact you to let you know your progress on the list, or do they prefer you contact them? If so, how often?
- What are their operating hours and do the times they have available suit you? How much flexibility is there to change times you access the service?
- If you require accessible facilities such as accessible bathrooms and wheelchair access, does the service have these?
- Do they have a choice of venues in which they provide the service? Can service provision be at home or school? Can it be online if appropriate/necessary?

Transport:

- What is the service provider's policy on transporting participants? Can staff take you in their car or the organisation's car? Can other people besides you ride in the car too (eg. family members)?
- How is transport charged, is it through your plan, or is it an out of pocket expense to you?
- Are workers willing to catch public transport with you?
- If the service is provided at a venue, is there transport to and from, and is there a cost for this?

Financial:

- The cost of the supports they offer, and how these compare with the NDIS Price list. NDIS providers cannot charge you more than the NDIS Price Guide, but unregistered providers can set their own prices.
- How often do they change their prices, and how and when will you be notified about this?
- How often do they send you their invoices and how long do you have to pay? Are you expected to pay on the day of service?
- What additional charges can you expect, such as for administration, transport or activities/entry fees? In what increments do they charge for things like phone calls (eg. 15 minutes, 30 minutes)?
- Are they willing to be responsible for personal finances, including companion card, Medicare card, etc?

Service standards/qualifications:

- Is the service a Registered Service Provider with the NDIS?
- How long have they been supporting people with disability?
- What skills and qualifications do the people providing the service have?
- Do they have an accreditation system and if so, are they accredited?
- Do they have a mission or values statement? How do they demonstrate or evidence this in their day to day work?
- Are participants and their families encouraged to be involved in quality assurance? Are there surveys or feedback forms sent out and if so, how often?

Occupational Health and Safety:

- Is there anything in the provider's OH&S policy to prevent them from carrying out services you need? For example, supporting you to do things in your own home, giving medication or manual handling/lifting.
- What is their policy in regard to adults with disabilities pursuing recreational activities such as alcohol consumption, smoking and relationships?
- Do they have a COVID-19 Safety Plan? How would that apply to choosing individual support?
- Remember, you can choose the people who support you. If you are not happy being supported by a person who is unvaccinated, you can tell the service provider. They may have to find a different support worker for you.

Complaints handling:

- If you have any problems or issues, who should you talk with?
- Can you make a complaint to that person anonymously?
- Do they have a Complaints Policy and how can you obtain it?

Service agreements - work with your providers to get service agreements that suit your needs.

- Some providers will draw up a Service Agreement for you to review and sign. Make sure you understand and agree with everything in the agreement before you sign it.
- Regardless of how your plan is managed, you can have input into Service Agreements. If you are self-managed or plan managed, you may wish to prepare your own Service Agreement as you may need to employ workers directly.
- There are a number of Free Service Agreement templates online.
- Take a look at the NDIS guide [Making a Service Agreement](#) for more useful tips.

Keep detailed records of your interactions with your providers. This will make it easier to keep track of each conversation.

- You might like to take someone you trust along with you and ask them to take notes.
- Keep all your notes, reports and other paperwork in the same place.
- Some people find it easier to take notes on their phone or iPad, or to take photos of paper documents so they can access them wherever they are.
- There are apps to help you keep your files and notes in one place. Some examples include the [Blue Care NDIS Planning App](#), the [LeapIn! App](#), and the [My Plan Manager app](#).

Useful Links:

[NDIS Practice Standards](#)

If the provider is not NDIS registered, the [National Standards for Disability Services](#) can tell you about your rights and outcomes.

[Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#) (formerly NDIS Price Guide)

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