# Four things aged care staff should know about aged care complaints

We know that as an aged care worker you have an important, demanding role. The people in your care depend on you. Care recipients and their family and friends will often come to you first if they have concerns about the aged care services being provided. Whatever your role is – personal care worker, hairdresser, office worker, kitchen staff, nurse, laundry, cleaner or care manager - you play an important role in the aged care complaints process.

Below are four key things you should know about aged care complaints:

## 1. Try to resolve the issue within your service first.

If anyone shares a concern or complaint with you, the first step is to try and resolve the issue within your service. You should start by making sure that you are aware of your service’s internal complaints process and try to work through a concern this way. Resolving the issue within your service can deliver a faster and sustainable result for care recipients, without needing further action and any unnecessary involvement from the Aged Care Complaints Scheme (the Scheme)

### We are supporting best practice

The Scheme is committed to supporting better practice complaints handling by service providers. We work with service providers in a range of ways to help resolve concerns and achieve the best result for the care recipient.

We collaborate with, and encourage service providers to try to resolve any issues directly with care recipients and their representatives first. This is provided the issue does not present any significant risk to the health or safety of the care recipient.

We have developed industry resources to support you in effective complaints handling. This includes alerts and reports that outline an identified issue, risk or trend and provide suggestions of areas that you may wish to review within your service. We’ve also developed a Better Practice Complaints Handling Guide that can help your service manage complaints effectively and enhance existing processes. These resources are available on the Scheme’s website at **agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au**

## 2. Contact the Scheme if resolving the issue within your service isn’t a suitable option.

Despite a service provider’s best efforts, sometimes assistance from the Scheme is required to address a concern. If resolving an issue within your service isn’t a suitable option, you can raise it with the Scheme. The Scheme provides a free service for anyone to raise their concerns about the quality of care or services being delivered to people receiving aged care services subsidised by the Australian Government, including residential care, Home Care Packages and Commonwealth HACC services.

Anyone can contact the Scheme for free, by calling 1800 550 552. Other ways to contact the Scheme are listed on the other side of this tab.

Scheme resources that can help you include a brochure, a booklet, posters, consumer and staff DVDs and fact sheets. The poster, consumer DVD and brochure are translated into 17 languages. The DVD for staff is translated into five languages. To download or view resources go to the ‘Resources’ tab on the Scheme’s website at agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au. Details on how to order these materials are also available there.

You can also call 1800 200 422 to place an order.

‘It‘s important that you provide care recipients and their family and friends with information about the Scheme so they can contact us if they need to’

## 3. The Scheme can only assist with concerns relating to a service provider’s responsibilities under the *Aged Care Act 1997* (the Act) or under their contractual funding agreements with the Australian Government.

### The types of complaints the Scheme can help with include:

* Abuse;
* quality of health and personal care;
* the care environment;
* personal security of care recipients and staff;
* variety or quality of food being offered;
* service provider’s internal complaints process;
* choice of activities;
* staffing and levels of staffing qualifications;
* laundry services; and
* discrimination.

### The Scheme is unable to:

* provide legal advice;
* advise who can make financial or health related decisions for the care recipient; and
* address industrial matters such as wages or employment conditions.

If someone is unsure if we can help them, they should contact us directly. If the Scheme can’t help, we will try to identify who can.

## 4. You can help people feel more comfortable about sharing their concerns.

Speaking out is important. We understand that people aren’t always comfortable about raising concerns about the services they are receiving. Everyone has a right to make a complaint without fear of being punished and service provider peak bodies have shown their support of this.

Here are some suggestions you can make to care recipients and their family and friends that might make them feel more comfortable about raising their concerns:

* Advocates can support anyone who doesn’t feel comfortable making a complaint on their own. The National Aged Care Advocacy Line can be contacted on 1800 700 600 for the details of the advocacy agency in your state or territory. For more information on advocacy, there is a factsheet on the Scheme’s website under the ‘Resources’ tab at agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au
* People can submit a complaint to the Scheme openly, confidentially or anonymously. However, confidential and anonymous can limit what the Scheme can do to help resolve a concern. For more information about placing a complaint confidentially or anonymously please see the ‘Lodging anonymous complaints with the Aged Care Complaints Scheme’ blog post under the ‘For consumers’ tab on the Scheme’s website or contact the Scheme at 1800 550 552.

## Anyone can contact the Aged Care Complaints Scheme to discuss a concern or make a complaint:

### Phone:

1800 550 552

### Write:

Aged Care Complaints Scheme

Department of Social Services

GPO Box 9820

In your capital city

### Online

agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au

Subscribe to the website to ensure you are kept up to date with the latest news and resources for industry as they become available.

You can subscribe using the ‘subscribe to updates’ function on the

Scheme’s website homepage at agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au

Complaints are important as they help identify opportunities to improve service

and ensure people are receiving quality care.