



'Nobody knows
my needs better
than me.'

Gwenda

Self-advocacy toolkit

Plain English

Information and resources to help you speak up for
better aged care.

Your guide to self-advocacy

What you need to know for better aged care



What is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself about issues that are important to you.

You might want to speak up when you:

- are finding it difficult to access aged care services
- have a concern about your aged care services
- feel like your aged care services are not meeting your needs
- want to make a complaint.

This toolkit has some useful tips and information to help you get started.

Inside it, you'll find:

- a step-by-step guide on how to make yourself heard
- checklists on how to speak up in home and residential care
- aged care options for when you leave hospital
- and tips on how to make an effective complaint.

When something is not right, or not working for you, it's okay to speak up.

Know your rights

The Statement of Rights let you know what your rights are. For example, your right to safe and high-quality care and your right to be treated with dignity and respect.

The Statement of Rights also support your right to speak up and:

- make decisions about your daily life
- be listened to and understood
- make a complaint freely
- And have your complaint dealt with fairly and quickly.

Professional aged care advocates are people whose job it is to support you to get the best possible care.

When you speak up, you help to improve your care.

How Lorraine spoke up for her rights

Lorraine's husband, Ron, lives with dementia. When he first went into residential care in regional NSW, she was worried about the quality of care.

'He was locked out in the garden one time I went to visit him – it was the middle of winter.'

'The manager used to say, "Now, now, Lorraine, this is what happens. You are not coping".'

At first, Lorraine did not think bringing up her concerns would help. But after learning about her rights, she has become a strong advocate for herself and Ron.

'You still have to watch out for them. I don't want to be difficult. But I do want Ron's rights to be heard.'



If you run into any problems, or you just need to talk things over, you can scan the QR code or visit opan.org.au/toolkit or chat to us on **1800 700 600**.



How to speak up for yourself

Here are some steps you can take when you need to advocate for yourself.

Step one: Ask what the problem is

There can be many parts to a problem. Make a list of the things that are bothering you before you make a phone call or go to a meeting. Knowing clearly what the problem is will help you get results.

Step two: Know your rights

It is important to know what your service provider should and should not do. You can find your rights in the *Statement of Rights*.

Ask yourself:

- What are my rights in this specific situation?
- What do the Strengthened Quality Standards say?
- Are there any program guides I can read to understand what my provider's responsibilities are?
- What does my service agreement say, and does it have any information about how to make a complaint to my provider?

Step three: Think about what you would like to happen

After making a list of issues, think about what you want to change. Being clear about what you want to happen will help you and your provider find a solution.

Work out what the most important result is to you and what result you will not accept. It's important to remember that some issues may take longer than others to find a solution.

Step four: Make a phone call

Talk to someone who can make changes and work with you towards fixing the problem.

You should ask for the Manager or someone who handles complaints.

Step five: Hold a meeting

Sometimes you need to meet face-to-face. It might not be a problem that can be fixed over the phone, or it might need more time for everyone to understand and work through it.

Step six: Keep check

If the changes or actions you have agreed on have not been done, you will need to follow up. Call again and explain that you are not happy with the progress. Ask for an update or if you can speak to someone in a higher position about the issue.

If you do not see the changes you wanted, you can make a formal complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. It's their job to protect your health, safety and wellbeing.



Checklist 1

How to speak up for better home care



Here's a list of questions that you can answer to help you figure out what is important to you as part of your home care service.

What is important to me about how my care is delivered?

(For example: I like to sleep until at least 9am. I need to feel comfortable with who supports me. I must have respect for my cultural needs.)

What do I need from my care service?

(For example: I need someone to remind me to take my medication. I need help with cleaning and washing. I need help with groceries and preparing food.)

What else would I like to know about my care service?

(For example: Will the same support worker come each time? What happens if my care needs change? What are the fees and costs? What will be on my monthly statement?)

If you're not happy with your care service, here's what you can do:

1. Call the manager or the complaints team
2. Tell them what the problem is and how you want it to be fixed
3. Ask what the next steps are and when changes will be made
4. Speak to our advocates for more information and support.



To use our online toolkit, you can scan the QR code or visit opan.org.au/toolkit or chat to us on **1800 700 600**.

Checklist 2

How to speak up for better residential care



Here's a list of questions that you can answer to help you figure out what is important to you as part of your residential care service.

What is important to me about how my care is delivered?

(For example: Food that I enjoy and that meets my needs, or being able to wake up when I choose, or feeling comfortable with who supports me.)

What do I need from my care service?

(For example: I need safe care that is high quality. I need a phone in my room and to be able to stay connected with my friends and family. I need access to my GP and other health services.)

What else would I like to know about my care service?

(For example: What fees will I need to pay? Can my family visit me whenever they want to? What happens if my care needs change?)

If you're not happy with your care service, here's what you can do:

- Call the manager or the complaints team.
- Tell them what the problem is and how you want it to be fixed.
- Ask what the next steps are and when changes will be made.
- Speak to our advocates for more information and support.

To use our online toolkit, you can scan the QR code or visit open.org.au/toolkit or chat to us on 1800 700 600.



Checklist 3

What are my aged care options after leaving hospital?



You might feel pressure to move into residential care, but remember, it's okay to take your time and explore all your options.

Here's a list of questions that you can ask to help you make the best decision.

Ask the hospital social worker:

☐ Is **transition care** an option, and if it is, how long would I need to wait to access it?

☐ Will my private health insurance cover **rehabilitation**?

☐ What other services does the state or territory offer? E.g. Hospital at home.

Ask your service provider:

☐ Do I have any unspent money left over from the last billing period that could be used for extra care hours? Can I pay for extra services?

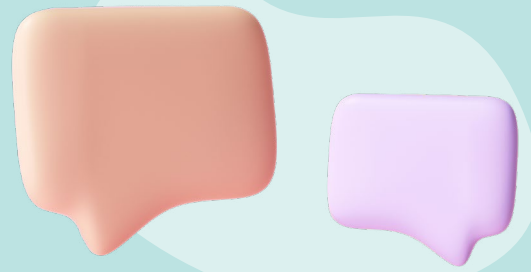
☐ What are my options after short-term post hospital care?

☐ If I have a support at home package, can I get an **urgent assessment** for a higher level of care? E.g. going from level 2 to level 4 in the 1-8 levels of care.

If you need more information about your aged care options when leaving hospital, chat to us on **1800 700 600**.

Checklist 4

How to bring up concerns and make a complaint



This checklist has questions and reminders to help you speak up or make a complaint.

When something's not right, it's okay to speak up. Bringing up and dealing with concerns is part of everyday business for providers and organisations.

First, answer these questions.

1. What is the **concern or problem** you want to bring up with your service provider, and what would you like to happen?

2. Have you read the *Statement of Rights and Strengthened Quality Standards*? If you have, which parts match your situation? (If you need, you can get extra support from one of our aged care advocates.)

Next, use this checklist to make sure you have all the information you need.

- ☐ Check your **care plan**. Does it cover the issue you want to bring up? (If not, you can ask for a review of your care plan.)

- ☐ Do you have **details or records**? (for example, names and dates, photographs, copies of documents.)

- ☐ Find out **who you need to speak to** – a manager or a complaints team.

- ☐ Ask about **next steps** and when the changes will be made. Take notes.

- ☐ Have the changes or actions happened in the amount of time that was agreed? (If not, you will need to **follow up**.)

If you aren't happy with the result after bringing up your concerns, you can raise your complaint with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

If you run into any problems or you just need
to talk things over, we're here to help.

You can chat to us on **1800 700 600**
or scan the QR code.



OPAN member organisations by state or territory:



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