



# Home Stretch WA and young people with disability

## Information for District Office staff

This information sheet is intended to help Department of Communities Child Protection District Office staff who are supporting a young person with disability, or suspected disability, to make an informed choice about participating in Home Stretch WA to assist with their transition from out-of-home care.

This information sheet also provides guidance on how to achieve a smooth transition to Home Stretch WA when working with a young person with disability (or suspected disability) and what types of supports they can access through the program.

## Informed choice

Home Stretch WA is a voluntary (opt-in) program. The young person must have the ability to understand what Home Stretch WA is, the role of the transition coach and the minimum level of engagement required to participate in the program.

Provisions are made by the transition coach for a young person to have a support person in attendance at the Home Stretch WA information session (Stage 2) to assist them in making an informed choice about their participation and engagement.

The level of engagement will be dependent on a young person's circumstances and this would be negotiated to meet the needs of the young person.

## Guardianship and administration

Where the young person's decision-making ability is impaired (due to a mental health issue, intellectual disability, acquired brain injury or serious and chronic substance misuse issues), and it is unlikely they will have the capacity to make decisions in their best interests, a guardianship and/or administration order may be required upon leaving care.

In this instance, the district must ensure an application is made to the State Administrative Tribunal via the State Solicitor's Office (SSO). The SSO will require time to review, assess, and make their determination. To get clear information on timelines and processes, contact the SSO via [sso@sso.wa.gov.au](mailto:sso@sso.wa.gov.au) as early as possible (from age 15) as part of the young person's leaving care planning. Refer to Communities' Child Protection Guide – [E.50 Guardianship and Administration](#) for further information.



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If the young person has an appointed guardian, they do not need the guardian's consent for a Stage 1 referral to Home Stretch WA. Once onboarded in Home Stretch WA, the provider must support the young person to inform their guardian that they are participating in the program, particularly if the order requires the guardian to make decisions on where and who they live with.

If the young person has an administrator (Public Trustee) appointed, the Home Stretch WA transition coach must liaise with them regarding all financial matters, including Invest in Me and Housing Allowance.

## Referring a young person to Home Stretch WA

When submitting a Stage 1 referral for a young person with a diagnosed or suspected disability to Home Stretch WA, you must complete the Disability Supplementary Information Form (available on the [Home Stretch WA SharePoint site – How to refer a young person page](#)). If the young person resides in metropolitan Perth, including Bindjareb, supplementary disability information is incorporated within the Metro Stage 1 Referral Form, which is submitted online via the SharePoint site to the Metro Central Referral System. If the young person resides in a regional area, please email the Stage 1 referral and Disability Supplementary Information Form to the Home Stretch WA service provider for that area.

## Information session with the young person

The Home Stretch WA information session (part of the Stage 2 process) is scheduled by the caseworker and is usually facilitated by the transition coach. The information session provides an opportunity for the young person and their support person/s (and/or legal guardian if relevant) to learn more about Home Stretch WA and ask questions about how the program can help meet their individual needs. NDIS service provider representatives, such as the support coordinator, may also be invited where the young person is a NDIS participant.

Each young person's situation is unique, and an individualised approach is taken by the transition coach, which includes consideration of:

- how best to communicate with the young person
- who else might need to be involved to ensure the young person's agency is respected
- if relevant, who has legal authority to provide informed consent for the young person, and
- if any further discussions/meetings are needed.

Refer to the Child Protection Guide – [A.08.3 Home Stretch WA](#) for further information about the Stage 2 process and information session.



## National Disability Insurance Scheme

Some young people with disability may be a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant and have a current NDIS plan, while some may have a diagnosed disability, but have not made a NDIS Access Request yet. Other young people may have a suspected disability and need support to determine if a disability assessment is appropriate. Refer to Attachment 1 – Disability status and type of supports that may be required by a young person.

It is important to gain the necessary evidence to support a NDIS application (e.g. reports, letters and/or assessments from treating professionals) for a young person living with disability and submit the [NDIS Access Request](#) well in advance of them leaving care to ensure a plan and supports are in place, including any accommodation requirements.

To meet disability requirements, NDIS requires evidence that the young person's disability is linked to at least one of the following impairments<sup>1</sup> that are, or are likely to be, permanent:

- intellectual
- cognitive
- neurological
- sensory
- physical
- psychosocial disability (where the young person has reduced capacity to do daily life activities and tasks due to mental health).

### Where the young person is already a NDIS participant

If a young person in care is already a NDIS participant, they should have a comprehensive assessment in partnership with their carer/s (where relevant) and the NDIS support coordinator to assist with a review of their plan when they turn 17. This will ensure the young person has a NDIS plan that will meet their needs when they leave care, particularly regarding funding for the supports required in their transition to adulthood. This will also be helpful should the young person choose to participate in Home Stretch WA, noting they can be onboarded from age 17.5 to support a smooth transition to the program once they turn 18.

