

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)

Your common questions answered

As allied health professionals, you'll know that inappropriate housing has a huge effect on a person's wellbeing and complicates the delivery of effective supports. You may also be aware that Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), is housing that is designed specifically to improve a person's capacity and wellbeing.

We also know that there are many barriers in the way of people knowing whether they might be eligible for this NDIS support and that people have a lot of questions in relation to SDA. The Housing Hub team has supported over 260 people to apply for new SDA properties and to secure SDA funding in their plans and we are aiming to break down some of the barriers.

The OT community plays a crucial role in supporting people with disability to find quality housing and in many instances, is the source of information about housing options. As such, the Housing Hub team is building resources for you and would welcome any reach out to our team for advice or support. We can all make a difference, together.

For relevant, current information OTs can sign up www.housinghub.org.au/sign-up and join Summer Foundation's Upskill program www.summerfoundation.org.au/project/upskill/

Q: What does SDA funding actually cover?

A: Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) provides funding payments for a dwelling a person could live in. This funding is a Capital support budget of a participant's NDIS plan. The SDA funding in a participant's plan gets paid directly to the SDA provider. All other supports are funded separately through their NDIS plan.

Q: I understand SIL and modifications etc; does that include rent?

A: A participant with SDA funding in their plan will usually pay a 'reasonable rent contribution' equivalent to 25% of the Disability Support Pension and 100% of any Commonwealth Rent Assistance they receive. Rent is paid to the SDA provider (on top of the SDA funding from the person's plan). More info here: www.housinghub.org.au/resources/article/who-pays-for-sda

Q: Can people who get SDA also get SIL? I have a care provider telling me this isn't possible but it doesn't sound correct.

A: As SDA (dwelling) and Support is separate a person can be funded for SDA and SIL. SIL is generally shared support and can be included in a person's plan if they are living in an SDA where there is an element of their support that is shared with other people.

Q: Once a participant qualifies for SDA how does the arrangement continue (is this reviewed each plan)?

A: Once a person has SDA funding included in their NDIS plan it is expected that this is required lifelong and will remain in the plan each year.

Q: From when SDA is approved in a participant's plan - how much time (on average) do you expect the process to be to compile all information required and submit it for approval?

A: In order to get SDA funding included in a person's NDIS plan, they need to have gathered all the evidence required and submit this to the NDIA. The process of gathering the evidence will depend on wait times of the chosen allied health professionals who are completing the required reports, and whether the NDIA planner is satisfied that they have all the information they need.

Q: We have had support coordinators requesting SIL assessments at the same time as SDA assessment. Do you have any resources/ links to support this kind of assessment as well?

A: We have seen good outcomes in Housing Assessment reports that specifically address all of the SDA rules (as per 2020 update) and outline a participant's support requirements in the same report under separate headings. In your housing assessment it is beneficial to outline the person's housing preferences, required support model, and demonstrate why non-SDA and non-SIL options do not meet the person's needs.

Q: I find a lot of the time when assessing eligibility participants have both very high support needs as well as extreme functional impairment (ie the extreme functional impairment leads to very high support needs). Is it more appropriate to choose one criteria or address both?

A: It's critical to show that the participant meets the extreme functional impairment or very high support needs pathway. There's no problem showing both, but if one pathway is a better fit, demonstrate that really well, rather than trying to cover off both.

Q: What is the tipping point? I have a participant who has 5 hours of 2:1 care plus extra 1:1 which adds up to between 10-15 hours of support per day. Will the NDIS continue to fund this level of support to enable her to remain in her own home? Will she be forced to move into an SDA home instead? Is SDA cheaper than care in a person's home?

A: There is no 'cap' or 'maximum' amount of support that a person can receive at home. If the person's preference is to live at home with support, and that option is available to them, ensure information presented to the NDIA aligns with the person's goals and preferences.

Q: Will NDIS take into consideration future need for people with degenerative disabilities? We have a number of people with MS that would be likely borderline eligible or eligible for Fully Accessible - will the panel take into consideration that they are likely to deteriorate needing SDA or a higher level of SDA than they currently need?

