Parent Guide: Psychology and NDIS

Preparing for Your First NDIS Planning Meeting

1. What is an NDIS Planning Meeting?

Your first NDIS planning meeting is a chance to tell your story, share what's hard for your child, and talk about what support your family needs. The person running the meeting might be called a Planner or a Local Area Coordinator (LAC).

The goal is to create a plan that helps your child take part in everyday life – at home, school, and in the community. You will talk about what your child needs help with, and what you want them to work on in the next year.

You can bring someone with you for support — a partner, family member, therapist, or friend who knows your child well.

A Note Before You Begin

We want to acknowledge that this process can be tough. The NDIS planning meeting focuses on what's hard, what your child can't yet do, and the challenges your family is facing. That can feel disheartening – especially when it doesn't leave space to talk about your child's strengths, joy, or uniqueness.

Please remember: this meeting is about accessing support, not about defining your child. Your child is so much more than their needs – they are creative, funny, thoughtful, determined, and growing. This process is just one small moment in their bigger story.

It may help to prepare a short strengths statement to share at the start of the meeting, such as:

"While we'll be talking about support needs today, I just want to say: my child is also incredibly curious and kind, and brings joy to our family."

Prepared by Family Minded – admin@familyminded.com.au

This guide is general in nature and aims to support parents in understanding the NDIS process. Families are free to choose any provider.

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2. Quick Checklist: What to Do Before the Meeting

- Think about what's hardest for your child each day

- Write down what your child needs more help with than other kids their age

- Write 2–3 goals you'd love to see them work on

- Collect recent reports from therapists, teachers or assessments

- Be ready to explain why psychology support would help

- Bring a support person if you'd like backup

3. What Should I Prepare?

You don't need to know everything – just come ready to share what daily life is like.

Think about what is hard for your child:

- What things upset or overwhelm them?

- What help do they need with daily tasks (getting dressed, brushing teeth, handling school)?

- What's difficult for them in social situations or new places?

Think about what your family needs:

- Are you doing a lot of extra things to help your child cope every day?

- Do you feel like you're walking on eggshells to avoid meltdowns?

- Do you need help learning how to support your child when things are hard?

Bring any reports or letters you have:

- Assessment reports (psych, speech, OT)

- School reports or communication books

- Letters from therapists or teachers

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4. What Are NDIS Goals?

NDIS goals are the things you want your child to learn, do better, or feel more confident about. They help guide what supports your child might get funding for.

Good goals focus on building skills, doing more things on their own, and making life less stressful.

5. What Does Psychology Support Do?

Psychology support funded through the NDIS is different from mental health treatment funded through Medicare. It is not about treating anxiety, depression, or mental health diagnoses. Instead, it is focused on helping your child build everyday life skills and improve their ability to take part in family life, school, and the community. This is called capacity building.

Psychologists help children and families build everyday life skills. These supports are all about learning — not about treating mental illness (which is funded through Medicare).

Psychology support through NDIS is about helping your child take part in life at home, at school, and in the community.

Here are some of the ways psychology can help:

- Learning to manage big feelings

- Understanding emotions

- Social skills

- Flexible thinking

- Solving problems

- Speaking up

- Coping with changes

- Parent support

Psychology helps your child learn skills to become more confident, independent, and able to take part in daily life. These are all things the NDIS is designed to support.

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6. Sample Psychology Related Goals

Self-Management

- To manage my emotions in safe ways when I feel overwhelmed
- To learn calming strategies I can use when I feel upset
- To be more flexible when things don't go to plan
- To recognise when I need help and ask for it

Social Interaction

- To feel confident when meeting or playing with other children
- To learn how to take turns, share, and read social cues
- To improve my communication with others so I can build friendships
- To join in activities with others at school, sport or the playground

Learning

- To stay focused on tasks and use strategies to help me finish things
- To learn to solve problems and keep trying when I get stuck
- To cope with changes to routine and transitions between activities

Communication

- To use words, visuals, or gestures to express how I feel
- To understand instructions and ask for help when I need it
- To build advocacy skills (like saying "I need a break" or "That's too much")

Self-Care

- To follow a visual routine to get ready in the morning with less help

- To use calming tools or breaks to reduce stress during hygiene tasks (e.g., brushing teeth)

Parent Capacity Building

- For my parents to feel confident supporting my emotional needs

- For my parents to learn strategies to help with meltdowns and transitions

- For my parents to receive guidance so we can have more calm and connection at home

7. What NDIS Will and Won't Fund

NDIS only funds support that is related to a child's disability and is above what other children need at that age. So:

- They won't fund "everyday parenting" that all families do

- But they will fund help if you're doing a lot more than typical – for example, constantly coaching your child through transitions, needing to pre-plan every outing, managing big behaviours that others their age don't show

If you're using visual supports, breaking tasks into steps, or planning your day around meltdowns – that's not typical parenting. That's supporting a high level of need, and NDIS can help.

8. How to Talk About These Needs in the Meeting

You don't need to use fancy words. Just explain your day:

"We have to plan every outing carefully because my child gets overwhelmed in new places."

"My child doesn't cope with change and needs a lot of help to transition between things."

"I spend most of my day managing meltdowns or helping my child calm down."

"We want to learn how to support our child better so our home can feel calmer."

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You are your child's strongest advocate. This meeting is about getting the help your family needs so your child can learn, grow, and feel safe in their world.

Disclaimer – Understanding the Purpose of This Guide

This guide has been written because many families are being told that psychology is no longer funded through the NDIS. We want to clarify that this is not official NDIS policy.

Psychology is still listed in the NDIS Price Guide and remains a funded support under Capacity Building when it is used to help children build skills and take part in everyday life. However, some planners may not approve psychology unless families can clearly explain why it is needed.

This guide is here to help you talk about your child's needs and show how psychology can support skill development, not to replace professional advice or promise any outcomes.

We also want to say that Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech Pathology offer excellent supports too. In fact, many goals can be worked on by different therapists — it's about finding the right match for your child's needs. For example:

Learning to handle big feelings might be supported by a psychologist or OT.

Improving social communication could be worked on by both a psychologist and a speech pathologist.

This guide is for families who feel that psychology is the right fit for their child's current needs and want support in explaining that clearly.