

Helping Children with Autism package, Better Start for Children with Disability Initiative and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

What are the HCWA and Better Start programmes?

HCWA and Better Start are early intervention programmes that provide information, services and support for children with additional needs and their families and carers.

HCWA is available to children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Better Start is available to children with a range of conditions, including: Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, Fragile X syndrome and Prader Willi syndrome. The full list of conditions is available on the [Department of Social Services \(DSS\)](#) website.

Both programmes provide up to \$12,000 in funding for early intervention services and treatments for eligible children, up to the age of seven years. The funding can be used to pay for services and resources provided by a range of providers who are members of the Early Intervention Service Provider Panels.

Both programmes also provide access to a number of other resources:

- Early Days workshops, PlayConnect playgroups, Better Start Playgroup community events and the Raising Children Network website.
- Better Start Registration and Information Service (RIS) provided by Carers Australia.
- Autism Advisor Services provided by Autism Associations in each state and territory.
- Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres (ASELCCs).
- There are also a number of Medicare items for diagnosis, assessment and early intervention available.

What will happen to the programmes after NDIS launches?

HCWA and Better Start early intervention support will progressively transition to the NDIS in trial sites as children currently in the programmes access the scheme. Only the individualised component of both programmes will transition to the NDIS (up to \$12,000 in funding for early intervention services and treatments). The other resources such as Early Days Workshops and Medicare items remain operating as usual.

Once relevant cohorts of children are phased into the scheme, access to HCWA and Better Start early intervention funding will cease in trial sites. From that time onwards, early intervention supports will be accessed via the NDIS through individualised packages of support.

HCWA and Better Start will continue to operate outside of trial sites.

My child is currently accessing one of the programmes – what does this mean for me?

If you live in a trial site and have a child currently receiving support from HCWA or Better Start, you should have already received a package from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) with information about the scheme. If not, parents and carers should contact the NDIA on 1800 800 110.

Support plans will be developed based on a child's needs and the assistance required to help them reach their developmental milestones at the time of assessment. Until the NDIA has a plan in place for a

child, you can continue to access the same disability programmes and the same services you are currently receiving, including Better Start and HCWA.

Will my child become a participant in the NDIS?

If your child is an existing HCWA and Better Start client you will have the opportunity to transition to the NDIS at different times in different trial locations, depending on phasing arrangements in that location.

South Australia

- Existing clients of HCWA and Better Start aged five and under in SA will transition to the NDIS during 2013-14. Children in age groups not currently phasing into the Scheme can still access Better Start and HCWA during this time.
- Better Start and HCWA have begun closing to new entrants in SA according to phasing arrangements. For example, from July to September 2013, the parents/guardians of children aged up to three years who would have applied for Better Start or HCWA could make an access request to the NDIS. Better Start and HCWA will remain open for all other age groups until that age group is phased in.

The Hunter region, NSW

- Existing clients of HCWA and Better Start in the Hunter region, NSW, will enter the NDIS by Local Government Area. Existing clients in Newcastle are being phased in. Existing clients in Lake Macquarie are entering the scheme in 2014 and existing clients in Maitland will begin entry in 2015. Until then, existing clients will continue to receive HCWA or Better Start until they are phased in to the scheme.
- Children not already accessing services but requiring early intervention supports in the Hunter region can make an access request to the NDIS. These clients will be 'new participants' and their family can make an access request at any time.

The Barwon region, Victoria

- Existing clients of HCWA and Better Start in the Barwon region, Victoria, have been gradually phased into the scheme according to the phasing schedule.
- Children not already accessing services but requiring early intervention supports in the Barwon region can make an access request to the NDIS. These clients will be 'new participants' and can make an access request at any time.

Australian Capital Territory

- Existing clients of HCWA and Better Start in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) will enter the NDIS in keeping with the current 'ages and stages' phasing schedule. (<http://www.ndis.gov.au/about-usour-trial-sites/ndis-act>)
- Children not already accessing services but requiring early intervention supports in the ACT can make an access request to the NDIS. These clients will be 'new participants' and their family can make an access request at any time.

Western Australia

- Existing clients of HCWA and Better Start in Western Australia (WA) will enter the NDIS by Local Government Area. (<http://www.ndis.gov.au/about-usour-trial-sites/ndis-western-australia>)
- Children not already accessing services but requiring early intervention supports in the Perth Hills area can make an access request to the NDIS. These clients will be 'new participants' and their family can make an access request at any time.

Northern Territory

- Existing clients of HCWA and Better Start in the Northern Territory (NT) will enter the NDIS in the Barkly Region. From July 2016, the NDIS will progressively roll out in the NT and by July 2019, all eligible residents will be covered.
- Children not already accessing services but requiring early intervention supports in the Barkly Region area can make an access request to the NDIS. These clients will be 'new participants' and their family can make an access request at any time.

What do I need to consider before I request access to the NDIS?

You can request access to the NDIS for your child once your child meets the phasing requirements in your location. You can use the existing HCWA or Better Start funding for your child while developing an NDIS plan. If your child becomes a participant in NDIS their plan will be developed and approved as soon as practicable. Planning cannot be delayed to enable you to expend your child's HCWA or Better Start funding.

Once an NDIS plan is approved, funding from HCWA and Better Start will cease.

You should be aware that if you choose not to request access to the NDIS when your child meets phasing requirements there may be delays if you change your mind.

What happens if my child doesn't become a participant?

Your child will continue to receive HCWA and Better Start early intervention support, administered by DSS, until your funds are fully expended, or your child reaches the maximum age for assistance.

Other services and supports, such as Medicare items, may still be available and the NDIA will assist you to access these services.

I am a service provider delivering HCWA and/or Better Start – what does it mean for me and my existing funding?

To deliver services to NDIS participants, providers will need to register with the NDIA. Providers in trial sites not registered with the scheme can also provide services to NDIS participants who choose to self-manage their funds.

The HCWA and Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider Panels will remain in place during the trial. Those providers wishing to deliver services to HCWA and Better Start clients will still need to be registered on the relevant panel.

More information

- Visit the [NDIS Website](http://www.ndis.gov.au)
- Email [NDIS Enquiries](mailto:ndis@ndis.gov.au)
- Call **1800 800 110*** Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm EST
- For people with hearing or speech loss
 - TTY: 1800 555 677
 - Speak and Listen: 1800 555 727

- For people who need help with English
TIS: **131 450**

*1800 calls are free from fixed lines; however calls from mobiles may be charged.