

Guide Dogs.

Funding Position Statement

1. Introduction and Purpose

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT (GDN) is a registered Charity and also a registered service provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) since 2014.

GDN has a responsibility to its key stakeholders (Organisation, Clients, and Donor Community) to ensure that it:

- Fulfils its charitable purpose of responding to need
- Demonstrates equity and transparency in relation to access to service
- Is sustainable for the future in order to achieve its mission of supporting more people who have low vision and blindness.

To date, GDN has applied some broad principles about clients' access to services and how funding will be utilised, however, increased transparency is required.

This document outlines GDN's position on funding support for services to clients. The information, processes, and guidelines in this document are intended to:

- Provide clarity on key principles informing how clients access funding for GDN services to achieve their goals
- Enable GDN to equitably and transparently use donor funding to support clients to achieve their goals.

2. Scope

This position statement applies to access to the following intervention-based Client Services:

- Assistive Technology
- Occupational Therapy
- Low Vision
- Orientation and Mobility Services (including Guide Dog Services)

It does not apply to access to:

- Connection Services
- AT Help desk

3. Position Statement

3.1 Service Agreements

Service Agreements set out the rights and responsibilities of the organisation and clients in relation to services provided. They are a key part of the continuous improvement of GDN's services to clients.

To promote client-led and goal-oriented service delivery, GDN will collaborate with all clients to ensure that they have a Service Agreement (SA) in place prior to commencing intervention.

Service Agreements provide a clear plan for clients and staff about the types and amounts of service that will be provided in order to enable clients to achieve their goals. The aim is for all GDN clients to have a Service Agreement, regardless of the source of their funding.

Service Agreements will cover service hours that are provided directly to the client either face to face or via telepractice. Service Agreements may also cover time spent on agreed non- face to face time required e.g. to write up progress on goals.

For NDIS funded clients, GDN will seek consent from the client to allocate hours in the service agreement for travel time and program support required to enable clients to meet their goals. Clients will not be disadvantaged if they do not consent to non-face to face time being claimed in their Service Agreements.

3.2 Service Agreement Support Funding

Service Agreement Support Funding is a new initiative by GDN that provides clarity on how services to clients will commence. This funding is available annually to all clients.

Service Agreement Support Funding provides donor funded time for the necessary conversations and administration required to set up a service agreement with a client. This is available whether a client is new, existing, or returning. The maximum number of hours for Service Agreement Support Funding will be 7 hours and this will be donor funded.

In order to start up services, GDN staff will have conversations with a client about what they want to achieve. This will mean setting out some broad aims that can be refined as a client's needs are assessed in more detail.

To start up services clients will:

- Have a conversation with the Enquiries and Intake team to identify their aspirations and needs and identify any potential funding supports.
- Collaborate on an Estimate of Support (EOS) about what types of services they need and how much of these services.
- Undertake specific activities to make sure the EOS is as accurate as

possible so that GDN's Service Agreement with a client is a good match to what they need.

- Assessment of Needs
- Reporting

A Service Agreement is required to commence all services, regardless of the source of a client's funding, unless a client's case is determined to be urgent and needs specific and immediate intervention. Criteria for urgent services are set out in the section 3.4

Once a client is satisfied with the Estimate of Supports, this will be converted to a Service Agreement for the client's approval. A Client's approval and consent is required to commence service.

3.3 Urgent Services

A client's need for GDN services will be deemed as urgent where it relates to:

- A recent acute neurological impairment
- An immediate safety risk

These areas will be covered at the point of contact with the Enquiry and Intake team and escalated to the relevant Area Manager for response within 24 hours as part of a risk assessment escalation process.

3.4 Funding Sources

GDN Services are made possible through a combination of donor and government funding. This section outlines the key funding supports and how GDN will work with clients to maximise their access, choice, and control related to funding:

NDIS

People under 65 years, an Australian resident and who have a significant and permanent disability are eligible for the NDIS.

- If a client is eligible for NDIS but not accessing the scheme, GDN will assist them to connect and get started with their access to it.
- GDN will commence service and issue equipment when a Service Agreement is in place, unless a client has urgent needs (see Section 3.4).
- Clients will not be disadvantaged by delays caused by the NDIA, such as delays for plan meetings, and will have the same wait times as any other clients.
- Where possible any services supports will be back claimed once the client's NDIS plan is in place.

My Aged Care

Clients who are over 65 years may be eligible for funding under the Commonwealth Home Care or Home Support Packages.

