

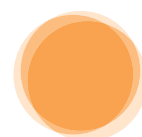
# SUPPORT COORDINATION

## A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

A REPORT THAT EXAMINES WHAT FUNCTION SUPPORT COORDINATION WITHIN THE NDIS PROVIDES NOW AND WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED INTO THE FUTURE.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Support Coordination will play a critical role in ensuring that NDIS participants are able to use their plan to live a good life. This is especially the case for participants who are vulnerable and socially isolated – such as younger people in residential aged care – where Support Coordination will be a key determinant of whether younger people have the supports in place to leave aged care.

*Support Coordination – A Changing Landscape* looks at where support coordination stands in the NDIS.

The aim of this document is to:

- outline relevant frameworks that assist people with disability to achieve their goals and build capacity
- provide practitioners with an overview of how the support coordination function is designed within the NDIS
- reflect on the development of the support market, including the types of providers in the market, the ideal skills base of support coordinators and market investments needed to support this emerging workforce

This report is the result of an extensive review of available literature and practice with regard to effective support coordination models. It provides information about support coordination within the context of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

It is still early days for support coordination and this resource explores what functions support coordination is providing now and what could be improved into the future.

*Support Coordination – A Changing Landscape* draws on the collective knowledge of people within the NDIS system: interviews and surveys were conducted with people who are actually providing support coordination, as well as various people whose roles interface with it.

This resource is expected to provide a starting point for further work aimed at developing the support coordination market in Australia.

# CONTEXT

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With the introduction of the NDIS, human services in Australia are undergoing the most significant transformation in their history. Heralded as “the insurance that provides peace of mind for us all”<sup>1</sup>, the NDIS aims to increase the social and economic independence of people with a disability and maximise their participation in community life. The NDIS is still in relative infancy, but is maturing as people, families and the sector share their experiences and learnings.

The NDIS is the result of a movement led by people with disability and their families arguing for better and fairer access to services – and greater control over the resources allocated to deliver them. The movement culminated in *Every Australian Counts*, a national campaign that highlighted the need for people with a disability to be included and given ‘a fair go’. The promise of the campaign was the creation of a national scheme that would offer fairness, transparency and equity<sup>2</sup>. *Every Australian Counts* tapped into a wider community consensus about doing better by people with disability.

The movement was consistent with the international groundswell for greater choice and autonomy for people with disability, to assist them to be active citizens in their communities, consistent with the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*<sup>3</sup>.

Five years into the rollout of the NDIS, many people and families are reporting<sup>4</sup> that navigating and getting the most out of the NDIS is not as easy as anticipated. In many cases, control over the resources in itself is not enough. The ability to purchase long-term support, that is individually tailored and flexible enough to suit people’s needs and lifestyles, is critical to successful self-directed support.

The NDIS has all of the necessary elements to be successful, but at present there is a risk of continuing the status quo: If the only supports and services available to purchase are the same ones that people and families have criticised for being inadequate and not person-centred, then no amount of resourcing will make a meaningful difference to the quality of a person’s life and/or participation.

Alongside this, service providers also report dissatisfaction with the developing system<sup>5</sup>, arguing that their best approaches to supporting people are limited by the NDIS, because they are treated simply as suppliers. Providers have argued that, for many people, implementing and ‘managing their supports’ long term can be really challenging. Providers that previously engaged in a shared management approach with their clients, report that many of the functions they previously performed are no longer in the domain of providers.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has introduced a range of roles that aim to support people navigating the NDIS, including Local Area Coordinator (LAC) and Support Coordinator. This resource focuses on support coordination, as LACs have only recently been introduced in the eastern states of Australia and to date it is difficult to determine their impact. At the time of writing, in Western Australia a state based scheme (WA NDIS) and a national scheme (NDIS) were operating in parallel. This report focuses on the development of support coordination in the national NDIS, as opposed to the WA NDIS.

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1 NDIA [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

2 Every Australian Counts, [www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au](http://www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au)

3 UN Convention of the Rights of Disabled People, 2006, United Nations

4 Facebook: NDIS Grassroots discussion board

5 State of the Disability Sector, NDS, Centre for Applied Disability Research, 2016

# INTERNATIONAL LEARNING ABOUT SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT

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Self-directed support (SDS) is a growing international movement. It is defined in a range of ways; SDS Scotland has a simple definition<sup>6</sup>:

**“Self-directed support allows people to choose how their support is provided and gives them as much control as they want of their budget.”**

SDS Scotland

There are now various mechanisms in place around the world that aim to assist people to shape and control their own support arrangements and, where possible, control their own resources<sup>7</sup>. The following map indicates the countries where an SDS mechanism or approach is in place. A majority of western countries have adopted a self-directed approach<sup>8</sup>.



*The growing movement of Self Directed Support, Citizen Network, 2016*

A challenge to understanding the development of SDS internationally is the differences in terminology used across various countries; terminology that is often determined by the structure of a country's human service provision.

In the UK, for example, the overarching SDS mechanism is referred to as 'Personalisation'<sup>9</sup>, which has a significant focus on individual funding. Within this context, 'Direct Payments' are the mechanism that enable people to have control over the management of their individual funding. There are a range of Direct Payment Support Services that aim to assist people to manage their Direct Payment. In contrast, the overarching SDS mechanism in Australia is the NDIS, which has a focus on individual plans. In the Australian context, 'Self Management' is the mechanism that enables people to have control over the plan and funding. The term 'Self Management' in the NDIS denotes a direct payment.

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6 SDS Scotland

7 Architecture for Personalisation, Duffy and Fulton 2010, Centre for Welfare Reform

8 Citizen Network, [www.citizen-network.org.au](http://www.citizen-network.org.au) 2016

9 [www.centreforwelfarereform.org](http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org)

In preparing this resource, we found a wide range of terminology used in connection to SDS<sup>10</sup>. The following table includes a sample of SDS-related terms that are used today across English-speaking countries that are adopting a self-directed approach:

**Range of terms used globally to describe Self Directed Support**

<b>Individual funding</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
Vouchers	Personal Health Budgets
Cash and Counselling	Service Brokerage
Education Budgets	Community Brokerage
Family Funding	Direct Payments
Individual Service Fund	Waiver Schemes
Independent Living Fund	In Control

With such variation in language and approach, comparing roles in different countries is problematic; contrasting the features and functions of support is more useful.

