

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Local Area Coordinator Framework

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000003

Question asked by: Senator Hollie Hughes

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page: 10

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

Senator HUGHES: Is there any review of the LAC providers, with regard to those that seem to generate the highest number of reviews of plans, or challenges ending up in the AAT through particular LAC providers that are perhaps not as effective as others?

Mr Hoffman: In terms of the AAT, the technical answer would be that an AAT review is of a delegate decision, which is only within the agency. It's an agency decision, rather than a LAC action, that is at the AAT. Certainly, we have in our agreements with the LACs a performance and reporting framework. We give regular feedback to them in terms of their performance against that framework. I'd be happy to provide more detail about that on notice, if you wish, Senator.

Senator HUGHES: I would, and I'd be interested to know if there have been any LACs that have basically been told their services are no longer required because they generate excessive numbers of requests for review et cetera.

Mr Hoffman: We've had some LACs exit and change for a range of reasons. We have not terminated any LAC in that way.

Answer:

Partners in the Community (PITC or Partners) have a role in working with Participants to discuss plan goals and develop funded supports in a draft Participant plan, before assigning the draft plan to a NDIA delegate for decision. The NDIA delegate is responsible for plan approval. Further, an AAT review is of an NDIA decision made by a delegate.

The NDIA Outcomes Assurance Framework (Framework) is the performance management approach included in Partner agreements, which allows the NDIA to monitor, manage and support the performance of Partners.

Under the Framework, a risk-based approach is used to monitor and assess the performance of Partners across the following key measures:

1. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
2. Quality Plan Audits
3. Contract Assurance Activities

Partner KPIs focus on areas such as timeliness of connection and supports for Participants, customer satisfaction, development of plan goals relating to social and economic participation, and connections to mainstream and community supports.

Quality Plan Audits review the plans developed by Partners, covering areas including compliance, reviewing reasonable and necessary supports, and ensuring the key planning requirements have been met. Partners are required to have internal Quality Teams and the Agency provides feedback and works with this team on any quality issues.

The NDIA undertakes regular performance reviews of Partners delivering Local Area Coordination (LAC) and Early Childhood (EC) services, and provides feedback regarding their performance against the Framework.

Where performance improvement is required, the NDIA discusses and agrees with the Partner the required actions to support improved performance. Depending on the item raised, there is often relatively quick improvement once identified and raised with a Partner.

The NDIA has not terminated an agreement with a Partner due to the numbers of requests for reviews.

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Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Plan Reviews - AAT

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000005

Question asked by: Alicia Payne

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page: 15

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

Ms PAYNE: How many plans with a reduction in funding have had all or some of the supports restored at the AAT in the last 12 months?

Mr Hoffman: I will have to take that on notice. It will be difficult to track all the way through, but I understand the question and I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The NDIA does not hold structured data to respond to this question. The most recent Quarterly Reports contain data about the outcomes of AAT applications, which can be accessed here: www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/quarterly-reports.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Rapid Antigen Tests

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000009

Question asked by: Senator Carol Brown

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page: 16

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

Senator CAROL BROWN: But, when we are talking about participants that still receive the supports and services, particularly those in supported independent living and other provider-supported accommodation, if they've used all their money and they've had significant RAT purchases, what's the process for them to receive a top-up, as you put it?

Dr Studdert: The participant can contact the agency and ask for a top-up of plan funds if, as Mr Hoffman said, they've expended all of their core budget and that extra capacity is needed for ongoing purchasing of rapid antigen tests.

Senator CAROL BROWN: So what's the process to request a top-up? It's not just a phone call, is it?

Mr Hoffman: Yes, it is—it's a phone call to the national contact centre and then, because we're not doing face-to-face planning in most cases now, for obvious reasons, that can be done over the phone.

Senator CAROL BROWN: So that's the entire process? I ring up and I say: 'I've used all my core support funding and I need a top-up of my funding,' and you'll just put it in, will you?

...

Senator CAROL BROWN: On notice, then, can I get proper detail about exactly what the process is? It's not simply a phone call. That's just to initiate the discussion about receiving extra funds.

Answer:

The Australian Government has commenced distributing Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) to high risk residential disability care settings, with five million test kits to be delivered by June 2022. Supported independent living (SIL) providers will receive an allocation of tests to manage outbreaks and outbreak prevention. SIL Providers will distribute tests to participants and their workers as required. The cost of these rapid tests will not be deducted from participant plans.

Participants who don't have supported independent living funded in their NDIS plan can use their Core support budget to purchase RATs, if they need them to access their reasonable and necessary supports. Participants can also use their plan to purchase RATs for their support workers to make sure they can safely receive supports.

