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# Reference Group meeting bulletin – 20 March 2024

The Independent Advisory Council (IAC) [Children, Young People and Families Reference Group](#) (Reference Group) met online on 20 March 2024. They discussed:

- what they have heard in their communities
- the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Children's Taskforce
- how the NDIS works with child protection services
- NDIS Review recommendations about children, young people and families.

Ms Leah van Poppel, IAC Principal Member and Reference Group Co-Chair, led the meeting. She noted Dr Sharon Boyce, IAC Member, is the new Reference Group Co-Chair.

## What members have heard in their communities

Reference Group Members shared issues with access and planning. This included the challenges some families face in accessing the NDIS because of the cost of assessments. Members also highlighted delays in plan reviews and suggested ways to better include the participant voice in plans.

Members said child participants and their families often find it hard to get the supports they need. Some families have difficulty accessing disability supports in schools and in rural and remote areas. They also shared that families need support to understand and build the independence of their children with disability.

On engagement, members noted the community wants to learn more about what might change as a result of the NDIS Review. They also noted the importance of genuine co-design.

## Update on the Children's Taskforce

Ms Samantha Taylor PSM, General Manager of the Children's Taskforce, shared an update on current co-design work, early intervention for children under 9 years and growing a family centred practice at the NDIA.

She also thanked the Reference Group for their work on the IAC's advice 'Improving the NDIS for children and young people: the importance of being guided by their voice'.



The Reference Group offered to guide the NDIA on ways it can engage children and young people with disability in co-design. Members also explained that family centred practice must balance the needs and views of those supporting the child with an evidence-based approach.

## Update the NDIS and child protection services

Representatives from the NDIA's Complex Support Needs Branch and Government Initiatives Branch presented on how the NDIS works with child protection services. This included ways the NDIS shares information and works with state and territory child protection agencies.

Members noted:

- The importance of collaboration across organisations to better plan for the future of a child with disability. They suggested child protection services and the NDIA start planning for a young person's future at least a year before they turn 18 years.
- That some First Nations families worry that child protection services may be contacted if they ask for more NDIS support.
- The importance of collecting accurate information on how many children with disability are in contact with child protection services.

## NDIS Review recommendations

Reference Group Members discussed the [NDIS Review's recommendations](#) on foundational supports and children under 9 years. Members highlighted the importance of:

- Children receiving individualised support as early as possible.
- Early access to peer support and capacity building programs for parents and guardians.
- Equitable access to the NDIS for all families, regardless of their socioeconomic background or culture.
- Supporting a young person with disability at every stage of life, with a focus on a child's journey into adulthood.

## More information on the Reference Group

The [Children, Young People and Families Reference Group](#) will next meet in July 2024. Find out more about IAC and Reference Group meetings and bulletins at the [IAC website](#).

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