The following 'best practice' features of SDS, as described by Duffy and Fulton 2012<sup>11</sup>, can be used to identify what the focus of support functions should be:

1. **Self-Directed Support** – the individual shapes and controls their own support arrangements and, where eligible, controls their own individual budget.
2. **Co-production** – professionals are involved to the degree necessary to ensure the individual gets what they are entitled to, is in control of support delivery and is achieving good outcomes.
3. **Community-based support** – support for the individual comes from the widest array of support possible, including family, friends, peers, community services and service providers.
4. **Total place commissioning** – funders direct their focus away from purchasing services and towards moving the control of resources into the right hands; learning from the outcomes achieved to help shape the local community.

These best practice features highlight that the NDIS shouldn't become a system that processes people, but an approach that restores social justice; rebalancing the relationship between citizen and the state. They indicate that the NDIS should focus on enabling people to live their lives, connected to their communities. In this context, the purpose of reform under the NDIS is to challenge the status quo and life experiences of exclusion, segregation and discrimination.

<sup>10</sup> www.centreforwelfarereform.org  
<sup>11</sup> Architecture for Personalisation, Duffy and Fulton 2010, Centre for Welfare Reform

# INVESTING IN PEOPLE

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Fundamental to the NDIS is the notion of building capacity. The NDIS was designed to support people with disability to independently and actively participate in Australia's social and economic opportunities.

Together with this vision, the Scheme's insurance principles emphasise the importance of investing short term to achieve long term improvements in the lives of people with disability. Building capacity is an underlying philosophical driver of why the NDIS was set up and how the Scheme is intended to be delivered.

Capacity building can be defined by as:

**"transformations that empower individuals, leaders, organizations and societies. If something does not lead to change that is generated, guided and sustained by those whom it is meant to benefit, then it cannot be said to have enhanced capacity."**<sup>12</sup>

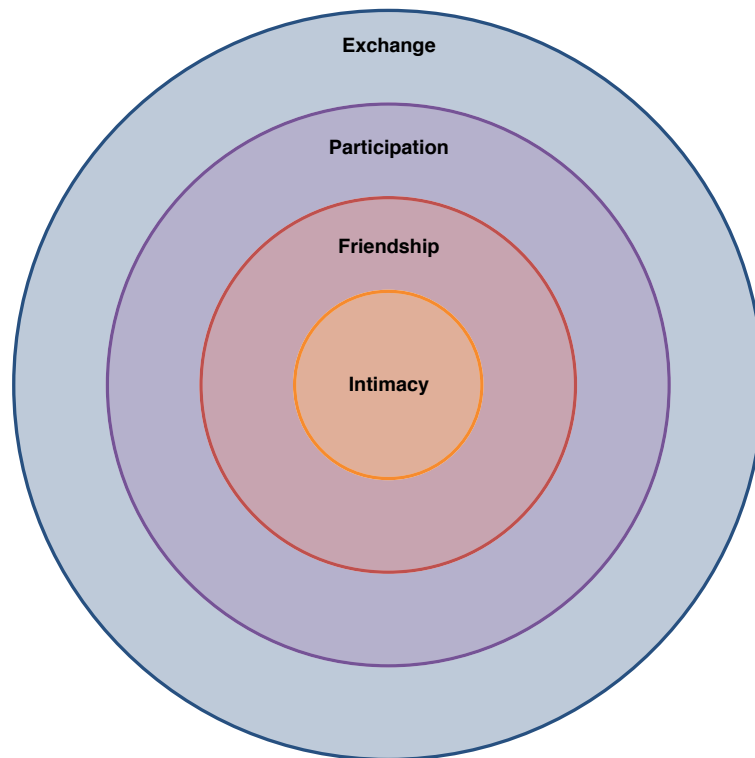
International practice suggests that navigation/assistance roles are most effective when they invest in people themselves, rather than simply supporting people with a range of tasks. When the following elements are in place, building the capacity of people is more likely:

1. **Meaningful relationships with others** – the presence in a person's life of other people who hold and contribute to their goals and are part of bringing them to life.
2. **Vision and working to potential** – self-direction is a means to an end, which is a great life where a person's potential is realised and any 'soft bigotry of low expectations' is exposed and challenged.

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12 "Capacity Development: A United Nations Development Primer", 2009

A practical way of exploring the concept of investing in people is to look at a person's 'circles of relationships' – a concept pioneered by Judith Snow, the first woman in Canada to receive individualised funding:



3. **Modeling possibility** – at the beginning of significant change, people often need real-life examples of what is possible beyond their own experience. Meeting others who are creating change for themselves can be a powerful catalyst for change.
4. **Skills and tools for self-direction** – strategies and systems that make it easier to self direct.
  - In the circle of Intimacy are people who the person loves.
  - In the circle of Friendship are the person's friends.
  - In the circle of Participation are people the person knows, such as colleagues, but who would not be close enough to be considered friends. This circle is about how we become known. It is the part of life where we participate and meet people through our various roles and activities.
  - In the circle of Exchange are the people who have a paid relationship with the individual.<sup>13</sup>

A core principle of the NDIS is that participants' social and economic participation should be increased. For many NDIS participants, their life experiences will see an outer circle of Exchange that is well populated, but they will have few people filling the inner circles of their lives. There is a risk that NDIS participants experience only an increased ability to move between the paid providers of the outer circle, but SDS is a way to direct the outer layer of Exchange to be focussed on building people's inner circles.

13 Falvey, Mary, Forest, Marsha, Pearpoint, Jack & Rosenberg, Richard L. (2000): All my Life's a Circle. Using the Tools: Circles, MAPS & PATHS. Toronto: Inclusion Press

# NDIS SUPPORT COORDINATION TODAY

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Support coordination is one of the major investments the NDIA is making to help NDIS participants achieve their goals and achieve self-direction.