- At Enquires and Intake the team will ask clients about their CHSP or CHCP Package and work with them to align GDN services to their goals and funding.
- If a client is eligible for CHSP but not accessing the scheme, GDN will assist them to connect and get started.
- GDN will commence service and issue equipment when a Service Agreement is in place, unless a client has urgent needs (see 3.3).
- Where possible these supports will be back claimed once the plan and Service Agreement is in place.

Donor Funding

All clients at GDN receive a level of donor funding for the services they receive, including those with NDIS funding. Specifically, donor funding is utilised when clients:

- Require additional levels of services or equipment to achieve their goals,
- Are not eligible to access government funding
- Have specific hardships in accessing government funding

In order to ensure equity and transparency related to use of donor funds, the following business rules are framed:

- Where a client is not eligible for government funding support, GDN will use donor funding to the value agreed in their Service Agreement to enable a client to meet their vision-related goals.
- When a client needs additional time to achieve the goals in their service agreement and does not have access to additional government funding, Donor Support Funding will be used to cover this.
 - If more time is required to achieve goals, a review of the existing Service Agreement will be held (see process above for Service Agreements).
- Where a client is eligible for NDIS and requires services urgently (see section 3.3) GDN will provide immediate support to address those urgent needs. GDN will seek to back claim for services provided.
- Where a client requires non-urgent services, is eligible for NDIS, but experiences a delay in accessing government funds which is outside their control, then GDN will place the client on relevant wait lists and commence service when it becomes available. GDN will require clients to allocate the agreed NDIS funding when it becomes available and will seek to back claim where possible.
- If a client is eligible for NDIS but chooses not to apply, GDN will seek to understand their position. Where the decision relates to a voluntary choice not to access NDIS funding this will be escalated to the Head of Client Services and Head of Fundraising for review and recommended actions by the relevant Area Manager.

- Where a client has NDIS funding and chooses to use it with another organisation for the same services they are seeking from GDN, GDN will decline service. A client's right to choice and control over their provider is supported.

3.5 Equipment and Guide Dogs

For clients assessed as suitable for a guide dog, there are a range of funding options which are set out in the Guide Dog Information Pack.

If a client is a) not eligible for government funding, has b) been denied government funding or c) chooses not to access government funding for a guide dog, then special consideration for donor funding for a guide dog will be provided to the Executive for review. A procedure for this has been developed called Procedure for Notification of Clients Awaiting a Guide Dog.

When an NDIS client needs additional equipment such as canes or electronic mobility aids and this is not provided for in their plan, GDN can support the client to have their plan reviewed and Area Managers may authorise one off supply of a cane.

4. Cancellations

In the event of client advised absence for NDIS clients, the cancellation guidelines noted in Service Agreements will be applied. Where applicable, cancellation rates will be charged at the rate in the NDIS price guide and applied in the event that it is cancelled by the client with 48 hours or less notice. Exceptional circumstances will be escalated to the relevant Area Manager for consideration.

For clients using CHSP and donor funding, services will be suspended in the event of 3 sessions cancelled by the client with less than 48 hours' notice. Discussions will be held with the client by the Client Services team to determine how to best support them to access services.

5. Debt Management

For clients who are funding services through NDIS via plan managed or self-managed modes, non-payment of 3 invoices will result in service being suspended. If the fault in payment lies with the Plan Manager, clients will not be disadvantaged in accessing service.

In all other cases, following advice to the client by their Area Manager, that services are being suspended, the GDN Finance team will liaise with the client to work through options. Services will be resumed once fees for the non-funded sessions have been recovered.

6. Related Documents

Related policies & guidelines:

- GDN Debt Management Policy

Related procedures, documents and forms:

- Guide Dog Information Pack
- Procedure for Notification of Clients awaiting a Guide Dog

7. Definitions

Service Agreement:

A Service Agreement refers to the documented agreement a client makes with a provider about what services and supports they will receive to achieve their goals. A Service Agreement with GDN will set out:

- What supports and services GDN agrees to provide.
- The amount of time needed and costs of those supports and services.
- How long you need the supports and services to be provided.
- How any problems or issues that may arise will be handled

Service Agreement Support funding:

A set number of hours allocated as donor funded time provided to carry out the necessary administration and assessments required to set up a Service Agreement

Risk Assessment Escalation:

The process for the Enquiries and Intake team to assess whether a client has urgent needs that require immediate service.

NDIS:

National Disability Insurance Scheme

My Aged Care:

Commonwealth Home Support and Home Care