



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission



NDIS Workforce  
Capability Framework

# Supervising for Capability

## Working Together: A Guide For Supervisors

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## Contents

_Toc148605679User 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.....	5
Recording outcomes .....	5
Section 2: The Conversation Guide.....	7
Setting up the participant-worker relationship .....	7
Worker capability.....	8
Understanding what is important.....	9
Providing support .....	11
Checking in.....	12
Other useful resources.....	13

## 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

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## Introduction

Organisations are responsible for the quality of the support they deliver, as set out in the [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) and the [NDIS Practice Standards](#). Supervisors play a critical role in supporting their organisation to meet their responsibilities.

The supports and services to be delivered to NDIS participants are outlined at a high level 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 needed to deliver those supports. This guide illustrates how to apply the Framework to supporting an individual participant.

Bringing support plans to life for each NDIS participant requires the combined effort of you, the worker, and the organisation to achieve agreed goals. Three-way communication between you, the participant and the workers 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 Quality and Safeguards Commission (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 Commission are listed at the end of this guide.

### Related supervision resources

- [Overview of Resources](#)
- [Supervision and Support Relationship: A Guide for Supervisors and Workers](#)
- [Performance Agreement template](#)
- [Learning and Capability Development: A Guide for Supervisors](#)
- [Feedback Tip Sheet for Supervisors](#)

## 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 to engage participants and workers in thinking about their expectations and preparing for conversations.
- The second section provides a series of questions and prompts you can use to guide communication with participants and workers in the various situations described in Section 1. It also has examples to illustrate how the questions could be used by participants, workers and supervisors in different circumstances.

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## Using this guide

This guide has been developed to support three-way communication. You can use this guide as a prompt to structure these conversations to think about your own role and contribution as a facilitator. You should also suggest to the worker and participant that they access their own versions of this guide to encourage their active engagement.

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## 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 establishing a working relationship with an NDIS participant. It is equally important to check in, invite feedback, and adjust to reflect changed needs or priorities along the way.

Your role is to create an environment where both the NDIS participant and the worker feel at ease and able to ask for clarification or help, make a suggestion or raise a difficult issue when they need to. At the outset, this includes confirming how the participant prefers to communicate so they can effectively engage and contribute, especially where participants are non-verbal.

### When to have conversations

- **You are arranging to support a new participant:** You meet with the participant, to get to know them, confirm the supports to be delivered, and understand their needs and preferences. You note the key points so that you can make sure workers in their support team have the relevant capabilities and know what is expected. You also explain your role as supervisor and your responsibility to ensure support is delivered to expected standards. You explain that you will be checking in on how things are going from time to time and encourage the participant to provide feedback directly to the worker or to yourself, including praise for good work and any areas for improvement.
- **A worker is joining the participant's support team:** You make sure the worker understands the supports to be delivered and the participant's needs and preferences. You provide them with the information the participant gave you and check if there is anything they are not sure about before they start. You follow up by introducing the new worker to the participant and make sure there is a clear, common understanding of what supports will be delivered and how.
- **A worker you supervise is requesting your help to support a participant:** You make time to talk with them so you can identify where and how they need help. As part of the conversation, you discuss any related capability development needs and how to address them and update the Capability Development Plan section in in the Worker's Performance Agreement as needed.
- **There is an incident or a near miss:** You talk through what happened and the possible causes with the worker and the participant and agree on how to ensure it does not happen again. You record the outcome so that the participant and all their support workers are aware of the new arrangements. You consider whether there any related capability development needs for the individual worker or across the organisation. If so, you update the relevant Worker Capability Development Plan section in in the Worker's Performance Agreement.
- **Regular check-ins to discuss how things are going:** As part of your regular review, you, the worker and the participant refer back to your earlier agreement on expectations, discuss how things are going, take note of any feedback from the participant or the worker and make any necessary adjustments to how supports are delivered as circumstances or needs change.

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## Preparing for conversations

You find out about the participant's communication needs and preferences and check if they would like to involve anyone else when discussing their support with you or the worker, such as a family member. You plan what to discuss, questions to ask and how best to raise issues. This will greatly improve the quality and usefulness of two-way and three-way conversations between the participant, the worker and the supervisor. As the supervisor, you encourage participants and workers to access their version of this resource to help them think about the information they would like to share or receive, the points they would like to check, etc.

**Adjusting the Conversation Guide for your situation:** You check that the questions in the Conversation Guide are relevant for the circumstances. By selecting the main headings in the Conversation Guide, you can link to the relevant core capabilities in the Framework to check whether you want to ask questions about other aspects of the capabilities to suit the needs of the participant.

Depending on the support needs of the individual participant, you may want to consider the [additional identity capabilities](#), relevant 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 provides an important reference for future conversations. How and where you record the points depends on what you will use them for, and you should discuss the proposed method with the worker and participant involved. For example, some organisations use customer relationship management (CRM) systems to record and track how they are meeting participants needs and preferences so the key points can be added and accessed there.