While a range of documents published by the NDIA<sup>14</sup> have been used to inform this resource, there doesn't appear to be a single NDIA publication that explains support coordination in detail. The publicly available information on support coordination appears to be contained in the NDIS Price Guide and a document called *Support Co-ordination: Information for Providers*<sup>15</sup>. All of the other NDIA documents and presentations that have been sourced echo, but do not elaborate on, the information in these two sources.

It is clear from the following statement, however, that the NDIA believes there is a need for assistance in delivering wider outcomes, as well as specific assistance with NDIS Plan implementation:

**“The NDIS is not only about funded supports, it’s also about supporting people with disability with their community participation and independence. Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and Support Coordinators are key partners who will focus on Participant capacity building, including NDIS plan implementation, exploration of options and preparation for plan review”<sup>16</sup>**

The NDIA provides a description of three forms of support coordination:

## SUPPORT CONNECTION

Time-limited assistance to strengthen NDIS participants' ability to connect with informal, mainstream and funded supports, and to increase capacity to maintain support relationships, resolve service delivery issues and participate independently in NDIA processes.

## COORDINATION OF SUPPORTS

Assistance to strengthen NDIS participants' abilities to connect to and coordinate informal, mainstream and funded supports in a complex service delivery environment. This includes resolving points of crisis, developing capacity and resilience in a participant's network and coordinating supports from a range of sources.

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14 “Co-ordination of Supports: Information for Providers” Version 2.0 July 2016, NDIS Coordination of Supports, 2016 by NDIA, NSW Support Coordination workshop, 8 August 2016, Support Coordination presentation – via NSW NDS, November 2016, ‘Request for service’ forms when NDIA is making a direct referral to a Support Coordinator for a Participant (one from NSW and Tasmania), Queensland provider presentation, December 2016, Document via a Support Coordinator in Victoria – this list is apparently attached to their ‘Request for Service’ form. This list does not appear to be attached to Request for Service forms in NSW or Tasmania.

15 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/medias/documents/hdf/hc6/8800436518942/Fact-sheet-Support-coordination.pdf>

16 NSW NDIA Support Co-ordination workshop November 2016 presented by Mary Hawkins at an NDS provider forum

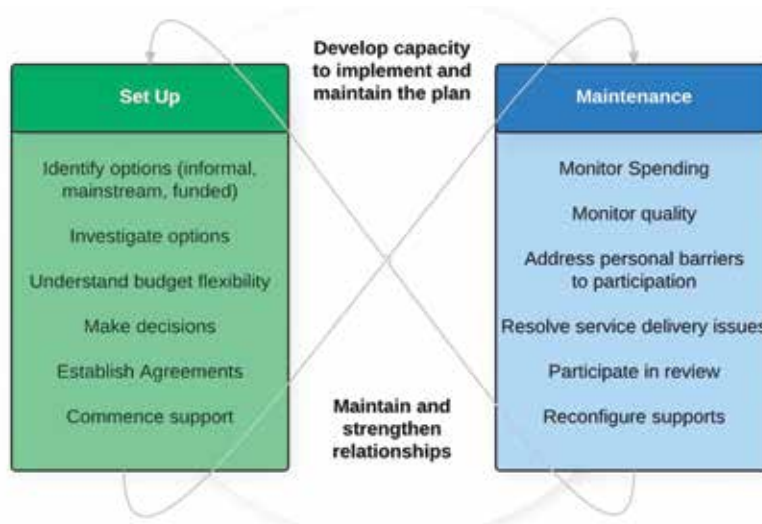
## SPECIALIST SUPPORT COORDINATION

The provision of support coordination within a specialist framework necessitated by specific high-level risks in a participant's situation. This support is time limited and focussed on addressing barriers and reducing complexity in the support environment, while assisting the participant to connect with supports, build capacity and build resilience. It may also involve development of an intervention plan that will be put in place by disability support workers.

In addition to the three levels of support coordination described above, the NDIA also list Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Support Coordination as an additional line item. It is unclear what this line item includes and/or its current allocation, and none of our survey respondents reported seeing this allocation in anyone's plan.

The NDIA<sup>17</sup> describes support coordination as having a dual focus:

- Developing capacity to implement and maintain the plan
- Maintaining and strengthening relationships



17 NDIA Queensland Provider Presentation December 2016

The NDIA expects that support coordination will result in the following outcomes:<sup>18</sup>

## PARTICIPANT

- The participant is supported to work towards their goals.
- The participant is well connected with informal and mainstream supports.
- The participant and their network better understand how to take part in NDIA processes, such as establishing agreement with service providers, managing budget flexibility and setting and refining goals, objectives and strategies.

## PARTICIPANT & SERVICE PROVIDER

- The participant's supports are managed within the budget parameters in the plan
- The participant has genuine choice and control of service providers
- Where possible, a participant (or their nominees) are confident at managing their support with no or a reduced need for a Support Coordinator in subsequent plans.

## SERVICE PROVIDER

- The participant is able to manage any issues that arise with service provision (including optimising service quality and effectiveness).
- Participants will address issues or barriers in accessing service provision within existing funded supports in the first instance. Requests for additional funded supports are made when there are significant changes in circumstances. In these instances, the NDIA will review the plan as required.
- All task items\* are completed as required.

\* Lists of tasks<sup>19</sup> often accompany Request for Service (referral) forms and presentations. We have included an example in the Appendices.

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18 NDIA VicNorth Update for Service Providers, March 2017

19 Taken from different NDIA presentations and task lists associated with Request for Service forms.

# SUPPORT COORDINATION LEARNINGS

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Although support coordination is in its infancy, those providing support coordination across the country are reporting the following experiences<sup>20</sup> that require attention:

- Inconsistent allocation of support coordination
- Excessive administrative responsibilities
- Underinvestment in training and development of Support Coordinators
- Unclear expectations around capacity building
- Short timeframe for capacity building

## INCONSISTENT ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COORDINATION

Support coordination is a reasonable and necessary allocation, but its allocation is reported as being incredibly varied, with a lack of transparency about how it is allocated. Many Support Coordinators report feeling that the process is inequitable, with some also seeing large reductions in allocation for support coordination in subsequent plans, despite a continuing genuine need for support.

