

When we decide whether to fund an assistance animal, we think about what support is reasonable to expect your family, carers, informal networks and the community to give you. We think about whether it's reasonable for them to give the type of support that an assistance animal would give you.

For example, we usually expect parents to look after their children. We think about how much extra support the child needs because of their disability compared to other children of a similar age.

For children, we need to know:

- whether the tasks the assistance animal will do are tasks we would usually expect the child's parents to do, taking into account the child's age
- whether the child's needs are a lot more than those of other children the same age because of their disability
- if there are any risks to the family's or carer's wellbeing
- whether the assistance animal will help the child to do tasks without support, taking into account what we would usually expect the child's supports to do.

We know how important it is to get therapy and supports for children early in life. Early childhood supports help a child be more independent and live an ordinary life.

A child and their family usually work with a team of allied health professionals. They'll help you try supports that have been beneficial and effective for other children in similar situations, before thinking about an assistance animal.

For adults, we need to know:

- whether it's suitable for family members, carers, informal support networks and the community to give you the support you need
- how much support you need, and whether your family members and carers can manage this, depending on how old or able they are
- whether there are community supports available to support your family and carers, and if there are any risks to their wellbeing
- if there are any risks to your wellbeing by having to rely on your family for support
- whether your informal supports help you to be more independent or not, compared to an assistance animal.

We know it's important to support and develop informal supports for both children and adults.

Learn more about [informal supports](#) .

Example

Sarah has lived with quadriplegia for the past 5 years. Sarah has some function in her arms but limited function in her hands and problems with fatigue.

She uses a power wheelchair for all mobility and needs help with many personal and domestic tasks at home.

Sarah lives with her boyfriend who provides her with support in getting to work and accessing the community.

Sarah wants an assistance animal because she wants to increase her independence in accessing her work and the community. Sarah tells us she wants an assistance animal to pick up and retrieve dropped items, open and close doors, and carry items such as bags.

We need to consider Sarah's goal of increasing her independence from her informal supports. We also need to consider what is reasonable to expect Sarah's boyfriend to support her in while also sustaining his role as an informal support.

Based on the information, an assistance animal will help increase Sarah's independence and sustain the informal support she receives from her boyfriend.