In other organisations, supervisors and workers keep written records and include key points in handover notes to ensure all relevant information is available to workers assigned to participants. Any points related to the worker's performance (strengths or capability development needs, agreed learning objectives) should be recorded in the Worker's Performance Agreement, including the Capability Development Plan section. Information also needs to be accessible to participants. For example, a participant might want to keep a summary of main points they want their workers to know about in a note on their fridge. Whatever arrangements are used, make sure you consider and respect issues of privacy when sharing information of a personal or confidential nature.

**Giving and receiving feedback:** Good working relationships rely on being able to give and receive open, honest feedback. When workers and participants can talk about what is going well and what needs to change, minor concerns can be addressed before they become major problems.

Feedback is about much more than formal channels for complaints and feedback management systems. By letting workers know what they are doing well and supporting them where they need help, you build strong working relationships and connections with between you and the worker and between the worker and the organisation. When workers feel valued and supported they will be more capable and confident to deliver quality support. Organisations are also expected to provide appropriate supervision, including feedback and development, as outlined in the guidance to

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providers to meet requirements of the NDIS Code of Conduct. This not only gives you and your organisation confidence about the quality of support delivered, it also supports a more engaged and satisfied workforce.

Supervisors can encourage the habit of providing positive, developmental feedback as part of day-to-day interactions by modelling good practice in the way they invite, respond to and provide feedback, and by supporting workers and participants to participate.

For more information on the when, what and how of effective feedback, see the [Feedback Tip Sheet for Supervisors](#). You can also refer workers and participants to tailored versions of this guide.

## Section 2: The Conversation Guide

This section suggests some typical questions to ask of the participant and the worker, to draw out information about the participant’s needs and expectations and ensure the worker has the capabilities to meet them. It also prompts you to think about the implications for how to supervise and support the worker to meet requirements. You can click on each of the headings to see the relevant core capabilities from the Framework.

### Setting up the participant-worker relationship

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have any specific preferences or needs to support you to communicate with your worker?</li> <li>• Are there other people in your life or your support team that your workers should know about or work with?</li> <li>• Do you know who to contact if you have an issue or concern you want to raise with the organisation rather than with the worker?</li> <li>• Have you agreed on the kinds of information you are happy for your workers to have access to or share with others?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you need to learn or adjust your communication style or develop new skills to meet this participant’s needs and preferences?</li> <li>• Do you know who else is important in the participant’s life that they want you to know about and work with?</li> <li>• Do you know what kinds of information you can share and who you can share it with?</li> <li>• Do you know what types of information you need to pass on to your organisation and how to do this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do participants and workers have reasonable expectations about the working relationship? What support might the worker need to understand and work within appropriate boundaries?</li> <li>• Is the participant aware of who else in the organisation to contact to address matters that are outside the scope or responsibility of the worker?</li> <li>• Are there any specific communication devices or techniques the worker needs training in?</li> <li>• Do we know who the participant wants to involve in planning and delivering their support and what their role is?</li> <li>• Does the worker need support to understand their role if working with a participant assisted to make decisions through a supported decision-making process?</li> </ul>



Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the participant and worker talked about information that needs to be shared, such as known potential risks to participant or worker safety and how to prevent or manage them?</li> </ul>

**Example:** Effie has stressed that privacy is very important to her. She does not want her support workers to contact her care practitioners or pass on information about her. You talk with Wendy and agree on when and what type of information the worker would share and who they can share it with to respect Effie's concerns and also keep her safe. You also agree to share this with Effie's other support workers.

## Worker capability

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When a worker needs to learn something new, do you want someone such as a family member or a health practitioner to be involved in explaining what to do?</li> <li>How will you know that the worker has the capabilities they need?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you feel confident and ready to deliver this support?</li> <li>Are there any aspects of this new work that make you feel stressed or anxious? Is there anything you want to discuss or support that would help you manage this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How experienced is this worker in delivering this type of support? What support do they need from you to work well with this participant?</li> <li>Have you agreed with the participant and the worker about assessing worker capabilities? Have you talked with them about how they want to be involved in training workers and providing feedback on support received?</li> <li>Have you talked to the worker about how you will assess their capabilities – including behaviours, attitudes and values?</li> </ul>

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If your assessment will involve direct observation, have you agreed with participant how to do this in ways that will be the least disruptive of daily routines and respect their privacy?</li> </ul>

**Example:** ABC Support Services support Gina’s five-year-old daughter who relies on tube feeding. You have rostered a support worker who will be supporting Gina’s daughter, starting on Monday. Gina has always trained her daughter’s workers in understanding what she needs. You have checked the High Intensity Support Skills Descriptor and arranged for the worker to complete a short course to understand the broader principles and practice that support enteral feeding. You agree that Gina will provide additional hands-on training for her daughter. You also make a time to visit to make sure the new worker is providing this support to the required standard. You explain to Gina that although she is the expert in her daughter’s support, the organisation has a responsibility to assess that the worker is delivering this support in line with your organisation’s procedures and quality standards.

