

# Community connections

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**Quick summary:** Community connections is a service available through the NDIS.

It is available to people with disability aged 9 to 64, and their families.

You don't have to apply to the NDIS to get community connections. Both people with disability and NDIS participants can access this service through our NDIS local area coordinators. This helps people know about and access the supports available in their community.

Local area coordinators will also help people with disability apply for the NDIS and start their plan.

If your child is younger than 9, read [Our Guideline – Early connections](#) for information on the support available.

If you are aged 65 or older, we will provide you information on your local aged care services.

Community connections can include things like help to access information, talking about how to access mainstream and community supports, or help to apply to the NDIS.

It is available even if you are not eligible for the NDIS.

Being involved in your community can support wellbeing and keep you connected to the people and places in your area that build on this. Community connections can help you to do what is important to you. This can include finding supports you need to be more independent and do more of the things you enjoy in your local community.

When we say 'you', we mean a person aged 9 to 64 with disability.

When we say 'we', we mean the NDIA.

When we say 'participant', we mean a NDIS participant who has met the NDIS eligibility requirements and has an NDIS plan and budget.

The NDIS has funded local area coordinators to deliver community connections since the NDIS started in 2013. We have previously called this 'linking you to information and support in your community'.

## What's on this page?

This page covers:

- [What do we mean by community connections?](#)

- [How do you get community connections?](#)
- [What type of community connections are available?](#)
- [What do community connections look like?](#)
- [What happens after community connections?](#)

You might also be interested in:

- [Early connections](#) (for children younger than 9)
- [Applying to the NDIS](#)

## What do we mean by community connections?

Community connections are all about helping you find the supports you need in your local community.

Community connections are available for people with disability aged 9 to 64, even if you are not eligible for the NDIS. If you are aged 65 or older, we will provide you information on your local aged care services.

Community connections are available to people with disability living in Australia regardless of their citizenship or visa status. However, you will need to meet the eligibility requirements, including the residency requirements, to be eligible for the NDIS. To find out more about the NDIS eligibility requirements, go to [Applying to the NDIS](#).

The support you get through community connections will be different depending on your needs. Community connections generally occur over one or two meetings, but for some people, it might be a regular conversation depending on your needs. There is no limit to the number of times you can contact your local area coordinator. If you get community connections, you may not need long-term support funded by the NDIS.

Community connections can support you to do what is important to you. This can include getting supports you need to be more independent and do more of the things you enjoy in your local community. Being connected to your community can improve wellbeing and support your safety.

## How do you get community connections?

To get community connections, you can contact a local area coordinator. Local area coordinators work alongside people with disability aged 9 to 64. They work with local communities to improve awareness and inclusion, and to remove barriers in the community.

Local area coordinators have strong connections in their local community. They use these connections to develop partnerships to support people with disability in the community. Because they are part of the local community, they know the available disability supports and mainstream and community services well.

In some instances, for example, if your child is 6 years or older, and you would benefit from substantial support to connect with community and mainstream services to support their development, your early childhood partner may help you make community connections. For more information, contact your local [early childhood partner](#).

## What if there are no local area coordinators in your area?

Local area coordinators are not located in remote and very remote areas. If you live in an area that doesn't have a local area coordinator, you can [contact the NDIA](#).

The NDIA can put you in touch with your NDIS Remote Community Connector if there is one available in your area. If you have questions about your disability, you should also speak with your doctor or other health professional.

## What type of community connections are available?

Your local area coordinator will talk with you about the different ways you can receive supports. This may include a combination of services, such as:

- [connections to information relevant to you](#)
- [connections to mainstream and community supports](#)
- [connections with other people for peer support](#)
- [connections to apply to the NDIS](#)

### Connections to information relevant to you

Depending on your needs, local area coordinators can help you find practical information that's relevant to you. This can include:

- information to find [social and peer groups](#)
- help to find and use online supports and services
- booklets or fact sheets from other organisations
- information about different disabilities and conditions
- information to understand your rights and link you to organisations that help advocate for your rights

- information on accessibility in your community.

You may be given information about different supports and other services you may find helpful.

## Connections to mainstream and community supports

Mainstream and community supports are supports and services that are outside the NDIS and generally available to everyone.

Mainstream supports are the supports from other government funded services, like health, mental health, and education.

Community services are services you can get through community organisations, like religious groups and supports from local councils.

Local area coordinators have strong connections in their local community. They help to link people together with services and raise awareness in the community about disability. They can help you connect with supports in your local area, including:

- education, for example schools, universities, TAFEs and community learning programs
- health services, for example GPs, nurses, hospitals, vision, and hearing services
- community health services, for example dietetics, mental health services and counselling services
- social networks that help you keep, build and strengthen your support networks, for example community groups and service organisations
- recreational activities, for example sporting clubs, performing arts groups and local swimming pools
- other government services, for example housing, transport and family violence support services.

## Connections with other people for peer support

Your local area coordinator can work with you to build and strengthen your local support networks and services so you can meet other people with similar experiences or situations, if you want to.

These peer-to-peer and community-based support systems allow for sharing of information that can build your confidence and knowledge and can be a good way to build a community with other people. You may also be able to share your experience with other people who will benefit from this as well.

Peer supports can be one-on-one or in groups. They may be delivered through an online platform or in face-to-face sessions and programs.

