



NDIS Quality
and Safeguards
Commission



NDIS Workforce
Capability Framework

Supervising For Capability

Working Together: A Guide For Workers

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Contents

User icon key.....	1
Introduction	2
Related supervision resources.....	2
What is in this guide	2
Using this guide.....	3
Section 1: When to have conversations and how to prepare for them.....	4
When to have conversations	4
Preparing for conversations.....	4
Recording outcomes	5
Getting and giving feedback	5
Section 2: The Conversation Guide.....	7
Setting up the participant-worker relationship	7
Worker capability.....	8
Understanding what is important.....	8
Providing support	9
Checking in.....	10
Other useful resources.....	10

User icon key

Each document in the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework suite of resources uses one or more icons to show the intended user or users.

Icon	Key
	NDIS participants
	Workers
	Supervisors and frontline managers
	Senior managers and leaders
	NDIS providers

Introduction

As an NDIS worker, you need to have expertise and competence to deliver the supports a participant requires and you are responsible for delivering support safely and competently. Your responsibilities are described in the [NDIS Code of Conduct](#). To do this, you need to understand what is expected of you and make sure you have the capabilities you need before you undertake the work. Ask your supervisor if you need help or are not sure.

Your supervisor may already have explained the capabilities you need as part of your induction or when discussing your [performance agreement](#). This guide helps you to understand how to apply these capabilities when supporting an NDIS participant and what support you might want to ask from your supervisor.

Self-managing NDIS participants can use these resources as a guide when they are working with intermediaries, like platform providers or working with people they engage or employ themselves, like direct employees or sole traders.

The NDIS supports and services to be delivered to participants are described in participants' NDIS Plans, service agreements and service schedules. These documents describe 'what' supports will be provided. The [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) (the Framework) describes the capabilities workers need to deliver those supports. Bringing support plans to life for each individual participant requires the combined effort of you, your supervisor and the organisation, to achieve agreed goals. Participating in ongoing, three-way communication between the NDIS participant and your supervisor is an effective way to do this.

Related supervision resources

This guide is part of a set of 'Supervising for Capability' resources developed by the NDIS Commission. You can view the [full set of resources](#) on our website or access related resources by selecting the links below. Further useful resources developed by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (the Commission) are listed at the end of this guide.

Related supervision resources

- [The Supervision and Support Relationship: A Guide for Supervisors and Workers](#)

What is in this guide

This guide has two sections.

The first section lists common situations that provide opportunities to talk about expectations, seek feedback and agree on future steps. It also suggests how you can prepare for these conversations.

The second section provides a series of questions and prompts you can use to guide your discussions with your supervisor and the NDIS participant you support. It also includes examples to show how the questions could be used by in different circumstances.

Using this guide

This guide is intended to be used to support three-way communication. You can use it to help you think about the information you need to know about the NDIS participant you are supporting and any specific support to request from your supervisor. It is likely that your supervisor is already using these resources. If not, you could let them know they can access their own version of this guide using the link on the title page. A version of this guide is also available for participants.

Workers working with self-managing NDIS participants can also use these resources as a guide when they work through intermediaries, like platform providers or you are a direct employee or sole trader.

Section 1: When to have conversations and how to prepare for them

Strong, trusted relationships are the basis of good support and ongoing, open communication is the key to effective working relationships. A clear, shared understanding about expectations and responsibilities is an essential first step in setting up a good working relationship with a participant. It is equally important to ask questions or raise issues, get feedback, make suggestions and adjust your practice to reflect changed needs or priorities along the way.

When to have conversations

Here are some examples of when you could use the Conversation Guide. Of course, not all participants communicate verbally. Both you and your supervisor need to check with the participant about how they want to communicate.

You are joining an NDIS participant's support team: You may have already been supporting other participants but you need to understand the specific needs and expectations of each new participant you work with. Your supervisor might ask you to read through the participant's support plan and a description of what they expect and invite you to check anything you are not sure of before you start. You could use the questions in Section 2 of this guide to help you to think through any specific questions you might have.

There is an incident or a near miss at work: You let your supervisor know and agree on a time to meet with you and the participant to talk through what happened, discuss possible causes and agree on how to ensure it does not happen again. Your supervisor records the outcome so that the participant and all their support workers are aware of the new arrangements.

You have a regular check-in to discuss how things are going with the NDIS participant you are supporting: You use this time to raise issues about the best way to deliver support. For example, the NDIS participant you support wants to go to water aerobics at their local leisure centre and will need support to get in and out of the pool. You let your supervisor know and together with the participant, you discuss how you will do this. Your supervisor arranges for you to talk to the aerobics instructor about how to support the participant so they feel comfortable, safe, and enjoy their class.

Preparing for conversations

Thinking ahead about what to discuss and any questions you want to ask will help you feel prepared and get the most out of these conversations.

