This Newsletter provides updates on early intervention services for families accessing the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) or Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) programs.

As of June 2018, HCWA service providers have delivered 2.6 million services to over 60,000 clients, to a value of $532 million. Better Start providers have delivered 485,000 services to over 13,000 clients, to a value of $96 million.

Thank you for your contribution to this impressive achievement.

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Contacting the Department of Social Services (DSS)

The Early Intervention Helpdesk can be contacted on 1800 778 581 (toll free) or by emailing early.intervention@dss.gov.au. Please check the Early Intervention Operational Guidelines before contacting the Helpdesk, as these Guidelines may provide the answers to your questions. Further information can be found at www.dss.gov.au/autism and www.dss.gov.au/betterstart.

Staff are available Monday to Friday between:

- AWST (Perth) time from 9.00 am to 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm
- AEST from 11.00 am to 2.30 pm and 3.30 pm to 6.30 pm

For FOFMS issues please call the FOFMS Helpdesk on 1800 020 283 or email FOFMS.helpdesk@dss.gov.au.

Following Operational Guidelines

DSS is conducting compliance checks on a number of providers to ensure Grant Agreements and the Early Intervention Service Panel Operational Guidelines are followed. A number of issues have been identified during the review:

Providing services outside the Guidelines

Providers are only permitted to publish services on the DSS website that are listed in Section 4 of the Service Provider Panel Operational Guidelines. Wording should be in line with the ‘In Scope’ services listed in the guidelines.

DSS is looking more closely at fee schedules as they are updated and have noted many services listed which fall outside the HCWA and BSI remit. Fee schedules must be updated correctly in accordance with the Guidelines, using the appropriate wording.

Fee Schedules are intended to be easy to follow for the Parent/caregiver of eligible children and are not intended to provide a comprehensive list of service options available.

Fee Schedules

The fees on the Service Delivery Record provided to parents must align to the amounts claimed through FOFMS, and advertised fee schedules on the DSS website.

Client Consent

The child’s parent/carer must sign the Service Delivery Record Form after each service or resource is delivered. The Service Delivery Record Form is available in FOFMS from the Literature tab. In situations where there is term or block funding, the parent can sign multiple forms at once, in arrears.

Maintaining organisation records

Please ensure that you keep all contact details up to date so DSS can contact you when required. Only persons listed on DSS Online Funds Management System (FOFMS) as the organisations contact person is able to request changes and/or information.

Changing your business type/business name/business address

Service Providers must first update the details against your ABN prior to requesting DSS to update your FOFMS records. FOFMS undertake and data check with the ABR and reject any applications that do not have the correct/updated details registered therein.

Adding Employees to your FOFMS Database

Employees are not required to be listed on your Agreement via the FOFMS Database. If you have an alternative delivery address, it is only the additional delivery address which must be noted on FOFMS to enable claims to be processed through that location.
Only independent Subcontractors or Consortium Members who both will have their own ABN as sole traders, will be listed on your Agreement once approvals have been confirmed by DSS issuing the Service Provider with a Notice of Change advice by email.

Closure of new panel provider registrations for HCWA and Better Start

The NDIS has rolled out in NSW, SA and the ACT and all locations in these states/territories are closed to new enrolments for HCWA and Better Start. These states/territories are also closed to new provider registrations. Current providers are encouraged to register to join the NDIS.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Status of the NDIS

Rollout of the full scheme started progressively from July 2016. People will enter the NDIS at different times through the next few years. In some states and the Northern Territory, the NDIS will be rolled out by area, while in others people will enter by age groups.

The NDIS is rolling out in:

- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia

The NDIS is currently available in:

- Australian Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- South Australia

Western Australia – Important NDIS Changes

On 12 December 2017, the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments agreed that WA will join the nationally delivered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

From 1 July 2018, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will assume responsibility for the delivery of the NDIS in Western Australia (WA). The NDIA will continue to implement the NDIS on a geographic basis, with full rollout across WA by 2020.

All current participants in the WA NDIS will transfer to the nationally delivered Scheme from April 2018 to December 2018.

Further information on this change can be found on the WA Disability Services website.

Accessing DSS Early Intervention funding for clients with an NDIA plan in place

Children with an NDIS plan are no longer eligible for support under HCWA or Better Start.

It is your responsibility to check with the clients’ parent/carer if they have a plan in place before lodging any claims.

Knowingly lodging claims for services delivered where a client has an NDIS plan is a breach of your agreement with DSS. It also exposes service providers to the risk of having the claim rejected and/or compliance action being taken by DSS.
Supporting clients with transition to the NDIS

Families are encouraged to transition to the NDIS as soon as the ECEI approach becomes available in their area. Service provider support with this transition is greatly appreciated.

