

Official Community Visitors

Fact sheet No 1

Who we are

Official Community Visitors are statutory appointees of the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services under the *Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019* (ADC Act) and the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

We visit accommodation services for children, young people, people with disability, and people living in assisted boarding houses, throughout NSW. We actively encourage the speedy resolution of issues at a local level. We report serious concerns to the Minister, the Ageing and Disability Commissioner, and to the Children's Guardian.

We are independent from the services we visit.

We have diverse backgrounds that enable us to directly relate to children, young people and people with disability. OCVs include people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with professional experience in community services.

Our role

We promote the rights of children, young people and people with disability in care, and help to resolve issues of concern by raising them with services.

We visit services

We visit accommodation services where residents are in the full time care of the service provider, including children and young people in residential out-of-home care (OOHC) and people with disability in accommodation operated by providers funded under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS); as well as assisted boarding houses.

OCVs may visit some services every three months, but other services are visited less frequently.

Our functions

- Informing the Minister, the Ageing and Disability Commissioner and the Children's Guardian about matters affecting residents.
- Promoting the rights of residents.
- Considering matters raised by residents, staff and other people who have a genuine concern for the residents.
- Providing information and support to residents to access advocacy services.
- Helping to resolve complaints or matters of concern affecting residents as early and as quickly as possible by referring those matters to the service providers or other appropriate bodies, such as the NSW Ombudsman, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and the Children's Guardian.

We have the authority to

- Enter and inspect a visitable service at any reasonable time without providing notice of our visits.
- Talk in private with any resident or person employed at the service.
- Inspect any document held by the service that relates to the operation of the service.
- Provide the Minister, the Ageing and Disability Commissioner and the Children's Guardian with advice and reports on matters relating to the conduct of the service.



When visiting services, we

- Listen to what residents have to say about their accommodation and support, and any issues affecting them.
- Give information and support to residents wanting to raise matters with their service provider about the support they are receiving.
- Support services to improve the quality of residents' care and resolve matters of concern by identifying issues and bringing them to the attention of staff and management.

How we help to resolve issues

We bring a fresh pair of eyes to situations and provide a voice to those living in supported accommodation who may be unable to speak up and raise issues of concern on their own behalf. We seek to apply a 'community standard' and look at what is reasonable.

Our role is generally one of local resolution in the first instance, by bringing issues of concern to the attention of the service provider. We document issues in a visit report, which we must complete after each visit. Through these reports, we inform the service provider about particular issues we have identified during our visit, and seek information and advice from the service provider about the issues, and the actions that are being taken to resolve them.

OCVs are not auditors, investigators, complaint handlers or case workers.

We must always

- Respect the privacy of individuals.
- Take all reasonable steps to consider the wishes of the person before inspecting any document directly relating to them; however, we are not bound by their wishes.
- Ensure the confidentiality of any information obtained during a visit, and not disclose information without good cause.

The ADC Act and Children's Guardian Act provide protections for people who make, or propose to make, a complaint to an OCV.

Want more information about Official Community Visitors?

Call the OCV team at the Ageing and Disability Commission to:

- Contact an Official Community Visitor.
- Ask about the operation of the Official Community Visitor scheme.
- Discuss concerns about the conduct of an Official Community Visitor.

Contact us for more information

Our business hours are:
Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm

General OCV scheme inquiries - 02 9407 1831
Level 6, 93 George Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

Email OCV@adc.nsw.gov.au
Web www.ageingdisabilitycommission.nsw.gov.au