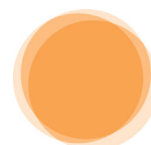




# **Looking for somewhere to live**

**A guide for NDIS  
participants and providers**

**JUNE 2023**



**SUMMER  
FOUNDATION**

# About this guide

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This guide explains how you can access and make the most of NDIS funding to look for housing. It forms part of a series of information resources that the Summer Foundation has prepared about accessing housing. It is for people with disability and complex support needs, their families and supporters, NDIS support coordinators and providers.

**You can find the latest version of this guide here: [summerfoundation.org.au/looking-for-somewhere-to-live](https://summerfoundation.org.au/looking-for-somewhere-to-live)**



**NDIS plans**



**Looking for housing**



**Housing plan**



**Specialist disability accommodation**



## **This guide is in 3 parts:**

- **Part 1** – explains the capacity building funding available to NDIS participants who need support to search for suitable housing
- **Part 2** – for people who have NDIS capacity building funding to search for housing, this part includes information on choosing your support coordinator and how to make the most of the funding
- **Part 3** – explains what a housing plan is and what it should include



# Part 1: Searching for housing

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The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) can provide capacity building funding for participants who need support to search for suitable housing.

If you're not happy with where you live, it's important that you talk about this at your NDIS planning meeting. At the planning meeting, you will be asked to identify goals for the next 12 months – make sure that searching for suitable housing is one of your goals. The NDIS will then provide you with a plan, which may include a budget for reasonable and necessary supports to assist you to reach those goals.

## Housing and support under the NDIS

The NDIS does not own or operate any housing, but it may give capacity building funding to people with disability to help them find housing that supports their independence. The NDIS can also fund home modifications or, for a small number of participants, specialist disability accommodation (SDA) payments (for more see [summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide](https://summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide)).

The NDIS provides funding for reasonable and necessary support to people with a disability to reach their goals and live an ordinary life. For most people, 'an ordinary life' means leaving their parents' family home as a young adult and either living in a shared house with friends, on their own or with a partner and children. But without access to appropriate housing and support in the community, many people with disability live with their parents later into adulthood, or in a group home or residential aged care.

An important change under the NDIS is that housing and support are considered separately, so that you are able to change your support provider without having to move to a new house. This provides NDIS participants with more choice and control over where they live and the services they use.

## How do I know if I already have NDIS funding to search for housing?

If you are an NDIS participant with a plan and you answer 'Yes' to any of the questions below, you may already have funding for 'capacity building supports' in your NDIS plan to search for suitable housing:

- Is it time to move out of your parents' home?
- Is your current housing putting you and/or your carers at risk?
- Are you living with ageing parents?
- Do you currently live in a group home and want to leave?
- Are you stuck in hospital with no access to appropriate housing?
- Are you currently living in residential aged care?

It is possible that you have this funding and you don't know it, because it may be described in different ways in your NDIS plan, such as Exploring Housing Options Package, Exploring Your Housing Options, Investigating Your Housing Solutions, or something else. If you aren't sure, please discuss with your support coordinator.

The Summer Foundation has put together a number of sample NDIS plans that give examples of what might be in a plan. Sample NDIS Plan 2 is for a person who has capacity building funding search for housing: [summerfoundation.org.au/sample-ndis-plans](https://summerfoundation.org.au/sample-ndis-plans)

## Do I need funding to look for housing?

Not everyone will get capacity building funding to search for suitable housing. If you can look for housing and/or write a housing plan on your own, or with help from your informal supports, the NDIS may not provide you with funding for support coordination to do this with you. Also, if you have current allied health assessments relating to your disability and housing and support needs, the NDIS will expect you to use these and may not provide you with funding for more allied health assessments.

The NDIS may provide capacity building funding for participants who need support to look for appropriate housing and write a housing plan (see **Part 3** of this guide for more about housing plans). If you need to move to more appropriate housing, list this as a goal at your NDIS planning meeting, and talk to your planner about the types of supports you will need to search for appropriate housing and to prepare a housing plan to achieve this goal.



## How do I get funding in my NDIS Plan to search for suitable housing?

If you're preparing for your NDIS planning meeting – or you need an NDIS plan review because your current housing is putting you at risk, making you unhappy and/or making it hard for you to participate in family and community life and or in employment – you should make 'Explore more appropriate housing options' one of the goals in your NDIS plan.

