

# Appendix F – Supporting people with disability



“My partner and brother rely on me to find our little family a safe home. I feel guilty that my physical accessibility needs complicate the already complex process of finding an affordable rental or vying for almost non-existent social housing. As if my disability is somehow within my control, as if the systemic lack of accessible housing is my fault for being too different, too difficult, too disabled.”

*Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.*

## Overview

There are multiple models used to understand disability. The medical model focuses on a person's impairments and limitations in which an impairment can be physical, intellectual, sensory or psychosocial<sup>i</sup>. Yet the social model explains disability as the result of interactions between people living with impairments and the barriers in the physical, communication and social environments and attitudes<sup>ii</sup>. Workers' actions can help to overcome the constraints imposed on people living with impairments.

In the 2021 Census, about five per cent of people experiencing homelessness in Australia had profound or severe disability<sup>iii</sup>. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in 2021-22 approximately 2.6 per cent of specialist homelessness services clients in NSW reported a disability and approximately 37 per cent a mental health condition<sup>iv</sup>. However, it is assumed that the number of people living with disability experiencing homelessness is under-reported.

The pathways into homelessness for people with disability are diverse and can be influenced by their location, disability type and level of disability<sup>v</sup>. Additionally, discrimination and a lack of access to reasonable adjustments can be major contributors to poor education and work outcomes, increasing a person's risk of homelessness.

People with disability may experience physical, psychological, communication and/or social barriers which impact their experience. People with disability may have difficulty accessing public infrastructure and navigating social services, and/or lack financial resources to control or modify their living spaces<sup>vi</sup>.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides funding to eligible people with disability to enable greater independence, skills, connection, and an improved quality of life. People who are experiencing homelessness (or at risk of homelessness) face a unique set of barriers to accessing the NDIS and may find it difficult navigating the process while in this situation<sup>vii</sup>.

In very limited instances, the NDIS may be able to assist with accommodation. However, not all people with a disability may be a participant in the NDIS. This may be because the person did not meet the NDIS eligibility criteria, has not applied for the NDIS, or has a pending application<sup>viii</sup>. A person with disability can access specialist homelessness services (SHS) but not all services may be able to support the person.

Some people experiencing homelessness may not have a formal diagnosis of their disability resulting in the lack of specialist support<sup>ix</sup>. This may impact a person's wellbeing and/or interactions.

Most disabilities are not visible, so workers may not be aware that a person has a disability unless the person discloses it. People are not required to disclose the fact that they have disability, and many people choose not to, unless they feel safe to do so. It is important for the worker to focus on the person's needs in a non-judgemental and non-stigmatising way.

Each person with disability has unique needs and experiences. A person with disability's choices and preferences must be considered and respected in all interactions where it is safe to do so. Workers are encouraged to participate in disability awareness and capacity building training to better understand the needs of and how to best support a person with disability.

It is important to ensure premises, activities, responses and engagements are accessible, empowering, non-judgemental and respectful for people with disability. Workers should try to make reasonable adjustments on a case by case basis such as providing accessible formats for documents (e.g. Easy Read), providing interpreters including Auslan-English, Deaf and/or Deafblind (as required), and augmentative and alternative communication tools (as required). Workers should provide adequate time when engaging people with disability.

## Engagement strategy

### Things to consider before engaging:

- People with disability require a person-centred response as each presentation of disability is different.
- People with disability may use equipment to assist with their mobility, communication, and/or understanding.
- Workers should be aware of and be prepared to use augmentative and/or alternative communication methods, such as engaging an Auslan-English, Deaf and/or Deafblind interpreter, electronic communication devices, pictorial systems and Easy Read as needed.
- A person who is deaf may not be fluent in Auslan as they may use a different overseas sign language or did not learn that form of communication.
- An Auslan-English Interpreter is someone who translates in both directions between English and Auslan, facilitating communication between two parties. A Deaf Interpreter is someone who works in tandem with an Auslan-English Interpreter and possesses additional specialist language skills to facilitate communication when the person is not fluent in Auslan.