### When the NDIS Access Request is in progress

Once the NDIS Access Request is submitted, it can take up to 21 days for a decision to be made on whether the young person is eligible for the NDIS. If the young person's situation is urgent (e.g. the young person is about to leave a hospital or custodial setting, or is at

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply](http://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply)



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imminent risk of homelessness), a request can be made for a 'priority eligibility decision' which will be made within 2 to 5 business days. Refer to the [NDIS website](#) for full details.

### If the young person has a suspected disability

In some instances, a young person may have an undiagnosed disability that requires extra supports, but a NDIS Access Request was not submitted prior to them leaving care (this may be for various reasons).

Should the young person consent to a Home Stretch WA referral and decide to participate in the program (or they are already onboarded with a Home Stretch WA service), they give consent for Communities to share information with the transition coach. The transition coach would have a conversation with the young person (and a support person) about their needs and whether they wish to apply to the NDIS to become a participant. If agreed, the transition coach will need to obtain any necessary evidence to support a young person with the NDIS Access Request.

The transition coach may contact the district where the young person was connected prior to leaving care to seek any information held on file to support the NDIS Access Request, such as details of which reports/letters and/or assessments from treating professionals or support workers etc are on file and how to request access to these direct from the specialist or through Freedom of Information.

In some cases, the transition coach may seek Leaving Care funding on behalf of the young person for any necessary assessment/s to be conducted to support the NDIS Access Request. Any funding for a young person aged 18 and over from a district is determined and approved by the Assistant District Director or District Director. The transition coach should complete and provide the Request for Leaving Care Assistance via a Home Stretch WA Provider form to the district outlining the justification for the financial request.

### Role of the transition coach

The role of the Home Stretch WA transition coach and that of a NDIS support coordinator are quite different.

The role of a NDIS support coordinator is to help a participant understand and implement support included in the NDIS plan and connect them to providers and other community and government services. The NDIS support coordinator will also support a participant to build skills and direction.

A transition coach, who is not trained in disability support, can assist a young person with disability by increasing their interdependence and transition into a young adult after leaving care. A young person with disability may have more complex support needs and these disability-related needs may overlap at times with their needs in transitioning from care. As much as possible, the disability-related needs are supported through their NDIS



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plan (where the young person is a participant), with appropriate providers and their transition coach complementing these supports.

The transition coach can work flexibly with a young person to help them articulate and work towards their own goals. This might differ to the types of functional and therapeutic supports identified and outlined in a young person's NDIS plan (where this is in place).

The transition coach may also need support to increase accessibility for a young person such as through visual tools, sensory soothers and emotional regulation tools and strategies.

Note, if a young person is living with a foster or family carer and they decide to participate in Home Stretch WA, the Staying On Subsidy would not be paid if the carer (supportive adult) is in receipt of, or eligible for, the Centrelink Carer Payment. This is because the Centrelink Carer Payment rate (and any supplementary payments and allowances where relevant) will be much more than the Staying On Subsidy. However, the young person and supportive adult would have all other supports available under Home Stretch WA such as one-to-one support from a transition coach and the young person would have access to Invest In Me funding as required. The carer will be advised of this.

Role and activities a transition coach may undertake when working with a young person with disability are outlined below:

- Once the young person has chosen to participate at the information session (i.e. Stage 2) and consented to do so, the transition coach/provider staff will get to know any additional workers (caseworker, NDIS support coordinator etc.) who support the young person and each of their roles. The transition coach will work with the young person and their team of supports to determine their goals and what they would like to work towards.
- Work closely with the young person's caseworker during the smooth transition phase (i.e. 17.5-18 years) and share information.
- Work closely with the young person's existing support networks to build a strong and trusted relationship. Once the relationship is well established, the transition coach can help introduce new support workers/others to the young person, especially if they feel anxious and/or uncertain when meeting new people.
- Where there are concerns the young person may use potentially harmful behaviour, the transition coach may take a step back from the one-to-one mentoring/support role and work more closely with the carer/guardian and support workers on areas in which they can help.
- Consistency, trust, and impartiality of the transition coach relationship mean the service is well placed to help a young person navigate the NDIS and ensure their supports are appropriate and understand their rights and responsibilities regarding their support plan.



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- The transition coach may help a young person complete and submit their NDIS Access Request (where this has not been done prior to leaving care). This might involve:
  - reaching out to the district where the young person was connected prior to leaving care to seek information required to complete the NDIS Access Request Form
  - exploring what evidence is available and/or required to support the NDIS Access Request (e.g. copies of existing reports, letters and/or assessments from treating professionals, support workers etc.)
  - seeking approval of Invest in Me funding for disability assessment/s if required (or funding may need to be sought from the district via the Leaving Care Fund)
  - scheduling an appointment for disability assessment/s to be conducted and helping the young person to attend (where needed)
  - helping the young person identify and connect with the supports they need and manage and attend appointments (if required).
- Provide coaching support around housing, education, wellbeing and life skills development. This might include helping the young person access disability employment services and supported accommodation, and exploring education and training opportunities and wellbeing supports, which may sit outside or compliment the types of supports included in the NDIS plan.
- The transition coach's role can include looking at the young person's aspirational goals and what may be met through Invest in Me funding.
- A transition coach can use the Support Circles approach to support the young person to build their own connections and develop the confidence to seek help from their supports and mainstream services.

