

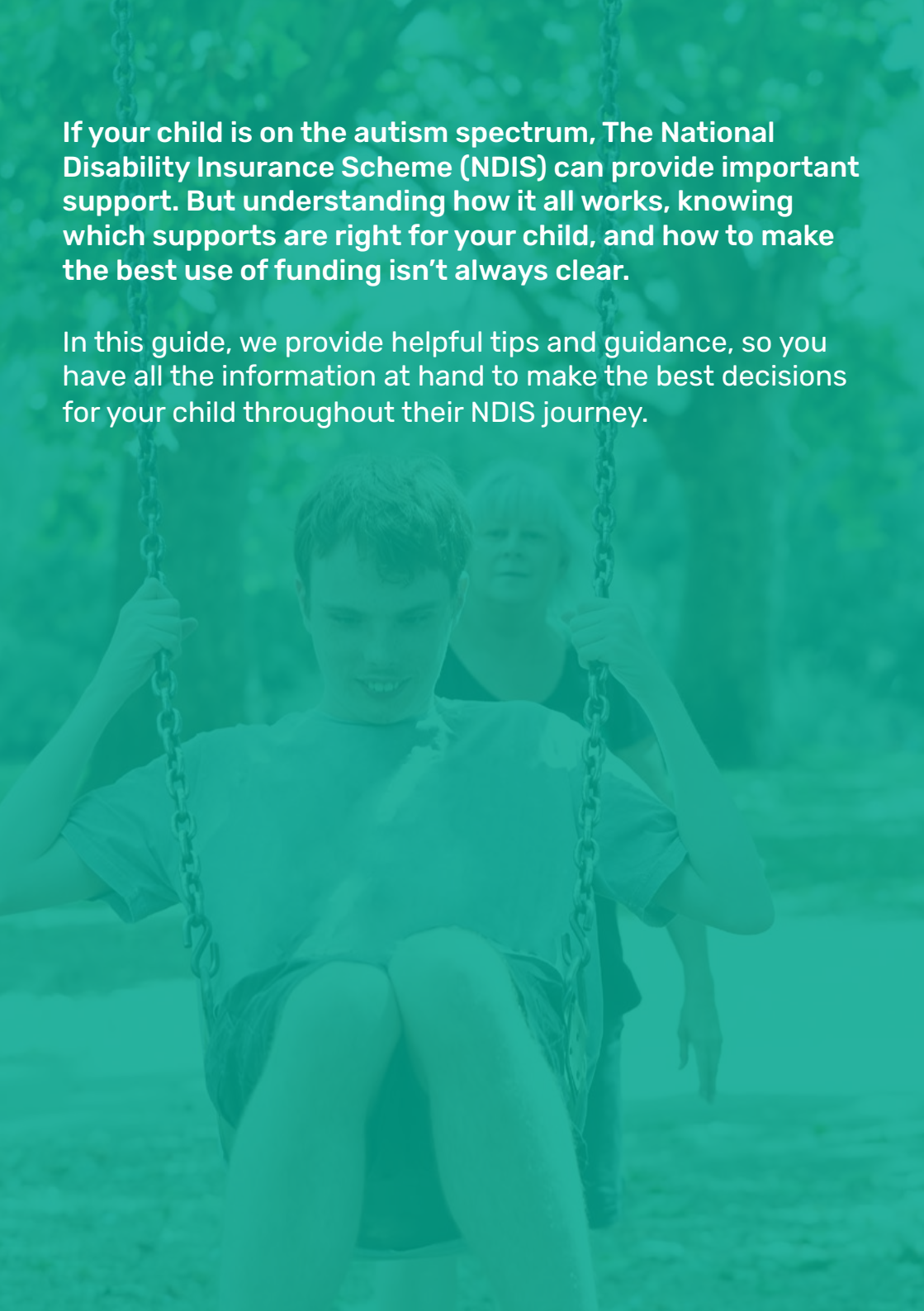
# Autism and the NDIS

Get the most out of the NDIS for your child.



