

Support Coordination National Summit

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Stories & Insights



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Man's Weekend	4
Assistive Technology for Behaviour Support Needs	5
Support Coordination in Remote Communities	6
Exploring Housing Options with Support Coordination	7
Peer Support Coordination	9
Plan Review Reports	10
Home: Where the "I" is for Individual	12
Workflows & Templates	14



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A Man's Weekend

The Growing Space | Ben Paior - Smith & Sam Paior

If you ask Ben Paior-Smith his thoughts about your standard Short Term Accommodation (STA) facility, his answer is pretty unambiguous- "URGH!" However, the idea of getting away from mum for a weekend is "pretty cool." Like many 19 year olds, Ben wants to drink beer and hang out in the city with friends. He and his mum, Sam were looking for the opportunity for him to do just that.

The Solution

Ben pooled his NDIS funds together with a friend to go away for a Man's Weekend. The STA line item is designed to cover the costs of food, accommodation, support and activities for the time away. As the boys self manage their funds, they chose to use unregistered providers, staying in an Airbnb, eating at restaurants, buying tickets to a local festival and directly employing their support worker, Clarrie.

Clarrie supported the boys to learn the skills of safe alcohol consumption and how to travel around the CBD independently. In the end, it cost less than half the amount it would have cost for the boys to stay in a more traditional STA facility for the weekend and they had the opportunity to learn skills and have some real fun. This is a totally legal way for people to use their NDIS funds - it is even used as an example in the NDIA's [Guide to Self Management](#).

Factors to Consider

Ben and Charlie self manage their funds but there is no reason you couldn't do this if funds were plan or agency managed. A registered provider could offer STA from an Airbnb instead of a specialist facility and given how cost effective the Man's Weekend was, there should be nothing stopping someone with plan managed funds (though it's worth checking with the Plan Manager first and sending them a copy of the Guide to Self Management if you suspect they may screen the invoice).

Tips & Practice Insights

- » Make the case for short term accommodation funding in the Participant's Plan. While Core supports could be flexibly spent on STA even if it wasn't specifically included, it is an expensive activity to come out of the Plan if it hasn't been budgeted in.
- » Consider caravan parks- they often have an accessible cabin and lots of entertainment is on site.
- » The Participant should be actively involved in planning the weekend.
- » If you are a STA provider, there is nothing to stop you creating an experience like this for the people you support. Give it a go!
- » If the Participant is using their STA experience to learn new skills, some of the funding can come out of the Capacity Building budget.

Assistive Technology for Behaviour Support Needs

EasyTech Living | Marianne Hubbard

For NDIS Participants with complex behavioural support needs, restrictive practices are an all too common response. These can compromise the person's human rights and frequently exacerbate the behaviours. Families of young children with complex behavioural support needs often dedicate a significant amount of time and energy to keeping that child safe, often at the cost of the entire family's wellbeing.

The Solution

EasyTech Living is a technology social enterprise in Victoria. They customise low cost technological solutions to an individual's safety needs. For example, Jed, a young child with autism and an intellectual disability was frequently leaving the house unsafely, sometimes watching closely where his mother hid the keys. The family lived in fear and didn't let Jed out of their sight. This meant that Jed was never given any time alone, and that the wellbeing of the rest of the family was compromised. EasyTech Living implemented a simple finger print lock system, which only responded to Jed's parents' and siblings' touch. They also placed a sensor on the windows that beeps in an off-putting frequency whenever he tries to open them. One of the more pro-active solutions presented was to settle night time waking with a monitor that triggers a soothing ocean scene projected on the ceiling and calming music automatically when a child wakes in the night. With all of these solutions in place, Jed is now a lot safer in his home, and his family have some peace of mind.

Factors to Consider

These solutions are available to many NDIS Participants- but you do need a creative and supportive OT. It can also be difficult getting quotes approved by the NDIA (of course). Remember, if the technology is in any way restrictive (and that includes the off-putting beeps mentioned above) then the person will need a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) that considers alternatives and to use registered providers.

