



A Guide to Selecting Therapy and Specialist Services

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Therapy and specialist services can offer a range of benefits to people with disability, their families and carers.

They support health and wellbeing, improve functioning and maximise ability, help develop independence, build people's skills and enable increased participation in community life.

What services are available?

Therapy and specialist services may be included in your individual My Way plan and may be funded through WA NDIS My Way. Your My Way Coordinator can let you know what services are available and can provide you with a list of Commission endorsed service providers. This means that the provider has been recognised as having staff with the right qualifications and under the terms of their contracts, must ensure that service standards are met.

There are a wide range of therapy and specialist services that people can access, including but not limited to:

- physiotherapy
- psychology
- occupational therapy
- social work
- speech pathology
- podiatry
- dietetics
- human relationship counselling
- assistive technology, aids and equipment prescription.

Therapy Packages

Therapy can be accessed through different types of packages depending on your particular need. They are:

- **Generalist Therapy Package** – where a number of different therapist work together to help you achieve your goals.
- **Specialist Therapy Package** is specific to areas such as complex aids and equipment needs, complex behavioural support, human relationship counselling etc).

A combination of generalist and specialist packages may also be deemed reasonable and necessary to achieve your goals.

Therapy and specialist service providers include private providers, non-government organisations and in the Lower South West only, the WA Country Health Service.

Choosing a therapy service provider

There are three suggested steps when choosing a service provider:

1. Initial research

Gather information and make enquiries about service providers in your area. This may include internet research, talking to other families and discussing options with your My Way Coordinator. There are links to additional information included in this document.

2. Talk to potential service providers

If you are able to meet face-to-face, let the service provider know the purpose of the meeting, who will be attending, if interpreter services are required or if there are any cultural considerations. Not all providers will have the time and resources to meet with all potential clients, so if a meeting is not possible you can speak over the phone.

3. Weigh up your options

The services that are best for you and your family depend on your particular needs. When deciding on a service provider or specific therapy or specialist support, there are a number of factors to consider such as:

- What are your options?
- Is this the only provider or are there other good choices?
- Does the service base its approach on sound evidence and best practice?
- Is the provider able to offer the range of specialist services you and your family require?
- Does the price seem reasonable for the quality or type of the services provided?
- How comfortable do you feel about any interactions you've had with the service or therapist?
- The personal and practical benefits. For example, your values, where you live and the personal and financial costs.

Note – There is a checklist at the end of this document with questions to consider asking service providers.

Who is responsible for quality assurance?

This depends on how the funded strategy in your My Way plan is managed. There are two funding management options available to people in WA NDIS My Way sites:

- **Self-managed**

You or your representative (e.g. parent, spouse or guardian) may prefer to receive the funds and pay for services directly (Footnote 1).

If you are self-managing your funding, you are responsible for the quality of the paid supports and services you select. You may wish to ask about the quality checks they have in place.

- **Organisation managed**

You may prefer to choose a service provider that has a contract with the Commission to receive the funds for therapy and provide the services to you. This can include shared management arrangements.

Service providers who have a contract with the Commission must comply with the Commission's Quality System (Footnote 2). Through the quality system, the Commission monitors and evaluates service quality and service providers are expected to continuously improve the services they provide. Service providers must also meet outcomes that have been agreed between you and the provider.

Your My Way Coordinator can discuss these options with you.

Other considerations when choosing a service provider

If you are partly or fully managing your funding for therapy and want to choose a therapist or service provider **not** contracted with the Commission, it may be difficult to negotiate your way through all the information, particularly for people who are accessing therapy services for the first time.

While it is expected that services should be innovative and demonstrate best practice in therapy provision, in general you should be wary of:

- claims that any particular intervention will provide “cure” or “fix”
- costs which seem too low or excessive
- use of scientific jargon (this does not necessarily mean a service is using a scientifically, best practice or proven approach).

If you have any doubts or concerns discuss these with your My Way Coordinator.

What other resources are available?

In addition to your My Way Coordinator and the Disability Services Commission website, you might like to consider accessing information from professional and peak bodies including:

[Australian Health Practitioner Registration Agency](http://www.ahpra.gov.au) (www.ahpra.gov.au)

[Speech Pathology Australia](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au) (www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

[Australian Association of Social Workers](http://www.aasw.asn.au) (www.aasw.asn.au)

[Dieticians Association of Australia](http://www.daa.asn.au) (www.daa.asn.au)

[Carers WA](http://www.carerswa.asn.au) (www.carerswa.asn.au)

[National Disability Services \(WA\)](http://www.nds.org.au) (www.nds.org.au)

[Raising Children Network](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au) (www.raisingchildren.net.au)

[Early Childhood Intervention Australia](http://www.ecia.org.au) (www.ecia.org.au)

Further information

- Visit the Commission's website www.disability.wa.gov.au
- Email: MyWay@dsc.wa.gov.au
- Phone: 1800 996 214
- TTY: 9426 9315

Am I Eligible? – This online tool allows people to carry out an initial eligibility assessment for WA NDIS My Way. Visit the Commission's website and click on Am I Eligible? It also provides contact details for State Government disability services throughout WA.