Those who do not receive support coordination will receive plan implementation support from an LAC (excluding WA). Anecdotally, participants have found both the allocation of NDIS Plans, and the implementation of them, to be complex and confusing. The following excerpt comes from an email from an NDIS participant's nominee:

"My son has been approved for NDIS but (and I am a qualified accountant with 40 years experience and have worked in 15 countries) I can't understand the process from here nor what his approval letter entitles him to. I am sure any new process has teething problems and time issues but calls to the help line have failed and I would appreciate any assistance in moving forward as his sole support."

## EXCESSIVE ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The administrative support required by NDIS participants can be arduous. It includes the initial translation of what their plan includes, how the plan will be applied in practice (which often results in renegotiation with the NDIA), setting up a participant's MyGov account and understanding and navigating the Myplace participant portal.

In addition to the set up administration, many Support Coordinators report spending a lot of time rectifying poor quality plans that do not reflect the participants' requirements. The NDIA states that Support Coordinators "do not make a judgement about the adequacy of the plan and do not make requests for an unscheduled plan review on behalf participants",<sup>21</sup> but Support Co-ordinators report that the amount of time spent rectifying inadequate planning at the NDIA level is impacting on their work in reaching participant outcomes.

Problems encountered with the introduction of the Myplace portal have also been significant and continue to require a level of focus from Support Coordinators that is not recognized in participants' plans. This level of administrative support can become a significant focus of participants' total supports coordination, leaving little room for capacity building.

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<sup>20</sup> Summer Foundation survey, unpublished Support Coordination Survey, 2017

<sup>21</sup> Support Coordination: Information for providers, NDIA, March 2017

## UNDERINVESTMENT IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT COORDINATORS

The requirement to provide support connection and/or support coordination allows for people with lived experience to offer this support, as well as those with professional experience and/or qualifications. However, there is very limited evidence of training or educational resources for Support Coordinators' development.

Inadequate development of Support Coordinators means that the quality of support coordination may be less than ideal. Support Coordinators consistently reported a lack of information, training and/or development opportunities to develop their practices. A particular problem relates to the limited ability to provide technical advice; for example, to Self Managers about employment, or to participants experiencing multiple systemic barriers – such as young people living in nursing homes.

**“If you want to build a person’s capacity you need to understand a person’s cognitive, executive and communication impairment, so you can use strategies to support the person with complex disability to engage meaningfully in the process and build their capacity”<sup>22</sup>**

This represents a large gap and an opportunity for learning and development of Support Coordinators.

## UNCLEAR EXPECTATIONS AROUND CAPACITY BUILDING

Currently, many Support Coordinators have little understanding of what capacity building activities look like and what indicators can be adopted to measure success. There is also confusion about what capacity building approaches are expected within the functions of support coordination, including how to measure and demonstrate capacity growth.

One of the aspirations for the NDIS is that “People with a disability are increasingly engaging in the economic, social and cultural life of the community. They are becoming active citizens, are more resilient, develop support options that are more enduring and build ordinary lives strengthened by relationships, not just services.”<sup>23</sup>

This is a significant aspiration, and one that requires a particular focus on how we support people to make it a reality. This aspiration should underpin all of a participant’s interactions with the NDIS and could be a measurable element of the scheme’s success. It may also form a significant element of the support coordination function. Work to explore effective strategies and measurements of this aspiration would be worthwhile.

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22 Respondent during our survey and consultation period

23 NDIS Capacity Building for People with Disability, their Families and Carers September 2015

## SHORT TIMEFRAME FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

“Change doesn’t take one year” is a common sentiment among Support Coordinators.

Addressing adaptive barriers to change is often a longer-term support. When people are seeking to be the author of their own life, many things have the potential to de-rail this.

Change can be frightening and success can be hard to imagine. Time is needed to build relationships, move with people through the ups and downs of what is entailed and to really see things through.

As one respondent reported, “The success with which an NDIS Plan is implemented is directly related to the amount of time and effort that is dedicated to building-up a picture of a person’s needs and wants/likes and dislikes”.

Capacity building is acknowledged as an important part of support coordination, but due to the amount of time required to problem-solve and implement foundational supports, as well as the level of unmet need and lack of quality in NDIS Plans, Support Coordinators often have trouble getting around to and implementing effective capacity building activities with participants.

It would be useful to collate data on effective capacity building strategies and their timescales to better understand what is required.

# ANALYSING THE FUNCTION OF SUPPORT COORDINATION

To fully understand what support coordination is intended to do and to best develop it in the future, it is important to understand the various forms of assistance it provides. While some of these functions are funded by the NDIS, other functions that are identified as important by this report would not currently be funded by the NDIA.

Participants need a range of supports to assist them to navigate the NDIS; a range of investments, supports and action to enable them to self direct, exercise choice and control and ultimately achieve their goals for a good life.