Adjusting the questions for your situation: the Conversation Guide in Section 2 presents a series of questions based on the capabilities in the [Framework](#), which describe the attitudes, skills and knowledge expected of NDIS workers. Some questions may not be relevant to you and you may want to suggest others. Select the main headings in the conversation guide to link to the relevant core capabilities in the Framework.

Depending on the support needs of the NDIS participant, you may also want to look at the **additional identity capabilities** you need when supporting participants who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse or LGBTIQ+. There are also **additional**

specialised capabilities you can select to suit a participant's specific support needs. If participants require support for high intensity daily personal activities, you will find these capabilities described in the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#).

Recording outcomes

Recording key points from conversations gives you, your supervisor and the NDIS participant a record to refer to in future conversations. Organisations will have different ways to record this information and it is important that you understand your responsibilities for any formal recordkeeping. It is also important that the participant can easily access a record of what is agreed in a way that suits them. For example, they might decide to list the main points they want their workers to know about in a note on the fridge. When recording and sharing any personal or confidential information, it is important to respect the privacy of the participant and only share information that you have permission to share. Discuss this with your supervisor if you are not sure.

Getting and giving feedback

Good working relationships rely on being able to give and receive open, honest feedback. Seeking feedback, letting people know how you are going, and asking for help when you need it, shows that you are committed to developing and applying your capabilities. Being open and honest about what you find difficult or need help with makes it easier for others to see what they can do to support you. This kind of open conversation also supports healthy working relationships.

NDIS participants, your supervisor and your co-workers have a wealth of experience you can learn from to support you in your work. Here are some tips to help you to ask for and get the most out of feedback.

Decide what you want feedback about: A common time to ask for feedback is to check how you are going when you are learning something new. For example, you need to learn to use a new hoist. After you completed the manual handling course and worked some buddy shifts with a more experienced worker, you are now working on your own. You ask the participant if they could spend a few minutes with you at the end of the shift to let you know how you are going. You should always check to make sure the timing is convenient for the person providing the feedback.

An answer like, 'yes that was okay' does not tell you much. Preparing a few questions in advance will give you more information. For example:

- *'How did I go with using the sling?'*
- *'Is there anything I could do to make you feel more comfortable and secure when we are using the hoist?'*
- *'Are you happy with the way I talked with you during the shift?'*
- *'Is there anything else I could do to support you better?'*

Check your emotions: It can be hard to hear negative feedback. You might get defensive or annoyed if someone is not listening to you or you feel unfairly criticised. It is okay to let the other person know you are finding the conversation difficult, and you could suggest taking a break and following up when you have time to think about what is being said.

Say thanks: Open, honest feedback is essential for you to know how you are going. Let the person providing it know you appreciate their time and honesty.

Request the support you need: Feedback helps you find out where you could adjust or improve the way you work. This can help you in your current role and when thinking about how you would like to develop in the future. Talk with your supervisor about any support you need and seek out opportunities to get the learning and development you need.

Seek out regular feedback: Requesting regular feedback conversations with both your supervisor and the NDIS participant sets up working relationships that support you in your work. The frequency of these conversations will depend on what is practical for all parties. For example, you could agree with the participant to spend some regular time at the end of the week to review how things are going. You might check in by text with your supervisor after each shift and follow up with a conversation when you need to. Setting up this regular pattern gives you opportunities to address issues as they come up instead of waiting for a more formal performance review conversation.

Section 2: The Conversation Guide

This section includes questions you could ask yourself to help you understand NDIS participant needs and preferences, check whether you have the relevant capabilities and think about how you want your supervisor to support you. It also provides practical examples of how these questions could be used in different situations. You can click on each of the headings to see the relevant core capabilities from the Framework.

Setting up the participant-worker relationship

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you need to learn or adjust your communication style or develop new skills to meet this participant's needs and preferences?
- Do you know who else is important in the participant's life that they want you to know about and work with?
- Do you know what kinds of information you can share and who you can share it with?
- Do you know what types of information you need to pass on to your organisation and how to do this?
- Do you know who to contact and what role any third party might play in the relationship you have with your participant, e.g. a plan manager, platform provider?

Example: Effie has said that privacy is very important to her. She does not want her support workers to contact her behaviour support practitioners or pass on information about her. Your supervisor talks with Effie and agrees on when and what type of information you need to share and who you can share it with to respect Effie's privacy and keep her safe.

Example: Nam employs his own workers and wants them to work as a team to support his needs. He gets consent from each worker when they start to share their phone numbers with his other workers and his partner. He explains that he is comfortable for workers to share information about his health needs with other workers and his partner if he has agreed.

Worker capability

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you feel confident and ready to deliver this support?
- Are there any aspects of this work that make you feel stressed or anxious? Is there anything you want to discuss or support that would help you manage this?