Checklist

Skills and experience

It is important to consider the skills and experience of the staff that the provider employs. Providers that are contracted to the Commission already need to meet a standard for demonstrating the skills of their staff.

Questions to ask:

1. What training and experience does your staff have in relation to helping people with _____ work towards their goals?
2. What results have you achieved with other people who have similar goals to mine?
3. What professions do you employ / work with?
4. How do your staff keep their skills up to date so that supports and services are effective?
5. Do you have experience working with people from my cultural background?
6. Do your staff have current National Police Clearances and Working with Children Checks?

How the service will be provided

It is important to ask questions about how the provider will link in other professionals and specialist services.

The Commission supports a team approach to provide the range of expertise needed to meet individual, family and community goals. Broadly, this refers to a team of professionals such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, psychologists and speech therapists, working together to provide services to meet the specific needs of the person and family and to adjust the balance of these services as the person's needs change.

Services should be provided in a range of natural settings wherever possible, such as in the home and local community, day care, preschools, schools, work and other locations.

Questions to ask:

1. How do you work with other professionals involved in my plan?
2. How will I communicate with my therapists?
3. Is there one main contact person, or do I talk directly with each team member as needed?
4. Are interpreter services available? (if required)
5. Where are you located?
6. Where are you able to provide the therapy services? Where will I access your service?
7. Do you use technology as part of your support? i.e. Do you use video sessions, iPad/Android apps, Skype, email?
8. What times are available for appointments? i.e. Do you only offer services Monday-Friday 9am-5pm or is there flexibility? (times before / after school or work). Are services available on the weekend?
9. How soon can I start? Is there a waitlist?

Individualised services

The Commission supports a self-directed approach. This means you will have genuine choice and control over your supports and services.

Services should:

- have you at the centre of your therapy plan
- not take a one size fits all approach
- assist people to be part of their local community
- promote and support you to develop and maintain connections, networks and relationships
- provide you with opportunities for life-long learning and development.

Questions to ask:

1. Are your services person and family centred?
2. How will you work with me, my family and others involved in my care?
3. Are there options for meeting other people and families in similar circumstances?
4. Can your service support me to link in with my local community and build relationships?
5. Can your service provide support and guidance to other organisations that I am already involved with? (e.g. sporting clubs, community groups)
6. What happens if my needs change?
7. How often will you need to see me?
8. Is this a long or short term service?
9. How will we measure my progress? Will I get a report to keep or will we have regular meetings?
10. How long do you think it will take to achieve my goals?
11. How do I get in touch with you between sessions if I have questions?
12. How are issues or disputes managed if they arise?
13. Do you provide other types of services that may be useful?

Funding arrangements

The WA NDIS My Way Support Clusters Pricing Arrangements outline information about pricing, costing of travel, cancellations and so on, and applies to Commission endorsed service providers. This can be found at:

www.disability.wa.gov.au > WA NDIS My Way > WA NDIS My Way Service Providers > Pricing arrangements

Questions to ask:

1. How much does the service cost?
2. How is payment arranged?
3. What exactly is provided for that amount? What can I expect from the service?
4. Do you have a cancellation policy? Do I need to pay for appointments I don't attend?
5. What happens if a staff member is not able to make the appointment? Will I still be charged?
6. Are there any costs which are not covered by my plan?

Weighing up your options

The goal is to choose a therapist you feel comfortable with so you can all work together to ensure the therapy is successful.

Questions to ask:

1. Is this the only provider or are there other good choices?
2. Does the service base its approach on sound evidence and best practice?
3. Is the provider able to offer the range of specialist services you and your family require
4. Does the price seem reasonable for the quality or type of service provided?
5. How comfortable do you feel about any interactions you've had with the service or therapist?
6. The personal and practical benefits e.g. your values, where you live, the personal and financial costs

Footnotes:

1. Self-management of funds requires the approval of the My Way Coordinator (see WA NDIS My Way Policy – Plan Management Decisions).
2. Disability Services Commission Quality System Policy, 14 March 2014.