



Recovery and the NDIS

Recovery-oriented practice is a holistic approach to mental health that goes beyond the traditional medical model. Recovery approaches recognise that each person's journey is different, and support individuals to identify their own goals and aspirations for living a meaningful and purposeful life.

In the NDIS, people living with a psychosocial disability are supported to identify their goals and aspirations and to choose which services and supports will help to achieve these. This aligns well with recovery-oriented practice, which emphasises that recovery is not about a cure, but about supporting people to live the kind of life they choose.

What is recovery?

The concept of recovery was conceived by, and for, people living with mental health conditions to describe their own experiences and journeys and to affirm personal identity beyond the constraints of their diagnoses. When we use the term 'recovery' in the mental health setting we are referring to the idea of 'personal recovery' rather than 'clinical recovery'.

Clinical recovery focuses on alleviating or controlling symptoms of mental health conditions. It is:

- based on the medical model of health and wellbeing
- focused on 'getting rid of' symptoms and restoring social function
- focused on 'getting back to normal'.

Personal recovery is about creating a meaningful and contributing life whilst living with, or recovering from, the impacts of mental health conditions. It acknowledges that recovery is:

- a unique and personal journey
- a normal human process
- an ongoing experience and different from an end point or cure
- a journey rarely taken alone
- nonlinear and interspersed with both achievements and setbacks.

Recovery and the NDIS

From a recovery perspective, there is a lot to be excited about when it comes to the NDIS.

Here are some of the ways that the NDIS is changing service delivery to support individual recovery:

Social and economic participation

Supporting people to be active and contributing members of society is the main aim of the NDIS. This inclusive framework empowers people to live the lives they choose and recognises the value of diversity and inclusivity.



Innovative service delivery

NDIS services don't have to 'fit the mould' of traditional mental health and disability services. People can now use their NDIS funding to access personalised and innovative services, or those that aren't traditionally aimed at people with a disability. NDIS funding can help people to do things that they never dreamed of doing before.

Building community capacity

The NDIS is about more than individual support funding. It also recognises how important it is that communities, businesses and mainstream services are inclusive of people with a disability and have the knowledge to appropriately support people to engage in the broader community.

National ILC grant rounds

These provide funding to organisations to work with the broader community and break down the barriers that stop people with a disability from living an everyday life of their choosing.

Recovery principles

The [principles of recovery-oriented mental health practice](#) ensure that mental health services are delivered in a way that supports the recovery of mental health consumers. The principles are:

- **Uniqueness** – everyone’s recovery journey is different
- **Real choices** – people are the experts in their own lives
- **Attitudes and rights** – everyone has the right to live a meaningful and connected life
- **Dignity and respect** – communities must be accessible to, and respectful of, people from all backgrounds
- **Partnership and communication** – people should be involved in all aspects of their recovery journey and care
- **Evaluating recovery** – the outcomes of recovery practices can be seen in many ways including through improved social connections and participation in daily life.

This table summarises how the principles of the NDIS align with recovery practice.