**Plan  
Partners**

Together, it's possible

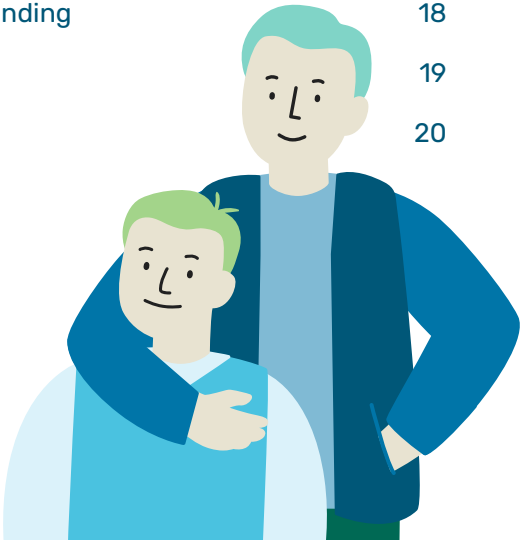
A young man with short brown hair is sitting on a swing, smiling. He is wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark shorts. A woman with blonde hair is standing behind him, looking on. The background is a blurred green field with trees. The entire image has a semi-transparent teal overlay.

**If your child is on the autism spectrum, The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) can provide important support. But understanding how it all works, knowing which supports are right for your child, and how to make the best use of funding isn't always clear.**

**In this guide, we provide helpful tips and guidance, so you have all the information at hand to make the best decisions for your child throughout their NDIS journey.**

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# NDIS 101: Understanding the basics



**The NDIS is designed to support people with disability throughout their life. We often hear the words “choice and control” used when it comes to the NDIS, because it puts participants in charge of the supports they receive.**

The NDIS decides how much funding your child gets in their plan based on what’s reasonable and necessary, but you have full choice and control over which supports you use for your child.

## **Handy Tip**

Our Knowledge Centre is filled with helpful tips and guidance relevant to all stages of your child’s NDIS journey, so you get the answers you need to make the right decisions. Check it out now.



Some important terms to know:

<b>ECEI</b>	Early Childhood Early Intervention is funded by the NDIS and supports children under 7 years of age who have a developmental delay or disability. No formal diagnosis is required, as ECEI aims to give kids support as early in their life as possible.
<b>NDIS Plan</b>	Your child’s NDIS plan contains their goals and how much funding they have. Your child will go through many plans throughout their life as their support needs and goals change.
<b>NDIA</b>	The National Disability Insurance Agency is the organisation in charge of implementing the NDIS. It decides how much funding your child needs and what categories they can spend it on.
<b>Reasonable and Necessary</b>	These principles help the NDIA make individual funding decisions for each person.
<b>Plan manager</b>	A plan manager takes care of all the admin associated with your child’s plan, such as processing and storing your invoices.
<b>Service provider</b>	Any business or individual who delivers a funded support to an NDIS participant is considered a service provider.
<b>Support coordinator</b>	An expert in NDIS plans who can help you understand your plan, what it covers and who supports you to find and connect with the right service providers for your child. Not everyone is eligible for support coordination.

# Getting the right NDIS plan for your child



**Your child's NDIS plan should reflect the types of support that will help them develop the skills they need for life.**

It contains personal information about them and their short and long-term goals. It shows what funds they've been given by the NDIS and the kinds of supports they can spend it on.

It's important you're happy with the plan your child receives and that it accurately reflects the supports your child will need.

## **The importance of good evidence to get the right plan**

Whether you're applying to access the NDIS for the first time or looking to get a change made to your child's existing plan, you want to provide 'good evidence' to prove why funding is necessary.

The best form of evidence you can present in your planning meeting is a written report from a healthcare professional. We recommend you see a therapist you know and trust to get a formal assessment report you can take to your planning meeting.





### Top 4 tips to providing good evidence:

- 1 Use a recent report:** a current report shows the NDIA what support your child needs at this moment in their life.
- 2 Use standardised tools:** assessment tools, like PEDI-CAT, the Carer Strain Index (CSI) and an OT functional assessment, quantify the impact your child's disability has on their life. While they'll never be 100% accurate, they can help the NDIA understand your child's support needs.
- 3 Be specific:** to avoid misinterpretation, use a professional who understands the NDIS and can make specific recommendations about the supports your child needs.
- 4 Make sure the important stuff stands out:** as people are busy and things can get missed, put the key information at the start of each section, and use bold text to highlight important recommendations.

