



Policy

Purpose

At Focal Community Services (Focal), we aim to provide high-quality, safe, and effective services that meet the needs of every client. We believe people with disability deserve the same opportunities as everyone else to reach their potential, participate in their community, and have their voices heard.

This policy explains how we support clients from when they first connect with Focal to when they leave, ensuring safety and quality every step of the way. We are committed to protecting clients from harm, including violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination.

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all Focal employees, volunteers, clients and contractors. For the purpose of this document, the terms employee and support worker refers to paid employees and volunteers.

Statement

Focal is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where:

- clients are empowered to make choices about their services
- client safety and wellbeing are central to our work
- clients' voices are heard and respected in decisions affecting their lives

Everyone at Focal has a role in ensuring client safety and wellbeing by following the *NDIS Practice Standards*.

Client's Rights and Responsibilities

Clients have the right to:

- be treated with fairness, respect, and dignity
- access clear information and support to make decisions
- a safe and welcoming environment
- receive quality services tailored to their needs and goals
- make complaints or suggestions and have them addressed promptly
- have a support person or advocate represent them

Clients have the responsibility to:

- treat others with respect and fairness
- follow policies and procedures for using Focal services
- respect others' privacy and rights

Person-Centred Supports

Focal uses a person-centred approach, focusing on each client's strengths, preferences, and goals. We:

- involve clients and their families or advocates in decisions about their services
- help clients connect with other services they need
- provide interpreters or language services when necessary

Individual Values and Beliefs

Focal respects the diversity of all clients. We:

- treat everyone equally and without discrimination
- support clients to practice their cultural or religious beliefs
- partner with communities to ensure inclusivity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and culturally diverse groups

Privacy and Dignity

Focal protects clients' privacy in line with the *Privacy Act 1988*. We:

- only collect information with the client's consent
- keep client information confidential
- share information only with permission or when legally required

Independence and Informed Choice

We empower clients to make their own decisions and respect their choices. Focal:

- provides information about clients' rights to advocates and support
- encourages clients to take the time they need to make informed decisions
- respects clients' relationships and expressions of intimacy within lawful boundaries

Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination

Focal is dedicated to preventing harm. We:

- identify and address risks to client safety
- act swiftly to support clients if harm occurs

Refer to the *Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy and Procedure* for further detail.

Working with Children

Focal ensures that children and young people feel safe, included, and supported. We:

- promote a child-safe culture
- work closely with families and guardians to meet children's needs
- train employees to respond to concerns about child safety

By upholding these commitments, Focal strives to support clients to live safe, fulfilling lives with dignity and independence.

Procedures

Accessing Focal Services?

You can start Focal's intake process when:

- you're a new client requesting services, or
- you're an existing client asking for more services or have had a change in circumstances

The intake process looks at your needs, goals, risks, current or past supports, and your funding. Focal ensures this process is fair, consistent, and transparent.

Steps in the Intake Process

1. Making a Request

You contact Focal to request services

2. Assessment

Focal creates a *Client Profile* to:

- understand your needs and goals
- check if your needs fit within Focal's scope of services
- look at any risks
- review any supports you've used before
- assess your funding to ensure services are possible
- identify any special training your support workers may need

3. Decision

Based on the assessment, Focal decides if:

- They can safely and effectively provide the services you need.

What Happens Next?

• If Accepted:

- Focal creates a *Client Profile* and *Individual Support Plan*
- all necessary documents are completed, saved, and added to your file

• If Not Accepted:

- Focal tells you why and explains your right to appeal
- they refer you to other suitable services, if needed
- you can appeal, appeals must be in writing to the CEO, who makes the final decision

• If the Appeal is Unsuccessful:

- you will receive written notice

- if you're unhappy with the decision, you can use Focal's Feedback, Compliments, and Complaints process

Support Planning

How Focal Works With You

Your *Individual Support Plan* is all about you—your goals, needs, and preferences. Focal will:

- build a strong, trusting relationship with you
- understand your abilities and help you grow
- explore creative solutions to help you achieve your goals
- share resources and information to expand your opportunities
- work with you to plan for risks and stay safe while building independence
- include your family, advocates, and other agencies in planning to meet all your needs

Developing Your Service Agreement

At Focal, we work closely with you and your family, advocate, or representative to make sure your *Service Agreement* reflects your needs, interests, and goals. Here's how we do it:

- **Collaboration:** We listen and work with you to ensure the agreement aligns with what you want.
- **Clear Communication:** We use language and tools that are easy to understand to explain what's included.
- **Record Keeping:** We document the process, including any permissions to work with other providers or share information.
- **Copy of Agreement:** We provide you with a copy of your Service Agreement. If you choose not to keep a copy, we'll record this in your file.