**[ndis.gov.au/participants/creating-your-plan/setting-goals](https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/creating-your-plan/setting-goals)**

To help you reach this goal, your NDIS Plan may include capacity building funding to assist you to:

- Work with a support coordinator to look at what housing options are available to you
- Work with allied health professionals to assess your housing and support needs

Your support coordinator will write up this work in a housing plan. Your housing plan provides the NDIS with evidence of your housing goals and preferences, and your assessed housing needs. For more information on housing plans, see **Part 3** of this guide.

## NDIS funding to search for housing

If you get capacity building funding in your NDIS plan to search for housing, it may be made up of 2 separate sections – support coordination and allied health assessments.

### 1. Support coordination

The NDIS may provide up to 75 hours of support coordination to assist you to look for appropriate housing and write your housing plan. Your support coordinator should find suitable allied health professionals to assess your housing and support needs. These assessments provide evidence to the NDIS of the personal supports, home modifications or housing design features required to support your independence.

Your support coordinator will use the remaining hours to work with you to define your housing preferences and write your housing plan. For information on choosing your support coordinator and making the most of your capacity building funding, see **Part 2** of this guide.

## 2. Allied health assessments

The NDIS may also provide you with funding to work with allied health professionals to complete a range of housing-related assessments with you. Allied health professionals include:

- Psychologists
- Occupational therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Disability specialists
- Acquired brain injury specialists
- Speech pathologists
- Rehabilitation counsellors
- Social workers
- Nurses

These assessments will provide the NDIS with detailed information about your physical, cognitive and functional support needs. These assessments will help you, your support coordinator and the NDIS to understand how the following supports might maximise your independence:

- Capacity building activities
- Assistive technology
- Home modifications
- Specialist housing design features

The Summer Foundation's Allied Health Housing Assessments Guide explains what types of allied health assessments might be best to work out what housing will suit you and how the NDIS can maximise your independence:

**[summerfoundation.org.au/allied-health-housing-assessments-guide](https://summerfoundation.org.au/allied-health-housing-assessments-guide)**



## Part 2: Making the most of your funding

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Capacity building supports are reduced as your capacity increases, so it's important that you work with your support coordinator to make the most of the capacity building funding the NDIS gives you to search for suitable housing.

### What is a support coordinator and how should I choose one?

If you haven't had a planning meeting with the NDIS, think about who you would like to work with to develop your housing plan. This person is called your support coordinator.

Is there a person or organisation that you have worked with before? Or is there someone with specialist housing knowledge that you would like to work with? If not, ask around – go to workshops and forums, or look at online forums to find someone you would like to work with.

### What does a support coordinator do?

Your support coordinator will help you understand and implement your NDIS plan. They will:

- Help you set up your myGov account
- Help you access your NDIS participant portal, called myplace

The myplace portal allows you to:

- Make service bookings
- Monitor funding
- Submit payment requests
- Provide feedback

## Can I choose anyone to be my support coordinator?

There are rules about who you can choose as your support coordinator. You will need to choose your support coordinator from the NDIS list of registered support coordinators:

**[ndis.gov.au/participants/working-providers/find-registered-provider](https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/working-providers/find-registered-provider)**

## How do I choose the right support coordinator?

If you have capacity building funding to search for housing, it's important that you choose a support coordinator who knows about accessible housing and understands the types of housing that could meet your specific needs.

The following section contains a list of questions that will help you to learn about the support coordinator's housing knowledge and approach. Use this information when you decide whether to enter into a service agreement with them. The answers to these questions may give you important information about whether the person:

- Understands your needs
- Listens to you and will explain things clearly to you
- Will help you to think about what housing and support options might suit you
- Is a good problem solver
- Is able to talk to people in government and help you to get things done
- Can negotiate well with others on your behalf
- Is someone you can work with





## Questions to ask a potential support coordinator

- Tell me about your experience working alongside a person with a disability to navigate a large government department to get a successful outcome. What do you think were the most important things to get a good outcome?
- How is the NDIS improving the lives of people with disability?
- How do you stay up to date with opportunities for participants under the NDIS?
- What experience do you have building the capacity of NDIS participants and their families to find appropriate housing?
- What do you know about specialist disability accommodation (SDA) under the NDIS?
- How do you record and manage your time working with participants' capacity building funding to explore their housing options?
- Tell me about your organisation's experience managing conflicts of interest. For example, if they are registered to provide SDA and supported independent living (SIL), as well as providing support coordination to participants exploring their housing options, how do they manage this potential conflict?