The following table outlines a typical participant's journey into and through the NDIS and considers what kinds of assistance the person is likely to be looking for:

<b>Participant's journey</b>	<b>What kind of assistance may participant be looking for?</b>	<b>Themes of assistance</b>
Understanding eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help navigating the system – detailed information, advice and guidance about entry into the NDIS</li> </ul>	Navigating and informing
Pre-planning and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help understanding the NDIS and its potential impact on the participant's life</li> <li>• Assistance with the language and requirements of the NDIS</li> <li>• Help to explore what's possible and to learn from what others have done</li> <li>• Help to determine the current realities of the system – things to look for and pay attention to</li> <li>• Tactical awareness and support to get voice heard regarding needs and desired outcomes</li> </ul>	Planning and guidance
Planning – NDIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning support and facilitation</li> <li>• Help exploring what's possible</li> <li>• Help to understand how the plan will be resourced</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Help understanding the available funding management options</li> </ul>	Researching and connecting
Implementation/Initial set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help understanding the NDIS and its potential impact on the participant's life</li> <li>• Help to explore what's possible and to learn from what others have done</li> <li>• Help to determine the current realities of the system – things to look for and pay attention to</li> <li>• Help to understand the practical reality of their NDIS Plan – goals, supports &amp; funding management implications</li> <li>• Assistance with the language of the plan, what support categories mean and what can be purchased</li> <li>• Setting up of practical aspects of the plan, including set up of MyGov account and participant portal</li> <li>• Training and support to access and use the portal/language</li> <li>• Understand the NDIA language including categories of funding and understanding how the money can work in different categories</li> <li>• If the participant/nominee is unhappy with the plan: redesign/ rethink – negotiating with NDIA; or link to advocacy support if required</li> </ul>	Facilitation and coordination

<b>Participant's journey</b>	<b>What kind of assistance may participant be looking for?</b>	<b>Themes of assistance</b>
Choosing provider(s) and/or Direct recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help exploring how goals can be met creatively; for example, by making use of community and informal supports</li> <li>• Help exploring existing provision locally, community resources and access</li> <li>• Assistance to interview prospective services and providers – and to make a decision and develop relationships</li> <li>• Help checking current Service Agreement and renegotiating existing relationship with provider, or developing a new Service Agreement</li> <li>• For direct employment – employment Technical Advice, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Contractors versus direct employment</li> <li>– Insurance</li> <li>– ATO Superannuation</li> <li>– Occupational Health and Safety</li> <li>– Advertising/recruitment</li> <li>– Agreeing on a payroll system</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Technical advice
Monitoring/coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help keeping track of how things are going, including goals, plan and finance</li> <li>• Help to revisit and redefine goals</li> <li>• Help to mould supports to ensure appropriate support</li> <li>• Assistance with rethinking, changing or mediating with providers</li> <li>• Help understanding changes to Service Agreements or MyGov</li> <li>• Assistance developing new Service Agreements</li> <li>• Support to connect with and access community resources</li> </ul>	Coaching and coordination advocacy, negotiation and mediation
Review/reflect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help preparing for reflection and preparing info</li> <li>• Help to revisit and redefine goals</li> <li>• Help to capture learning to use in next planning phase</li> </ul>	Reflecting and developing

This table outlines a hypothetical pathway and draws from international best practice. The individual experiences of people who are accessing NDIS may differ significantly, so it is important that work is undertaken to fully understand the Australian experience and the forms of assistance that participants require in the developing NDIS. This work should seek to identify and understand:

1. Best practice supports and actions associated with investment in people's overall capacity
2. The journey through the NDIS from a Participant perspective

Categorising the various types of assistance that participants and families require into themes helps to clarify the core functions of assistance that are needed, and in turn identify the kinds of skills that assistive roles (including professional roles like Support Coordinator) need to have. These core functions, and the skills required to deliver them, should be considered in a way that seeks to build capacity, not dependency.

The use of themes of assistance also provides a potential framework for learning and development for those providing support coordination.

<p><b>Navigating and informing</b> - Helping people to navigate the system and informing them of their rights, responsibilities and choices</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Building Capacity</b> - an approach that invests in the person to act autonomously and be able to grow and develop</p>
<p><b>Planning and guidance</b> - Helping people to explore what's possible and formulating ideas into action</p>	
<p><b>Researching and connecting</b> - Helping people to know what's available and connecting people to resources locally and in a way that supports inclusion. This includes connecting to peers</p>	
<p><b>Facilitating and coordinating</b> - Supporting people to explore and develop connections and supports that support them to live their lives</p>	
<p><b>Coaching and coordination</b> - Supporting people to grow, develop and explore</p>	
<p><b>Advocacy, negotiation and mediation</b> - Assisting people to be and remain in control and secure the right supports to live their life</p>	
<p><b>Technical advice</b> - Offering a range of advice and guidance relating to directing their own supports including employment advice and systemic advice</p>	
<p><b>Reflecting and developing</b> - Helping people to reflect on what's working and what needs to change going forward</p>	

# SUPPORT COORDINATION QUALITIES AND COMPETENCIES

As well as being able to provide the forms of assistance participants may be looking for, Support Coordinators require a range of personal competencies to assist people to make their aspirations reality.

Hutchison and McGill<sup>24</sup> suggest that a Support Coordinator should:

1. Value and identify strongly with the person being served
2. Be a good communicator and able to listen to what people want and need
3. Get excited about putting plans in to action and be willing to follow through on initiatives
4. Have a flexible enough schedule to respond to issues or concerns as they arise
5. Be a resourceful person, who is knowledgeable about their community, its services and opportunities
6. Be a creative problem solver
7. Know and understand the planning process – for example, the difference between when a phone call to ensure access is all that is needed, versus a more extensive planning process to ensure inclusion and participation

Supporting the findings of Hutchison and McGill, respondents to a recent survey by the Summer Foundation<sup>25</sup> identified the following personal competencies as being necessary for the role of Support Coordinator:

Core Competencies	Additional Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience/lived experience of disability, psychosocial conditions</li> <li>• Values of inclusion and social model of disability</li> <li>• Supported decision making</li> <li>• Ability to design individual solutions</li> <li>• Excellent communication skills</li> <li>• High level problem solving skills</li> <li>• Cross-cultural perspective and understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive behavior support</li> <li>• Understanding complex communication</li> <li>• Strength-based approach</li> <li>• Skills in mathematical calculations and accounting for projecting costs and managing supports</li> <li>• Excellent time management skills</li> <li>• Record-keeping and report writing skills</li> </ul>

<sup>24</sup> Hutchison and McGill, "Leisure, Integration and the Community", 1998  
<sup>25</sup> Summer Foundation Support Coordination Survey 2017

# WHO COULD OFFER THESE SUPPORTIVE FUNCTIONS?

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There is a trend in some countries to create new professional roles to offer these functions of assistance. Below are some examples of comparable roles to that of a Support Coordinator (or LAC), who are providing similar assistance to that described above:

