

An Introduction to the NASC

Helpful tips and information



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If you or someone you care for is disabled or neurodivergent, you can find out if you are eligible for any support funded by **Disability Support Services (DSS)** by contacting your local **Needs Assessment Service Coordination organisation (NASC)**.

NASCs work with eligible disabled people and their families to learn about a disabled person's strengths, support needs and goals, and to outline and allocate different funding and support services that the individual may be entitled to.

Each region in New Zealand has its own NASC—most of them have different names. You can find the contact details for your local NASC (or NASC equivalent, as is the case with Mana Whaikaha in the Mid Central region) here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/assessment-and-funding/needs-assessment-services#north-island-nasc-services>

The process:

Although the specific processes and terminology used by each NASC may vary slightly from region to region, the general process is as follows:

Referral to your NASC



You can self-refer, or a professional (GP, Paediatrician, Specialist) can refer you. If you are self-referring, contact your local NASC to ask for the referral form.

Needs assessment



If your referral meets eligibility criteria and is accepted by the NASC, they will contact you to arrange a time for one of their staff to meet with you. This meeting is often referred to as a "needs assessment". There is often a waiting list for this appointment.

The purpose of the needs assessment is for the NASC to learn more about the disabled person, their family, their goals, and what support is needed to live their life.

Although the needs assessment is usually done in person, sometimes it may be done by phone, or by filling in a form.

Service coordination



After the needs assessment, the NASC will determine if you are entitled to receive any government-funded disability support services, based on the information you provided during the needs assessment. The NASC may also consider if there are other services or organisations that you can access for support.

Outcome



The NASC will advise you in writing if any funded support services have been allocated to you. They may also advise you of any other relevant information or support services that you may wish to access, and may make referrals, if appropriate, on your behalf to other services/organisations.

If you feel that the NASC has not accurately understood your support needs and/or that the supports that have been allocated are not appropriate, do raise your concerns with the NASC.

Start using any allocated supports



If you feel that the NASC has understood your needs and goals and that the supports allocated are appropriate, then you can begin to learn how to use your funded supports!

Review and reassessment



The NASC reviews a person's allocated supports on a regular basis (for example, annually), with a more formal reassessment typically occurring every three to five years. The NASC will contact you to work through the review/reassessment process. Your allocated supports may increase, decrease or stay the same, depending on factors such as changes to your support needs, the cost effectiveness/availability of different support options or policy/guideline changes.

Helpful tips and information

We have collated some information below, including tips from other families that have been through the process, that we hope will help you prepare for and engage with your local NASC effectively.

Before the needs assessment

Be prepared! The NASC determines what supports and services a disabled person is entitled to based on the information provided during the needs assessment. Prior to the needs assessment, spend time gathering information, making notes and considering your (or your child's) support needs and goals.

Some preparation ideas:

- Familiarise yourself with the different DSS-funded supports that are available and consider what supports might be useful for you and your family. You can find more information here: <https://parent2parent.org.nz/resource-hub/introduction-to-disability-funding-in-new-zealand/> or here: <https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services>
- Talk to other people you know who have gone through the process—while everyone's situation is unique, it can sometimes be helpful to share ideas and tips with others. If you don't know other people who have gone through the process, please contact [Parent to Parent](#) for some suggestions on how to make connections with others.

- > Think about your support needs and make some notes. Be realistic and factual.



Think about a usual day, week, and weekend in your and your family's life.



Try not to rush this process—spend a week or two jotting down notes so that you have a full and accurate record of all the support that is needed in all aspects of your life. It may be helpful to talk to other people in your life to get their perspectives too.



If you are caring for a disabled child, think about every task that you (or others) do to support your child or imagine you are going away for a week and need to list everything that would need to be done while you are away.



It may be helpful to consider support needs by thinking about a person of a similar age who does not have a disability. This can help to identify and clearly articulate the level of support needed over and above that of a non-disabled person of a similar age.



For example, is support and prompting needed to wake up, get dressed and start the day? Is food preparation and feeding support needed? Is support needed to move around? Is help or supervision needed to walk/drive/catch public transport? Can spare time be filled with appropriate leisure activities or is support needed to do this? Is communication with others independent, or is support required? Is support needed to access and maintain employment or other daytime activities i.e. volunteer work? Is support required to regulate emotions?