## Exploring mainstream housing options

Allied health assessments give the NDIS the information they need to decide what housing-related supports are reasonable and necessary for you. This might mean increased personal support, capacity building supports, assistive technology and/or home modifications that would allow you to return to your own home, or to live with your family.

If you are currently living in residential aged care or in hospital and you can't return home, you are expected to explore mainstream housing options including:

- Public housing
- Community/social housing
- Private rental – including living with peers who don't have a disability

## If you can't access mainstream housing

Your support coordinator will document the outcome of your search for mainstream housing in your housing plan. If your allied health assessments confirm that you cannot access mainstream housing due to your extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, your support team may liaise to recommend the building type, design category and location of Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) that would maximise your independence.

The NDIS will look at the evidence in your Housing Plan to work out if you are eligible for SDA payments.

## Accessing SDA payments

SDA payments are for the costs of housing for participants who have an 'extreme functional impairment' or 'very high support needs' requiring specialist housing support (to understand what the NDIS means by these terms, see our guide to SDA payments:

**[summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide](https://summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide)**). SDA payments are made directly to the provider.

Ultimately, the NDIS will use your housing plan to decide whether you require SDA. Only a small number of NDIS participants will be eligible for SDA payments. It's important that your housing plan provides relevant evidence of your housing needs and preferences, so that the NDIS can decide whether SDA is reasonable and necessary for you.

Information in your allied health assessments will be used by your support coordinator to recommend which of the following SDA housing design categories would maximise your independence and community and economic participation:

- Improved Livability
- Fully Accessible
- Robust
- High Physical Support



If you require SDA, your housing plan should include your preferred location, building type (such as house, villa, duplex, townhouse, apartment etc), SDA design category, whether you want to live alone or with other people, as well as whether or not you need access to on-site overnight support. See **Part 3** of this guide for more information about how to prepare a housing plan.

For more information on SDA payments, refer to this guide:

**[summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide](https://summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide)**

## **What's next?**

Submit your completed housing plan with a home and living supporting evidence form (**[ndis.gov.au/participants/home-and-living/home-and-living-supporting-evidence-form](https://ndis.gov.au/participants/home-and-living/home-and-living-supporting-evidence-form)**). Advice on how to complete this form can be found here

(**[summerfoundation.org.au/completing-a-home-and-living-supporting-evidence-form-in-relation-to-a-person-requiring-specialist-disability-accommodation-sda](https://summerfoundation.org.au/completing-a-home-and-living-supporting-evidence-form-in-relation-to-a-person-requiring-specialist-disability-accommodation-sda)**).

Submit these at your next NDIS planning meeting. Request the supports you need to reach your goal and if appropriate test your eligibility for SDA.

If your next planning meeting is too far in the future, and/or there is some urgency, such as if your current housing is putting you at risk, then you can request a review before your next planning meeting. The process is explained here: **[ndis.gov.au/participants/using-your-plan/changing-your-plan/change-circumstances](https://ndis.gov.au/participants/using-your-plan/changing-your-plan/change-circumstances)**

If the NDIS decides you are eligible for SDA, then the SDA design category, dwelling type and location will be included in your NDIS Plan.

If you do not get SDA funding (or believe you are in the wrong category), then you can request a review of the decision. See: **[ndis.gov.au/participants/request-review-decision](https://ndis.gov.au/participants/request-review-decision)**

# Part 3: Your housing plan

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## What is a housing plan?