- People with disability may have supports already in place including NDIS service providers, a carer, trustee or guardian. If an interaction with the person proceeds (such as providing referral or services), the worker should ask the person and/or their trustee or guardian, where applicable, for consent to inform or engage with relevant supports.
- Presume that a person has capacity to make decisions about themselves. Do not make assumptions about decision making capacity based on a person's disability (including cognitive disability).
- In some cases, where a NSW Trustee and Guardian may be appointed, the worker should continue to seek the person's opinion on actions and information that will be shared with the trustee or guardian.

### Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Gain the person's attention by a verbal introduction and/or using visual cues.
- Do not touch any assistance equipment or animals unless given permission.
- Be respectful and empowering when you communicate with the person. Consider and address any perceived power imbalances. This includes asking the person if they would like you to communicate with them at their same physical level and may involve you needing to sit or crouch down if they request you to do so.
- Work with the person and their supports, where available, to understand any individual barriers.
- Speak or communicate in plain English and avoid jargon and acronyms. Keep your sentences short and have one main point per sentence.
- Be polite and do not try to rush the conversation.
- Re-word rather than repeat what you say if the person seems to have difficulty understanding you. Try asking 'yes or no' questions if the person seems to have difficulty communicating with you.
- Be aware that some people may have restricted capacity to understand visual cues. It is important to communicate all actions you are doing throughout the engagement, or to express emotions you want to share with the person.
- Consider the person's sensory needs to enhance communication, such as:
  - showing and telling that may improve understanding
  - allowing the person to walk and talk (if appropriate) to regulate themselves, rather than standing still and interviewing

- considering the impact of the environment, and under/over-stimulation, on engagement
  - allowing the person to show their personal space requirements
  - monitoring body language and its impact on the person
  - mirroring their expression to help build rapport when verbal skills are limited.
- When using an interpreter to communicate with someone who is deaf, you do not have to speak loudly. Pause after each phrase (not word) to allow the interpreter time to translate what was said. Be sure to speak directly to the person who is Deaf not the interpreter, using words such as “you” and maintaining eye contact where culturally appropriate.
  - Only make reference to the person’s disability if it is necessary or relevant.
  - Do not make assumptions about the person’s needs. The person has the right to accept or decline any offer of support or assistance. Give the person the opportunity to explain the best way to provide the requested support.

## RESOURCES

### CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">Ask Izzy</a>	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://askizzy.org.au">https://askizzy.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Link2Home</a>	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 152 152 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless">https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless</a>

### INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING SERVICES

Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">Auslan Services</a>	Provides face to face interpreting, remote interpreting and notetaking for deaf Australians.	<b>Phone:</b> 1300 287 526 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:admin@auslanservicesbookings.com">admin@auslanservicesbookings.com</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://auslanservices.com">https://auslanservices.com</a>
<a href="#">Deaf Connect</a>	Provides face to face interpreting, remote interpreting and notetaking for deaf Australians. Deaf Connect also provide information services to connect the Deaf community to services and supports.	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://deafconnect.org.au">https://deafconnect.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Sweeney Interpreting Services</a>	Provide interpreting services to people who are deaf including Auslan-English, Deaf and Deafblind interpreting.	<b>Phone:</b> 0427 755 753 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:bookings@sweeneyinterpreting.com.au">bookings@sweeneyinterpreting.com.au</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://sweeneyinterpreting.com.au">https://sweeneyinterpreting.com.au</a>

