



Disability Services Commission

Western Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme (WA NDIS) Operational Policy

Support Needs Assessment

1. Keywords

Assessment, medical report, fund, support, planning, reasonable, necessary, goals, participation, choice, control.

2. Policy statement

This operational policy outlines how the support needs of a person in WA NDIS are assessed to inform the planning process.

3. Principles

- As citizens, people with disability have the same rights and responsibilities as all other people to contribute to their life goals and the life of the community.
- Services provided by WA NDIS are complementary to (ie add to), not a replacement for nor duplicate of, existing supports available to the individual and that individuals should be assisted to coordinate all available supports.
- People with disability can exercise choice and control in the selection, design and implementation of their supports and services.
- Planning may identify a requirement for formal supports and services; these are most effective when they are complementary to, and strengthening of, informal natural relationships and connections in the person's life.
- Investment in the capacity of eligible people with disability aims to minimise lifetime support costs.
- All citizens have equal access to supports from the service system most appropriate to their needs.
- Activities and services are to be designed and administered so as to be sensitive and responsive to the individual and the diverse needs of all people with disability taking into account age, gender, religion, Aboriginality, cultural or linguistically diverse backgrounds, developmental needs, and geographic location.
- WA NDIS is responsive to changing needs of individuals, whether as a result of unforeseen variations in an individual's circumstances or foreseeable life transition points.

4. Introduction

Planning is central to the WA NDIS approach. Plans provide direction to enable people with disability to work towards their individual goals for a good life. A needs assessment helps the individual and their family to look at different parts of their life to identify goals, in partnership with the Local Coordinator. This informs the strategies in the plan to achieve these goals.

A needs assessment gathers information to help with planning and provides an understanding of the individual's strengths and abilities, and the barriers that may prevent achievement of their goals. Best practice recommends that a needs assessment is conducted in the early stages of planning with each person and their family. All plans require a full needs assessment to be completed using the Planning and Assessment Tool.

5. Definitions

The Planning and Assessment Tool is a computer based recording tool, into which the Local Coordinator enters information from a range of sources about an individual's capacity across 13 domains. The matrix element of the tool provides indicative levels of support required across ten domains. This approach is consistent with the NDIS Rules regarding assessment tools referencing the World Health Organisation's international classification of functioning.

6. Implementation

This operational policy will be implemented in WA NDIS trial sites.

The information required to complete a needs assessment can mostly be gathered by the Local Coordinator during conversations with the person, their family or carer, or relevant stakeholders rather than necessarily being a defined exercise. The assessment will be conducted in a responsive and non-intrusive way and can be completed over a period of time.

Local Coordinators are expected to use their judgement (drawing upon their skills, experience and expertise) in determining the depth and pace of these discussions, how this information is gathered and the manner of engagement with the person. They will be sensitive to the person's needs and circumstances. For example, some individuals may find the needs assessment highly beneficial and others may find it overly intrusive.

The assessment will be of appropriate rigour reflecting a balance between the information an individual provides, the complexity of presenting needs and level of supports, and funding which may be required.



Information may be sought from a range of other sources, for example existing files, medical reports, information and assessments. This information can be used to complete the Planning and Assessment Tool. A Local Coordinator may require assistance to understand the information available and may seek the expertise of other staff and/or professionals, including the Allied Health Consultant.

The needs assessment completed at the time of the individual's first plan development does not necessarily require updating for subsequent plans. However, it may become evident during planning conversations between the person and the Local Coordinator that there has been a change in needs and a new needs assessment would contribute to informing a new plan. The needs assessment should be reviewed a minimum of every three (3) years for adults, a minimum of every two (2) years for children aged between 7 and 18 years old, and at least annually for children under 7 years of age.

Planning and Assessment Tool

There are two versions of the Planning and Assessment Tool. One has been developed for use with adults (aged 18 years and over) and one for us with children (aged 0 to 17 years). The Tool evaluates the area and nature of support needs across 13 domains.

The Tool allows a more detailed consideration of needs where any one of the domains, or core areas of functional capacity, is significantly and permanently impaired and is identified by the person as presenting specific challenges that would need to be addressed to enable them to achieve their individual goals.

The Tool covers any difficulties experienced by the person and the impact of their disability in the domains of:

- learning and applying knowledge
- general tasks and demands
- communication
- mobility
- self-care and special health care needs
- domestic life
- interpersonal Interactions and relationships
- community, social and civic life
- education and training
- employment (paid or voluntary work) (pre-employment for adolescents)
- support needs for sustaining informal care
- assistive technology, equipment and home modifications
- Individual empowerment and vulnerability.

7. Related documentation

WA NDIS Individual Funding Allocation and Management Process Operational Guidelines
October 2013, Disability Services Commission

WA NDIS Planning Framework

Individualised Funding Policy, June 2015, Disability Services Commission

WA NDIS Operational Policy – Reviewing and Appealing WA NDIS Decisions

WA NDIS Planning and Assessment Tool

8. Evaluation and review date

30 June 2017 or earlier if required.

For further information contact

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