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| Program requirements for support for children with complex disability support needs in Victoria |
| March 2023 |

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# Purpose of program requirements

This document sets out the program requirements for delivering services for children and young people who require or, without additional supports, may require accommodation outside the family home due to complex disability support needs. The program requirements are the essential pre-requisites that must be delivered to meet the service agreement obligations.

For providers in receipt of funding for board and lodging, additional policy guidelines must also be followed – see Board and lodging policy for children with complex disability support needs: Requirements for NDIS providers in receipt of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funding. Available at [Providers DFFH](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs>

# Background

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) recognises that the primary aim of supports for children and young people with complex disability support needs and their families is to preserve the family unit in a supported and safe manner.

In the exceptional circumstance where a child is unable to remain in the family home due to their complex disability support needs, state, territory and Commonwealth governments have reached an agreement about funding arrangements. Children and families will receive supports based on their individual circumstances.

Under these arrangements, the department will work with families to arrange and contribute funding for board and lodging, as well as to support access to mainstream services where required.

# Terminology

| **Term**  | **Description**  |
| --- | --- |
| **Board** | Core expenses and household costs incurred by the NDIS provider in providing a homelike and suitable environment for a child or young person to live. This includes costs for food, utilities, maintenance, household furnishings and equipment and other relevant household and living expenses. |
| **Lodging** | Provision of accommodation through making a departmental house available, funding rental costs for a house or paying the costs of a bed in an existing accommodation facility. |
| **Full time accommodation and care** | When the arrangement is expected to last for longer than a respite stay (approximately one month) and is agreed as a full-time out of home living arrangement by both the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the department and they usually spend 7 nights per week in the accommodation. |
| **Part time or shared care** | Is defined as when the arrangement is expected to last for longer than a respite stay (approximately one month) and is agreed as part time/shared care by both the NDIA and the department and the child spends 3 nights or more per week in the accommodation. |
| **Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)** | Has the meaning as outlined in the NDIS (Specialist Disability Accommodation) Rules 2016, meaning housing designed to support people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. SDA does not refer to the support services, but the homes in which these are delivered. |
| **Child** | Reference to a child is taken to include children and young people. |

# Program description

The program Support for children with complex disability support needs complements the disability supports funded by the NDIS for children whose disability support needs may not be able to be met within the family home. The program works in collaboration with the NDIA to ensure necessary supports are in place to support families to continue care in the family home and in exceptional circumstances, in accommodation outside the family home.

Children who require this service present with complex disability support needs which cannot be met at home by their families without substantial supports, but do not require a statutory intervention.

To be eligible for this service children must be an NDIS participant and will be jointly supported by the department and the NDIS.

For providers in receipt of board and lodging payments, additional policy guidelines must be followed – see Board and lodging policy for children with complex disability support needs: Requirements for NDIS providers in receipt of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funding. Available at [Providers DFFH](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs>

# Program objectives

The program aims to:

* complement NDIS funded disability supports for children with complex disability support needs and their families to remain at home or return safely home with their family, or;
* complement NDIS funded disability supports to ensure the necessary supports are available for the child to reside safely outside the family home.

# Principles

The service delivery principles align with [Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022-2026)](https://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan) <https://www.vic.gov.au/state-diability-plan> outlined by the pillars and priority areas:

* Inclusive communities: ‘I feel included’ - The experience of inclusion is central to social interaction, sharing information and having everyday experiences. For this experience to be possible we need accessible public and social infrastructure, including buildings, public transport and communications to be in place.
* Health, housing and wellbeing: ‘I live well’ - Having a stable home and good health and wellbeing are fundamental to a satisfying everyday life. We know there needs to be a significant improvement in access to suitable, affordable housing. Provision of quality, person-centred disability supports, healthcare and other community services is also important.
* Fairness and safety: ‘I get a fair go’ - We want to create opportunities for all Victorians. Our responsibility for measures relating to protecting rights and preventing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation form part of this pillar.
* Opportunity and pride: We want to ensure people with a disability can participate easily in education, training, community participation and decision making. This pillar also includes access to employment and all aspects of the economy

# Roles and responsibilities

Departmental oversight of arrangements funded by Support for children with complex disability program is undertaken by the divisional Principal Disability Practice Advisor, with the support of the divisional Disability Practice Advisor. These roles will coordinate and support access to mainstream services, where required. This may include case conferencing when mainstream services require additional coordination support.

The program is voluntary, and parents retain full parental responsibility for their child. All decision making regarding the child’s care, wellbeing and safety is therefore undertaken by the parent. The Principal Disability Practice Advisor will support parents, where required, to maintain their parental responsibility.

