

A week in the life of an OCV

By OCV, *Renata Wilczek*



Monday

I log into my emails on Monday morning to check for any COVID-19 updates that may be relevant to my visits and other news I need to be aware of. I take some time to work out which houses I am going to visit this week. I decide to visit three houses, including a house I tried to visit last week, but no one was home when I got there.

For a couple of weeks I have also been trying to arrange my first visit to a new house I have been allocated. So far the house manager has not responded to my phone calls. I email the service provider's senior manager for their assistance. An hour later, I receive a phone call from the house manager, and I am able to set up the initial visit to this house, to occur next week.



I spend an hour reading and responding to emails, sending two emails to service managers who have not responded to my OCV visit reports by the due date, and reviewing responses to my visit reports that I have received over the last few days.

In the afternoon, I go to the house that I attempted to visit last week, and there is still no one home. I phone the regional manager to find out what is happening. It turns out that the residents moved to a different location a few months ago, but the service forgot to notify me and the OCV team.

I decide to bring forward a visit I was going to do tomorrow, as this house is just two streets away. I enjoy visiting this group of residents. The three women, Sharon, Jenny and Carol*, get on really well and have very active and fulfilling lives. When I arrive at the house they all greet me, and are keen to chat. However, I notice that while Sharon and Jenny are having their afternoon tea outside on the patio, Carol is sitting inside the door, in her wheelchair, having her snack. At my last visit, Carol had told me she can't sit outside with the others because there are three steps leading down onto the patio that she can't navigate in her wheelchair. I had raised this issue in my previous OCV visit report. Management had advised that they were going to install a ramp so that Carol could use the outside area. It was disappointing to see that several months later this change hadn't been made. Carol told me that she would love to sit outside in the shade and breeze, on warm days, and found it frustrating that she could not easily move around her home. I told Carol that I would raise this issue again in my OCV visit report.

I enjoyed the rest of my visit and seeing how well the women looked. They told me that they had all lost weight since my last visit and were proud of this. They showed me some of the new clothes they had bought. In my last visit report I had raised questions about their weight gain, so it was great to see how effectively they had been supported by the service to address this health issue.

Tuesday

I check my emails, and contact the OCV team to advise the change of address from the house I tried to visit yesterday. The OCV team updates this for me on the OCV Online database. I draft an OCV visit report from the visit I did visit yesterday. I still feel annoyed that Carol continues to be excluded

from the outdoor area of her own home many months after the issue was raised. For this reason I am careful in how I word the visit report to ensure that it is professional and non-judgemental.

In the afternoon, I visit the residents that moved to a new house. Josh and Adrian* have been living together for about three years and have formed a close bond. When I arrive at the new house, I am pleased to see that the house is light and airy, and much bigger than the previous house. Josh greets me at the door and is excited to show me around the home. However, Adrian is quiet and doesn't want to engage with me, which is really unusual. He stays in his bedroom most of the time I am there. I also meet the new resident, Peter*, and while he is friendly, I notice that he talks over the top of Josh quite a lot, and tends to dominate the conversation. I also notice that he is a lot older than Josh and Adrian. When I speak with Josh privately he tells me that he likes the new house, but doesn't like living with Peter and wants him to go home. He tells me that Adrian and Peter argue a lot, which upsets him, especially when they are shouting. Josh also tells me that Peter sometimes threatens to punch Adrian, and that there was a physical fight recently. I go into the office to speak with staff, asking them how the men are getting along with each other. The staff are not very forthcoming and are quite defensive in response to my questions. While they acknowledge that there has been some 'teething problems' between Adrian and Peter, they tell me that they don't know much about the physical altercation because they weren't there when it happened. I request the incident report relating to this event but am advised that they can't provide it to me because they don't have access to the incident reports once they are submitted.

I review the communication book and shift notes and see that there have been numerous arguments between Adrian and Peter, and these seemed to be becoming more frequent. I also notice that Josh is mentioned as displaying a number of challenging behaviours, which are unusual for him. I find notes in Peter and Adrian's client files that refer to the physical altercation and from the limited information it appears that neither man sustained any injuries. I ask the staff on duty what was being done to ensure the safety of all the residents in the house. The staff members indicate that they don't really see any need to take special measures to ensure the ongoing safety of the men as no-one has been hurt. This raises concerns for me.

I feel upset on my drive home. Adrian and Josh had been content in their previous home, and while this house is much nicer than the last one, they did not appear as happy as they were when they were living at the old house. Just as worrying for me is the staff attitude that there is no problem to be addressed. I find myself thinking about the visit for quite a few hours after I get home.

Thursday

I still feel concerned about my visit on Tuesday afternoon. I send an email to the service manager asking them to send me copies of all the incident reports that have been submitted since the men moved into the new house.

I phone the Manager of the OCV Scheme at the Ageing and Disability Commission to debrief about the visit to Adrian, Josh and Peter, to discuss how best to approach writing the OCV visit report. I feel better after talking out my concerns, and spend some time carefully drafting my visit report. I will not send the visit report until I have had a chance to review the incident reports I have requested, in case there are more incidents to read and more questions to ask.

Unfortunately I didn't receive the incident reports overnight, so I will have to be patient. I finalise my report from the visit to Sharon, Jenny and Carol, and send it to the service provider. I spend an hour catching up on some admin, as well as doing some preparation for my third visit for the week which is in a rural area and a three hour round trip from my home. Luckily, I check my Live Traffic app before setting off on my journey, and see that there has been a major traffic incident that has the

highway blocked. I look at my schedule and decide to visit an assisted boarding house that I was planning to visit next week. This service has always been quite a challenge to visit because it has taken me a long time to develop rapport with the 10 residents who live there. After several visits, I find that some of them still don't want to talk with me. It can be difficult sometimes to find the right balance in respecting their decision to not engage with me, while still trying to fulfil my role and continue to make friendly overtures when I visit them.

When I arrive at the assisted boarding house, the staff member on duty comes to the door and tells me the manager isn't there and encourages me to come back another day. I gently insist on going ahead with the visit and enter the premises. What I notice straight away is that several residents are much more willing to chat with me, though a few of them still retreat to their rooms when they see me. I have a good chat with Bruce* who tells me that he is uncomfortable speaking with me when the manager is around, in case they overhear our conversation. Bruce tells me he has been working with his NDIS Support Coordinator to find alternative accommodation. This is being done quietly as he is worried that the manager will be angry if he finds out that he is planning to leave. Bruce is a bit worried that I may divulge this information to the manager, but I assure him that I will maintain his confidentiality.

The staff member is cooking the evening meal and I comment to the residents that it smells good. Bruce tells me that the meals aren't good and there is very little variety. Other residents also comment that they don't like the food and it becomes apparent to me that the residents don't have any input in selecting the meals that are provided. I offer to raise the issue in my OCV visit report and when I reassure the residents that I won't mention any names, they are happy for me to raise the issue. I feel a strong sense of satisfaction on my trip home, as this is the first time that I have made real inroads in engaging with the residents at the premises. I feel that following this visit I would be able to raise an issue that is practically important to them.

Sunday

I log on to my work email, and there is still no sign of the incident reports I requested. If I don't receive them by Monday, I will phone the service manager to see if I can speed things up. I finish up my OCV work for the week by drafting the OCV visit report for the assisted boarding house.

I reflect that this has been a fairly typical week in my life as an OCV. I have had to be organised but flexible, and willing to change plans at short notice. I have felt frustrated and upset about some aspects of my visits, but also had a strong sense of satisfaction about other aspects of my visiting.

*The names of residents have been changed to protect their privacy.