Service providers should not encourage parents/carers to delay access to the NDIS until all the funding available for a child under HCWA and Better Start is spent as this may lead to a gap in service provision for the child. Funding under HCWA or Better Start will not cease until the date of the child’s NDIS plan is approved, or until the child has exited the program, whichever happens first.

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission)

The NDIS Commission brings together various quality and safeguards functions under a single agency, to improve consistency in regulation and registration for providers in different states and territories.

NDIS Commission requirements for NDIS providers registered in New South Wales and South Australia take effect from 1 July 2018. More information is available [here](#).

DSS and the NDIS Commission are running information sessions for currently registered NDIS providers about the new registration requirements, and particularly the NDIS Practice Standards. You will need to meet these requirements when renewing your NDIS provider registration.

A schedule of upcoming sessions in New South Wales and South Australia is available [here](#).

Becoming an NDIS Provider

Service providers wishing to deliver services under the NDIS will need to become registered NDIS providers under the Early Intervention Support for Early Childhood Registration Group. This registration group require specific qualification and experiences as a prerequisite and must also comply with Quality and Safeguards requirements of the relevant state/territories.

The professions eligible to apply for this registration group are:

- Occupational Therapist
- Psychologist
- Physiotherapist
- Social Worker
- Speech Pathologist
- Teacher
- Developmental Educator
- Audiologist
- Music Therapist
- Counsellor
- Art Therapist
- Orthotists
- Podiatrist

DSS encourages members of the Early Intervention Service Provider Panel (EI Panel) to apply to the NDIS registration group. This will ensure that you are able to continue to provide services to HCWA and Better Start clients after they transition to the NDIS.

Providers not registering with the NDIS will not be able to deliver services to HCWA and Better Start clients who have transitioned to the NDIS and have their individual support plans managed by the NDIA. You can, however, continue to deliver services to HCWA and Better Start clients and to NDIS clients who self-manage their support plan, as these clients can choose to use unregistered providers.

The HCWA and Better Start EI Panel will continue to operate outside of, and in parallel to the NDIS, until the NDIS is fully rolled out. If you wish to deliver services to HCWA and/or Better Start clients, you will still need to be registered on the Panel.
Reminders from the Helpdesk

**Using Correct Templates**
It is important that as a provider you only use the correct templates issued by DSS. Forms with the FaHCSIA letterhead should not be used.
If you intend to alter templates, you must discuss with DSS, and obtain approval prior to use. The DSS logo must also be removed from any altered forms.

**Responding to Correspondence**
Requests in correspondence from DSS must receive a response by the due date stated. Failure to do so may lead to the withholding of some or all grant fund payments.

**Translating and Interpreting (TIS) services**
A reminder that Early Intervention TIS codes can only be used for current HCWA and Better Start clients or when registering new clients. This code should not be used to provide translating services for NDIS participants or HCWA or Better Start clients whose eligibility has ceased.
Cancellations must be made through TIS Online or in writing, in accordance with the Cancellation Policy available on the TIS National website. Please note that DSS is required to pay for cancellations made with less than 24 hours’ notice. DSS requests cancellations be made in a timely manner to avoid this cost.
If translating support is required for an NDIS participant, please contact the NDIA on 1800 800 110 to discuss the matter.

**Prepayment**
A reminder that DSS will only make payments to service providers (on behalf of eligible children) for services delivered. Service providers are not permitted to arrange for pre-payment of resources or services under any circumstances.
DSS can withhold all or part of a payment of Grant funds if it is found that you have not carried out an Activity in accordance with your Agreement, or have breached a requirement in this Agreement (including requirements in the operational guidelines).

**Key messages:**
- Prepayment of HCWA and Better Start services is not permitted
- If charging for a term, lodge your claims at regular intervals (within 10 days of providing the service) to ensure payment and accurate FAS for parents.

**Lodging a claim**
Parents/carers are ultimately responsible for managing their children’s funding however many rely heavily on their Family Activity Statement (FAS) to do this. More than one provider can receive payments from DSS for providing early intervention services to a particular child. If there is a lag in lodging a claim, you run the risk of insufficient funds being available for you to claim for services.
Additionally, long delays in making claims compromises parents’ ability to monitor and manage their child’s funding using the FAS, as it only includes details of claimed services.
When a child is being charged for a term or block of funding, DSS suggest lodging claims for services already delivered at regular intervals, to reduce the chances of problems occurring for both the family and the service providers. Claims should be submitted within 10 days after the end of term.