

NDIS Tip Sheet 5 – Selecting Services

Tips to consider when purchasing Services and Supports

These tips are provided as helpful practical issues and questions to use where they are relevant to your situation, in your selections of service providers and/or other supports.



In this era of managing your own supports (i.e. self-directed approaches) it is important for people with a disability and their families/supporters who are embarking on this journey to have good information to support them.

This document is aimed at providing individuals **with ideas to consider** in their decision-making about which service/agency to purchase support off. This information may also assist individuals to avoid potential difficulties.

Some of the information can be found in the service's brochures, annual reports or on their website. So, you **don't have to sit and ask every question** of a potential service. However, some of your individual questions about how you want to do things will need to be asked directly **in the context** of the type of activity or staff support that you are after.

Financial Considerations

Of course, this is a key area especially when purchasing services and/or staff hours off a service provider, which means there are also many pitfalls.

- How does the cost per hour (if purchasing staff per hour) or per day or per program (where applicable) compare to the NDIS Price Catalogue i.e. equal to or less or more?
- How often are invoices sent monthly or fortnightly and how much time do you normally have in which to pay their invoices?
- What other costs will the service charge you? Note: NDIS Registered Providers cannot charge you more than the NDIS Price Catalogue unit cost for that type of support, but unregistered providers can set their own prices. - *just Google 'NDIS Pricing'*
- What is the minimum time for a shift booking e.g. 1 hour, 2 hours?
- Can you employ staff casually according to your roster (i.e. not permanent part-time or full-time)?
- How much notice has to be given for cancelling a specific booking/shift to avoid still having to pay for the shift? e.g. 2 business days
- Do you have to sign a Service Agreement and can you vary it to suit your needs?
- Will the service take bookings for shifts if a Service Agreement runs out e.g. NDIS is late in approving a Plan and therefore a new plan can't be 'sighted' for a short time?
- How much notice do you have to give to break the Service Agreement and move to another service? e.g. one month

Staffing Considerations

When thinking about buying staff with your Plan, you will need to consider things like how much involvement you want in the selection, orientation & monitoring of staff.

If you want to be 'hands on' (i.e. **select and/or manage your own staff**) then you will need to think about things such as:

- Can you select your own staff and then have the service sign them up as employees?
- Will they assist you develop up a pool of staff that are familiar with you or your family member and then only roster these staff for providing your support?
- Can you provide supervision and support to your pool of staff?
- If your pool of staff are only providing support to you (and you are supervising them), can they then be exempted from:
 - ordinary staff in-services, comprehensive supervision if not required?
 - the full 'orientation' process, e.g. shouldn't need some non-safety training
- What are the key policies that you will need to be mindful of in supervising staff who are technically employed by the service? e.g. provision of a safe working environment; safe lifting policy; medication administration.

If you choose **not to select your own staff** then consider issues such as the following:

- Can you have an agreed trial period for staff?
- Will the service agree to send only familiar staff from a small pool (number will depend on the amount of hours required etc.) of their staff?
- Can you have shadow shifts for new staff to learn from regular staff?
- Do they have staff who are willing to ??? (insert the things you need) e.g.
 - work after hours, e.g. in the evening, weekends
 - go on public transport?
 - support the person participate in activities (whatever you need), e.g. swimming, golf
- For example, would you have staff that would take the person to the football on public transport in the evening?

General issues you might want to ask a service if it is relevant to your situation:

- Can you provide your own orientation to staff in addition to services orientation?
- Where there are personal care tasks required of staff, especially involving physical support, you might need to ask if there are special OH&S requirements for your bathroom or the use of hoists etc.
- What basic level of training are the service's staff required to have?
- Has the service been providing support to people with disabilities for very long (e.g. some health &/or aged services are now registered for the NDIS), if not do they have disability experienced staff to provide you?
- Will the service be willing to provide additional training to staff to meet your needs?

Volunteers

- Are volunteers able to be involved and accompany paid staff on activities?
- Can you provide reimbursements from you funds to volunteers for their expenses?

Policy Considerations

Individuals and families need to think about what they may want staff to do as part of their support role with them. This is because sometimes a service you wish to purchase 'staff hours' off, may have policies that either support or obstruct the program that you have in mind for yourself / your family member?

The key question is will they only provide services within these policies?

e.g. if they are the technical employer of the staff involved in your program & their policies say that staff cannot transport participants in their own car, can this be negotiated?

So, you may wish to ask about and/or ask for a copy of a service's policies around the following areas depending on the role you have in mind.

Transport

- Are staff able to transport participants, if so in their own car or agencies?
- Are staff allowed to have other passengers, such as family members?
- If it is a service-based activity you are purchasing, is transport provided to and from the service and if so, at what cost?
- If a full day activity, is other transport required during the day (e.g. to go from one activity to another) going to be charged in addition?

Staffing / Employment

- Do they have a staff recruitment policy?
- How are new staff provided with general orientation about the service?
- How are new staff provided with the opportunity to orientate themselves about the 'clients' they support? e.g. client profile summary, shadow shift
- Does the service have a minimum staff qualification policy that may prohibit local people with the specific skills that you want to provide a program for you?
- Can you book staff shifts directly with your pool staff?
- What basic training do staff have?
- What cultural awareness training have staff had?
- If you have specific needs, e.g. behaviour support, lifting, then you should ask if they have staff with this training? If not, will they up-skill staff for you?

Occupational Health & Safety

- How strict is it – prohibitive or flexible? e.g. with additional training would things be different?
- Does it restrict any of the activities you might want provided, e.g. administering medication, showering person in your shower, transport

Fees Policy

- Does the service have a fees policy?
- Are there additional charges, such as for administration, activities (eg. entrance fee to swimming) or for the use of vehicles/transport?
- How often are there increases in charges and fees?
- How are participants and their families consulted about fee changes?

Complaints Policy

- Does the service have a Complaints Policy that is easy to obtain?
- If you have problems or issues who should you talk to?
- Can you give constructive feedback in confidence to the nominated person?
- How are families involved in quality assurance processes?
- Are there appropriate versions of this policy available for your use e.g. other languages if needed or for you family member e.g. plain English pictorial?

Communication Considerations

Communication is key to working with a service, so it is worth finding out a bit about what you can expect from the service.

- What regular communication can you expect to receive?
- Who will be your contact for ordinary bookings?
- Will you/your family member have a Key Worker?
- If you have problems or issues who should you talk to?

Quality

- Is the service a Registered Service Provider under the NDIS Act 2013?
- You may also wish to know what quality assurance process they use, that is, what Standards have they been accredited against, e.g. ISO, NDIS, Health?
- Is there accreditation up to date?
- What type of involvement do participants and families have in quality assurance, e.g. are you sent an annual survey or do they hold feedback Forums?

Finding Services

You can purchase supports with your NDIS package from NDIS Registered providers.

NDIS also has a list of NDIS Registered Service Providers:

- *just Google 'NDIS providers list'*

You can also purchase supports with your NDIS package from unregistered providers if you have the correct funds management option (i.e. Plan Management or Self-Management) in your NDIS Plan. (*refer to VALID NDIS Tip Sheet 9*)

If you can't find what you are looking for, then go back and ask your planner or if you have a LAC (Local Area Coordinator) service they should be able to assist you.

Reminder: that if you have tried a service and it isn't working out for whatever reason (problems that you couldn't work out or not appropriate to needs), then you can change to another service as long as it provides the same type (category) of support. e.g. Support Coordination provider to another Support Coordination service.

This NDIS Tip Sheet is a resource developed by the VALID Family Team.

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