Recovery principles	NDIS principles	Be a recovery practitioner in the NDIS
Uniqueness Everyone's recovery journey is different	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people will have choice and control over the services they receive and from whom. • goals and aspirations as identified by the person will guide recovery and service outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use supported decision making to ensure people are exercising choice and control • manage all potential conflicts of interest • develop service agreements in partnership with people to ensure their goals and service needs are met • be flexible and adaptive
Real Choices People are experts in their own lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choice and control • a flexible funding approach to develop a new disability services market - services will develop based on what people want, not what is available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think creatively about your service and the services you refer to - how can the flexibility of the NDIS lead to new and innovative services?
Attitudes and rights Everyone has the right to live a meaningful and connected life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the NDIS puts people in charge of their plan and their funding • carers and trusted others are included in the NDIS journey • social and economic participation for people with a disability is the main aim of the NDIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support people to participate in social, recreation and/or work activities that are meaningful to them • listen to people and their carers about what is important to them
Dignity and respect Communities must be accessible to, and respectful of, people from all backgrounds.	Respecting people's values, beliefs and culture through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person centred planning • Goals and aspirations • Choice and control Challenging discrimination with services and the broader community through community inclusion grant funding and an emphasis on social and economic participation for NDIS participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to people about what they want • be courteous, respectful and honest in all interactions • allow dignity of risk
Partnership and Communication People should be involved in all aspects of their recovery journey and care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person centred planning and goal driven service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise that service delivery is a partnership and communicate regularly to make sure everyone is on the same page
Evaluating Recovery The outcomes of recovery practices can be seen in many ways including through improved social connections and participation in daily life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDIS outcomes framework which measures progress toward goals across important life domains (e.g., relationships, work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be mindful of the person's goals and what your service is doing to help the person achieve those goals • always build skills and capacity – do things with people and not for them.



Recovery-oriented practice in the NDIS

As the NDIS has a capacity-building focus, it is important to take a recovery-oriented approach when working with participants.

Recovery-oriented language

The words we use have an impact, and recovery-oriented language keeps the focus on capacity building and on mental health recovery.

According to the Mental Health Coordinating Council, recovery-oriented language needs to be:

- Respectful
- Non-judgemental
- Clear and understandable
- Free of jargon, confusing data and speculative comment
- Consistent with our body language
- Sincere in carrying a sense of commitment, hope and presenting the potential for opportunity
- Strengths-based.

Recovery-oriented practice

Recovery-oriented services acknowledge that people are the experts in their own lives, while recovery practitioners are the experts on available services and supports.

Recovery-oriented practice is about respecting individual choices and supporting people to make decisions. It focuses on doing things with people, not for them.

Recovery-oriented practice is a partnership which focuses on:

- supporting people to embrace their strengths, resilience and inherent capacity for living a full and meaningful life of their choosing
- adapting to people's needs and aspirations, rather than people having to adapt to the requirements of the service
- being trauma-informed, culturally aware and culturally safe
- being person-centred by maximising self-determination and self-management of mental health and wellbeing
- being aware of and addressing the broader factors that impact wellbeing and social inclusion of people experiencing mental health issues such as the social determinants of health
- supporting families and carers to understand people's experiences and how they can assist with recovery
- supporting local communities to accept, welcome and include people living with mental health conditions.

Recovery and the access process

To access the NDIS people will need to show that they have a likely permanent disability and that they have substantial difficulties in at least one domain of daily life.



Some people may find this challenging and feel like it is contradictory to the recovery principles. Your recovery-oriented skills and knowledge are crucial here.

You may want to keep the following messages in mind when working with people during the access phase:

- The NDIA needs evidence that the impairment caused by the mental health condition is likely to remain across the person's lifetime. Confirming that the person's impairment is likely permanent bears no reflection on whether the person has achieved their best possible version of personal and emotional wellbeing.
- The NDIS supports recovery by funding services and supports, as chosen by the individual, to meet their needs. It may feel confronting to identify areas of need, but doing so will empower people to live the life they choose and get the services they want.

Tip! When writing access requests using recovery language, make sure you talk about the support that someone is receiving to help them maintain their current functioning. It's ok to write the application in a positive way, but make sure that you're still painting a really clear picture of what the person's life looks like without the support in place.

Some people that come into NDIS are functioning really well because they've been very well supported prior to their access request. It's fine to say that, but you need to demonstrate the supports that they require to keep them at that level of function, so the assessor can see the level of support that they're likely to continue to need in the future.

Further information

We have a range of resources that can help you understand the NDIS. Check out:

- [NDIS explained training](#)
- [NDIS explained factsheet](#)
- [NDIS access and psychosocial disability training](#)
- [Guide to writing a good support worker letter](#)
- [Principles of recovery-oriented mental health practice](#)
- [Recovery training module](#)

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