## CANADA – INDEPENDENT FACILITATOR

An Independent Facilitator works in the context of promoting family and community inclusion, while supporting people to navigate the Human Services system in Canada; a system that has a significant focus on individualised family funding. Independent Facilitation refers to the idea that citizens who are excluded or vulnerable can benefit from someone “walking with them in their journey to claim an everyday life”.<sup>26</sup>

## UK – PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT BROKER

In the context of the UK SDS mechanism, known as ‘Personalisation’, a Professional Support Broker is described as “supporting someone to navigate through all the options available to him or her to find the one that is right for them”.<sup>27</sup>

There are various networks and associations around the world that support, develop and regulate – and in some cases accredit – these professional roles. An example is the UK National Brokerage Network, which is described as a “Network of Networks to act as an information exchange and authoritative voice for the development of Brokerage throughout the UK”<sup>28</sup>. The network has an established a code of ethics and has developed an accredited training and development program for Professional Support Brokers. Similar initiatives have developed in Canada and USA.

## ALTERNATIVES TO PROFESSIONAL ROLES

The need for professional roles is often borne out of the need for a ‘navigator’ to help navigate systems that are complex and difficult to do so alone. For example, a country’s legal system is often complex and difficult to navigate, hence the need for ‘professional navigators’, such as solicitors or lawyers.

That a new system requires highly skilled navigators indicates that it is complex. Ideally, we don’t want an NDIS that is so complex that it relies heavily on professional navigators. Part of the sector’s role is to influence the developing NDIS to ensure that it is as simple and easy to navigate as possible, and make it easy for people to connect to peers who have lived experience of making the most out of the NDIS to live their lives.

Rather than developing and investing only in formal, professional roles, there may be significant advantages in exploring how assistance can be offered by drawing on the skills of the whole community – in particular the knowledge and expertise of those with lived experience of disability and/or mental ill health.

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26 Lord, <http://www.johnlord.net>

27 Reimaging Brokerage, Leach, 2015 Centre for Welfare Reform

28 [www.nationalbrokeragenetwork.co.uk](http://www.nationalbrokeragenetwork.co.uk)

The following approach builds on Duffy and Fulton's model of Best Practice in Community Brokerage<sup>29</sup>, and is a suggested framework for implementing the functions of assistance described above. Community brokerage was introduced in many areas in the UK, as a way of supporting people and families to navigate their individualised funding pathways. The model draws on all of the community's resources. A key foundation is that people are able to choose who is the right 'broker' or assistant for them and their context:



Some of the advantages of this model are that it:

- Encourages and supports people to do more for themselves
- Makes peer-to-peer support easily available
- Makes better use of existing community infrastructure
- Encourages support providers to design and develop personalised support
- Builds on the skills and abilities of professionals

Importantly, it also provides a pathway to achieving the capacity building outcomes that generate lasting change in people's lives.

The assistive functions necessary to support the NDIS could be delivered via a range of options similar to the Community Brokerage model. NDIS participants could be offered a choice of assistance types that include:

**DIY** – Providing information and guidance for participants to do as much as they can themselves

**Peer Support** – Connecting participants with others who have similar lived experience

**Community Organisations** – Connecting participants to local organisations whose mission is to create and support better communities for all citizens

**Support Providers** – Empowering organisations that are already allies of NDIS participants to offer a holistic approach to providing and coordinating supports, through a shared management approach

**Independent Support Coordinators** – Connecting participants with professional navigators, brokers and linkers that are independent of support providers

Looking at the current situation in New South Wales<sup>30</sup>, there are 2969 organisations registered to deliver services, 401 of whom are registered to provide Support Connection/Coordination under Assisting Life Transition, and 339 are registered to provide Specialist Coordination under the Support Coordination line item. An initial analysis suggests the distribution of those registered to deliver Support Coordination may be something like:

29 Community Brokerage Duffy and Fulton 2012, The Centre for Welfare Reform  
30 NDIS Register of Providers 2016

## New South Wales

Registered to provide Support Coordination. Assisting Life Transition: 401	DIY	Unknown
	Peer Support	0.5%
	Community Organisations	10%
	Support Provider	85.3%
	Specialist Provider (clinician etc.)	2.2%
	Independent Support Coordinators	2%
Registered to provide Specialist Coordination under Support Coordination: 339	DIY	Unknown
	Peer Support	0.5%
	Community Organisations	8.1%
	Support Provider	86.7%
	Specialist Provider (clinician etc.)	2.7%
	Independent Support Coordinators	2%

Support Coordination. Assisting Life Transition: 401<sup>31</sup> & Specialist Coordination under Support Coordination: 339<sup>32</sup>

## AUSTRALIAN EXAMPLES

Further work is required to explore how this model could develop in Australia, but examples of some of these approaches exist already:

### DIY

- WAIS (Western Australia Individualised Services) offer a telephone helpline for Participants who are going through the NDIS to assist and offer advice in WA.
- NDIA has recently launched Nadia, an electronic guide or navigator for Participants going through the NDIS.

### Peer Support

- CDAH, based in Newcastle, host Planning Cafes for people to connect with other people with lived experience to share ideas and experiences<sup>33</sup>.
- Valued Lives, based in WA, is an organisation with a mission to promote and facilitate peer-to-peer connections, based on a belief that this advances people's understanding and possibilities.<sup>34</sup>

31 Number of people/organisations registered to provide Support Connection/Coordination under Assisting Life Transition: 401 (13.5% of total organisations registered)

32 Number of people/organisations registered to provide Specialist Coordination under Support Coordination: 339 (11.4% of total organisations registered)

33 CDAH - <http://us8.campaign-archive2.com/?u=af52eb016c6ad91f57ef94fb7&id=a280e1a139>

34 <http://valuedlives.org.au>

## **Community Organisations**

There are many community organisations whose purpose is to provide information, advice and guidance to local citizens. Some organisations provide this support to all citizens; others focus on particular people in communities. Organisations such as women's centres or local homeless support organisations often have relationships with people who may be reluctant to engage with 'professional' services.