**Example:** A participant who has been receiving supports for a while has recently told staff that they have changed their name to Beau and now identify as gender non-conforming. They want everyone to use the pronouns ‘them’ and ‘they.’ Your organisation actively supports diversity and has previously offered Rainbow Awareness training. You arrange for a worker who actively identifies as part of the LGBTIQ+ community to explain to others in the support team why it is important for them to make the effort to change their language when supporting this participant. You update the Working Together record and suggest that workers look through the LGBTIQ+ capability and talk to you about anything they are not sure of or uncomfortable about. You check in with Beau and their workers more frequently over the next few months to see how things are going.

## Understanding what is important

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What should your workers know about what is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you know what is important to this person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the participant have reasonable expectations about their support and is it</li> </ul>

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
<p>important to you and how you want to be supported?</p>	<p>and how you can support them to achieve it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you need any support or extra information to help you understand what this participant needs?</li> </ul>	<p>within the scope of the organisation and the capabilities of the worker or do you need to discuss things that are out of scope and the reasons why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the worker have access to relevant experts or information they need to support this participant? This could be about the participant's cultural background and identity or about the nature of the support they need.</li> <li>Does the worker need to update their understanding of relevant models or approaches e.g. recovery-oriented practice? If so, have you included it in their <a href="#">Performance Agreement - Worker Capability Development Plan section</a> and agreed with the worker on how they will access that learning?</li> </ul>

**Example:** Jill has lived in a group home for years and is excited about the possibility of moving into a place of her own. As the date of the move is getting closer, Jill is feeling increasingly anxious about how she will go on her own. Bing has only recently started supporting Jill and tells you he does not want to keep doing this shift as he just cannot connect to Jill and does not know how to respond, saying she seems upset or angry most of the time.

You arrange for Bing to get some training in trauma-informed practice. You also set up a meeting between Jill and Bing. Jill explains how important this move is for her and that she is worried that it might not go well. Bing asks Jill to describe what 'going well' would look like and they talk about how he can support her when she is feeling anxious. You also agree with Jill to arrange for Bing to attend her next meeting with the support coordinator to explore how he can support her to make this move a success.

**Example:** Ben is an Aboriginal man with intellectual disability, living in Brisbane City. He grew up in a remote part of New South Wales but has been living in the city for the last few years to be close to medical and psychosocial supports. Knowing that Ben wants to get back to country and family, you talk with Ben about who could support him with this. He nominates some people from his community he wants to involve and, together with his support workers and health care team, you plan how Ben is able to get back to country and family.

## Providing support

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From time to time, you or your worker may be aware of a situation that presents a risk to your safety, the safety of your worker or of others around you. If this happens, how do you want to discuss and manage this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are you aware of preferences, situations or triggers that could affect the way you need to support this participant?</li> <li>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.</li> <li>What do you know about existing strengths of this participant? 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?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do participants and workers have reasonable expectations about the support and how it will be provided?</li> <li>How do you support the worker to keep themselves and the participant safe while respecting the right of participants to take the risks they choose?</li> <li>Does the worker understand the concept of dignity of risk? What support might they need to apply it?</li> <li>Is the participant aware of the potential consequences of their choices?</li> <li>Are there any authorised restrictive practices this worker needs to know about? Do they understand the basic principles and regulations that govern their use?</li> <li>How can you support the worker to think creatively when encouraging participants to expand their</li> </ul>

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
		interests or explore new opportunities?

**Example:** Angelo is a young man who is supported to live with his autism. He explains to Rex (his worker) that he is likely to get agitated if the environment is too noisy or brightly lit. You make a note of this so that Angelo's other workers will be aware. Recently Angelo suggested he would like to get out more and meet new friends. You work with Angelo and Rex to plan how to do this so Angelo feels confident and has a plan about what he wants Rex 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 Eric's worker was supporting him to transfer from the bed to his chair and Trixie got in the way and they both nearly ended up on the floor. The worker reports this to their supervisor and the three of them discuss the best way to keep everyone safe. They decide to keep Trixie out of the room when doing future transfers and to let others in the support team know they should do the same.

## Checking in

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you have any feedback on how things are going? What is good and what could be better or different?</li> <li>Do you feel comfortable to give feedback to your worker about the support you are getting – either positive or negative? If not, what makes it difficult to do this?</li> <li>Are there ways you want to be supported to provide feedback to others?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>If a participant is reluctant or uncomfortable to provide feedback, what</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there an agreed way for participants and workers to regularly share thoughts and feedback about how things are going?</li> <li>Who else might have useful feedback about how support is working for this participant and worker?</li> <li>How does the organisation monitor service delivery and use feedback from workers and participants to reflect on the quality of support provided and how</li> </ul>

Questions for the participant	Questions for the worker	Implications for supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we make a regular time to check in so we understand how things are going and adjust our arrangements as needed when things change?</li> </ul>	could you do to support them?	well are they supporting their workers to deliver it?

**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 okay. 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

- [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 Service Providers](#).
- [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#): specify the quality standards to be met by registered NDIS providers to provide supports and services to NDIS participants.
- [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#): guidance for NDIS providers and workers supporting participants with high intensity daily personal activities.