#### Handy Tip: Painting an accurate (and honest) picture

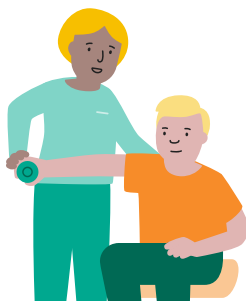
It's not always easy talking about your child's disability. But your planner is relying on you and your evidence to understand your child's situation, so be open and honest and don't downplay the challenges they face.

### Other evidence you can present

In addition to your reports from medical professionals, you might choose to provide evidence from the following people to show how your child's disability impacts them in different settings:



Teachers



Carers



Family members

### Not happy with your plan?

It can be disheartening when you receive your plan and it fails to reflect your child's needs and goals. Should this happen, there are steps you can take.



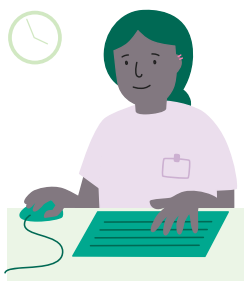
#### 1 Seek help

First, discuss your plan and why you're disappointed with it with an NDIS professional, like an LAC, support coordinator or plan manager (like Plan Partners). If you can fully understand the situation and the options available to you, you'll know what action to take.

Still not happy

#### 2 Request an internal review

If you're still not happy, you can request an internal review with the NDIS. Some changes, like having plan management added to your plan, can be easily applied through a 'light touch review', while other changes will need you to submit a 'request for review'. You may need to provide additional evidence for a successful review outcome.



Still not happy

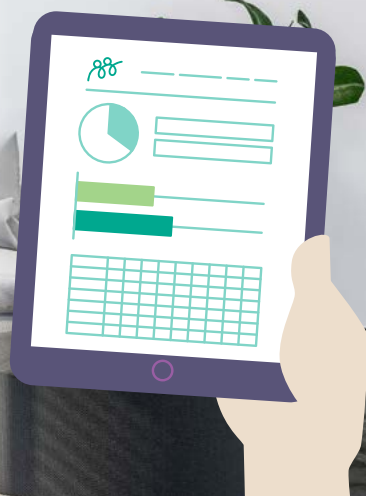
#### 3 Request an external review

If your request for review is rejected and you'd like to contest the decision, you can contact the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for an external review.





# Getting a new plan as your child grows



**The NDIS will review your child's plan every now and then to make sure it's still relevant. This is called a plan renewal. When your child is young, this will likely be every 12 months or less, because they're going through so many changes.**

As they grow and things stabilise, they can choose to keep their plans for longer – sometimes up to three years.

The NDIS will contact you before your child's plan ends to see whether it continues to meet their goals and has enough funding for their support needs. If this is the case, your child's plan can be renewed with the same budgets and support categories.

If your child's plan needs to be changed, let the NDIS know and they'll arrange for a formal review. This is a chance for you to have your say about your child's NDIS plan and to get a new one that reflects your child's evolving needs and goals.

## **Handy Tip: Plan Reviews**

Preparation is key when it comes to formal plan reviews if you want an NDIS plan you and your child are happy with. Make sure you take plenty of notes and good evidence to show how your child's needs have changed and what supports are needed.

You're not obligated to take your child with you if you feel it may cause distress. Some parents choose to take a trusted friend or family member to support them.

# Your child's NDIS journey



**Your child's support needs and goals will change throughout their NDIS journey. As they shift into adult life, their NDIS plan should evolve with them.**

While everyone's NDIS journey is different, there are generally four stages. There's likely to be multiple milestones and plans within each of these stages, but you can use these as a general guideline with some of the typical goals and supports for each stage.

## Early Childhood (EC) 0-9 Years Old

The early childhood approach is about giving you and your child the right supports to enable them to have the best possible start in life.



