

NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

Effective Organisational Communications – What does this mean and why is it important?

The resource has been developed to assist providers to meet the requirements of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Communication in its many forms, appears throughout the [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) and in every [NDIS Practice Standard](#).

Effective Communications are good for business, services and for the workplace. Good communication practices can help prevent issues occurring or contribute to resolving issues quickly.

The information in this resource aims to assist providers to improve their communications with all stakeholders and provide the opportunity to improve the organisation's internal and external communications. This resource is aimed at organisations without dedicated communications staff. It can be used by leaders and departments within organisations, who may be responsible for developing internal and external communications.

This resource includes information on:

- **What is effective organisational communication and why is it important?**
- **Developing Communication Skills**
- **Tips for developing a culture of effective communication**

What is effective organisational communication?

It sounds obvious, but communication is an integral part of any successful organisation. Today, there are so many ways to communicate. Being able to communicate with all your stakeholders, in ways which have the most impact, is an invaluable asset for organisations to have.

Communicating effectively can improve the relationships an organisation builds and maintains both internally and externally and ultimately can assist an organisation to work collaboratively, productively and towards achieving its collective goals.

In very simple terms effective communication can be broken into 2 areas, that:

1. What you communicate to others (individuals or groups) is being received, understood and acted upon, in the way you expected, by the people you intended.
2. The communications you receive, are understood, and allow you to take action on the information that you are being provided.

Why is effective communication important in NDIS supports and services?

The [NDIS Commission Code of Conduct](#) expects all NDIS providers of support to deliver high quality and safe services with care and skill. They expect providers to deliver supports and services which are inclusive and collaborative, that partner with people with disability and their networks and are delivered by a skilled and appropriately trained workforce.



Developing communication skills: Different roles within your organisation will have different responsibilities when it comes to communication.

For your direct support workers it is important that they have an understanding of the importance of effective communication and the role it can play in working together with people with disability. [The Supporting effective communication](#) e-learning module demonstrates what effective communication looks like, and how it supports choice and control.

For managers, consider what training could be provided to help improve communication with their teams, the broader organisation and externally. Consider utilising resources such as NDS [Employee Engagement Fact Sheet](#) and [Communicate Clearly - A Guide to Plain English - 26 TEN](#).

In NDIS supports and services effective communication is essential for:



Upholding the rights of people with disability to have choice and control, to express themselves, to be heard and to be safe.

Developing positive relationships and facilitating a person-centred culture where people with disability and their networks have clear information to make informed decisions.



Recruiting a workforce who meet the needs of people with disability and the organisation.

Developing a workforce who understand their roles and responsibilities, implement an organisation's policies, procedures and practice and have the information they need to do their job well.

Supporting workers to adapt to and manage changes in organisational structure or supports and services.



Fostering a culture of continuous improvement, where the experience of people with disability and their networks is sought out, understood and used by organisations to improve.

Retaining a workforce who are well-informed, trained and whose contributions are valued.

Different organisations will have different structures in place depending on their size and scope, what services they provide, their location and the geographical scope of their supports and services. There is no one size fits all approach to communication but a good place to start is to review what types of communication can exist within an organisation.

What are the common types of communication in an organisation?

Internal communications can flow between departments, between groups, from worker to worker or upwards and downwards (to and from managers or leadership). It can be verbal, written, visual, audio, informal or formal. It's happening all of the time.

The impacts of people **not** communicating effectively can mean time being wasted due to messaging being unclear, communications being misinterpreted, or more serious impacts such as conflict, inaction, disengagement where workers feel unheard or de-skilled and the leadership of the organisation being misinformed of what is happening on the ground.

External Communications refers to communication directed outside of the organisation. This could be through formal planned communications such as letters, emails, brochures, media, and participant information. External communications also include informal or unplanned communications that occur through the phone calls, interactions and meetings held between your workforce and your stakeholders. These communications create an impression of your organisation and can have a significant impact on your relationships.

All people are different, have their own experience, communication preferences and styles. When the impacts can be so high it is important that your workers are clear about your expectations for communication while they are representing your organisation, both internally and externally.

Tips for developing a culture of effective communication.

Developing a culture can take time and commitment from all levels of the organisation. Communication happens all the time, throughout your organisation. Consider the following tips on building a positive culture in your organisation.

<p>Know how your organisation communicates.</p>	<p>Take time to understand what communication currently takes place at your organisation, where the current gaps in communication are and develop a plan of actions to remedy. Use your teams and different people within your organisation to get a clear understanding.</p>
<p>Understand who you communicate with.</p>	<p>Identify who your stakeholder groups are and what their needs and wants are. Keeping this at the core of your communications will help you to ensure that it is meeting the need or purpose.</p>
<p>Be accessible and inclusive.</p>	<p>This is integral to any communications. If your communications are not accessible and inclusive, it means that they are not meeting everyone's needs and could result in barriers to your communications being received and understood.</p>
<p>Be clear about your expectations.</p>	<p>Develop policies and procedures which provide clear guidance for your workers on how to act in all anticipated situations. Make sure workers with direct contact with participants and families understand the organisation's values and mission to guide their interactions with people with disability and families and help drive person-centred practice.</p>
<p>Consider how changes will be communicated.</p>	<p>Change can be challenging for workers and people who access services. Ensure your framework includes how you will communicate any significant changes that might occur. Consider how you will clearly communicate the organisation's reasons for change. Promote how workers and participants can get support or further information – especially in times of change.</p>

Set up systems which improve your efficiency.

Develop templates for your communications that can be adapted and edited easily. This can assist to ensure that your communications are accessible and inclusive, consistent and don't leave out important information. Include templates that can be used quickly in an emergency or crisis.

Regularly monitor and review your communications.

Seek feedback from people on whether your communications have delivered what you expected them to. This could be done informally through discussion with your workers, or formally as part of your evaluations with the people accessing your services. Test your policies and procedures to ensure they are meeting the needs of your organisation and that they are clear. Check-in with workers through surveys, focus groups or face-to-face to ensure the organisation's communication is working.

Commit to effective communication as a priority.

Provide training and resources relevant to different roles to assist workers to communicate effectively and appropriately. Review the communications that are being sent as part of your commitment to continuous improvement. Raise communication regularly in your team meetings and regular touchpoints with your teams.

Promote effective communication at all levels.

Include workforce communication as an organisational priority. Include it as part of your strategic plan, risk register, operational plan and continuous improvement plan. Include communication as a job function and responsibility in job descriptions. Consider identifying communication champions who can help share information across the organisation, how you will utilise this resource and what additional training you will provide them.

References and Resources

NDIS Commission resources

- [NDIS Commission Code of Conduct webpage](#)
- [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#)
- [Supporting effective communication](#)

Supporting the workforce

- NDS - [Employee Engagement Fact Sheet](#)
- Communication and Engagement videos - [NDS Optimising your workforce](#)
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations - [Communication with people with disabilities](#)
- Fairwork Ombudsman - [Communication in the workplace](#) and [Consultation and cooperation in the workplace](#)

Please note: This resource was developed in May 2023 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.