

Complaints Management Guide for Disability Services Providers (Managers)

When you receive complaints, compliments or feedback about the services you provide, you have an opportunity to learn and to improve the quality of your service.

Under Right 10 of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code), the people who access your services have the right to complain about the services they receive, and you must have a complaints management system for the fair, simple, speedy and efficient resolution of their complaint.

To help you evaluate your complaints management system, the Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC) has created a checklist for you to work through with staff in your organisation. This checklist should:

- Start a discussion on how your current complaints management system works;
- Give you an opportunity to work out what is missing from your complaints management system;
- Help you make decisions about which parts of your complaints management system you want to work on; and
- Help you develop a plan for the areas you will work on, and the timeframe for their completion.

HDC recommends that you consult with disabled people and their family/whānau and friends when you work on your

complaints management system, because these are the people who will be using it.

This checklist covers:

- Complaints management systems and processes;
- Staff training and culture; and
- Consumer education and relations.

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Your complaints procedure				
Does your organisation have a clearly written complaints policy? Does your policy include information about the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code); HDC ; the Nationwide Advocacy Service ; ¹ your complaints management process; your timeframes for responding to complaints; and how your organisation records complaints?				
Does your organisation take action to inform consumers about their rights under the Code ? Is the information accessible to your consumers?				

¹ Training for your staff and presentations for consumers are available free of charge from your local advocate.

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Is a senior manager responsible for developing, monitoring and reviewing your complaints management system?				
Does your organisation know how to recognise a complaint, and differentiate between a concern and a complaint?				
Are complaints always recorded by your staff? Do you group similar types of complaint? Can you look at all complaints together, for example check the number of complaints received? Can you check the outcome of all complaints?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Do you respond to complaints within the mandatory timeframes under Right 10 of the Code ?				
Does your organisation make sure that all staff understand the role of feedback and complaints in improving the quality of your services? Do staff respond to complaints positively?				
Are complaints shared throughout your organisation? Do you look for trends, and use that information to improve services for individuals and your organisation as a whole?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Do all staff see complaints data regularly, and have the chance to talk about the issues? Do staff have an opportunity to speak up about how the organisation could improve?				
Does your organisation actively encourage feedback and complaints from people who access your services? Do you support them to feel comfortable and valued when they provide feedback?				
Do you have systems in place to guarantee privacy and confidentiality for the consumer or the person making the complaint, during and after the complaint process?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Do you check with staff, consumers, and their family/whānau when developing and evaluating your complaints management system?				
Have you created a culture where staff, consumers and their family/whānau feel comfortable making a complaint or raising concerns without the fear of negative consequences or retribution?				
Have you created a culture where people who make complaints are treated respectfully, politely and sensitively?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Do you always clarify the issues with the person complaining to make sure all his or her concerns have been covered, including the person's desired outcome?				
Do you have strategies to make sure that people are not treated unfairly because they have made a complaint?				
If someone is unhappy with your response to his or her complaint, do you provide information about the Nationwide Advocacy Service and HDC ?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Staff training				
Do all staff know about and receive training on your organisation's complaints management system during their induction? Do staff have follow-up training?				
Do staff know how to recognise a complaint and how to respond to concerns when they are first raised?				
Do staff know the appropriate person in your organisation to whom they should talk about a complaint? A manager? A colleague? A complaints officer?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Do staff know how to record a complaint or concern in your complaints management system?				
Are all your staff given regular training on the Code and the role of the Nationwide Advocacy Service and HDC ?				
Do your staff see complaints or concerns as a learning opportunity? Have they seen positive examples of learning?				
Is the positive feedback you receive passed on to staff to reinforce and recognise where they are doing well?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Make complaining easy				
Do you help people who access your services when they want to make a complaint, including telling them their rights under the Code and helping them to contact the Advocacy Service if required?				
Are all people who have made a complaint kept updated, in an agreed manner and on a regular basis, about the progress of their complaint, and what if any action will be taken to address their concern?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Are all improvements and changes made as a result of feedback or complaints communicated back to the person who made the complaint and, if appropriate, to staff and other people who access your services?				
Do you have a process for managing complaints from someone other than a consumer? Do your staff know how to respond to the friends and family/whānau of a consumer raising concerns or making a complaint? ²				

² Taking into account the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993 and applying an understanding of the role of Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPOAs) and Welfare Guardians.

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Do you have information easily available for family/whānau and friends about how they can make a complaint or support the consumer to make a complaint?				
Are consumers and their friends and family/whānau told that they can make a complaint directly to staff or a manager? Do they know to whom to speak?				
Is your information about consumers' rights and your complaints system easily available and appropriate for anyone? For example, do you have the information in accessible formats such as large print text , easy-read language with pictures , or New Zealand Sign Language ?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
(Please note that any response to a complaint or concern should also be available in an appropriate and accessible format.)				
You will be aware that some people with learning disability find it difficult to repeat the details of an incident over and over. Do you have guidelines on how to support people with learning disability to make a complaint effectively the first time? Will they be properly supported during and after the complaint process?				

Complaints Management	Yes	In Progress	No	Action Required
Are your staff aware of how to contact the Advocacy Service , and do you encourage staff to contact the Advocacy Service to support consumers with learning disability through complaints?				
Do you provide complaints information to your governing body to make planning decisions about your organisation?				
Does your organisation regularly seek feedback on the services being provided and consumers' satisfaction?				

HDC Resources:

HDC's Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights: [http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights/the-code-\(full\)](http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights/the-code-(full))

HDC's easy-read Code, "You Have Rights":
[http://www.hdc.org.nz/publications/other-publications-from-hdc/disability-resources/you-have-rights-\(easy-read\)](http://www.hdc.org.nz/publications/other-publications-from-hdc/disability-resources/you-have-rights-(easy-read))

HDC's accessible language video about the Code and making a complaint: <http://www.hdc.org.nz/about-us/disability/an-hdc-and-people-first-collaboration---the-code-and-making-a-complaint>

HDC's New Zealand Sign Language video on the Code and making a complaint: <http://www.hdc.org.nz/about-us/disability/your-rights-when-using-a-health-or-disability-service-and-how-to-make-a-complaint/your-rights-when-using-a-health-or-disability-service>

HDC's "Learning from Complaints" brochure for blind and low vision consumers: <http://www.hdc.org.nz/about-us/disability/resources---accessible-formats/learning-from-complaints-brochure>

For more information about how to manage complaints or concerns from the people to whom you are providing support, contact:

Nationwide Advocacy Service: 0800 555 050 or
advocacy@hdc.org.nz

www.advocacy.hdc.org.nz/find-an-advocate

Health and Disability Commissioner: 0800 11 22 33 or
hdc@hdc.org.nz

www.hdc.org.nz