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Reference Group meeting bulletin – 1 June 2023

Intellectual Disability Reference Group

This Bulletin summarises the recent meeting of the Intellectual Disability Reference Group (Reference Group). The Reference Group gives advice to the Independent Advisory Council (IAC) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Its advice aims to support people with intellectual disability live an ordinary life, take part in their community, and have supports to make their own decisions.

The Reference Group met on 1 June 2023 in Melbourne and via videoconference. [Ms Leah van Poppel, IAC Principal Member and Reference Group Co-chair](#), led the meeting. Ms Sam Paior, IAC Member and Reference Group Co-chair helped Ms van Poppel run the meeting.

From the Reference Group Co-chair

Ms van Poppel noted the work the IAC and Reference Group Members have done since their last meeting on [12 October 2022 \(DOCX 86KB\)](#).

What Members have heard in their community

Reference Group Members reported on matters for the NDIA's attention, relating to:

NDIS access and planning

- Reports that people with intellectual disability must repeatedly provide evidence to prove their disability to access the NDIS. Reports that younger people with intellectual disability find it harder to access the NDIS.
- Calls for fairer and quicker access to the NDIS for people with intellectual disability, especially those in the justice system, First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people.
- Calls for NDIA to make NDIS information and plans available in easier to read formats, like Easy Read. This can ensure that people with disability understand the supports in their plans. This can also help participants make decisions about things that affect them and have flexibility in how they use supports.



- Inconsistent plan decisions, especially for innovative supports like circles of support. These supports provide peer support and build people’s capacity to make decisions.
- Some support coordinators are charging for phone calls they make for participants.
- Calls for support workers to have better training to help people with intellectual disability.

NDIS service and supports

- There are general issues with workforce and the delivery of quality services to people with disability.
- Reports that the lack of specialist support coordinators negatively impact participants.
- Calls for those accessing the court system to be able to use justice liaison services. This could help people prove their eligibility for the NDIS.
- General issues with service accessibility, among people who live in regional and remote areas, and issues with service quality for people with disability, among people with intellectual disability.
- Some people with intellectual disability say that they are subject to restrictive practices without their consent. These limit choice and control in their life.
- Some people with intellectual disability face issues with housing. Some people get little support to help them find a home.
- General issues with home and living supports and plans. This includes issues with housing availability, supported independent living (SIL) and specialised disability accommodation (SDA) options, and conflicts of interests where a service provider is also the dwelling owner.
- The hope that significant investment in home and living supports by the NDIA will deliver better outcomes for NDIS participants.
- Mixed feedback about the PACE trial in Tasmania. Some people say it is working well and that they welcome improvements to the role of local area coordinators. Others say that it is causing sector disruption.
- Calls for better information, training and tools that help people with intellectual disability to report fraud.

NDIS providers and disability community

- Reports that some NDIS behaviour support practitioners develop behaviour support plans without ever meeting with an NDIS participant.
- Some people with disability say there are workforce challenges in relation to inconsistent quality, with little accountability/oversight.
- Clinicians who work with people with disability need more training around how to better support people with intellectual disability. For example, dentists could use an oral health pathway to inform people with intellectual disability about connected services and consent.
- People with intellectual disability want to exercise their rights, including the right to vote, and to review programs and services they get.



- There are concerns that recent Commonwealth Government budget announcement around NDIS expenditure are not well explained to the disability community.

Other services that work alongside the NDIS

- General concern about how the NDIS works alongside other services that support Australians. For example, health, education, housing, and justice.
- Services outside the NDIS need to work together to make fair provisions of cognitive assessments for people with intellectual disability in the court system, so that they too can access NDIS supports.
- There are sometimes gaps in understanding in both the NDIS' and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's role to practically put in place a behaviour support plan.
- Calls for the aged care sector to provide better services and supports for those younger people with disability living in residential aged care.

Update on behaviour supports

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission gave an update about their work to improve behaviour supports, including increasing skills training for behaviour support practitioners, and reducing the use of restrictive practises. Members gave the following feedback:

- Behaviour support plans should be in Easy Read to ensure everyone understands their plan.
- Behaviour support plans should use strong processes, checks, and authorisation, adopting a co-design approach that includes participants.
- Any panel meeting for a behaviour support plan should include the participant, not only family and service providers.
- There is a need for increased understanding and dialogue between participants, families and communities about behaviour support plans and restrictive practices.

Discussion on IAC's advice on behaviour supports

The Reference Group discussed the latest version of its advice, titled 'Enhancing behaviour support in the NDIA'. Members endorsed the advice, which will now progress to the IAC. They noted that best-practice behaviour supports use a strong co-design process, enhanced training for practitioners, making behaviour support plans and other information easier to understand, and including people with intellectual disability at every step to ensure consent and choice and control.

More information on the Reference Group

The Reference Group will next meet on Wednesday 16 August 2023. Find out more about Reference Group meetings and bulletins at [the IAC website](#). You can also access [IAC advice here](#).

The IAC publishes an Easy Read version Bulletin. This is part of its commitment to accessibility.