Local area coordinators will work with you to understand what you are seeking from peer supports and connect you with the most appropriate supports for you.

## Connections to apply to the NDIS

While you're being supported by your local area coordinator with community connections, you may decide that you want to apply to the NDIS.

If you decide to apply to the NDIS, your local area coordinator can support you to gather the right information and evidence to help work out if you are eligible.

To find out more about being eligible for the NDIS, refer to Our Guideline – [Applying to the NDIS](#).

If you become an NDIS participant, then we'll use information gathered about goals, and connections with community and mainstream supports, to help create your NDIS plan. You can read more about how we make decisions about your NDIS plan in Our Guidelines – [Creating your plan](#), [Your plan](#) and [Reasonable and necessary supports](#).

## What do community connections look like?

Your local area coordinator will be available to support you with general enquiries regarding information on programs and activities in your local community. You can make an enquiry over the phone or at your nearest local area coordination partner office.

If you need more support, you can meet with a local area coordinator to discuss your situation and needs. Your local area coordinator will listen to you and talk about what mainstream and community supports are available in your community and see how these supports may help you pursue your goals..

If someone is seeking support on your behalf, we will talk to both of you about consent. We will consider if they have authority to act on your behalf. In some cases, more information may be needed before we can work with you on community connections.

## What can you expect when we meet with you?

They will start by working with you to get some general information. They will work with you to understand your needs and current situation.

Your local area coordinator will ask you about what's important to you to understand the life you want to live, and your goals. Your goals are your own personal desires about what you'd

like to do. You can have as many or as few goals as you want. They can be big or small, short-term or long-term, simple or complex.

We'll talk with you about what your goals will mean for community connections. We can't change your goals or choose them for you. But we can help you think about how you want to word them.

All the information you give helps us work out the best supports to meet your needs. We'll keep your personal information safe and secure. Learn more about [your privacy and information](#).

You can also ask other people to help you if you want to. For example, you can have friends, family or an advocate join the conversation about community connections.

When you meet with your local area coordinator, they'll ask you about:

- your situation
- what is important to you, including goals you would like to pursue
- your current strengths and abilities
- your current supports and services
- areas where you may need more support
- how well the current supports and services meet your needs
- what help you need to build your skills to do more things yourself
- the types of community and government services you are using.

Your local area coordinator will show you what connections are available in your local community that could support you.

If you want, we can give you a record of what we talk about with you. This may be helpful if you want more help to make community connections than one or two conversations. We'll need some more personal information from you if you want help to make community connections, like your name, address and date of birth.

- Example

Jamie has just completed a Patisserie training certificate and dreams of being a pastry chef. Jamie has a mild disability and wants some support to prepare for work and find a job.

Jamie contacts his local area coordinator and asks about what supports are available. The local area coordinator talks to Jamie about his situation. Jamie prepares some goals with his local area coordinator, including a goal to find the right job and a goal to be supported to start and keep his new job. The local area coordinator records Jamie's goals and information

about his current supports. The local area coordinator also records and shares information about mainstream supports available to help Jamie prepare for and find a job. For example, one of the mainstream supports is a local employment service that provides support for people starting out in work. Once Jamie finds a job, the employment service will also work with his new employer to make sure the workplace is inclusive and provides any reasonable adjustments Jamie needs.

At the end of the meeting, Jamie leaves with the information they discussed, including his goals, current supports and the community and mainstream supports he can get to help him work towards his employment goals. Jamie also has a record of the next steps he needs to take.

Jamie gets help to find and adjust to a new job through one of the mainstream supports he talked about with his local area coordinator, a local employment service. Once Jamie has connected with this employment service, he receives the support he needs for preparing for work and is on his way to finding the right job. Jamie doesn't need any further support through the NDIS. Jamie knows he can always talk to his local area coordinator if he needs more help in future.

### **Example**

Zaina is a 19-year-old university student who lives with friends in a share house. She has just been diagnosed with a degenerative condition and wants to know what options and services are available to her if her condition worsens.

Zaina comes to talk to her local area coordinator to find out what supports, and services are in her local area. We talk to Zaina to find out more about her and her situation. We explain the ways we can help her find supports and services in her community, such as giving her information on what services are available in Zaina's local area and helping her to make connections with mainstream services.

We ask Zaina if she would like help to make community connections. We need some personal information to do this. Right now, Zaina just wants some information to know what type of help is available near her, so we give her information about support groups and local services that are available in the area.

In 6 months' time, Zaina's circumstances change. She contacts her local area coordinator to get more information and she asks for more help to make community connections this time. She talks about her situation with her local area coordinator. Zaina decides she wants to apply to the NDIS, and her local area coordinator helps her apply.

## **What happens after community connections?**

Once you have met with your local area coordinator, you will have been given information and the tools to start to make connections in your community. You can check the information we gave you when you need to refer to your goals, the steps you want to take to work towards your goals, or where to find information to build your community connections.

While you are connecting with your community, you may decide you want to apply to the NDIS. Your local area coordinator can support you to gather the right information and evidence to help work out if the NDIS is right for you. You can learn more about being eligible for the NDIS in [Applying to the NDIS](#).

Your local area coordinator will be available to support you with general enquiries, help you find information and help you find local programs and activities.