

Tools, Resources and Information for Lead Complaints Handlers

Complaints handling can take a range of skills and experience. The list of resources below aims to provide some tools and assist with developing different skills of the people in your organisation who are responsible for handling complaints (Complaint Handlers). All staff need to be able to respond well to complaints. This resource is for staff who may have a lead role in handling complaints through to resolution. This builds on the foundation resources in NDS's Risk Incident and Complaints Management: [NDS Complaint Handling for Staff](#).

The resources are drawn from a range of different sources. They are not an exclusive list and do not replace, your organisation's policies and procedures. The information provided is a starting point and should be used and adapted to meet the size and scope of your organisation and the supports you provide. This resource provides links to resources on:

- **Guidelines for Complaints Handling and Processes**
- **Understanding Human Rights in Complaints**
- **Managing complex behaviour and unreasonable conduct in the context of complaints**
- **Procedural Fairness**
- **Conducting Investigations**
- **Supporting people with disability**
- **Record Keeping**
- **Tips for clear written communication**
- **Resources to support effective communication and building rapport**
- **Workplace complaints and disputes**



Other NDS resources: For more information and resources [NDS Risk Incidents and Complaints interactive pdf](#) provides easy access to tools and resources developed for NDIS providers to support them to effectively manage and respond to risks, incidents and complaints.

Guidelines for Complaints Handling and Procedures

Having a good understanding of complaint handling guidelines can assist complaints to be managed in a timely, fair and outcomes focused way.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|---|---|
| NDIS Commission Complaints Handling Guidelines for Providers | Overview of the NDIS Commission’s expectations of NDIS providers. |
| Ombudsman WA - Better Practice Complaint Handling Guide | A more detailed look at handling complaints, including roles and responsibilities, a step-by-step process, case studies and scenarios to consider and work through. |
| WA Ombudsman Guidelines on Effective Complaint Handling | Guidelines on complaints handling, information on processes, roles, responsibilities and record keeping. |
| Queensland Ombudsman Complaints management | An overview on what a complaints management system (CMS) is and a CMS model of working. |
| Victorian Ombudsman - Complaint handling in a crisis Feb 2023 | 12 lessons and helpful tips for managing complaints about services. |
| NDS Complaint Feedback Policy and Procedure Checklist | Checklists to identify where your policy and procedure could be improved or to use as a guide to the development of a policy and procedure document. |



Understanding Human Rights in Complaints

Providing feedback and raising a complaint is a human right. These resources provide information about handling complaints with a human rights lens.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|--|---|
| Victorian Ombudsman - Managing Complaints Involving Human Rights | Information and case studies to unpack giving proper consideration to Human Rights when managing complaints. |
| A guide to responding to complaints | A step by step 2 page guide to responding to complaints from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. |

Managing behaviour that the complaint handler might find complex

Handling complaints can involve dealing with behaviours that a complaint handler could find complex.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|---|---|
| Victorian Ombudsman - Good practice guide: Managing complex complainant behaviour | This resource provides information to reflect on, useful scripts and tips on managing situations that complaint handler may find complex. |
| NSW Government - How can I de-escalate a situation when someone is angry or agitated? | Practical strategies and tips for effective support when there are signs of anger or agitation from people involved in complaints. |



Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness principles offer an important framework for any decision-making process, including complaints.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|--|--|
| Ombudsman WA - Procedural Fairness | Information on what procedural fairness is and how this can be applied by people investigating or handling complaints. |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme (Procedural Fairness) Guidelines 2018 | The legislation which governs the NDIA on Procedural Fairness. |
| NDS Animation: The 4 A's of Complaints | Talks about the process of responding to a complaint and the importance of an organisational culture that values and learns from complaints. |

Conducting investigations

Serious complaints may require further investigation as part of your handling process.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|---|---|
| NDS Conducting Investigations Guide NDS Investigation Action Plan Template | A guide for conducting investigations including a checklist and a template to follow, in the event that a complaint requires further investigation. |



Managing any conflicts of interest is also important for complaint handlers. For more information on actual and perceived conflict of interest, see [NDS Sector Readiness Conflict of Interest resources](#).



