

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Workshop Two: National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and psychosocial disability

This document provides a summary of the discussion and findings from the advocacy workshop targeting mental health occupational therapists providing services under the NDIS. Please refer to the initial briefing paper for an overview of the discussion questions focused on during the session.

Key themes and challenges

1. Mental health OTs have an important role in the NDIS and are highly valued 'on the ground', particularly where they are working with other mental health professionals or those with experience in psychosocial disability.
2. The OT functional, outcomes-focused approach aligns very well with the design of the NDIS and should be more highly valued by NDIA decision-makers and policymakers.
3. OTs are highly sought after for assessments but not always recognised or funded appropriately for treatment/interventions.
4. Assessment and treatment/interventions are different skillsets and OTs may not always have both.
5. The NDIA and other people working within the NDIS may not understand the difference between different OT skillsets and that mental health OTs are different to those focused on assistive technology or other areas.
6. The NDIS remains highly focused on physical disability and is much more likely to fund even minor physical disability than psychosocial.
7. Participants with dual diagnoses struggle in the scheme as the NDIA does not understand the interaction between physical and psychosocial disability.
8. Splitting clinical and personal recovery, or symptom minimisation versus addressing functional outcomes is largely artificial and results in poorer outcomes for participants.
9. Strong need for improved guidance for OTs supporting people with psychosocial disability through templates for assessments and reports that address NDIA needs. Opportunity for OTA to co-design with profession and consumers.
10. Strong need to ensure that newly graduated OTs have the support needed to work safely and effectively in the NDIS while building their experience.

Funding scheme-specific challenges

1. Planner/delegate decision-making continues to be inconsistent, and rejections are still common even when experienced mental health OTs have done extensive work to build a case for support.
2. OT interventions, such as sensory modulation, and use of assessment tools (e.g., PRPP) may be rejected by delegates without clinical understanding of why they are used.
3. Functional assessments for those with psychosocial disability can take twice as long as for those with physical disability but OTs may not be given sufficient hours.
4. Professional isolation can be an issue, particularly where OTs are practising in rural or regional locations, due to lack of workforce.
5. Structure of NDIS information-sharing and focus on participant choice in relation to providing information means OTs often lack basic information about clients, including critical safety information.
6. Participants can lack a support role that is accountable for the participant and their outcomes and for supporting interaction and information-sharing between NDIS and mainstream services.
7. Support roles in the NDIS including support coordinators, specialist support coordinators and recovery coaches have widely varying skills and understanding of scope. High turnover in these roles impacts participants.
8. Disability support workers have an important role in supporting participants with OT-led interventions but can be resistant to being provided guidance and training.
9. Timely payments remain a consistent issue with plan-managed and self-managed clients.

Additional post-session questions

1. **Are there mental health OT-specific interventions that you use, or would like to use, that you have had issues getting the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to fund? Please send details of those interventions and when you would use them (with short examples if possible).**
2. **Are there assessment tools that you consider clinically appropriate but that the NDIA won't accept? Please provide details and examples where possible of when they would be appropriate.**

If you would like to provide feedback, please contact: haveyoursay@otaus.com.au.