

NDIS NUTS & BOLTS #3

Managing the Money for your NDIS Plan!



There are several ways you can deal with the money side of things with the NDIS, and if the way you have chosen isn't working for you, or you need more

support, you can switch at any time – not just at review time – just let your NDIS office know!

At the end of your planning meeting, your NDIS Planner should ask you “How do you want to manage your Plan?”

Here are your choices and the pros and cons as I see them.

1: AGENCY MANAGED

When a participant chooses their Plan to be “Agency Managed” this means your funds are paid directly by the NDIS (the “Agency”) to your registered service providers after services are provided.

With Agency management, you can ONLY choose NDIS Registered Providers (see explanation of terms at the bottom) to give you supports and service with your NDIS funds. Those registered providers have a direct portal link to the NDIS online and electronically send their bills directly to the NDIS after they have provided you a service. Then the NDIS pays them directly.

You (participant or nominee) can check in on the MyPlace NDIS web portal (when it is working) at any time to see how you're tracking with your funds, what has been claimed, and what is left.

This option offers the least choice and control but is a good option for people who aren't looking for much flexibility, and want the security of all registered providers.

Pros: no bookkeeping, no upfront costs, no separate bank account, never audited

Cons: can only choose registered disability providers, less control and creativity over how to spend your funds, and no spontaneity (for example, most registered support worker agencies will have minimum shift lengths that may not suit your needs).

2: SELF MANAGED

This means the money effectively (but not actually) goes to you, the participant, to spend to meet you or your child's goals. You can use any providers or mainstream supports and services - they do not have to be disability specific, nor registered providers.

An example might be that you want to learn to surf, but need two instructors to assist. With self Managed funds, you could pay the fee for the extra instructor from your self-Managed funds – as surf schools are not likely to be Agency registered providers you could not do this if your plan was Agency Managed.

When your plan is self-Managed, it's important to know that no provider is obligated to stick to the NDIS fee schedule – they can set their own fees and charges (this might be good if you want to pay a valued

support worker more than the scheduled fee, or bad if the provider is the only one in town and charges ridiculously high fees).

You'll need to open a separate bank account just for your NDIS funds (for nominees of children, a student account in your child's name or an offset account of your own are both fine, and if you have more than one participant in your family, each of them will need their own account). You can then go out and purchase services and supports yourself.

You can either pay up front for services as you use them or put in claims after you are invoiced, and then pay (very easy on the portal) – your reimbursement will be deposited into your account, usually within a few days. You will need to keep decent records and all of your receipts for auditing purposes.

Pros: complete control of funds, choose any provider or company to help meet your goals (which means you can be more spontaneous), and you can pay higher rates for valued staff and/or be able to negotiate lower prices for stuff and maybe stretch your funds further

Cons: you will probably have to pay for stuff upfront at times and wait for reimbursement, you'll need to keep good records, and you could be audited.

3: PLAN MANAGED

This offers pretty much the same advantages as self Managed, without the disadvantages, and the NDIS adds *extra* funds in your Plan specifically to cover the cost of someone else to do the paperwork and pay providers for you – it's a bit like having your own NDIS funded accountant. Your NDIS funds are reimbursed directly to a registered Plan Manager of your choice when they claim, who then pays the bills that you send them, or your providers can send the bills directly to the Plan Manager. You can use registered or unregistered providers to provide supports and services through a Plan Manager, but all Plan Managers are registered (you can't use your own regular bookkeeper or accountant). The money to fund a Plan Manager is an **added extra** in the Plan, and does not eat into your therapy or any other Plan funds. Make sure, if you choose a Plan Manager, that they have a system that lets you login and see all your claims anytime.

Pros: choose any provider or company to help meet your goals (which means you can be more spontaneous and flexible), you might be able to negotiate lower prices and maybe stretch your funds further, never audited, never have to worry about record keeping.

Cons: your Plan Manager might not pay your providers as quickly as they'd like (but they might – depends on the Plan Manager you choose)

4: A MIX: Plans can be part Self Managed and part Agency Managed, so, for example, you might want your capacity building therapy funds Agency Managed, but Self Manage your consumables continence supplies funds so you can buy nappies on sale and stretch your funds further.