Participants who need to use their core budget to buy RATs, and who have exhausted their core supports, can call the National Contact Centre (NCC) on 1800 800 110 or contact the NDIA through the MyNDIS tab in the Participant Portal. The NCC phone line has an option to allow NDIS participants to indicate that they have a COVID-19 related enquiry.

The request is escalated to a dedicated team who will complete an urgent agency-initiated plan review.

Requests for an urgent plan review to enable a participant to purchase rapid tests are prioritised and typically actioned within 2 days.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Co-Design Update

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000010

Question asked by: Senator Carol Brown

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

Please provide an update on the NDIA's work to put in place co-design processes, and any other work the agency has progressed since late last year.

Answer:

After receiving feedback from the disability community and the NDIS Independent Advisory Council (Council) in mid-2021, the NDIA has been working closely with stakeholders to strengthen engagement processes and introduce co-design.

Since October 2021, the Agency has established and held 6 Co-design Advisory Group meetings seeking feedback on the workshop's recommended 'learn by doing' co-design approach. The Agency has also sought feedback from the Council and the 27 Disability Representative and Carer Organisations (DRCOs) on the NDIA's new Engagement Framework. The NDIS Engagement Framework outlines how the Agency plans, designs, sequences, delivers and evaluates stronger, authentic engagement with the disability community. It will also include the priorities for co-design over the next 6 months in a roadmap of activities. The Agency intends to release the Engagement Framework by the end of March of 2022.

The Agency have engaged The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) as subject matter experts to support the Agency's build-up of co-design capability; coach NDIA staff in the practice of co-design; and review and improve current processes of engagement.

The Agency has worked with the Co-design Advisory Group to identify the following priorities for co-design, which will commence in quarter one of 2022:

- Participant Safety
- Support for Decision Making
- Home and Living policy
- Information Gathering for Access and Planning as instructed by Disability Reform Ministers' in July 2021.

The Agency has sought nominations from the disability community and key stakeholders to join the Steering Committees to guide these initiatives.

In addition, the Agency has begun preparation and discovery work on the refresh of two cohort strategies, using co-design methodologies, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities to engage with the NDIS. The Agency is also working closely with the DRCOs on ensuring they are appropriately remunerated to participate engagement and co-design activities.

The Agency is committed to working closely with participants, their families and carers and the wider disability community to deliver the best Scheme possible.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Rapid Antigen Tests

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000020

Question asked by: Senator Carol Brown

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

For people who are immunocompromised, the costs of RATs could be very high. Does the Agency have any plans to automatically adjust plans in these circumstances?

Answer:

Please refer to NDIA IQ22-000009.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Rapid Antigen Tests - children

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000021

Question asked by: Senator Carol Brown

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

Second, as RATs can only be purchased out of core funds, children who are only in receipt of capacity building funding or early intervention cannot purchase RATs from their NDIS funds. Many of these children are immunocompromised and their therapists will be seeing many other children and could easily become infected. What is the Agency doing to address this issue?

Answer:

The informal support provided by parents and carers, siblings and other family members is vitally important to children. Typically the supports provided to children for support with daily activities and community access is provided by family or carers. Some children also receive support from mainstream services such as childcare.

Some participants younger than 7 require a level of support with daily activities significantly beyond the level expected of family or carers. In these cases Core funded supports are included in plans based on the individual needs of the child and family. Children requiring this level of support will have Core funding in their plan to purchase Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) as required, for example to test support workers delivering in-home personal care support.

The NDIA expects providers of capacity building supports to be best placed to manage COVID-19 risk in their interactions with children and families. Providers may also offer alternatives to home visits where appropriate.

Beyond this, RATs for children is typically a parental responsibility or are available through community and mainstream services for example the Department of Education in some states, if required for school.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Early Childhood Approach

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000025

Question asked by: Senator Carol Brown

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

Many parents perceive the NDIS medical models of early intervention as being delivered in clinical settings. However, best practice early intervention is delivered in every-day settings and involves therapist training parents, grandparents and early intervention providers in how to incorporate therapy into day-to-day activities. What is the NDIA doing to ensure best practice early intervention therapies in day-to-day settings becomes the norm?

Answer:

Children younger than 7 are an important cohort of the NDIS. To ensure a nationally consistent approach to support young children and their families, the NDIA engages Early Childhood (EC) Partners around Australia to deliver the early childhood approach (formerly early childhood early intervention (ECEI)).

EC Partners are appointed by the NDIA to assist families to understand their child's support needs and the potential role of the NDIS. EC Partners focus on delivering family-centred supports using a best-practice model.