Tips & Practice Insights

- » Find an OT who is willing to learn about creative solutions to complex behaviour support needs.
- » If the technology is low cost and low risk, consider taking the cost out of a Participant's Core funding.
- » Start with a cheap solution, and work up from there.
- » Consider additional insurance costs resulting from assistive technology and vehicle modifications and see whether they can be funded in a person's plan.

Support Coordination in Remote Communities

Eunoia Lane | Kate Smith, Cathryn McAdie & Marie Lyons

In many remote Indigenous communities, disability supports are few and far between. Consequently, people are often forced to leave country and their communities to live in larger centres. Furthermore, many people with disability in these communities have never had access to an allied health professional or a Support Coordinator. Support Coordination and Occupational Therapy provider, Eunoia Lane was looking for a solution that would enable people to get the supports they need while remaining on country.

The Solution

Eunoia Lane charters flights to remote communities, filling them with Support Coordinators and other service providers, as well as people living in the city who want to return to country. Their aim is for every flight to be completely full. The trips give Eunoia Lane the opportunity to visit the people they support, and to introduce the allied health team to the local community. They aim to build as much trust and do as much groundwork as possible, so that the therapists can start work as soon as they arrive. They also identify service delivery gaps in the local communities and approach other service providers to address the market need. Eunoia Lane also employ indigenous people who assist with building the company's cultural competence and trust from remote communities.

Factors to Consider

Eunoia Lane is determined to help grow the entire disability services market in the Northern Territory. This means finding ways to work with other providers, rather than competing against them. They will introduce the providers they travel with to the community and help them to understand the local culture. In order to prevent conflict of interest, they also never support the same Participant with both Support Coordination and occupational therapy. Many of the people they work with have never received disability supports before. Eunoia Lane knows that to change this, they have to grow the whole market, not just their own organisation.

Tips & Practice Insights

- » Plan Management opens up a lot more opportunities to introduce new workers or providers to a thin market.
- » Think of cultural competency as an ongoing journey, not a competency level that can be reached.
- » When working in remote communities, consider if there are any local people that you can hire as support workers.
- » In regional areas, organise groups of assessments to encourage clinicians to travel.

Exploring Housing Options with Support Coordination

Ablelink | Jess Stubbins

Summer Foundation | Penny Paul

Many Support Coordinators will cringe at the thought of writing a housing plan for Participants. Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) has its own unique language, which looks (and is) complex and time consuming. A lot of Support Coordinators will refer the Participants they work with to another Support Coordinator to do the housing plan. But this may not be the best solution for your participant. Writing a housing plan is a great way to learn about the person you are supporting and their vision for their future. So, Jess and Penny explore why Support Coordinators should take the plunge and write a housing plan.

The Solution

Jess confesses that the first housing plans that Ablelink wrote were really tough and have come a long way since then. The first couple are the hardest. But there are people around who can help you learn the skills. The Summer Foundation has set up [Upskill](#), a community of practice for Support Coordinators working in housing. Once you learn the new language of SDA, you will find that it really is not that hard.

Factors to Consider

As of March 2019, the SDA Rule has been updated. People now do not need to exhaust all housing options before they can be found eligible for SDA. The new Rule also allows people to live with partners (though we do not know yet what this will look like in practice) and enables SDA to be put in a Plan even if there is no house currently available. There is now also a National SDA Panel that is empowered to make eligibility decisions quickly. This year, the government also created an Action Plan for Young People in Residential Care.

Tips & Practice Insights

- » If a person wants to explore their eligibility for SDA, make sure housing is their first goal.
- » Know the SDA Rules and the Design Categories inside out!
- » Fine tune a template that addresses all the points you need to make.
- » Make concise arguments.
- » Use the housing plan to tell a story. The allied health reports are likely to be very clinical, it is up to the Support Coordinator to tell the person's social story.
- » Find an OT to partner with. They need to be willing to skill themselves up in SDA speak. A well structure OT assessment will make all of the difference when starting to write a housing plan.
- » Explore assistive technology that can reduce a person's support needs – specialised bed with rolling sheets might reduce support needs by a whole extra staff member.

