Background:

In the NDIS, psychosocial disability refers to disability that arises from a long-term mental health condition.

It focuses on how impairments affect a person's functioning, rather than the diagnosis itself.

To access the NDIS, applicants must provide evidence to meet NDIS eligibility requirements.

In recent years, people with psychosocial disability, carers and the mental health sector have raised concerns about NDIS access rates for people with psychosocial disability.

While there have been no formal changes to NDIA access policy, guidance or decision-making, the number of people with psychosocial disability accessing the scheme has declined.

Purpose of the review:

- Explore current practice factors that could be impacting access rates for people with psychosocial disability.
- Provide greater visibility on how access decisions are made for applicants with psychosocial disability.
- Identify targeted areas for improvement to guidance and workforce capability.
- Provide actionable insights that support consistent practice and better-quality decision making.

What we did:

In response to these concerns, we conducted an internal practice review to identify factors that could be affecting access outcomes for people with psychosocial disability. A practice review helps organisations understand what is working well in their services and what could be improved.

The review was conducted between February and June 2026 and looked at the main steps in the NDIA access pathway. The practice review drew on several data sources including:

- in-depth interviews with NDIA Access Delegates, Quality Officers, and Technical Advisory and Practice Improvement Branch Advisors

focus groups with Local Area Coordinators

- review of access cases processed in 2025 (including Administrative Review Tribunal matters)
- review of over 40 guidance documents on NDIS eligibility and access
- analysis of NDIA administrative data from 2025.

What we found:

Our analysis found two key themes. These themes highlight specific challenges in the access process and NDIA practices for applicants with psychosocial disability.

- Theme 1: Evidence to support access applications

The NDIA's publicly available information on psychosocial disability access can be confusing, difficult to navigate and lacks the detail needed to understand NDIS eligibility requirements. As a result, access applications often do not include the evidence Access Delegates need to assess against NDIS eligibility criteria.

- Theme 2: Guidance and decision making

Internal guidance and processes do not adequately support Access Delegates to interpret and assess complex psychosocial disability evidence.

Without easily accessible resources and decision-making tools, Access Delegates reported difficulty assessing the evidence against eligibility criteria and making consistent decisions.

Opportunities for action:

- Clearer, simpler and more consistent public information could help applicants and supporting professionals better understand NDIS eligibility requirements and the evidence needed to support an access request.
- Access decision-making could be strengthened through clearer guidance on eligibility requirements and practical tools to help Access Delegates interpret and assess complex clinical evidence consistently and confidently.

What happens next?

The Practice Review has highlighted key opportunities to improve our practice. To do this, we will focus on:

- Simplifying public-facing guidance to help people with psychosocial disability know what information to give us when they apply.
- Supporting NDIA staff, skills and practice to enhance decision-making quality and consistency.

Contact us if you have any questions regarding these reports:

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