- Think about your goals and what support might be needed to achieve them. Consider the long-term vision for your life, and the short-term steps and goals necessary to work towards that vision. If you are a parent creating a long-term vision and goals for your child, involve your child in this as much as possible. Find more information on vision planning here: <https://parent2parent.org.nz/resource-hub/vision-planning-a-guide-for-parents-carers/>
- Consider the wellbeing of all family members.
- If you feel it will help, make copies of any letters or documents from professionals/specialists to take along to the needs assessment.
- Think about the eight principles of the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) approach and consider how they apply to your life. Incorporating these principles into your conversations with the NASC can be an effective way to communicate support needs, goals and advocate for your (or your child's) rights. The Government has stated its commitment to the EGL approach and, as a community, we can use the EGL framework to guide positive change in society towards the EGL vision.

You can read more about EGL here:
<https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/>



I try to mention some of the EGL principles in general conversation when I meet with the NASC—I want them to know that I know what the EGL approach is, and I expect those principles to be followed! For example, I've said to them before 'This is an ordinary life outcome that we want for our daughter...' when discussing goals."

"Our family follows the EGL principles to support our son, and if a service provider suggests something that doesn't align with those principles and goes against our family beliefs, then I am not afraid to speak up and tell them so."

During the needs assessment

- The needs assessment may take up to two or three hours. Choose a time of day for the meeting that suits you, in a venue where you feel comfortable and will be able to concentrate.
- Consider taking a support person with you to the meeting.
- Take the notes you prepared prior to the needs assessment to help you remember everything you want to say. Take your time and provide as much information as possible to ensure that the NASC fully understands and captures your needs and what a good life looks like for you and your family.
- If you have additional information that you'd like the NASC to know that doesn't fit within their questions, do share that information. This is your opportunity to have your say.
- If you are a parent or caregiver of a disabled child and need to discuss difficult issues privately, ask to have the needs assessment (or part of the needs assessment) without your child present.

After the needs assessment

- Read the document that the NASC sends you after the needs assessment carefully—check that it accurately captures the information discussed during the needs assessment and covers everything you want to be included. If it doesn't, ask for the document to be amended accordingly.
- If you are unhappy with the funded supports that have been allocated, you can discuss this further with the NASC—you may like to start by asking them to explain to you the basis on which the supports have been allocated. You can also request a review of your assessment/support allocation if you wish. Each NASC will have a process for this—check the NASC's website for any information on the process or ask the staff member you have been dealing with. For example, it might involve an internal review by another staff member, and/or an independent review by another NASC.

You can read more here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/assessment-and-funding/needs-assessment-services#what-if-youre-unhappy-with-a-change-in-your-assessment>

Review and reassessment

- A person's support needs and goals will naturally change over time, so the support that was allocated after the first needs assessment will not necessarily be an appropriate allocation for the rest of that person's life.
- Although the NASC has a timeframe for undertaking reviews/reassessments, you can request a review of your support allocation at any time—if your needs change and you need further or different support, please contact your NASC to request a review.



For the very first needs assessment for my son, I remember feeling overwhelmed, confused, and very, very tired. We had recently received our son's diagnosis after a difficult year, and I didn't really understand enough about the process or have the energy to be able to communicate effectively the support needs and goals for our son and our family. I therefore accepted what I was offered by the NASC (some carer support days) without much thought.

"By the time my first annual review came around, I had had time to learn more about the NASC process and the supports and services that were potentially available. When the Support Coordinator rang me to see how we were and to ask if we were happy to roll our package over for another year, I was able to clearly explain the challenges that my son, myself and the rest of the family were currently facing—as a result we were allocated some extra supports and services to better help meet our needs."

References:

Disability Support Services. (2024, October 24). How to access support. <https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/assessment-and-funding/how-to-access-support>

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Upston, L. (2024, August 12). Improving the sustainability of Disability Support Services. https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/assets/O4_AUGUST-CABINET-Paper-Improving-the-sustainability-of-Disability-Support-Services-redactions-applied-FINAL.pdf

Disclaimer:

The information in this document is for general information purposes only and is not intended as a thorough and complete guide to an individual's specific situation.

Reasonable care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information in this document, which is reviewed regularly. If you have any questions please contact:

SupportInformation@parent2parent.org.nz