Supporting people with disability

Supporting people to raise an issue with the NDIS Commission if they are not happy with the outcomes of your complaint handling process.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
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| NDIS Commission - Speak up resources | A series of resources to empower people with disability to 'speak up' if they need to about the quality and safety of their NDIS funded supports and services. |
| NDIS Commission - Make it known, make it better | A series of videos to empower people with disability, or their support networks, to raise a concern or complaint if they are not happy with the quality or safety of their NDIS supports or services. |
| NDIS Commission - How to make a complaint | Complaint information from the NDIS Commission including how to complain about services to the Commission. |
| NDIS Commission - Complaints about NDIS services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants | A booklet and video on complaints about NDIS Supports and Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. |



Record Keeping

Complaints can involve multiple stakeholders. Documenting complaints involves keeping accurate records, while maintaining people’s privacy and confidentiality.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|---|---|
| Keeping records and client confidentiality | ACWA guide to keeping records and client confidentiality. |
| OAIC – Tips for good privacy practice Privacy for not-for-profits, including charities | This resource can help provide tips for good practice in privacy when recording, managing and sharing information relating to complaints. |
| Complaints - Good Practice Guide for Public Sector Agencies (ombudsman.vic.gov.au) | Examples for writing an acknowledgement and complaint outcome letter/email. |
| NDS Complaint and Feedback Register Manual | A manual and template for a complaint and feedback register. |

Tips for clear written communication

Part of handling complaints is providing clear written communication, for example on the outcomes of the complaint.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
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| NDS Communicate Clearly | Tips and guidance for writing in plain English |
| Complaints - Good Practice Guide for Public Sector Agencies | A detailed overview, including some policy and procedure templates, and examples of templates for responding and detailing outcomes of complaints. |



Resources to support effective communication and building rapport

Communicating effectively with a range of different stakeholders is an important skill for complaints handlers. This may include accessing and working with interpreters.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|--|---|
| NDIS Commission Supporting effective communication | Training resources from the NDIS Commission on Supporting Effective Communication. |
| Building relationships - Practical strategies and tips for effective support | Tips and training videos on developing rapport and communication skills in case management. |
| Communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people | Cultural capability factsheet for communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. |
| NDS Person-Centred Practice Across Cultures resources | 14 workbooks focused on the crucial importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in disability support and service delivery. |
| NDS Quality and Safeguarding Hub - CALD resources | NDS has produced a suite of resources which have been translated into seventeen different languages, to support CALD Australians with complaints, feedback and considerations when supporting someone from a CALD background, these can be accessed in the NDS Quality and Safeguarding Hub under CALD Resources. |
| NDIA Language interpreting services for providers | Detailed information on how providers can register for and access language interpreting services for providers. |
| Working with TIS National interpreters. | The Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) National have produced some useful tips on working with interpreters. |



| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
|--|--|
| Victorian Government Working with interpreters | Includes guidance for working with Auslan Interpreters. |
| NDS Working effectively with Interpreters | Developed as part of the Person-Centred Practice Across Cultures resources which can be used as a self-paced training resource for your workforce. |

Workplace complaints and disputes

Sometimes as part of complaints, workplace disputes can also occur.

| Resource | How is this resource helpful? |
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| Fair Work Ombudsman - Effective dispute resolution | A guide for managers to explain how to avoid, manage and resolve disputes. |
| Australian Human Rights Commission - Good practice guidelines for internal complaint processes | A guidance resources on addressing employee complaints about discrimination and harassment quickly and fairly. |



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Please note: This tool was last updated in August 2023. National Disability Services Limited (NDS) believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing. However, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. This resource will need to be adapted to meet the specific needs of your organisation and the people who use your services. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standard