- » Let the person visit their new home as many times as they need to. This is a huge emotional journey for them and you will learn more about their needs through these visits.
- » Define the role and responsibilities that everyone will play in the transition process from the beginning.
- » Stay up to date with the latest in policy and practice and develop peer networks.
- » Check out the Summer Foundation's resources (they're awesome!).

Peer Support Coordination

AQA Spire | Nazim Erdem & Peter van Bentham

The value that peer support can offer people with disability is well established. So why do we not see more people with lived experience of disability as Support Coordinators and in other roles in our sector? Many providers would like their work to be informed by people with disability to the greatest extent possible. To make this a reality, providers need to put in place systems and processes that prioritise the voices of people with disability.

The Solution

AQA Spire offer peer-based Support Coordination where people are supported by a team that includes people with and without lived experience of spinal cord injury. Support Coordinators with lived experience tend to lead the founding conversations about a person's goals and the supports they need to reach them. Through their own experience personally and as peer workers, they're able to encourage the person to see all the possibilities that are open to them and demonstrate what is possible. They then oversee and give input into the work of Coordinators without lived experience, who fulfil many of the other Support Coordination roles.

Tips & Practice Insights

There are many ways that you can incorporate lived experience into your organisation. When Sam Paior saw the video presentation by AQA Spire, she thought about the pool of knowledge that exists within the people with disability and families that The Growing Space supports. It made her start to explore the ways she could facilitate her customers to support each other, and to get paid for their time doing so.

Each person has a multitude of different identities and interests.

So you could also consider connecting:

- » Parents who are supporting their adult children to live more independently.
- » People (or family) with recently acquired or diagnosed disabilities.
- » Self Managers or people looking to actively make the most of the flexibility in their Plans.
- » People looking to explore their options outside of paid services.
- » Shared cultural or linguistic background.

Plan Review Reports

Alicia Egidio | The Growing Space

The first time Alicia Egidio spoke to Sam Paor was when she called her in tears. Alicia is the mother of 11-year-old Luca. Luca had been an NDIS Participant for three years and on the day Alicia called Sam, she had just found out that Luca's Plan had been cut by two thirds.

The Solution

Alicia's experience with Luca's plan review meeting taught her some invaluable lessons about preparing for plan review meetings. Now working as an NDIS Support Coordinator, Alicia shares some effective strategies for approaching plan reviews with Luca and the people she works with:

- » Putting goals in writing and telling the LACs they should not be changed without consultation.
- » Outlining the supports needed and the budget- with actual numbers!
- » Summarising all therapy reports and picking out key quotes.
- » Including a Carer Statement which outlines the impact that the loss of funding had on the family.
- » Listing all existing assistive technology, regardless of how it was originally funded.
- » Outlining how funds will be managed.

As a result of Alicia's plan review preparation, Luca's funding was re-instated, and she is seeing great results with her clients too – the preparation work pays off!

Factors to Consider

Support Coordinators have an important role to play in scheduled Plan Reviews and change of circumstances Reviews. However, their role in appeals is more controversial and unclear. Support Coordinators need to be careful not to overstep the mark into advocacy. So if it feels like advocacy work, then refer the person to an advocacy service.

Tips & Practice Insights

- » Understand the Reasonable & Necessary criteria and how to apply it in plan reviews.
- » Include links with information about the disability in your reports. Particularly if it is a disability that the Planner is unlikely to be familiar with.
- » Review all therapist reports and recommend changes to them if necessary.

- » Make sure each report is only a couple of pages long and includes a clear link to the Participant's goals and future recommendations. Create an indexed table of contents if you are attaching a number of documents.
- » Consider who in the Participant's life can give input into your plan review reports - including teachers and support workers.
- » Send all documents in one email. Otherwise, you can almost guarantee that things will be lost.
- » Work with the LACs. You want to build a relationship with them and create mutual trust. A good way to do this is by making their job easier.

