



Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Answer to Question on Notice

Reference: QSC SQ20-000042

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19: Provider Information

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page: Page 27

Asked by: Senator Lambie

Question:

Mr Head: I'll let Mr Hoffman talk about those things that relate to payments to providers, some of which he outlined earlier. The commission's focus during the pandemic has been to ensure that providers are very well supported with good-quality information and guidance from the commission on those aspects of the pandemic that they need to be aware of. Senator Keneally referred earlier to some provider alerts that I'd issued. Since 7 February we've issued, I think, about 16 separate communications to providers: short, sharp messages about things they need to be aware of on different issues, including outlining to them their access to other government initiatives that are providing support across a range of sectors during COVID-19.

Our work has been focusing on ensuring that providers have the information they need to avoid disrupting the provision of supports and services to participants and that they can take all the actions they need to create a safe environment for their workers and for participants.

Senator LAMBIE: Would you be able to supply the committee with those additional resources and for what areas?

Mr Head: Yes, we can give you a pack of all of the information that we've issued to providers.

Answer:

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) has issued 13 COVID-19 provider alerts (via electronic direct message – email) and developed three COVID-19 factsheets for providers between 7 February 2020 and 30 April 2020. The NDIS Commission bi-monthly Provider Newsletter was also issued on 9 April 2020. (Refer to the table below for more detail).

All alerts, fact sheets and newsletters are available on the NDIS Commission website.

PROVIDER ALERTS & FACT SHEETS

Date Issued	Type	Topic	Summary	Link to Website
7 February 2020	Alert	Information about the novel coronavirus outbreak	General information and links to Department of Health information, updates and resources	Information about the novel coronavirus outbreak
9 March 2020	Alert	Provider obligations and COVID-19 health information	Explains registered provider obligations, how to reduce the risk to participants, and where to access further information. The alert was based on advice from the Australian Government Department of Health	Provider obligations and COVID-19 health information
17 March 2020	Alert	Online training module for support workers	Contains information about the online training module that the Australian Government Department of Health has made available to all support workers across all sectors	Online training module for support workers
19 March 2020	Alert	Business continuity planning	Contains information to assist NDIS providers when planning for changes that may occur to their service delivery due to COVID-19 (business continuity planning).	Business continuity planning
20 March 2020	Fact sheet	Coronavirus (COVID-19): What the NDIS Commission is doing	This fact sheet provides information to registered NDIS providers to support them in understanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· their obligations to safely and competently provide supports and services to people with disability during the COVID-19 pandemic· how to reduce exposure and transmission of COVID-19· how to maintain NDIS supports and services.	Coronavirus (COVID-19): What the NDIS Commission is doing
24 March 2020	Alert	Information for support workers and access to PPE	Contains information for support workers, including access for providers to personal protective equipment (PPE).	Information for support workers and access to PPE
26 March 2020	Alert	Assistance for organisations	Provides a summary of Australian Government measures available to businesses during the Coronavirus pandemic.	Assistance for organisations

30 March 2020	Fact sheet	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Behaviour support and restrictive practices	This fact sheet provides information to assist NDIS providers to better understand behaviour support and restrictive practices due to COVID-19.	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Behaviour support and restrictive practices
31 March 2020	Alert	Supporting providers to respond	Provides a summary to assist providers to stay up-to-date with current advice issued by the Australian Government and state and territory authorities, and what this means for services and supports provided to participants.	Supporting providers to respond
31 March 2020	Fact sheet	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Information for providers on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<p>This fact sheet provides an update to the access to PPE information that was released on 24 March 2020 and covers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When PPE should be used and how requests for PPE are prioritised An update on the current availability of PPE in Australia. 	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Information for providers on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
2 April 2020	Alert	Practice Alert: Influenza (flu) vaccine from mid-April 2020	Provides information for providers on the flu vaccination.	Practice Alert: Influenza (flu) vaccine from mid-April 2020
3 April 2020	Alert	Adjusting supports and reducing infection risk	Shares the innovative changes that NDIS providers are making to the delivery of supports and services to manage risks associated with COVID-19 to continue to support NDIS participants at this time.	Adjusting supports and reducing infection risk
9 April 2020	Newsletter	April 2020 Provider Newsletter (COVID-19)	Provides a summary of the guidance and information published by the NDIS Commission for providers on COVID-19, up until 9 April 2020. (Newsletters are published for bi-monthly).	April 2020 Provider Newsletter (COVID-19)
9 April 2020	Alert	Further assistance for organisations, people and households	Provides an updated summary of Australian Government measures available to organisations. It also provides a summary of new Australian Government financial support measures to assist individuals and households.	Further assistance for organisations, people and households