The Principal Disability Practice Advisor will work with the NDIA to coordinate supports, under the agreed arrangements between Victoria and the Commonwealth.

Regulatory oversight of NDIS providers is the responsibility of the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission. Concerns evident in the child’s disability supports must be addressed with the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints) <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>.

For providers in receipt of board funding, see Board and lodging policy for children with complex disability support needs: Requirements for NDIS providers in receipt of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funding. Available at [Providers DFFH](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs>

# Program outcomes

The program aims to achieve:

* coordinated supports to help a family safely maintain care of their child in the family home, with appropriate mainstream and disability supports in place.
* coordinated supports for a child requiring accommodation outside the family home.

From the department’s outcomes framework, the program’s aims are:

* Victorian families, carers and individuals have supportive and respectful relationships and are safe from harm, fear and neglect in their homes. This includes
* addressing the compounding effects of violence and abuse
* improving support and recovery for both victim-survivor and perpetrators
* ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people in care

# Program activities/outputs

The primary program activities include:

* Board (living expenses) – Under 16
* Board (living expenses) – 16+
* Sole Occupancy Loading
* Lodging (rent)

In exception circumstances, the following activities are available:

* Flexible board funding
* Flexible prevention funding
* Flexible leaving care supplement.

# Key performance indicators/targets

The key performance measures include:

* The number clients in receipt of board funding

# Service locations

This service is offered across Victoria.

# Client group

This activity is targeted at children who require, or may require in the future, accommodation outside the family home due to their complex disability support needs. To be eligible for this service the children must:

* be an NDIS participant and be jointly supported by the NDIS and the department, with both parties agreeing to coordinate services
* have complex disability support needs that may not be sustainably met in the family home
* not require a statutory response to ensure their safety.

Children may receive support from this program:

* when residing in the family home, to prevent entry into accommodation outside the family home, in the exceptional circumstances when other mainstream services are not available
* when requiring accommodation outside the family home
* when transitioning from a board and lodging arrangement outside of the family home into adult accommodation arrangements and additional support is required (in exceptional circumstances).

# Timeframes

The Support for children with complex disability support needs program timeframes are dependent on individual family’s needs and the agreed approach with the NDIA. Supports will end when a family no longer requires support to access mainstream services or the young person turns 18 years (noting in exceptional circumstances time-limited leaving care support can continue beyond the young person’s 18th birthday).

See Board and lodging policy for children with complex disability support needs: Requirements for NDIS providers in receipt of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funding. Available at [Providers DFFH](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs>

# Resourcing

Support for children with complex disability support needs program funding will support the core costs of living expenses and household costs incurred by the NDIS registered provider to provide a homelike and suitable environment for a child or young person to live.

This funding should not be used for staffing to care for a child.

# Legislative requirements

## Providers in receipt of board and lodging

For providers to receive the board and lodging contribution, the provider must be:

* registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to provide specified supports and services for the purposes of worker screening, and
* subject to certification audits.

As such, full compliance with NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission and the NDIS Act 2013 is required.

Requirements under Victoria’s *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, also remain in place.

See Board and lodging policy for children with complex disability support needs: Requirements for NDIS providers in receipt of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funding. Available at [Providers DFFH](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs>

## Providers in receipt of flexible funding

It is recommended that NDIS registered providers are engaged for flexible funding where possible.

# Accountability and monitoring

For the acquittal process, see Board and lodging policy for children with complex disability support needs: Requirements for NDIS providers in receipt of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funding. Available at [Providers DFFH](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs>

Confidentiality and information sharing

Information will be kept secure and will be protected by such security safeguards as is reasonable to prevent loss, unauthorised access, unauthorised use, modification, disclosure or other misuse, including unauthorised reproduction by any means.

Information will be shared with appropriate parental consent.

Dispute resolutions and complaints

Providers will have written policies and procedures in place that staff are familiar with (and that are readily accessible) for resolving complaints and disputes lodged by children and families. Best practice would include other options available to children and young people, such as the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission complaints service, the Victorian Ombudsman and other support services.

All complaints and disputes about support for children with disability support needs funding will be handled in a manner consistent with departmental policies, privacy and confidentiality standards, and will be resolved within a reasonable timeframe. Children and their families are to be made aware of these processes.

Supporting documents

Board and lodging policy for children with complex disability support needs: Requirements for NDIS providers in receipt of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funding. Available at [Providers DFFH](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/board-and-lodging-policy-children-complex-disability-support-needs>

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