### Typical Goals

- Develop language and communication skills
- Develop social skills
- Develop gross motor skills

### Typical Supports

EC supports are generally Capacity Building therapies, like speech therapy and OT.

## Primary School 7-12 Years Old

As children develop and start school, their goals tend to focus on building their skills and independence.



### Typical Goals

- Develop independence
- Make new friends
- Develop communication skills

### Typical Supports

Supports for this age group generally include Capacity Building therapies and improved relationships.

## Secondary School 12-18 Years Old

The teenage years see a focus on preparing for adult life and entering the workforce.



### Typical Goals

- Find and maintain a job
- Build capacity to travel independently

### Typical Supports

Supports for teenagers often include Assistance with Social & Community Participation and Finding and Keeping a Job.

## Adulthood 18+ Years Old

As people enter adulthood, life typically stabilises. Supports such as therapies that are a big fixture of plans in younger years, tend to drop off.



### Typical Goals

- Move into own place
- Find a suitable career
- Maintain independence

### Typical Supports

Improved Living Arrangements and Assistance with Daily Life are common supports at this age.

# What can the NDIS fund?



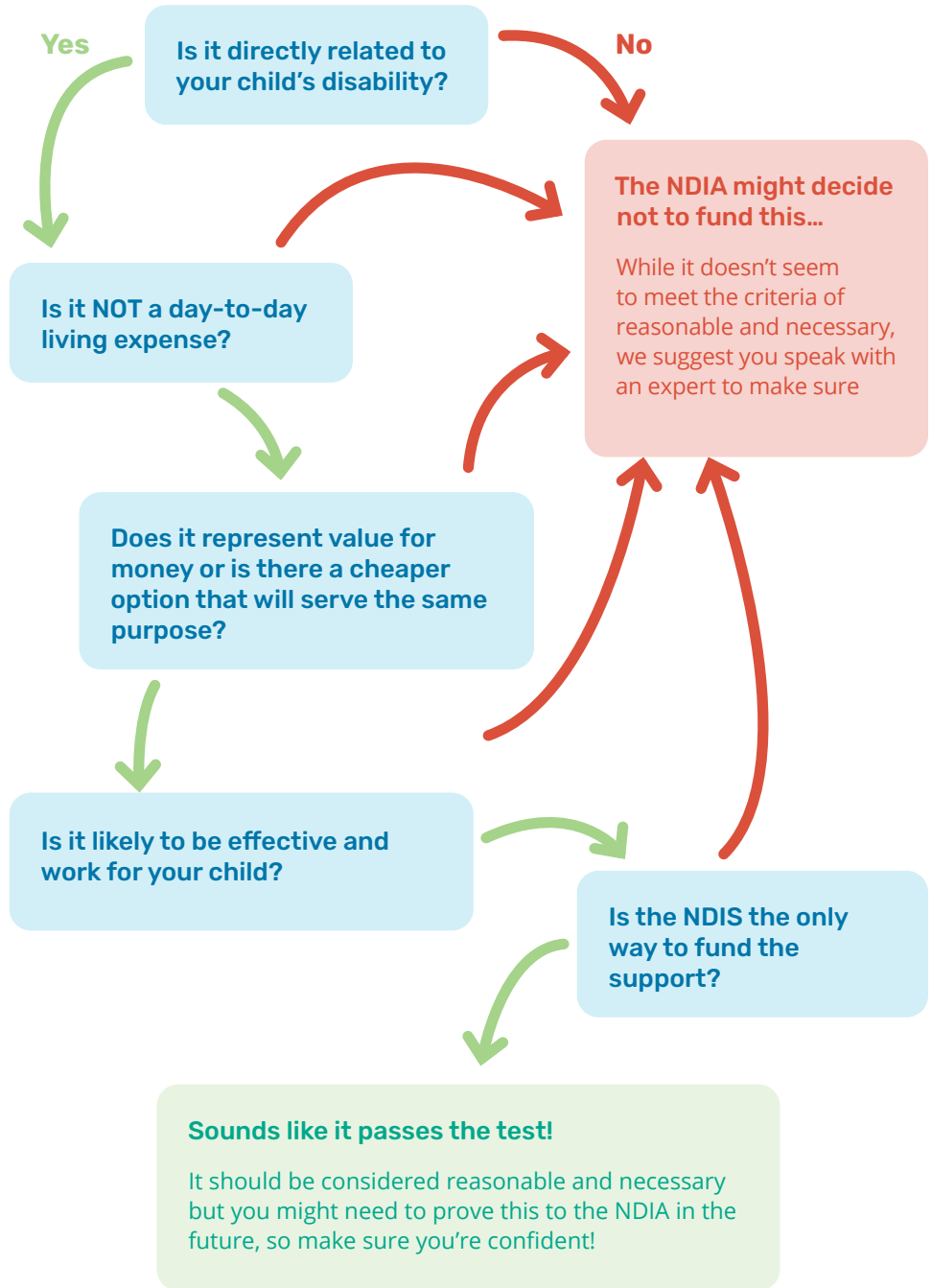
**The NDIS can fund a huge variety of supports and we're still discovering exciting new supports every day.**