20 April 2020	Alert	Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability	On 16 April 2020, National Cabinet agreed to release the Management and Operational Plan for COVID-19 for People with Disability (the Plan). This alert explains what the Plan is and why it is important for NDIS participants. The Australian Government Department of Health will oversee the Plan's implementation.	Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability
28 April 2020	Alert	Provider Alert: COVID-19 FAQs and fact sheet for participants	Contains information about the development a new webpage containing frequently asked questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the supports and services, and a fact sheet for NDIS participants explaining what they can expect from provider and workers	COVID-19 FAQs and fact sheets for participants
30 April 2020	Alert	Changes to student visa work conditions for workers of registered NDIS providers	The Department of Home Affairs has written to registered NDIS providers to announce temporary changes to work visa conditions for international students working for them.	Changes to student visa work conditions for workers of registered NDIS providers



Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Answer to Question on Notice

Reference: QSC SQ20-000043

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19: Personal Protection Equipment

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page: Page 3

Asked by: Senator Keneally

Question:

Senator KENEALLY: Great. If they do assess it—for example, their client has COVID-19 symptoms—how do they get a mask? They send an email. In the first instance, should they source it from their own stockpile?

Mr Head: The advice has been consistent throughout the pandemic. The first step is to try and source PPE through the usual arrangements but, where it's not available, to contact the National Medical Stockpile, where the need for PPE is assessed against clinical criteria.

Senator KENEALLY: Do they do that via email?

Mr Head: Yes, there's an email address. We have a participant and a provider webpage on COVID-19 to assist.

Senator KENEALLY: Once they've sent off an email, how long does it take to get the equipment? I presume it could be a few days.

Mr Head: I'd have to take that on notice. I wouldn't know off the top of my head what the range is.

Answer:

The Department of Health has provided the following response:

Once the Department of Health (Health) reviews an email request, the turnaround time for provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) is dependent on the assessor from Health being able to contact the applicant to obtain clinical information, and the logistics of dispatching the PPE through the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Access to PPE is based on an established need in line with clinical evidence, for example to assist managing an outbreak of COVID-19 at a facility. The Department of Health is working closely with the Department of Social Services and the NDIA to assess requests from National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) registered providers and self-managed participants for PPE. Health seeks to make contact with all applicants and make a determination regarding PPE distribution within 24 hours.

Between 7 April 2020 and 5 May 2020, 53 requests were approved as eligible for PPE. Of these, 43 per cent were approved within 1 day of Health receiving the email request.

The NDIA aims to have PPE delivered to the nominated provider or participant the day after Health has approved the PPE request. The delivery period can be impacted by unforeseen delays with transportation and delivery.

To date, more than 570,000 masks have been made available to the disability sector from the National Medical Stockpile.



Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Answer to Question on Notice

Reference: QSC SQ20-000044

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19: Restrictive Practices

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page: Page 29

Asked by: Senator Keneally

Question:

Senator KENEALLY: I have one quick question, and I understand some of the other Labor senators may have questions. My question is again in relation to the NDIA. Has there been any change in the reporting for the use of restrictive practices with people with a disability since the start of the coronavirus crisis?

Mr Head: You would be aware that the unauthorised use of restrictive practices is a reportable incident that registered proprietors are required to report. We've issued specific guidance to all providers on the use of restrictive practices during the pandemic and are particularly encouraging people to understand what would constitute a misuse of restrictive practices during the pandemic. The reporting obligations remain unchanged, so reporting the unauthorised use of a restrictive practice is required. In addition, the information we gather through the notice we've issued around COVID-19 would assist in understanding whether there are circumstances that are problematic for providers.

Senator KENEALLY: Thank you for that. I guess my question was: has there been a change in the level? Has it gone up, gone down or not changed at all?

Mr Head: I'll take that on notice, but I can say, in general, that we've had only a relatively modest increase in the number of complaints during the pandemic that are specific to the pandemic, and I'm not aware of any material shift in the numbers on restrictive practices, but we'll get that information for you.

Answer:

It is a condition of registration that registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers report certain incidents to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission). These incidents are serious events that occur in connection with the provision of NDIS supports and services to a person with disability, including the unauthorised use of a restrictive practice.

The NDIS Commission has not seen a significant increase in reportable incidents related to COVID-19, although there have been some which have noted the COVID-19 pandemic environment in context. The number of these is low compared to fluctuations in the number of incidents reported overall.