A: As answered in the video - in our experience, we have seen that the SDA panel does consider progression and prognosis for a person when considering their current and future needs. It is important that the evidence the person is submitting to the NDIA for an SDA determination outlines the expected functional impairment that the person will experience as their disability progresses.

Q: For people with intellectual disability who are non-verbal, what are some strategies for gaining insight into their wishes for housing, apart from speaking to their families?

A: This series of videos and resources have been created to assist people to explain how they like to be supported. A similar process and strategies may work for exploring housing goals: www.summerfoundation.org.au/documents/making-a-training-video

Q: Will the NDIS consider funding SDA for someone who already lives in department housing?

A: Anyone with an NDIS plan can test their eligibility for SDA. For this person, the risks to the person and inadequacies of the environment of the housing will need to be addressed. For example, would the current housing be suitable with more supports and/or environmental modifications? The need for a SDA housing response will also need to be outlined and be a reasonable and necessary response.

Q: I'd love to know how the new system works with living with their loved one. ie my client with high level spinal cord injury / physical needs with his mother, can they live in SDA? Rentals not appropriate in the area.

A: The changes to the SDA Rules in July 2020 now say that a person can live with another person or other people who do not have SDA funding, if they choose to. You can see more information about these changes here:

<https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/resources/specialist-disability-accommodation-rules-2020/>

Q: Thanks, so for this client and his mother, could they have separate bedrooms?

A: Yes they would have separate bedrooms. The person would need to get SDA funding in their NDIS plan for what they need (i.e. 1 bedroom that meets the SDA criteria). The person can then liaise with the housing provider about the 2nd bedroom and rent for their mother to live in another room.

Q: If a participant has had home mods and then needs SDA later, is that ok?

A: The NDIA may have previously funded Home Modifications to meet an immediate need, or as an investment in their long term housing solution. The NDIA may require further information to explain any change in the participant's living arrangements, including if the modified home is no longer going to be a suitable option.

Q: Assuming SDA eligible participants will require support workers - what is the difference between a house and a group home?

A: Housing and Support are separate, so a person can live in a suitable SDA dwelling and access support according to their individual needs and preferences. Some supports in a 24hr period might be 1:1, and some supports might be shared with others relative to a particular support model or living arrangement. Referring to the SDA Price Guide, a building type 'house' will have 2 or 3 residents and a 'group home' will have 4 or 5 residents.

Q: Is living in a one person dwelling not an option for SDA?

A: There are single resident SDA dwellings. In the SDA price guide, there is no provision for a single person to live in a house (2 residents only). One resident dwellings can be either building type apartment or villa/duplex/townhouse.

Q: Is the only distinction between house and group home then is a house is 2-3 residents and a group home 4-5 residents?

A: Key differences will be the number of people living in the dwelling, and the relevant SDA funding level. It will also make a difference whether the person chooses who they will live with and how the supports will be delivered in their home.

There are also differences noted between SDA building types; 'Typical Building Code of Australia Classification' (National Construction Code). Here is an article discussing [SDA Classification](#).

Q: How does the concierge model work with multiple participants and staffing? I imagine if multiple people are requesting support at the same time the response time may be delayed.

A: The concierge model is a 24/7 immediately available support that is in place to provide onsite unplanned and/or emergency support. Tenants will also have 1:1 support funded according to their individual needs throughout the day, evening and overnight. The concierge is available to provide assistance when people are alone in their home. Before tenants move, their needs are considered with the concierge model in mind for those regular supports (eg. They might engage the concierge for assistance with 2 person transfers). The support is triaged so at times there may be a slight delay. Naturally, when applying for an SDA property with the concierge model, the suitability of the model will need to be considered.

Q: Can someone buy a house, complete home mods to high physical support design and then register as an SDA?

A: A person can become an SDA provider and enrol their property as an SDA, providing it meets the design features of the SDA that they are enrolling it as. A good starting point is identifying whether the person is SDA eligible.

