

Cognitive Impairment and the NDIS



Cognitive impairment is when a person has trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions that affect their everyday life. Cognitive impairment ranges from mild to severe. With mild impairment, people may begin to notice changes in cognitive functions, but still be able to do their everyday activities.

Severe levels of impairment can lead to losing the ability to understand the meaning or importance of something and the ability to talk or write, resulting in the inability to live independently.¹

An individual may be eligible to become a participant of the NDIS where cognitive impairment affects their ability to participate at home, at school, at work and/or in social situations.

The NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is an Australia-wide scheme that assists people with permanent and significant disability including, cognitive impairment. The scheme helps participants to achieve their goals, take part in daily life, choose their own supports and services.

The scheme provides funding directly to eligible participants enabling them to purchase the services they need.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) was established to implement the scheme and is responsible for assessing eligibility and working with participants to develop support plans to meet their needs.

¹ US Centre for Disease Control (CDC). https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/cognitive_impairment/cogimp_poilicy_final.pdf

NSW Health works closely with the NDIA to ensure our patients, their families and carers can make the most of the opportunities and services available through the NDIS.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to become a participant of the NDIS an individual must satisfy the age requirements (be under 65 years at time of request) and residence requirements (be an Australian citizen, a permanent resident of Australia or a New Zealand citizen who is a Protected Special Category Visa holder).

An individual must also satisfy one of the disability or early intervention requirements set out in the NDIS Act 2013. More detail on each requirement is set out in the [NDIS \(Becoming a Participant\) Amendment Rules 2017](#).

People with cognitive impairment

A person with cognitive impairment will be eligible for the NDIS if they meet the (i) age, (ii) residence, and either (iii) disability or (iv) early intervention criteria.

Disability

The person has a disability that is likely to be permanent and:

- cannot take part effectively in the activities of daily living without assistive technology, equipment or home modifications, or
- requires assistance from other people, and
- is likely to require supports from the NDIS over their lifetime.

Early intervention

To meet the early intervention criteria the person must have a disability that is likely to be permanent, or be a child with a development delay. There must also be evidence to show that early supports will reduce how much help the person will need to do things in the future.

NSW Health and NDIS

NSW Health continues to provide emergency and routine inpatient and outpatient clinical services, including surgery, palliative care to all NSW residents, including those with a disability.

The NDIS provides funding for specialist disability supports. It does not replace mainstream health services. Some elements of a person's support needs can, however, be met through sources other than NDIS funded supports such as mainstream support services, family and friends. The NDIS funds reasonable and necessary supports that focus on a person's functional ability.

An individual may be eligible to become a participant of the NDIS where cognitive impairment affects their ability to participate at home, school, work and/or in social situations.

NSW Health will continue to be responsible for the diagnosis of people with cognitive impairment and provide acute clinical treatment where:

DIAGNOSIS: assessment, diagnosis and referral for people entering or exiting the NSW Health system

CLINICAL CARE: clinical care related to physical, cognitive, communication, behaviour and mental health, where treatment is directly related to the person's health status or after a recent medical or surgical event

REHABILITATION: non-inpatient rehabilitation programs for cognitive and physical function

NSW Health will assist a person to access the NDIA where the individual has cognitive impairment and is:

IN HOSPITAL: currently in hospital and would be able to live in the community with additional supports

AT HOME: for example, living in the community and comes to the attention of a health service and would benefit from additional supports.

AFTER A CHANGE: for example, living in the community and has an unexpected change in circumstances or crisis and urgently requires support to maintain or improve daily supports, assessment and training for mobility aides and assistive devices

NSW Health will also refer individuals to other services based on their needs including:

D&A SERVICES: drug and alcohol treatment services

HOUSING: housing services where the person has difficulties with housing or is homeless

FACS: Community Services where a child and/or young person is at risk of significant harm

OPG: Office of the Public Guardian where a person has difficulties with decision-making

OTHER HEALTH: other Commonwealth-funded health services, such as general practitioners and Primary Health Networks (PHNS)

JOB HELP: Commonwealth funded vocational assessment return to work and job placement services including workplace supports to maintain employment.

To find out if a person with disability is eligible for the NDIS use [My Access Checker](#) which is available on the NDIS website.

For further information on the NDIS in NSW visit www.ndis.nsw.gov.au