

Helping Your Young Person Make a Complaint: Your Guide to Speaking Up

Every young person has the right to feel safe, respected, and to receive quality services. When something is wrong, making a complaint is a way to address the issue. This can help get better outcomes for your young person and others.

Why it can be helpful for your young person to be aware and/or involved in making a complaint?

- It teaches them that their thoughts, ideas and opinions matter.
- It teaches them that they have the power to make a difference.
- It supports them to stand up for themselves as they grow.
- It helps them learn to recognise and report situations that are uncomfortable, unsafe, or inappropriate.

What Can You Complain About?

Complaints and feedback can be about:

- **NDIS Service Providers or Workers:**
 - Poor quality of services or supports.
 - Services not being provided in a safe or respectful way.
 - Concerns about a worker's behaviour.
 - Issues with how a provider handled a previous complaint.
 - Unfair pricing.
- **The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA):**
 - Decisions about NDIS access (eligibility).
 - Decisions about your young person's NDIS plan (e.g., funding amounts, types of supports).
- **The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission:**
 - How they handled a complaint you made to them.

How to Help Your Young Person Understand and Express Their Complaint:

The first step is helping your young person articulate what's wrong.

- **For all children:**

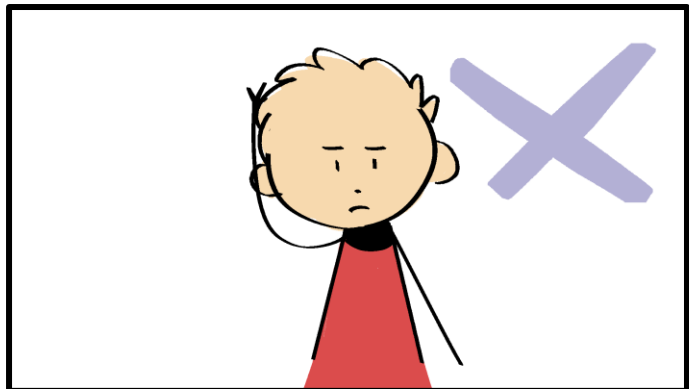
- Pay attention to changes in behaviour, withdrawal, or distress.
- Ask questions to help them share their feelings, for example "Are you happy when...?", "Does that feel good/bad?", "What makes you sad/uncomfortable?"
- Use simple pictures or social stories to explore feelings and situations if your young person finds this helpful.
- Try to recognise what they are feeling. Send the message that all feelings are okay, for example, "I see you're upset. It's okay to feel that way."
- Talk about their safety. Reinforce the idea of "my body, my rules". Share the message that they should tell you if anyone makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

- **As they grow and develop:**

- Ask questions to help them think about their feelings, for example, "What happened that made you feel upset/angry/sad?", "What do you wish was different?", "What do you want to happen next?"
- Help them find the right words to describe how they are feeling, for example, "It sounds like you felt frustrated when your therapist did [action]."
- Remember that young people may share their thoughts in ways other than words. Support them to do it in a way that works for them.
- Explain why doing something is important, for example, "If we tell someone what happened, maybe they can help make it better."
- Practice what they might say to you or to the person they are complaining to, to help them feel more confident.

- **And then later on:**

- Have direct conversations about the issue and potential solutions.
- Encourage them to complain and be heard without fear of negative consequences.
- Talk through the different ways to complain and who they might want to talk to.
- Let them lead the process as much as they can, with your guidance and support.
- Encourage them to write down what happened, when, and how it made them feel.



Steps to Making a Complaint:

There are usually a few steps you can take. Always keep records of all communications (dates, times, who you spoke to, what was discussed).

1. Talk to the NDIS Provider Directly (if safe and comfortable to do so):

- a. Often, the quickest way to resolve an issue is to speak directly with the service provider or worker involved.
- b. How to do it:**
 - i. Schedule a time to talk.
 - ii. Clearly explain your concerns and your young person's perspective.

- iii. State what outcome you are hoping for.
 - iv. Follow up in writing (email) to confirm what was discussed and agreed upon.
 - c. **Involve your young person:** If appropriate, have your young person present or share their thoughts directly.
- 2. Contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission:**
- a. If you are not satisfied with the provider's response, or if you do not feel safe or comfortable complaining to the provider directly (especially in cases of abuse, neglect, or serious concern), you can go straight to the NDIS Commission.
 - b. They handle complaints about the quality and safety of NDIS supports and services.**
 - c. How to do it:**
 - i. **Online complaint form:** Visit the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission website (www.ndiscommission.gov.au) and look for the "Complaints" section.
 - ii. **Phone:** Call 1800 035 544 (free call). They can arrange interpreters if needed.
 - iii. **Information needed:** They will require details like: who you are, the provider/worker's name, what happened, when, and how it affected your young person.
 - d. **What they do:** The NDIS Commission can help by talking to you and the provider, investigating, or taking action against the provider.
- 3. Contact the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA):**
- a. If your complaint is about **NDIS access (eligibility)** or **decisions about your young person's NDIS plan**, you need to complain directly to the NDIA.
 - b. How to do it:**
 - i. **Online Feedback Form/Live Chat:** Visit www.ndis.gov.au and go to "Contact" or "Feedback and Complaints."
 - ii. **Phone:** Call 1800 800 110 (NDIS National Contact Centre).

- iii. **In person:** Visit an NDIS office, Local Area Coordinator (LAC), or Early Young personhood (EC) Partner.
 - c. **Internal Review:** For decisions about access or your plan, you can request an "internal review" from the NDIA within 3 months of the decision.
- 4. Seek Advocacy Support:**
 - a. Your young person does not have to do this alone and neither do you. An independent advocate can help you understand your rights, explain the complaints process, and even speak on your young person's behalf if needed.
 - b. How to find an advocate:**
 - i. **Disability Advocacy Finder (Ask Izzy):** An online tool to find advocates in your area.
<https://askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder>
 - ii. **National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP):** Funded by the government to provide advocacy support (visit dss.gov.au and search for NDAP).
 - iii. **Contact your local community centre, council, or disability service.**
- 5. Commonwealth Ombudsman:**
 - a. If you are not happy with how the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission or the NDIA handled your complaint, you can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman. They review how government agencies make decisions and handle complaints.
 - b. **Phone:** 1300 362 072
 - c. **Website:** ombudsman.gov.au

Important Things to Remember:

- No one should be treated poorly for making a complaint.
- You can choose not to give your name when making a complaint. This is called making an 'anonymous' complaint. It is important to realise that this can sometimes make it harder to resolve the issue.

- The NDIS Commission will usually get your permission before contacting a provider about your complaint.
- You can ask friends, family, or an advocate to help you through the process.

By supporting your young person with a complaint, you can help them resolve an issue. You are also teaching them about standing up for themselves and their rights.

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