Resources to assist NDIS participants to understand their rights, make complaints and raise issues with a supported accommodation provider

Desktop scan of high quality local and international resources

To date there has been limited investment in Australia to support people with disability living in supported accommodation to understand their rights, make complaints and raise issues with accommodation and support providers.

The desktop scan identified tools and resources that could be modified to provide clear information to meet this gap. These cover a breadth of resources to support residents to be informed about rights, to stay safe, speak out and to raise issues or concerns when living in supported accommodation.

What is the problem?

Factors contributing to the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability include the power imbalance between residents and staff, the capacity of residents to speak out, poor culture, and rigid structures and routines that do not meet individual needs.

The lack of accountability for responding to complaints when they are raised, a lack of transparency and effectiveness of complaints processes and a culture that protects staff and normalises violence compound these issues.

What is the context?

The Summer Foundation is undertaking a project with funding from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to develop tools and resources to assist NDIS participants living in supported accommodation.

Supported accommodation is defined as individualised or shared housing with an onsite support component including specialist disability accommodation (SDA) settings, specialist independent living (SIL) settings or group homes.[1]

The resources will enable residents to exercise choice and control to shape supports, inform what quality supports look like, and to act when services and supports do not meet their expectations or uphold their rights.

The desktop scan undertaken for this project identified and reviewed existing high quality local and international resources that could be adapted for the local context or that would serve as an example for providing clear information in a range of accessible formats.

What is the goal of the desktop scan?

The goal of the desktop scan is to provide examples of tools and resources that could be adapted or modified to assist NDIS participants and supporters as well as providers of supported accommodation to address violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Main findings

The desktop scan identified key protective factors to prevent and respond to violence, abuse and neglect. These include:

- Enabling residents to have choice and control over their living environment and supports, including choosing staff and co-residents

- Systems of monitoring, reporting, and response

- Workforce quality, staff training and education

- Rights-based person-centred practice

- Support for self-advocacy and knowledge of rights

- Personal safety strategies

- Ensuring residents can voice concerns

The scan retrieved 86 resources covering a range of issues across 14 themes including 'choosing supports', 'rights', 'staying safe', 'speaking up', 'getting help', 'feedback' and 'making complaints'.

The top 20 resources were selected from the scan for their relevance and quality rating across the service continuum (rated 'somewhat relevant' to 'highly relevant', and 'good' to 'exemplar'). Resources for both residents/consumers and service providers/supporters were retrieved.

An example of a consumer resource is the 'Charter of rights for people living in supported housing' by Spring Housing in the UK. It is a downloadable flyer that outlines rights, standards and expectations for residents of supported housing.

Another example of a consumer resource is the 'Safeguards Resources' by Community Living British Columbia. It is a website housing videos and plain language guides on topics including addressing vulnerability, building networks, rights and safeguards.

An example of a provider/supporter resource is 'Your Service, Your Rights' based on a national project to build the capacity of service providers to understand NDIS participants' rights. This resource includes an audit guide for conversations with participants about quality and safety.

The NDIS provides a range of good resources for NDIS participants about rights and speaking-up, and resources based on the worker Code of Conduct. However, few resources targeted residents of SDA or SIL (defined below).

Implications for research and practice

These resources can be used, adapted or modified to support people living in a range of disability supported housing to understand their rights, to be able to raise concerns, to be safe and to speak up.

Notes

1. SDA is accommodation funded under the NDIS for people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs; SIL is funding under the NDIS to enable NDIS participants to have the support they need to live independently.