

# Health & NDIS: Interface in the age of COVID-19

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# NDIS Health Liaison Officers (HLO)

- The roll out of the Health Liaison Officer (HLO) positions, was a joint initiative between NSW Health and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- There are currently 4 HLOs working across NSW in collaboration with NSW Health
- The HLOs work closely with the NDIS Transition Leads, to identify patients in hospital whose are clinically ready for discharge
- They work to resolve NDIS-related issues to expedite participant discharge from hospital.
- Feedback from around the state is that HLOs are doing a great job and have been instrumental in the safe discharge of participants from hospital into the community.

**N.B.** Providers **do not** need to reach out to HLOs. If the HLO needs to contact you, they will reach out.



# NDIS Transition Leads

The NDIS Transition Leads act as local interface between the NDIA and NSW Health. They work closely with participants and those likely to be eligible for the Scheme and their families, Support Coordinators, clinicians and other in their own LHD/SHN and other LHDs/SHNs, the Ministry of Health (MOH), clinicians in the community, registered NDIS providers, other service providers, and anyone else necessary to assist people with disability access the Scheme and transition safely out of hospital into the community and stay safe and supported in the community.

They have multiple responsibilities, that include:

- patient advocacy
- liaison (with service providers, patients, carers and families etc.)
- raising NDIS participant issues through established NDIS escalation processes (focussed on local level resolution with backup escalation routes through the MOH for resolution with the NDIA)
- capacity building through education, information sharing, resource development and training delivered to patients, staff and the community to better understand the NDIS, and
- engagement with HLOs, planners and other NDIA staff to facilitate safe discharge for participants back into the community.

**N.B.** If you need to get in touch with an NDIS Transition Lead in your Local Health District regarding a participant related issue, please contact the [MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au) and we will liaise with the NDIS Transition Lead to arrange contact as appropriate.

# SDA and SIL Vacancies

- NSW Health has been working closely with SDA, SIL and Support Coordinator providers
- This has intensified over the last 6-8 weeks as providers have been providing their lists of vacancies to the Ministry for distribution to LHDs, SHNs and the NDIA.
- The vacancy lists have been instrumental in matching patients with permanent and temporary destinations to discharge to.
- NSW Health will continue to meet via teleconference with SDA, SIL and Support Coordinator providers in an effort to identify vacancies across NSW and neighboring states/territories to facilitate matches. **The next meeting will be on 16 April 2020.**
- A request was sent to providers on 6 April asking for SDA and SIL vacancies to be advised to the Ministry by **8 April 2020**. Providers interested in submitting their vacancies can do so via the following email address:

[MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au)

# COVID-19 Update

- **PPE** – information and relevant contacts regarding access to PPE from NSW Health (for immediate needs where there is a suspected or actual outbreak) and the National Stockpile (for ongoing needs) are referenced in the following slides.
- **Designation of disability services as ‘essential’ services** – the current Public Health Order applicable in NSW (<https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/what-you-can-and-cant-do-under-rules>) **exempts disability services** from limitations on mass gatherings (that is, now no more than 2 people together outside) and the 4 square metre rule (maximum density of people allowed in indoor spaces). There is currently no other legislation or order that applies any other special designation to disability services as being ‘essential’ services. The NDIS Q&S Commission will carry advice for providers on any change to their designation.
- **Usual services** – there are no current restriction on providers continuing to operate their usual services (including day programs), however appropriate risk management principles should be applied that accord with the published NSW Health general public health advice for limiting and containing the potential for spread of the virus (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-resources.aspx>). If in doubt, contact the NDIS Q&S Commission.
- **Resident groups going outside** – residents from the same household are currently exempt from the 2 person restrictions on public gatherings. While some areas have been closed (e.g. some public parks and public buildings), you may wish to make contact with your local council to discuss options and alert them to the exemption for public gatherings for disability services.
- **Families withdrawing family members from group homes** – The NDIS Q&S Commission is aware of this issue. In the absence of any additional specific advice, there is no additional risk for residents in continuing to live in a group home and disability services should continue to operate as usual, as far as possible, noting infection control guidance and application of appropriate risk management principles.



# Questions for the NDIA

- Can a participant's funding be redirected to pay for delivery of medication if they are required to isolate?
- Can you provide information on access to low cost assistive technology (e.g. tablets/laptops) to facilitate telehealth? Will internet data be funded as well or only the device?
- Is SIL included in automatic plan renewals?
- Can SDA providers provide Medium Term Accommodation (MTA) in SDA dwellings?
- How to we escalate for a light touch review? Is it through a Change of Circumstances Review application?
- How participants access short, medium or long term accommodation options while SIL eligibility/quote is being finalised?
- We have a number of clients who would usually attend regular day programs that are now closed. We are now needing the increase staff to look after the clients who must remain at home. Will there be additional funding? Does this fall under the light touch review to cover our additional staffing? Can day programs continue to charge even when they are suspended for Covid-related purposes?

# Update on Infection Control

WHERE THERE IS A SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19 IN A GROUP HOME OR PRIVATE DWELLING IN NSW  
WHERE DISABILITY SERVICES ARE BEING PROVIDED

## Immediate Need

- **NSW Health** will consider any request for immediate assistance with PPE from providers or self-managing participants who do not have supplies. Decisions will be made at a point in time based on our current stock levels and the needs across the public health system. As much as possible, we will seek to provide the requested items, but we may have to draw on alternative products (noting that we will only supply CEC-approved items) or partially fill requests.
- Providers/self-managing participants with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 should direct their inquiries regarding PPE to [MOH-JamesCovid19Support@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-JamesCovid19Support@health.nsw.gov.au)
- NSW Health expects that NDIS providers/self-managing participants will also immediately alert the National Stockpile to their ongoing PPE needs associated with suspected or confirmed cases.

# Update on Infection Control

## Ongoing Need

- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission** has issued (31/3/20) information for providers on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020-03/fact-sheet-covid-19-provider-information-about-ppe.pdf>
- **NDIS providers and self-managing participants** who can no longer access PPE supplies through usual suppliers can identify their needs by contacting the National Medical Stockpile by emailing: [NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au](mailto:NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au)



# Official Sources of Information and Resources

- **Commonwealth Department of Health (DOH)** is closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic <https://www.health.gov.au/>. DoH provides daily updates, answering your questions about the latest news, current facts and figures, travel advice, key contact and phone numbers.
- **NSW Health** has:
  - a COVID-19 page focused on public health issues: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>
  - translated factsheets, information, videos and posters into various languages: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus-resources-cald.aspx>
  - CALD resources addressing infection control on the NSW Health website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-resources.aspx>
- **NSW Clinical Excellence Commission** has everything you want to know about PPE and more at: <http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/keep-patients-safe/COVID-19>
- The **NDIA** has information for NDIS participants, their family and carers. This includes frequently asked questions and easy read resources available at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus#faq>
- The **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission** has information specifically for service providers, including an online training module for disability support workers. <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-information>
- The **NSW Department of Communities and Justice** has a webpage dedicated to the COVID-19 response with useful links and resources specific to vulnerable populations including people with disability <https://coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/>. Service provider information is available at <https://coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/services/service-providers>.

# Contacts

- **Medical assistance**
  - Phone your GP or hospital emergency department (ED) or call **healthdirect** on **1800 022 222** or visit at <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>.
  - If you have a medical emergency call 000.
- **NSW Ministry of Health**
  - Email questions to the MOH-NDIS Inbox - [MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au).
- **NDIA**
  - Phone **1800 800 110**, contact your Local Area Coordinator or visit <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus>.
- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission**
  - Phone **1800 035 544** or visit the website at <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/>.