While this is a good thing, it can sometimes feel overwhelming because there is so much choice and it may not be clear which supports you can use. To make it easier, let's look at the types of funding and which supports they cover.

## **Reasonable and necessary – your key to supports**

You'll often come across the term reasonable and necessary. It's how the NDIA determines whether a support is needed for your child. While there's a fair bit of interpretation around the term, here are some questions you can consider to work out whether a support can be funded or not (provided you have the right funding in your child's plan).

## WHAT CAN THE NDIS FUND?



### 3 main types of support budgets

The NDIS has three main types of support budgets: Core, Capital and Capacity Building.



#### 1 Core supports

Are the basic things your child needs to live their life. Funding for Core Supports is flexible, which means you can use one Support Category's funds to pay for another support (provided they're both Core Supports).

For example, this might be funding for a support worker to help your child take part in social and community activities, or a stay in specialist Short Term Accommodation (STA), which can give both you and your informal support network a well-earned break.

#### 2 Capacity building supports

Are designed to help your child develop the skills to become more independent and work towards their goals. They include therapies (Improved Daily Living), exercise physiology (Improved Health and Wellbeing) and plan management (Improved Life Choices).

Unlike Core supports, Capacity Building supports aren't flexible, which means you can only use funds for the specific support category they're allocated to.

#### 3 Capital Supports

Are larger, one-off items that support your child in their daily life. They can include assistive technology, like communication devices, or modifications to make your home more suitable for you to live in. You'll generally need to present a quote for these more expensive and specialised items.

### Our team's top 6 Core supports for kids with Autism



#### 1 Coaching and workshops

Practical tips for parents on how to manage the day to day needs of your child while promoting positive relationships.



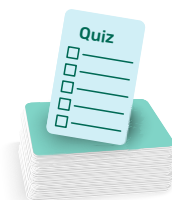
#### 2 Adaptive clothing

Specially designed garments that are sensory friendly can help reduce the stress of getting dressed.



#### 3 Speech therapy

If your child finds communicating challenging, speech therapy can help by developing language and non-verbal communication.



#### 4 Flash cards and visual aids

By gamifying the experience and making it fun and engaging, these learning tools can help your child develop their language and communication skills.



#### 5 Noise cancelling headphones

Noise cancelling headphones can avoid sensory overload by blocking out background sounds, allowing your child to regulate themselves and focus.



#### 6 Books

Books often use repetitive or rhyming words that capture your child's attention helping them build their language skills.



# Bringing your child's plan to life



Once you receive your child's NDIS plan, it's time to start connecting with service providers. This is an exciting time that's full of possibility, but it can also be difficult to know where to begin. Fortunately, there are lots of people and tools that can help you bring your child's plan to life.



1

## **Familiarise yourself with the plan:**

Here are 3 simple steps you can take when you first receive your child's plan:

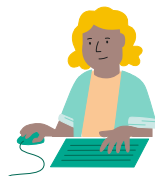
When looking through your child's plan, pay close attention to the support categories and budgets for each. Check how your funding is managed and consider requesting a review if you feel something's missing (see page 8).