When you use Focal's services, we ask that you:

- respect our employees and help maintain a safe and respectful workplace
- follow the terms of your Service Agreement
- let us know if your needs change so we can adjust services
- take responsibility for your choices, even if they involve some risk
- share feedback or concerns about your services or support workers
- provide accurate and helpful information to improve your *Individual Support Plan*
- take care of your health and well-being as much as possible
- understand that our support workers can only provide the tasks and hours agreed upon in your *Service Agreement*

Sharing Feedback

We value your feedback—whether it's positive or about something we can improve. Please don't hesitate to tell us if you're happy with our service or have concerns. Details on how to give feedback are included in your *Service Agreement* and in our *Feedback, Compliments, and Complaints Policy and Procedure*.

Responsive Support Provision

Our team is committed to providing respectful, high-quality care. Here's what we do:

- **Understand Your Needs:** We talk to you about what you need and how other services you use can work together.
- **Adapt to Your Preferences:** We document your preferred communication style and any tools you need.
- **Explain Clearly:** We make sure information and reports are easy to understand.
- **Build Your Capacity:** We help you practice skills and make informed decisions.
- **Promote Safety and Independence:** We work with you to develop safeguards while supporting your independence.
- **Plan for Emergencies:** We'll help you and your team understand how to handle urgent situations.

Reviewing Support

We regularly review your supports to ensure they remain effective and relevant. Reviews happen:

- at least once a year, or
- whenever there's a significant change in your needs or circumstances

Continuity of Support

We aim to provide consistent, uninterrupted care:

- **Documenting Your Needs:** We record your preferences and tasks to ensure consistency.
- **Managing Changes:** If a support worker can't attend, we'll do our best to find a replacement who meets your needs and let you know.

- **Emergency Plans:** In emergencies, we'll prioritise placing someone you know. If that's not possible, we'll provide the best available match and inform you of the change.
- **Disaster Planning:** For major events, we'll activate our *Business Continuity Plan* to ensure your support continues before, during, and after the disaster.

We'll always keep you informed and ensure you're comfortable with any changes. If you have questions or need help, our team is here to support you.

Safe Environment

At Focal, we are dedicated to providing a safe and supportive environment for our clients, tailored to their needs. To ensure this, we:

- Ensure our workers are screened and adhere to the NDIS code of conduct
- make sure clients can easily identify their support workers
- provide services in safe and suitable settings
- support clients with communication needs by helping workers understand their communication methods, including how they express health concerns
- prevent delays in treatment for clients
- have clear emergency protocols for each client and ensure support workers are trained to respond appropriately
- maintain a system to escalate urgent health issues for clients
- follow strict infection prevention and control measures in all service environments
- regularly clean spaces where services are provided (other than in clients' homes), especially frequently touched surfaces
- train all support workers in infection prevention, including hand hygiene and proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- provide PPE to workers and clients as needed

Cancellation of Services

When Focal Cancels Services

Focal may need to cancel services in certain situations, such as staff sickness, emergencies, or resource reallocation. If this happens:

- we will notify clients promptly
- we'll try to reschedule services at a time that works for the client
- no charges will apply for services cancelled by Focal

Focal aims to maintain enough support workers and resources to minimise disruptions. However, if a client requests only a small number of specific support workers, we will ensure they understand how this could impact service delivery.

When Clients Cancel Services

Clients can cancel services at any time, however, they must provide the required notice as stated in their *Service Agreement* or a late cancellation fee may apply.

Cancellation Fee

The cancellation fee follows the guidelines set in the current NDIS Price Guide and applies to both NDIS and non-NDIS services.

Impact on Support Workers

If a service is cancelled and no alternative shift can be provided, support workers are paid according to the relevant Industry Award.

Client Money and Property

Focal supports clients in managing their money and property responsibly and safely. Key guidelines include:

- support workers may only use a client's property for service delivery purposes (e.g., using household equipment)
- support workers cannot access a client's money unless it is specified in the client's *Individual Support Plan*
- employees must not give financial advice or witness legal documents for clients

Financial Management Guidelines

Support workers assisting clients with finances must:

- never use or access a client's PIN or ATM on their behalf
- follow the instructions in the client's *Individual Support Plan*
- obtain receipts for all purchases and give them to the client
- explain transactions to clients and ensure they can see them
- record all financial assistance as a session note in the Client Management System (CMS)

- never accept money from clients

Budgetly Cards

If a client uses a Focal Budgetly Card:

- follow the instructions in the client's *Individual Support Plan*
- keep all receipts and return them to the Client Connect team
- record transactions in the CMS

Suspected Financial Abuse

If financial abuse is suspected:

- report it immediately to the Client Connect team or On-Call after hours
- submit an incident report in the CMS with detailed information
- the Compliance team will review and address the incident report according to Focal's policies

Transportation

Focal is committed to safely and responsibly transporting participants during support hours. This ensures we meet service needs, follow safety standards, and comply with the law.