Q: What if the person with cognitive impairment doesn't see the need to have a housing goal but OT family and others see the need to change housing goal?

A: This can be tricky, but important because any funding included in an NDIS plan is to assist participants to achieve their goals. Consider whether the person is their own decision maker. It could also be useful to provide a carer statement and a Support Coordinator to assist with any expected transitions. A participant or their nominee can advise the NDIA of a 'Change of Circumstances' about their living arrangements. This may prompt an unscheduled plan review meeting. It is important to seek the participant's views and include their voice as much as possible in regards to their housing needs and preferences.

Q: If someone is currently in a legacy SDA how can the support Coordinator find out if it is basic or improved liveability design?

A: The participant can ask the NDIA to confirm the details of their SDA approval, or ask the Housing Provider to confirm the dwelling enrolment or provide their SDA quote.

Q: Who is responsible for home modifications once a Participant is living in a SDA property, i.e. kitchen modification. I have an SDA owner and NDIA who state it is the others responsibility.

A: The NDIS may fund either home modifications to enable you to live in mainstream housing or SDA payments to support you in SDA, but will not fund both for the same house. If the NDIA pays for SDA, they may fund Assistive Technology related to fit out and customisations.

Q: What has been your experience in SDA for children? Curious whether you think change in legislation might lead to SDA for younger children rather than doing extensive home mod? Particularly in context of known progressive conditions?

A: We understand this to be a challenging space because most children would live in a family home. The NDIA Act 2013 outlines the reasonable and necessary criteria including whether the support is related to a person's disability, what is reasonable to expect families and carers to provide, and whether the support is most appropriately funded by NDIS or another government system or community service. We are happy to continue learning about NDIS decisions about SDA, via contact with our Housing Hub team and Upskill Community of Practice.

Q: If there are not any suitable SDA properties available, can the client rent a private rental flat as an interim? and if they don't have funding for renting alone?

A: Refer to the video for more information about this. A person cannot use SDA funding to pay for a private rental property. SDA funding can only be used for an SDA enrolled property. There are alternative NDIS funded interim options for people who are awaiting for their long-term housing solution to be ready, e.g. Medium Term Accommodation.

Q: What's the process to upgrade from FA design to HPS design? Or IL to robust for example?

A: In order for a person to change their SDA determination, such as the design category, further evidence would need to be submitted to NDIA demonstrating why the design features for the desired design category would best meet the person's needs.

Q: How long is the wait for assessment via the SDA panel at the moment?

A: This seems to change quite a lot and can be as quick as a few weeks and as long as quite a few months. We have seen that people who are stuck in hospital or in aged care seem to be getting slightly quicker SDA determinations. It is important to submit an SDA request with a Change of Circumstances form. The recently updated [NDIA SDA Operational Guidelines](#) indicate if the NDIA has all the information they need, they will try and provide an outcome within 10 days.

Q: Looking on the Housing Hub, it says there are zero properties that are Improved Livability for singles or groups of up to 3 people in all of Brisbane. Am I missing something? Should I be a member or something otherwise it doesn't show properties?

A: SDA Providers have generally started with High Physical Support and Fully Accessible Categories as SDA area has developed. We are now seeing more Improved Liveability coming into the SDA market in NSW and Victoria.

The participant or their support team can also fill in a profile on the Housing Hub Website, and change the preferences to vary search results and the suitability score. Housing Hub are seeking to understand NDIS participant's housing needs, and work with housing providers to meet this demand. We are happy to talk about this further if you would like to contact our team.

Q: Is there a WA rep for Housing Hub?

A: There sure is! Our WA project manager's contact details are listed at the bottom of this page: www.housinghub.org.au/resources/category/are-you-eligible-for-sda

As an OT, you play a critical role in facilitating great outcomes for people with disability.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with our Housing Hub team – info@housinghub.org.au

- Discuss housing options for a client with complex needs
- Build your own knowledge with a personal development session for you or your team
- Sign up to the housinghub.org.au as a Support Team housinghub.org.au/sign-up