



Building participants' capacity

Information is an important safeguard because people with disability will find it difficult to exercise choice and control without having access to high-quality, meaningful and credible information about support delivery and providers.

The support of family, carers and community will also be essential for many people with disability to make informed choices as consumers.

Similarly, it is vital to actively support participants in developing their self-advocacy and decision-making skills, exercising their rights and using available information to make well-informed choices.

Supporting well-informed choices

The NDIS aims to position participants as active consumers with choice and control over the supports they need to live the life they want.

This means participants need access to high-quality information about support options and providers — information that is both meaningful and credible.

This could include:

- information on navigating the system
- information about support types and availability
- information about service quality and choosing a provider — including detailed information on services, such as price, effectiveness, safety and the experience people with disability have had with that provider
- everyone's rights and responsibilities.

This means information must be available in various accessible formats and designed so it can be customised to the needs of particular groups and individuals.

Information and communications technology will constantly change. Business and governments therefore need to be flexible and innovative to keep up with rapid change.

It is proposed we design a system that builds on and enhances the quality and reliability of available information, promotes peer support and provides the information that best meets user needs.

Questions

- What kind of information would best help participants to select a provider?
- How can we ensure that everyone has access to information about providers of supports in their local area?
- What approaches to delivering information, such as web-based information, peer review sites and consumer expos, might best meet participant information needs?
- What would be the benefits and risks of being able to share information publically, such as through online forums, consumer ratings of providers and other means?

Strengthening the support available to people with disability

People with disability often rely on the support of those they trust, such as families and carers, to make important decisions about their lives.

This provides a natural safeguard for these individuals.

However, experience at the NDIS trial sites has been that some participants are not well connected with family and other informal supports when they first engage with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Many participants have also had limited experience in identifying their own goals and exercising choice and control in decision making.

Therefore, it will be critical to build the capacity of these participants to self-direct and self-advocate, as well as to focus on building the personal support networks that connect people with mainstream and community-based supports.

If people with disability need more help with exercising choice and control, the NDIA could provide access (within an individual's plan) to specific kinds of assistance, such as decision-making supports.

These would assist individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to make choices, understand their plan and exercise their rights, when required.

The NDIA also has a role in developing individuals' natural safeguards through its Local Area Coordinators (LACs), who help people with disability connect to providers, including providers of mainstream supports such as community and health services.

Questions

- Are there any other ways of supporting people to build natural safeguards that the NDIS should be considering?
- How can the NDIS better support people with disability who are isolated or have few, or no, people in their lives — to help ensure they are safe and their rights are protected?

Supporting the capacity of providers

The NDIS service model is very different from former arrangements in most states and territories or in the Australian Government.

In the NDIS, the most important relationship will be between participants and providers.

The capacity of providers to deliver safe, high quality supports is therefore a critical safeguard.

A quality provider will usually have strong governance, policies and procedures and a corporate culture that fosters respect and openness.

Quality providers will also have effective practices for hiring and supervising staff.

They train staff and invest in their continuous education and improvement.

Frontline staff in provider organisations may benefit from information or training to increase their understanding of the NDIS while building their responsiveness to individual needs and respect for the rights of participants.

Question

- What initiatives would help providers of supports to ensure they offer safe and high-quality services?