## RESOURCES

OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">Acquired Brain Injury Services</a>	Provides support to people with an acquired brain injury including individual support, support coordination, recreational programs and supported accommodation.	<b>Phone:</b> 02 9334 2247 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://abis.org.au">https://abis.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Australian Centre for Disability Law</a>	Provides specialist legal assistance for people with disability and their associates.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 800 708 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:adviceline@disabilitylaw.org.au">adviceline@disabilitylaw.org.au</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://disabilitylaw.org.au">https://disabilitylaw.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT)</a>	Provides support to people on the autism spectrum including referrals to services, therapy, education and employment.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 277 328 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.autismspectrum.org.au">https://www.autismspectrum.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Council for Intellectual Disability</a>	A disability rights organisation led by people with intellectual disability that provides information, workshops and develops resources.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 424 065 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:info@cid.org.au">info@cid.org.au</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://cid.org.au">https://cid.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Disability Advocacy NSW</a>	Provides free individual advocacy support services to people with disability.	<b>Phone:</b> 1300 365 085 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:support@da.org.au">support@da.org.au</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.da.org.au/how-we-help">https://www.da.org.au/how-we-help</a>
<a href="#">Disability Gateway</a>	The Disability Gateway assists all people with disability, their families and carers to locate and access services across Australia.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 643 787 <b>National Relay:</b> 1800 555 677 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au">https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au</a>
<a href="#">Intellectual Disability Rights Service</a>	A free disability advocacy service and community legal centre for people with intellectual or other cognitive impairment to promote and protect their rights.	<b>Phone:</b> 02 9265 6300 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://idrs.org.au">https://idrs.org.au</a>
<a href="#">First Peoples Disability Network Australia</a>	Supports the rights of Australia's First Nations People with disability, their families, and communities. This service can also assist to find support for individual advocacy.	<b>Phone:</b> 02 9267 4195 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://fpdn.org.au/disability-advocates">https://fpdn.org.au/disability-advocates</a>
<a href="#">Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW</a>	Promotes and protects the rights of people from a non-English speaking background with disability and their family and carers in NSW.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 629 072 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://mdaa.org.au/individual-advocacy">https://mdaa.org.au/individual-advocacy</a>
<a href="#">National Disability Insurance Scheme</a>	Provides support packages for people with disability and links people to services for therapeutic support, personal activities, equipment, community connection, and other support to maintain independence where possible.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 800 110 (NSW hotline) <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au">enquiries@ndis.gov.au</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://ndis.gov.au">https://ndis.gov.au</a>

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Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">National Relay Service (NRS)</a>	Allows people who cannot hear or do not use their voice to communicate with a hearing person over the phone.	<b>Voice relay:</b> 1800 555 727 <b>Teletypewriter (TTY):</b> 133 677 <b>SMS relay:</b> 0423 677 767
<a href="#">NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal – Guardianship Division (NCAT)</a>	The Guardianship Division determines applications about adults who are incapable of making their own decisions and who may require a legally appointed substitute decision maker.	<b>Phone:</b> 1300 006 228 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://ncat.nsw.gov.au/how-ncat-works/ncat-divisions-and-appeal-panel/guardianship-division.html">ncat.nsw.gov.au/how-ncat-works/ncat-divisions-and-appeal-panel/guardianship-division.html</a>
<a href="#">NSW Trustee &amp; Guardian</a>	Protects, promotes and supports the rights, dignity, choices and wishes of the people of NSW through financial management, guardianship, power of attorney and other services.	<b>Phone:</b> 1300 109 290 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.tag.nsw.gov.au">https://www.tag.nsw.gov.au</a>
<a href="#">People with Disability Australia</a>	Provides information, referrals, advocacy and support to people with disability.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 843 929 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://pwd.org.au/get-help">https://pwd.org.au/get-help</a>
<a href="#">Vision Australia</a>	Provide services and support to people who are blind or living with low vision.	<b>Phone:</b> 1300 847 466 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:info@visionaustralia.org">info@visionaustralia.org</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://visionaustralia.org">https://visionaustralia.org</a>

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- i Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-2022](#), AIHW website, 2022.
  - ii People with Disability Australia (PWD), [Social model of disability](#), PWD website, 2023.
  - iii Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Estimating Homelessness: Census](#), ABS website, 2023.
  - iv AIHW, [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-2022](#).
  - v Ibid.
  - vi Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDC NSW), [Submission to the Productivity Commission National Housing and Homelessness Agreement](#), PDC NSW, 2022.
  - vii ICLA, [NDIS Access: Supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness](#), ICLA website, 2022.
  - viii AIHW, [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-2022](#).
  - ix PWD, [NSW Government Foundations for change – Homelessness in NSW Discussion Paper September 2016](#), PWD, 2016.