Focal support workers must follow all road rules and ensure vehicles are safe and roadworthy.

If a client's behaviour becomes a concern during transportation, support workers are to:

- park safely and turn off the engine
- try to calm the situation unless you feel unsafe
- if necessary, leave the vehicle, stay nearby, and keep windows down
- call 000 for Police if you feel threatened or are injured, then notify Employee Assist as soon as possible
- if the client leaves the vehicle, follow them at a safe distance

Client responsibilities are to:

- follow the support worker's instructions for safe travel
- not smoke in the vehicle, while being transported by a support worker
- keep the vehicle tidy
- wear a seatbelt
- pay for transportation costs
- pay for damage costs if their behaviour causes an accident

Withdrawal of Service

Client's Right to Withdraw

Clients can leave Focal's services at any time by giving written notice as outlined in their *Service Agreement*. Common reasons for withdrawal include:

- moving to an area outside Focal's service delivery area
- finding that Focal's services no longer meet their needs
- being dissatisfied with the quality of services
- switching to another provider
- experiencing changes in funding or resources

Focal's Right to Withdraw Services

Focal may also discontinue services for a client by providing written notice as specified in the *Service Agreement*. Reasons for withdrawal might include:

- the client not meeting the conditions of their *Service Agreement*, affecting the safe delivery of services or employee safety
- changes in the client's needs that exceed what Focal can provide
- situations where the client, other clients, or employees are at risk of harm
- unacceptable behaviour from the client or their family/carer, such as violence, abuse, theft, or property damage
- continued non-payment of service fees

Transition and Support During Withdrawal

If Focal decides to withdraw services, we will:

- assess the situation and explain the reasons to the client
- assist the client in finding alternative services
- collaborate with the client and stakeholders to create a *Transition Exit Plan*, which will include:

- reasons for withdrawal
- details of the new service provider
- communication strategies and key information shared with relevant parties
- client feedback and input from family or advocates
- transition timelines and steps
- risk identification and management strategies
- a review of the process for improvements

The *Transition Exit Plan* will be documented in the client’s file and CMS. If a client chooses not to participate in the planning process, this will also be recorded.

Focal’s withdrawal process is designed to be fair and transparent, respecting the client’s rights. If a client leaves due to dissatisfaction, we encourage them to provide feedback or lodge a complaint as detailed in their *Service Agreement* and the Feedback, Compliments, and Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Clients leaving Focal will be offered an exit interview and given a *Client Exit Feedback Form*. Any insights shared during this process will be added to our *Continuous Improvement Plan Register*

We’ll also provide information about how clients can return to Focal’s services in the future if they choose.

Supporting Clients with Fast-Changing Needs or End-of-Life Care

In situations where a client’s needs are rapidly changing or they are at the end of life, Focal will adapt their *Individual Support Plan* to address these circumstances. Clients can provide an *End of Life Plan*, which will be incorporated into their support plan to reflect their wishes.

Employee Training and Responsibilities

Focal provides relevant training to all employees to ensure they respect and support clients’ diverse needs. All employees are expected to:

- attend required training and then apply their learning to daily practice
- respect clients’ identities, values, sexual orientation, and cultural backgrounds
- use inclusive language and appropriate personal pronouns
- protect client privacy and only collect personal information with consent
- avoid making assumptions or imposing personal views on clients
- engage with the client’s support network as they see fit
- Safeguard personal information from misuse, loss, or unauthorised access

Related Documents

- Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy and Procedure
- Client Profile
- Individual Support Plan
- Service Agreement
- Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Management Policy and Procedure
- Business Continuity Plan
- Transition Exit Plan
- Client Exit Feedback form
- Continuous Improvement Plan Register
- End of Life Plan

References

- NDIS Code of Conduct
- NDIS Practice Standards
- Privacy Act 1988

Document History

Date:	Version:	Details:
05/12/2024	1.0	Reviewed and combined all client service delivery documents into one policy and procedure
22/01/2026	1.1	Minor edits adding NDIS code of conduct as a reference