



HEALTH & DISABILITY COMMISSIONER
TE TOIHAU HAUORA, HAUĀTANGA



Disabled people's experiences of health services: Report on complaints to the Health and Disability Commissioner



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About this Easy Read



This Easy Read is from the **Health and Disability Commissioner – Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga**.



The **Health and Disability Commissioner – Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga** looks after the **rights** of people using:



- health services
- disability services.



In this document the **Health and Disability Commissioner – Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga** is called **HDC** for short.

Where it says **we / our / us** in this document it means **HDC**.



Rights are things that the law says every person should:

- have
- be able to do.



Rights are things like:

- being respected
- getting safe healthcare.



This Easy Read is a report about **complaints** disabled people have made to HDC about health services.



Making a **complaint** means telling someone:

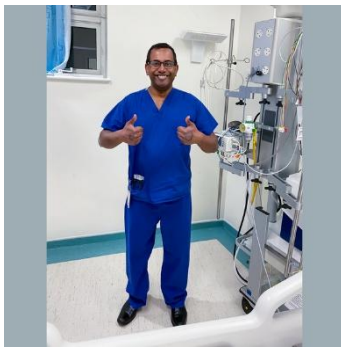
- there is a problem
- you want them to do something to make things right.

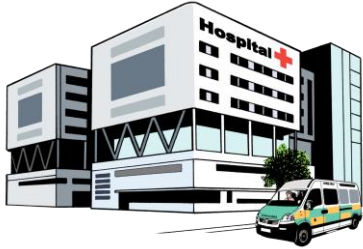
Why did we make this report?



We know:

- the health system in Aotearoa New Zealand is under a lot of pressure
- people in the **health system**:
 - work hard
 - usually do a very good job
- disabled people use health services more often than non-disabled people
- some disabled people have worse health than non-disabled people.





The **health system** is all the organisations that work together to support New Zealanders to be healthy like:

- the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora
- hospitals
- GPs
- counsellors.

People have the right to good healthcare.

They should be:

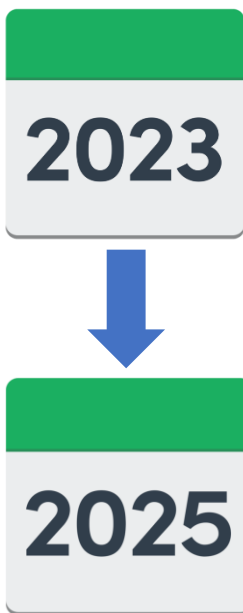
- treated well
- listened to.



People have the right to complain when things go wrong.



Complaints support us to understand what needs to change.



For this report we looked at complaints made to HDC between:

- 2023
- and
- 2025.

What the complaints told us



Some people who were unhappy with healthcare were:

- disabled people

and

- their supporters.



They said they were not listened to when they were getting healthcare.



Some disabled people said they did not get health services in the right way.



Some disabled people were **restrained** when they were using health services.



Being restrained is when health workers stop someone from moving.

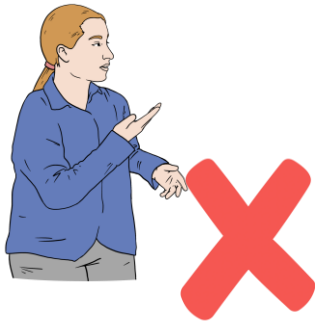
For example by holding them down on a bed.



Some people who said they did not feel respected when getting healthcare were:



- tāngata whaikaha Māori / Māori disabled people
- Deaf people.



They said their:

- language was not respected
- **culture** was not respected.



Culture is a way of:

- thinking that a group shares
- doing things as a group.

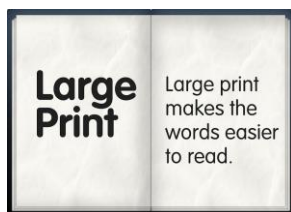


Some disabled people said they did not have **accessible information** when they needed it.



Accessible information is information in different formats like:

- Easy Read
- large print.



Some disabled people said they were not supported to make decisions about their:



- bodies
- healthcare.



Some disabled people said they did not get the disability support they needed while they were in hospital.



Some medical staff did not know enough about some kinds of disability.



This meant some disabled people did not get the healthcare they needed.



Some people who waited a long time for a **diagnosis** were:

- young disabled people

and

- their whānau / families.



A **diagnosis** means working out why someone is sick by using:

- tests
- what doctors know about bodies.



These people said while waiting for a diagnosis they did not get the:

- information they needed
- support they needed.



Recommendations



We made some **recommendations** after looking at the complaints.



Recommendations are ideas that would be good to do.

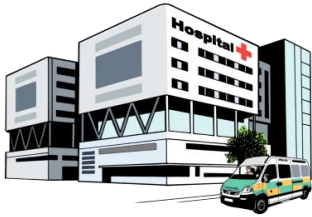


We recommend that **Health NZ** makes better ways for staff to communicate in:

- hospitals
- emergency services
- mental health services.



Health NZ is the part of the Aotearoa New Zealand health system that looks after **public health services**.



Public health services are health services that are funded by the Government like:



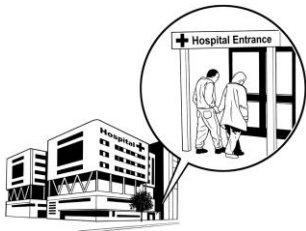
- some hospitals
- primary care / the doctor you go to first
- community care
- hauora Māori / Māori health services.



We recommend that Health NZ works more on stopping all restraint of disabled people in hospitals.



We recommend that Health NZ works with disabled people to come up with training about disability for people who work in health services.



The training about disability is most important for people who work in:

- emergency departments
- mental health services.



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS



We also recommend that Health NZ works together with Disability Support Services / DSS on issues / problems in the:

- health system
- disability system.





We recommend that Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS support disabled people when they are staying in hospital.



This is so disabled people understand which organisation:



- pays for disability support
- gives disability support.



We recommend that Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS make sure disabled people have the right disability support when they are ready to leave hospital.



We recommend that Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS help disabled people understand what they can get from:

- health agencies / organisations
- disability agencies / organisations.



We recommend that Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS work together to support disabled people with different:

- health needs
- disabilities.





We recommend that Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS support people waiting for a diagnosis who are:



- young disabled people

and



- their whānau / families.

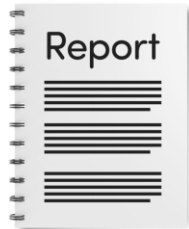


Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS have said they agree with our recommendations.



We will work with Health NZ and Disability Support Services / DSS to check how well they are going on the recommendations.

More information



You can read the full version of this report here:

<https://tinyurl.com/HealthExperiencesDisability>



You can find information about making a complaint to HDC at this website:

<https://tinyurl.com/YourRightsHDC>



These websites are **not** in Easy Read.



You can contact HDC by email at:

hdc@hdc.org.nz



You can also contact HDC by phone:

0800 11 22 33.

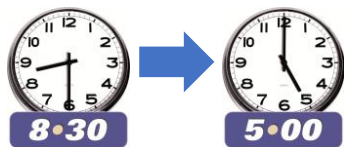


This number does not cost money to call.



You can call us from:

- Monday to Friday
- 8.30 am to 5 pm.



If you find it hard to use the phone the **New Zealand Relay** service is for people who are:

- Deaf / hard of hearing
- deafblind
- speech impaired / find it hard to talk.





You can contact HDC through the
New Zealand Relay service at:

- **www.nzrelay.co.nz**

then

- connecting to 09 373 1060.





This information has been written by the Health and Disability Commissioner – Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga.



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



The ideas in this document are not the ideas of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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