While information about community organisations providing support coordination is somewhat scarce, there are examples of organisations that have registered to provide support coordination, including women's centres, Aboriginal cooperatives and community colleges.

## **Support Providers**

There are many support providers in all jurisdictions providing support coordination. Some are organisations offering support coordination as well as providing direct support services that the participant could purchase. Some agencies have created internal separations such as not providing support coordination to people who choose to purchase supports and services from them to alleviate fears of bias.

There is much debate about conflict of interest in such arrangements, but exercising reasonable caution while ensuring that people have sensible choices open to them is important. An example of this is 'shared management', an approach that supports people to manage their plan and funding in partnership with an agency. Shared management has a long and effective history in WA.<sup>35</sup>

## **Independent Support Coordinators**

A range of independent Support Coordinators work across Australia. Some Support Coordinators have formed the Self Directed Collaboration Network (SDCN), a network that seeks to further develop the notion of independent intermediary assistance and capacity building.

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35 Shared Management, WAIS, 2012

# CONCLUSION

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It is early days, but the overall picture of support coordination is confusing and grossly underdeveloped. The recent claim<sup>36</sup> that the NDIS is likely to spend up to \$770 million in support coordination requires the NDIA to better define and develop such an integral part of the Scheme.

The functions described in this resource are needed by people to help them make informed choices about how their supports can improve their lives.

We make the following recommendations for the NDIA and the sector as a whole:

1. NDIA should appoint a clear internal leader for support coordination and intermediary functions, to provide leadership, direct investment and coordinate collaboration for this developing sector.
2. Collate data on effective capacity building strategies, including their impact and timescales, to better understand what is needed.
3. Better define and understand the notion of capacity building, including developing an outcomes framework that defines success and includes effective measurement.
4. Based on the functional analysis in this resource, work together with participants and networks such as the SDCN to further clarify and define the assistance that participants require.
5. Based on a sound understanding of the functional assistance that participants require, develop a robust process that provides equity and transparency in the allocation of support coordination – including recognition that the process is also allocating supports for capacity building.
6. Streamline the administrative burden involved in accessing and implementing the NDIS, to free up Support Coordinators to spend more time actively supporting NDIS participants. This may include developing an internal hotline for Support Coordinators.
7. Implement a national training and development framework for Support Coordinators – which is open to a range of potential providers of support coordination – to ensure that the quality of support coordination is sufficiently high.
8. Further develop and invest in a community-based model of assistance, which provides a choice to participants and diversity in the market. This may require a rethink of the current registration process, to enable the entry of smaller, more specialised individuals and organisations.
9. Further develop the SDCN, to provide opportunities for development, shared learning and collaboration across the support coordination sector.
10. Develop resources to help NDIS participants identify and engage high quality Support Coordinators. These resources could include recorded stories, fact sheets and vignettes.

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36 Disability Services Consulting, 2017 <http://www.disabilityservicesconsulting.com.au/resources/support-coordination-on-the-money>

# APPENDICES

Task list attached to Request for Service form from NDIA Vic\_North

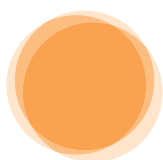
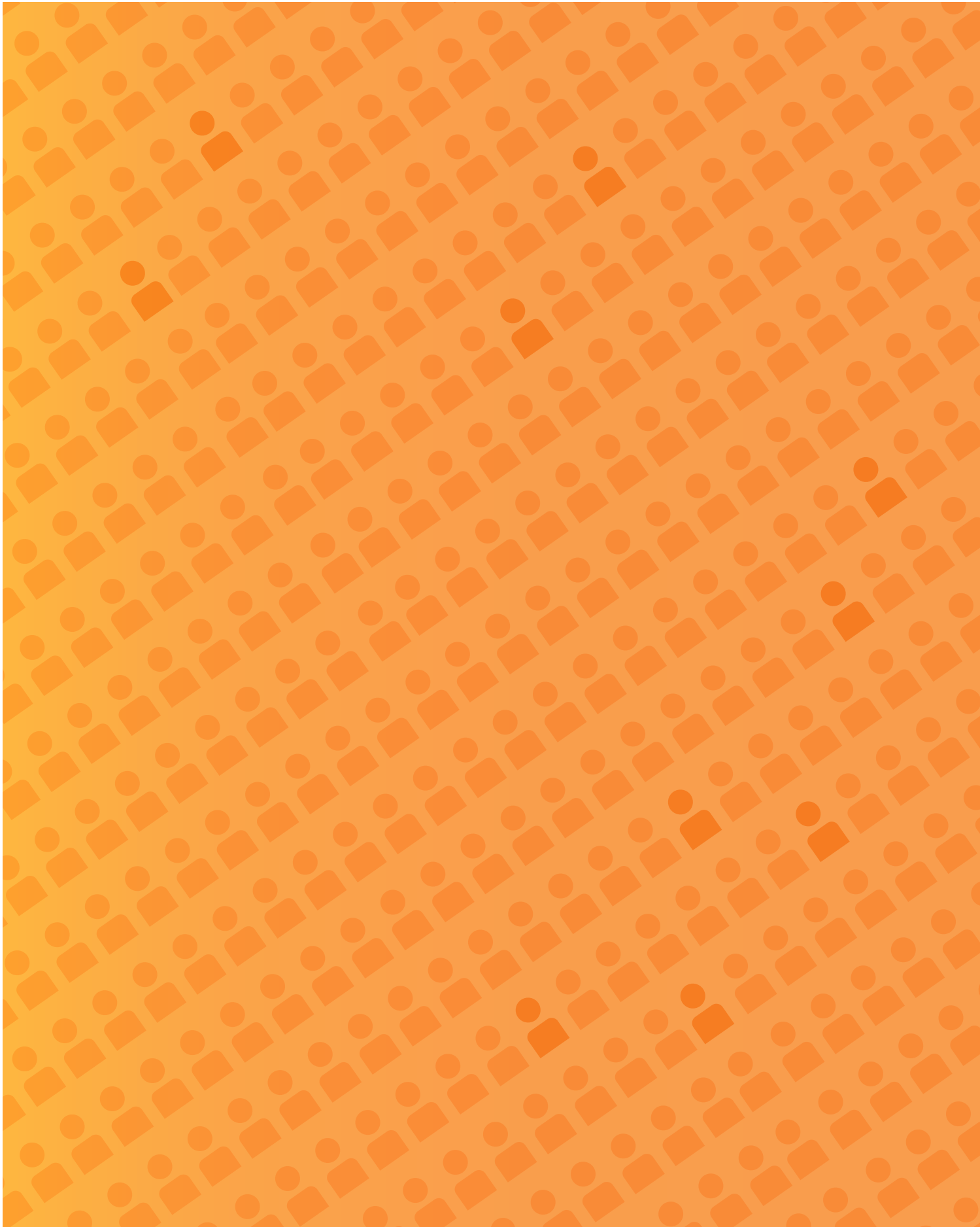
## Coordination of Supports