The transition coach may have an advocacy role to ensure the young person's needs and rights are upheld. For example, the transition coach may advocate to get access for the young person to the Tenancy Support Program where they have a housing application submitted with the Department of Housing and Works; support/advocate for a change in NDIS provider if the level of current service is not aligned with the young person's entitlement, or to have the NDIS plan re-assessed to ensure it meets their current needs (circumstances may have changed significantly since leaving care and the plan does not support their needs); and liaise with support coordinators and others and advocate when needed when a crisis occurs (for example, their stable living arrangement with a carer is breaking down).

### **Regional Intensive Support Coordination Program**

[Regional Intensive Support \(RIS\) Coordinators](#) are available across the state and can provide advice and information to district staff and/or a Home Stretch WA transition coach regarding the NDIS.



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The transition coach can ask the district to contact a RIS Coordinator in their region to arrange an initial discussion. If it is agreed that further support is required, the district will need to complete a RIS Coordination Referral Form outlining the background and assistance being requested.

## Community Disability Housing Program

The [Community Disability Housing Program](#) (CDHP) helps people with disability who require significant and ongoing support to live safely within the community. This could be a housing option for young people leaving care with disability who require this type of accommodation arrangement.

The young person must meet the eligibility criteria when they apply for CDHP and when the offer of a property is made. The application can be completed and submitted by the young person, transition coach, disability support provider, a WA Government authority such as Communities, or by an advocate or guardian. The application can be completed electronically and submitted to [CDHPapplications@dohw.wa.gov.au](mailto:CDHPapplications@dohw.wa.gov.au) or in person at a local Housing Office.

CDHP properties are managed by Community Housing Organisations. CDHP does not provide crisis or emergency accommodation.

## Communities Inclusion Connection Team

Once the young person has left care, the Communities Inclusion Connection (CIC) team can be contacted for help to connect the young person with mainstream supports and specialised disability services.

The CIC team provides three key functions:

- Navigation – with a 'no wrong door' approach, any person across WA (not in out-of-home care) can access timely information, sign posting and linkage to appropriate services.
- Connection – people with disability (or their carers) in metropolitan Perth who require additional support can access the CIC Connectors for direct service navigation and case management.
- Engagement – if required, an Engagement Officer can foster direct linkages to key stakeholders and community groups to build capacity, promote inclusion and identify and develop solutions to service gaps and barriers for those living in the metropolitan area.

The CIC team can be contacted via email at [InclusionConnect@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:InclusionConnect@communities.wa.gov.au) or phone on 1800 622 258.



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**Attachment 1: Disability status and type of supports that may be required by a young person**

Disability status of the young person (YP)	NDIS Access or not	Type of support required by a transition coach
<p><b>YP has a diagnosed disability</b></p>	<p>NDIS Participant – YP has NDIS Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YP may need support to submit a NDIS Plan Review due to change in circumstances</li> </ul>
	<p>Not a NDIS Participant – YP needs to submit NDIS Access Request</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support to gather evidence of disability and functional needs and submit NDIS Access Request</li> <li>If successful, YP will need support to identify providers that meet needs to implement NDIS Plan</li> </ul>
	<p>NDIS Access Request submitted – YP did not meet Access criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May need support to appeal the decision if considered justified</li> <li>Can submit a new NDIS Access Request if additional disability diagnosis received or circumstances change that are likely to meet NDIS Access criteria</li> </ul>
<p><b>YP has a suspected disability</b></p>	<p>Not a NDIS Participant – need to consider whether disability assessment/s are appropriate for the YP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support YP to discuss advantages and disadvantages of a lifelong disability diagnosis (<a href="#">Pros and Cons of Labelling a Child with Special Needs</a>)</li> </ul>
	<p>YP chooses to participate in disability assessment/s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange disability assessment/s for the YP – may need support to seek funding for the assessment/s</li> </ul>
	<p>YP receives disability diagnosis or does not meet criteria for disability diagnosis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires support to understand what this means for them</li> </ul>
	<p>Determine if the YP is likely to meet NDIS Access Request criteria (<a href="#">Disabilities not supported by the NDIS   Disability Support Guide</a>) – if yes, YP needs to submit NDIS Access Request</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help YP gather evidence of disability and functional needs and submit NDIS Access Request</li> <li>If successful, YP needs support to identify providers that meet their needs to implement the NDIS Plan</li> </ul>