Home: Where the “I” is for Individual

Linda Hughes

Jac was ready to move out of home. Linda, his mum, noticed he seemed much happier when she and Jac's dad were on holiday. The message was clear! Given that the family home was highly accessible, it made more sense for Jac to stay and his parents to go. So they did just that!

The Solution

Jac is now living in his own home. He has a support team who understand his health and disability needs and has his parents nearby for emergencies. Jac is currently interviewing potential housemates, who will be offered a reduced rent in recognition of the number of workers coming in and out of the house.

Jac's living situation is one example of an Independent Living Option (ILO). The NDIA are currently exploring funding options for ILOs and have placed three line items options in the new 2019/20 price guide. Examples of ILOs include:

- » Living alone.
- » Co-residency- where a person lives with people who provide an agreed level of support.
- » Host arrangement- where a person lives with people who provide support in a family like environment.
- » Living together- living with mates and shacking up.

Factors to Consider

The opportunity for people with disability to live in an environment of their choosing is not just a nice idea, it is a human right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD). There are, however, significant practical barriers to address to make this a reality.

- » Finding affordable, accessible housing.
- » Getting the right amount of funding and support.
- » Addressing fears and ingrained attitudes, assumptions and beliefs that make people think that individual living is impossible.

Tips

- » Address the fears of the person and their family directly. Look for strategies and safeguards to address fears and risk. Show them examples of it working in real life.
- » Explore ways of accessing affordable housing. Ask the local real estate agents to let you know when an accessible rental property becomes available, get to know the social housing providers and priority criteria.
- » Directly employ or engage support workers to get better bang for your buck. This can make living independently more possible within a person's NDIS budget envelope.
- » Work out what support a person needs and when. Look for ways to make use of informs support, natural support and assistive tech.
- » Consider living arrangements that facilitate a person's social inclusion. Social inclusion is the best safeguard there is.
- » Put the person and their vision for their life at the centre of all conversations about their housing.
- » Work with organisations that have experience individual living.

Workflows & Templates

Ablelink | Jess Stubbins

It's no secret that a lot of Support Coordinators do a lot of unpaid work. When Participants' funding is low, it's crucial to find ways to more efficiently deliver support. This means finding opportunities for automation and cutting down the time spent on repetitive tasks.

The Solution

Support Coordination can reap great value from creating their own templates for things like plan review reports, budgeting tools and action plans. Having a series of templates for the Participant's entire journey can help a team deliver consistent work and reduce unnecessary administration. Templates also allow customers to understand from the beginning the type of services that they can expect.

Factors to Consider

As your Support Coordination service grows, consider investing in a good CRM. CRMs can help cut out repetition by entering all the important information in one place, once. They also allow Support Coordinators to "merge documents." This means that they will automatically personalise templates and documents with the information already filled in. For example, if a person's goals and progress are entered into their CRM, you can automatically populate the right fields in your action plans and plan review reports, rather than manually finding and rewriting them. CRMs can be a costly upfront investment but they can save you hours of time (and money!) in the long run.

Tips & Practice Insights

- » Chuck out the pen and paper.
Record all information digitally so that you can copy and paste it.
- » Take the time to learn how to use Excel- it is worth it!
- » Ensure all your templates have the end goal of lending themselves to Plan Review.
- » Create Action Plans that detail what you are going to do with each Participant, noting the progress as you go along.
- » Have budget breakdowns and track the Participant's spending.
- » Put your logos on your templates to help spread the word about your good work.
- » Resources that provide education and build independence will save you time.

>> Consider developing the following templates:

- Service agreements
- Custom welcome plans
- Initial meeting templates
- NDIS Plan translation
- Budget breakdowns
- Action Plans
- Support Worker Roster template
- Plan Review Reports & Templates
- Plan Budget requests

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