A housing plan is a document that is prepared by your support coordinator to help the NDIS understand your housing needs. It will bring together information about:

- You, your goals and hopes for the future
- Your work, hobbies and community involvement
- Your housing history, current housing arrangements and your search for mainstream housing
- Your disability, your assessed support needs and a support plan recommended by an allied health professional
- Your assessed housing needs – including, if appropriate, a recommendation for SDA
- A life transition plan, which explains the supports you'll need to successfully move into your new housing
- If you are considering moving to a more independent housing situation, a skill development plan, which explains the steps you'll take to get ready for living more independently

The information provided by you and your allied health assessments in your housing plan will help the NDIS make a decision about your reasonable and necessary requirement for:

- Capacity building supports
- Person-to-person supports
- Assistance with daily living
- Tenancy supports
- Assistive technology supports
- Home modifications
- Specialist housing design features that would support you to reach your goals and maximise your independence, including SDA payments – for information on SDA payments, see our separate guide: [summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide](https://summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide)



## How to prepare your housing plan

When finished, your housing plan should include all the information that has helped you to find mainstream housing, or that the NDIS needs to determine your eligibility for SDA.

We are developing resources to help you and your support coordinator prepare your housing plan:

- My housing preferences, where you can record important information about your housing preferences: [summerfoundation.org.au/my-housing-preferences](https://summerfoundation.org.au/my-housing-preferences) (the information you include in this document will also be useful for you when you're applying for a housing vacancy).
- SDA Housing Plan Guide and Template: [summerfoundation.org.au/resources/how-to-write-a-housing-plan/](https://summerfoundation.org.au/resources/how-to-write-a-housing-plan/)
- A guide to allied health assessments: [summerfoundation.org.au/resources/allied-health-housing-assessments-guide/](https://summerfoundation.org.au/resources/allied-health-housing-assessments-guide/)

## If you want to move back home

If you are in hospital or residential aged care, and the information in your housing plan details how you could return to live in your own home with home modifications, you should request the necessary home modifications at your NDIS plan review.



**It is important to note that you can access NDIS funding for complex home modifications, or SDA payments, but not both for the same home.**

## Looking for suitable housing

Your support coordinator will use the information in your 'My Housing Preferences' and allied health assessments to help you to look for suitable mainstream housing. If you find a mainstream house that will suit you and need to request extra supports to help you move, these extra supports should be included in your housing plan.

Submit your completed housing plan with a home and living supporting evidence form ([ndis.gov.au/participants/home-and-living/home-and-living-supporting-evidence-form](https://ndis.gov.au/participants/home-and-living/home-and-living-supporting-evidence-form)) at your next NDIS planning meeting. Request the supports you need to reach your goal and if appropriate test your eligibility for SDA.

If your next planning meeting is too far in the future, and/or there is some urgency, such as your current housing is putting you at risk, then you can request a review before your next planning meeting. The process is explained here: [ndis.gov.au/participants/understanding-your-plan-and-supports/change-circumstances](https://ndis.gov.au/participants/understanding-your-plan-and-supports/change-circumstances)

## What the NDIS may fund in your NDIS plan

The NDIS uses three categories to describe the supports it funds in your NDIS plan:

- Capacity building – activities intended to improve your ability to do things and increase your independence
- Capital – permanent changes to your environment to make things easier for you, such as assistive technologies and home modifications or SDA housing
- Core supports – assistance with day-to-day living

On the basis of the information in your housing plan, the NDIS may fund:

- Your skill development plan, including assistive technologies and capacity building activities to increase your ability to live in mainstream housing
- Home modifications
- Your life transition plan
- Assistance with daily living and/or supports to sustain your informal supports (such as short term accommodation or assistance, or supports in the home)



- More support for self care and day-to-day activities, to ensure that your current housing arrangements don't break down
- Support coordination and other appropriate supports, such as support to make day-to-day decisions and/or tenancy support
- SDA payments
- medium term accommodation
- individualised living options (ILO)

**As mentioned above, the NDIS may fund home modifications, or SDA payments, but not both for the same home.**

## What if I'm not happy with my NDIS plan?

If you are unhappy with your NDIS plan, for example, if your housing plan recommended SDA, but you aren't funded for SDA, you may want to ask the NDIS to review its decision. The process is explained here: [ndis.gov.au/participants/request-review-decision](https://ndis.gov.au/participants/request-review-decision)



There are a number of organisations that can help you through the process of asking the NDIS to review its decision: [askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder](https://askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder)



First published – December 2017. Last updated – June 2023

Updated for accessibility – March 2024

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