How do you find a Plan Manager?

The NDIS website has a provider search function, which will list registered Plan Managers – I suggest you call a few and interview them BEFORE your planning meeting so you can tell your NDIS planner who you've chosen. When you interview these Plan Managers, ask them how long they take to pay bills, how flexible are they, and whether they have their own online system you can check into anytime to track your claims.

GLOSSARY

The terms I've used in this info sheet are all **very** specific, so have a quick read below to know **exactly** what I'm talking about.

Agency or Scheme– the “National Disability Insurance *Agency*” NDIA are the government group who are responsible for running and implementing the “National Disability Insurance *Scheme*” NDIS which is the program that assesses and provides funds for people with NDIS plans.

Disability service providers - are companies, people, not-for-profits and businesses that offer services specifically to assist people with disability – they could provide therapy, support workers, equipment, behaviour support, accommodation and/or other stuff. People often call them “*Providers*” for short.

Registered Providers – are disability service providers who have jumped through lots of registration hoops and satisfied the NDIA that they meet some basic safeguards and standards. You can generally be assured that registered providers are not recent bankrupts, have appropriate insurances, policies, training and, for example, support workers employed by registered service providers will all have national and state police clearances.

MyPlace – is the online “portal” where participants (people with disability who have NDIS plans for support) or their nominees (usually family carers) can login and see their NDIS plan, how much they have spent, and how much is left. In August 2016, the portal doesn't really work very well, so I will write more about it once it works the way it should)

Remember – and this is one of the most awesomest things about the NDIS – you are no longer begging agencies for their charity – YOU have the power, choice and control, YOU hold the money, and YOU get to choose what works for YOU!

This is just a very short description of a part of the NDIS and how it works, and is the third of a series of Q&A's about the NDIS from The Growing Space.

Information in the Nuts & Bolts information series is current when published, but can be out of date very quickly. Don't make any big decisions based on what you read here – always check!

You are welcome to share this information, but only with credit, in full, with no edits, please. Thanks!
Sam Paor - The Growing Space August copyright 2016

NDIS NUTS & BOLTS #3

How to Manage the Money for your NDIS Plan

Easy to Read

There are different ways to pay your disability help with your NDIS money. You can change the way your supports are paid anytime – just let the NDIS know.

At your meeting with the NDIS, they will ask how you want to look after the money. You will need to decide. Here are the ways.

1. AGENCY MANAGED

This means that the NDIS pays your bills for you and you don't have to worry about it.

It also means you can only choose disability supports and services who have registered their business.

This might mean they are safer than businesses who are not registered.

Good things: You don't have to keep any paperwork or open a special bank account

Bad things: You can't buy things from anyone except registered providers

2. SELF MANAGED

This means that you look after all your own bills and keep good records. You need to be good at maths and careful about keeping records to do this.

If you self-manage your plan you can use your NDIS funds and choose and pay any place or provider to help you with your disability.

If you self manage, you need to open a new bank account just for NDIS. You will also need to use a computer or fill in forms to get the money paid back to your bank account for your disability supports and services.

Good things: You can choose anyone to provide your support and services

Bad things: You have to be good at maths and budgeting

3. PLAN MANAGED

If you choose Plan Management for your NDIS funds, the NDIS will pay someone you choose from their list to help you manage the money and pay your bills. The NDIS will pay extra to pay for their help.

With Plan Management you can choose any place or provider to help you with your disability. Plan

Management means you have lots of choice and control, but don't need to be good at maths or budgeting, because your Plan Manager will help you.

Good things: You don't have to keep any paperwork or open a special bank account and you can choose anyone to provide your supports and services

Bad things: Sometimes, with some Plan Managers, your bill might be paid late

There will be more information about the NDIS coming from The Growing Space. This information can change quickly, so always check! You can share this page with your friends if you do not make any changes to it. -- Sam Paior, The Growing Space copyright 2016