Months	Task expectations	Done
0-1	Assist the participant to set up the participant portal	
0-1	Assist participant to select providers and enter into service agreements (including existing providers)	
0-1	Ensure service bookings are completed	
0-1	Ensure any urgent equipment is ordered	
0-1	Make referrals for any assessments in plan	
0-2	Ensure participant is aware of service providers feedback processes	
0-2	Ensure participants is aware of process to request a change of support coordinator'	
0-2	Implementation of all supports in the plan	
0-2	Explore mainstream and community supports that the participant may like to participate in including linkage and referral	
0-2	Post implementation reporting to NDIA	
0-12	Ensuring that skills building plans are implemented and followed by personal support workers, and are complimentary to other plans that already exist in a participants life i.e. Behavioural management plans, Individual learning plans, or existing skill development plans	
0-12	Work with the participant to increase their ability to access their local community	
0-12	Monitor plan expenditure to ensure that the participant can manage their budget over a 12 month plan	
0-12	Strengthen and enhance the participant's abilities to coordinate supports and participate in the community	
0-12	Assisting the participant to resolve points of crisis	
0-12	Build the capacity of the participant to achieve greater independence to self-direct services and supports in the longer term	
0-12	Ensure that Participant is accessing eligible supports through the Health, Justice, Education and housing sector	
9-12	Assist the participant to start to think about next plan and develop their goals prior to their plan review	
9-12	Provide the NDIA with reports on outcomes prior to review	
9-12	Prepare participant for review by developing new goals, evaluating current supports and exploring new supports. Assisting Participant to fill in and return any NDIS review documentation	

### Ten statements about support brokers

1. **The role of Support Broker is a key element of individualised funding systems.**  
This means that individual funding systems are incomplete without including the option of involving an independent Support Brokers. Equally, it means that the involvement of a Support Broker only becomes effective when accompanied by systemic change in the structures, procedures, and culture of the social care system as a whole.
2. **Support Brokers provide a skilled, technical service that is distinct from the role of Advocate.** Like many professions within social care, the Broker's work may sometimes include elements of advocacy – for example, reminding people in meetings to pay attention to the views of the disabled person. Brokers are mainly providing technical assistance to help people identify and achieve changes they require in their lives, and should be working in a system that recognises and values this input.
3. At best **Support Brokers should be fully independent, with no conflicts of interest.** This means more than not working for social services or social care providers. Brokers also need to be free of loyalties to the professionalized social care system, and fundamentally in alliance with people who use services, their families and allies, and with the wider community.
4. **People who need a Broker should not be discouraged from using one, and should be able to choose their Broker.** This means that there is a need for government (probably through local councils) to invest in the development of independent Brokers, so that there is not an undue financial disincentive to use a Broker, and so that there are enough Brokers to provide a real choice.
5. **Support Brokers are accountable to the disabled people they work for, providing assistance as each person requires, and on the basis each person requires, from the range of services that falls within the scope of what a Support Broker can do.**
6. **Support Brokers have no authority to make decisions** They have no right to determine or veto a plan or an element of a plan, or to talk to other people (e.g. care managers, support workers) to get or share information about the person they are working for, without the consent of the person (or, where necessary, the consent of the family on their behalf). This also implies that the social care system cannot impose a requirement on Brokers to report back to other professionals, such as care managers.
7. **The scope of the Broker's input includes helping people to identify the changes they want to make to their lives; find support services and community opportunities that the person requires; negotiate with providers and prepare community resources as necessary; cost and write a support plan; identify and obtain funding (including securing agreement on social services funding) and initiate implementation of the plan.**

8. **The role of the Broker does not extend beyond the implementation of the plan.** Some people will need continuing help with financial administration, or with monitoring and managing their supports, but these are different roles and are best kept separate from the Support Brokers input. There are a number of reasons. Firstly, it helps to define the Support Brokerage input clearly, with a definite start and finish point. (People should, of course, be free to enter into a fresh contract with the Broker later on, if they wish.) Secondly, the different areas of Brokerage are likely to require different 'skill mixes'. Thirdly, there are potential conflicts of interest if the roles are combined in one person (and possibly even in one agency). And finally there is the practical problem that if Brokers stay involved indefinitely; Broker resources will rapidly be used up.
9. **Support Brokers are offering a professional service, in the sense that they should be operating within a context of regulation that ensures minimum competences, accountability to each customer; and safeguards.** The challenge for the development of Support Broker resources is to make sure that Brokers don't become 'professionals' in the negative sense of remote, bureaucratic, and unaccountable to the people they supposedly serve.
10. **National policy needs to address the danger of Support Brokers becoming 'professionalised' in a negative sense, by giving responsibility for the support and regulation of local Brokers to disabled people, family members, and their community allies.** The National Brokerage Network provides basic oversight and regulation, plus services such as professional insurance, and these are undoubtedly valuable. However, Brokers need to be more strongly linked to local communities, and to the people who may use their services.



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