Families have choice and control in regards to choice of service Provider and type of early intervention approach. However, the NDIA is actively working to support family informed choice and control in choosing a best practice Provider through additional planning support, enhanced information through health and mainstream environments and an improved plan implementation focus by our EC Partners.

The NDIA's early childhood approach is underpinned by the evidenced based National Guidelines – *Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention* with a commitment to support the delivery of best practice in early childhood intervention.

This is evidenced by the work underway through the NDIS ECEI Implementation Reset, captured in Recommendation 2:

‘Clearly and consistently, communicate the intent of the Early Childhood approach and the Agency’s support for best practice, so families understand how the approach informs positive outcomes for young children’.

The NDIA has progressed a number of actions to date in promoting best practice in early childhood intervention in natural settings, including:

- Providing implementation guidance for EC Partners to help them build capacity of families and carers to make informed choices about engaging best practice service providers.
- Publishing 2 external facing early childhood specific operational guidelines to explain how best practice helps get the best results for children younger than 7 and their families.
- Delivering additional training to EC Partners on communication with families about best practice, including a self-assessment tool to support their own delivery of supports.
- Roll out of the Provider report form, enabling Providers to evidence how they are delivering services in line with best practice principles and the outcomes that have been achieved.
- Developing a suite of parent tip sheets including information about best practice.

Additionally, as part of the ECEI Implementation Reset, further collaboration with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission will help to enhance Provider application of the early childhood practice standards in their delivery of supports to children and families.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Public Hearing – 01 February 2022
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Market Stewardship

Question reference number: NDIA IQ22-000026

Question asked by: Senator Carol Brown

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 28 February 2022

Question:

The NDIA plays an important role in market stewardship. We are now seeing huge shortages in the workforce, due to COVID. This is in addition to the already significant shortages in rural and regional Australia. People with disability and their families are having to use personal networks to find workers and there is no provider of last resort. What role does the NDIA see of itself as a market steward going forward and what analysis has it undertaken to gauge the impact of its decisions on the market and whether or not they are consistent with the objectives of the NDIS?

Answer:

The NDIA has a role, as market steward, to support an efficient and sustainable marketplace with a diverse and competitive range of suppliers that are able to meet the needs of participants by making structural changes created by a consumer-driven market. This role is shared, as outlined in the NDIS Market Roles and Responsibilities document, which details the role of all governments in supporting and developing the NDIS market and building a responsible and capable NDIS workforce that supports NDIS participants to meet their needs and achieve their goals. The NDIS Market Roles and Responsibilities document can be found here: <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-government-international-disability-reform-council-reports-and-publications/ndis-market-roles-and-responsibilities>.

The approach taken by the NDIA to market stewardship, as well as data on and analysis of the Agency's progress, is contained in a number of publicly available documents. These include the NDIA Annual Reports, Corporate Plans, Quarterly Reports, Market Monitoring reports and other analyses which provide information on the progress of the Scheme and NDIS marketplace. These reports are available at <https://data.ndis.gov.au/> and the NDIS website.

The NDIA undertakes a range of activities as a market steward. Importantly, as part of a suite of activities and initiatives to support providers through the COVID-19 pandemic, the NDIA has established workforce support arrangements with a single provider delivering peer support services to the sector.

Support services are available to providers across the country that may be experiencing significant workforce disruptions to maintain and/or recover their services. This includes triage and assessment to prioritise workforce issues and response options, support to resolve issues and, where available, additional workforce support on the ground. The NDIS Commission is also providing COVID-19 workforce assistance through their 'New Worker-NDIS Induction Modules' that have been developed to support workers commencing their role during the pandemic.

More broadly, the NDIA implements market intervention projects nationally to help participants access quality supports. These market interventions are based on the Thin Markets Framework that was agreed by the then Disability Reform Council in December 2019. This includes:

- market facilitation (improving connections between providers and participants through targeted engagement and information)
- direct commissioning (directly purchasing disability supports on behalf of a group of participants)
- coordinated funding packages (pooling the funds and consolidating their collective buying power to achieve individual goals).

Further information on the NDIA's market interventions can be found here:

www.ndis.gov.au/community/research-and-evaluation/markets-and-innovations-our-research.

The Australian Government is also undertaking a range of activities to ensure there is a skilled and sustainable workforce to support the disability sector. These activities include promoting the benefits of working in the care and support sector, training and supporting the workforce, and reducing red tape. The NDIS National Workforce Plan, launched on 10 June 2021 by the Minister for the NDIS provides the framework for these activities. The initiatives in the Workforce Plan are designed to attract workers with suitable skills, values and attributes, while also improving existing workers' access to training and development opportunities.