Example: You are an experienced support worker and have recently completed a short course on enteral feeding in preparation for you to start supporting a five-year-old participant who relies on tube feeding. Although the course was good for learning the general principles, you are aware that each participant's arrangements are different. Her mother, Gina, is an expert in her daughter's support and will be showing you exactly how to support her daughter. Your supervisor will also drop in to check how things are going. You read through the High Intensity Support Skills Descriptor for Enteral feeding, making a note of a few things that you want to double check with both Gina and your supervisor.

Example: A participant who has been receiving supports for a while has recently told you that they have changed their name from Belle to Beau and now identify as gender non-conforming. They want everyone to use the pronouns 'them' and 'they.' You have done the Rainbow Awareness training your organisation provided but this is the first person you are supporting who identifies as gender non-conforming and you are nervous about getting it wrong, like using the wrong pronoun. You talk to your supervisor and they arrange for a co-worker who actively identifies as part of the LGBTIQ+ community to explain why language is important and also suggests to you that you discuss your concerns with Beau in advance. Beau reassures you that they understand you might sometimes slip up but they appreciate that you are making an effort to change. You agree with Beau to discuss how things are going regularly so you can talk through any questions as they come up.

Understanding what is important

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you know what is important to this NDIS participant and how you can support them to achieve it?
- Do you need any support or extra information to help you understand what this participant needs?

Example: Jill has lived in a group home for years and is excited about the possibility of moving into a place of her own. You have recently started supporting Jill and feel you are just not on her wavelength. Everything you say only seems to make her upset or angry. You tell your supervisor you want to change shifts.

Your supervisor arranges for you to learn more about trauma-informed practice. This gives you a whole new perspective on why Jill has been so prickly. Your supervisor also organises a chat with you and Jill. Jill explains how important this move is for her and that she is worried that it might not go well. You ask her to describe what 'going well' would look like and talk about how you can support her when she is feeling anxious. You also agree to come with Jill to her next meeting with the support coordinator to explore how you can support her to make this move a success.

Providing support

Questions to ask yourself:

- Are you aware of preferences, situations or triggers that could affect the way you need to support this participant?
- Are there any specific risks associated with supporting this participant and do you know how to manage these? Remember this requires understanding what the participant wants as well as your organisation's policies and procedures.
- What do you know about this participant's existing strengths? Do you know how to support this person in ways that build their confidence and abilities to pursue what is important to them? Do you want to discuss ideas on how to do this?

Example: Angelo is a young man who is supported to live with his autism. He explains to you that he often gets agitated if the environment is too noisy or brightly lit. Recently Angelo suggested he would like to get out more and meet new friends. You are concerned about how to manage the risks and ask your supervisor for advice. The three of you sit down together to plan how to do this so Angelo feels confident and has a plan about what he wants you to do if he starts feeling anxious or stressed.

Example: Eric lives at home independently and has Trixie the dog for company. Trixie sleeps in Eric's room. Recently you were supporting Eric to transfer from the bed to his chair and Trixie got in the way. It was quite dangerous and you both nearly ended up on the floor. You realise that this is something that could easily affect other workers and report this to your supervisor. The three of you sit down together to discuss the best way to keep everyone safe. You decide to keep Trixie out of the room when doing future transfers and the supervisor will let the other support workers know about this new arrangement.

Checking in

Questions to ask yourself:

- How do you feel you are going in providing support to this participant? What tells you that things are going well? Are there any areas where you feel you need further training or more support?
- Do you check in with the participant to find out what is working well and ask about any changes they would like in the way you are supporting them?
- If a participant is reluctant or uncomfortable to provide feedback, what could you do to support them?

Example: Rhonda is generally happy about the support she receives from Nan although lately she seems to be spending a lot of time on her phone. Rhonda has not raised this because she does not want to upset Nan and if she mentions it to the service provider, she is worried it will get Nan in trouble.

Agreeing in advance about how and when to check in with each other can help to deal with difficult conversations. Rhonda and Nan agree to make a time once a fortnight to have a cup of tea and a chat about how things are going overall.

Rhonda discovers that Nan has a daughter who has been sick and was checking with her childcare centre that she was OK. Nan realises that she has been a bit distracted and arranges for the centre to contact her partner if there is an issue with her child during working hours.

Other useful resources

- [The NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#): describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge required by all workers – including supervisors – and the behaviours you can expect to see.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct](#): promotes safe and ethical service delivery by setting out expectations for the conduct of both NDIS providers and workers.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct: Guidance for Workers](#).
- [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#): guidance for NDIS providers and workers supporting participants with high intensity daily personal activities.
- [Career Options Guide](#): helps current workers explore development options to deepen their capability in their current job or pursue other career opportunities in the disability sector or the care sector more generally.