2

## **Speak to a professional:**

A plan manager can help you understand your plan, what it covers and the support options available to you. You may not have funding for plan management in your plan. If you're unsure, but it interests you, give us a call and we can talk you through it.



3

## **Connect with service providers:**

Online directories, like Clickability and MyCareSpace can help you find highly recommended supports through reviews. You might also like to seek recommendations from other families and your local community.

### How Support Coordination can help you get the most out of your NDIS plan

For many parents, support coordination is an incredibly helpful NDIS support. A support coordinator understands the ins and outs of an NDIS plan and can help you find and connect with local service providers that are the best fit for your child's needs.

They will work closely with you and your child over the course of your journey, ensuring your plan continues to reflect your child's evolving needs, building your capacity and confidence to navigate the NDIS, and helping you prepare for plan reviews.

Not everyone is eligible for support coordination, so if you feel you'd benefit from this support, we recommend you get a letter from a relevant professional explaining why.



#### Handy Tip: Service Agreements

A service agreement is a written contract between you and a service provider. It protects you should a service provider overcharge or underdeliver on the service as promised.

Both you and your service provider will need to sign the agreement, which explains what support they'll be providing, how much it will cost, when the service will be delivered, and any terms and conditions, including their cancellation policy.

We encourage you to set up service agreements with each of your providers.

## 3 ways to manage your child's NDIS funding

It's easy to feel overwhelmed or even confused by what choices you have when it comes to managing your NDIS funds. There are some fundamental differences between the options available to you, the responsibilities that come with each and your flexibility.

As you'll need to state your choice in your planning meeting, we recommend taking time to consider which option is best for you and your child.

Let's take a look at the 3 ways your NDIS Plan can be managed and what they mean. You can choose one of these options, or a combination of each. For example, you may choose to self manage one part of your plan and have the rest plan managed.

### 1 Plan management

With plan management, a professional fund and plan manager, like Plan Partners, takes care of your admin and invoices for you and (depending on your provider) gives you tools, support and resources to make things easier. Plan management is fully funded by the NDIS at no cost to you.

The level of support and services offered by each plan manager can differ greatly. Some plan managers lack the infrastructure and resources to fully support you.

### 2 Self management

With self management, the admin (including compliance requirements) and management of your funds is completely up to you. You're responsible for getting your providers paid on time and claiming your out-of-pocket expenses.

### 3 Agency management

With agency management, your plan is managed by the NDIA. With this option, and unlike plan management or self management, you can only access providers that are registered with the NDIS. This means, you lose access to many of the smaller, privately-owned service providers such as a local physio or therapist. With agency management, your providers claim payment for invoices directly through the NDIA portal and you don't get the support, tools and guidance that come with plan management.

### Keeping track of your funds

Tracking your spending and balances regularly is the best way to ensure you're maximising the funds available to you.

If you're using your child's funds too quickly, you risk running out of money and not having enough to pay providers.

On the other side, it's possible to underspend and not use all of the funds available to you. In cases like these, the NDIA has been known to allocate your child a smaller budget in their next plan because they presume the full funds are not needed.

#### Handy Tip: Be Prepared

As you'll need to state your choice in your planning meeting, we recommend taking time to consider which option is best for you and your child.



# How Plan Partners can support you

At Plan Partners, we offer two important services, plan management and support coordination, to help you get the most out of the NDIS.

We give you the support, tools and info so you can make the best decisions about your child's NDIS plan and funding throughout each phase of their very important life.



## Have questions?

That's what we're here for! Get in touch via the below contact options.



**Live chat:**  
[planpartners.com.au](https://planpartners.com.au)  
Mon to Fri  
8am to 8pm  
(Melbourne time)



**Call us:**  
1300 333 700  
Mon to Fri  
8am to 8pm  
(Melbourne time)



**Email:**  
[info@planpartners.com.au](mailto:info@planpartners.com.au)

Plan Partners, 2023

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