

When I'm at work: Solving complaints

Learner's workbook



Contact details

Branch	Disability Program Branch
Department	Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Postal address	GPO Box 9820 BRISBANE QLD 4001
Phone	1300 653 227 Toll Free
Website	www.fahcsia.gov.au

Acknowledgement

This resource was produced by Wodonga TAFE in association with Aware Industries with funding from the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Copyright

© Commonwealth of Australia [2008]

This work is copyright. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your organisation. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved.

Requests for further authorisation should be directed to the Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney-General's Department, Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, Canberra ACT 2600 or posted at <http://www.ag.gov.au/cca>

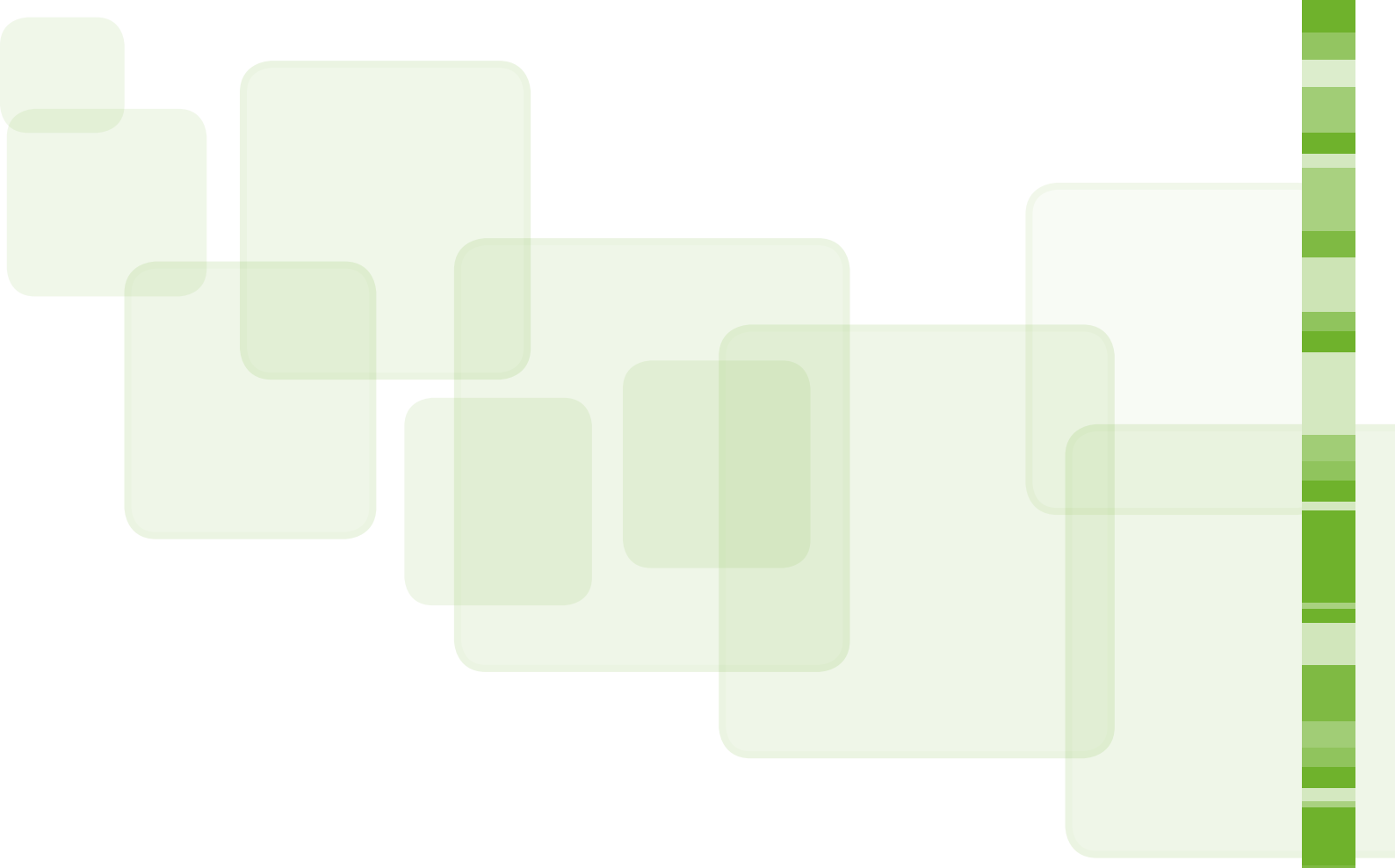
FaHCSIA0984.0803


Contents

Before we start	1
Topic 1	3
▶ What is a complaint?	
▶ What types of complaints are there?	
▶ What is the difference between a grumble and a formal complaint?	
▶ When should I make a complaint?	
You're ready so let's start	4
Igor's story.....	6
Topic 2	11
▶ How can a complaint make things better at work?	
▶ What are my rights?	
▶ What does my workplace have to do if I make complaint?	
You're ready so let's start	12
Dianne's story.....	14
Topic 3	19
▶ What are the steps to take in a formal complaint?	
▶ What will I have to do if I make a complaint?	
▶ What can I do if my complaint is not taken seriously?	
You're ready so let's start	20
Lisa's story.....	21
Topic 4	25
▶ What are some hints to make a proper formal complaint?	
▶ What happens when decisions are made about my complaint?	
You're ready so let's start	26
Melissa's story.....	27
Topic 5	31
▶ Who else can help me with my complaint?	
You're ready so let's start	32
Jackie's story.....	33



Before we start





Your trainer will show you some slides on the screen to help you understand about workplace complaints.

Your workbook has the same information in it. There are also some activities in the workbook to help you learn more about workplace complaints.

There are five topics for you to listen to and look at. They are all about complaints at work. Each topic gives you some information first. You then listen to and watch a story about the information.

You can discuss the information and the stories with your trainer.

You will see the pictures and words from each story in your workbook. That way, you can read it as many times as you want to later on.

You can write notes about some of the things that you have learned about in your workbook if you want to. There are lines in the workbook for you to write on if you need them.

You should keep your workbook so that you can look at it when you need information about workplace complaints.

Topic 1

- ▶ *What is a complaint?*
- ▶ *What types of complaints are there?*
- ▶ *What is the difference between a grumble and a formal complaint?*
- ▶ *When should I make a complaint?*

What you will need

You will need:

- ▶ this workbook
- ▶ your workplace's induction package or any written information about induction provided by your workplace
- ▶ something to write with.

You're ready so let's start ...

Watch the first three slides and listen carefully. They will tell you what this topic is about.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you have a problem or worry about your work that you need to tell someone about.

Something or someone could be making you feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or unhappy at work. This might make it hard for you to do your job. When this happens, you need to do something about it. You need to get help to sort it out.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Different types of complaints

Things that might lead to a complaint at work are:

- ▶ the way your supervisor or workmates treat you
- ▶ your pay
- ▶ your hours of work
- ▶ where you work
- ▶ the safety of your job
- ▶ being treated unfairly.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Is your complaint serious or just a grumble?

We all grumble about things at work now and then, but we may not need to make formal complaints about them all. Talking to a friend or co-worker who you trust can help you decide this.

There is a difference between problems that you need to make a formal complaint about and the 'grumbles' we sometimes have about work.

Example of a workplace grumble

Your workplace gives all its supported employees freshly-baked scones for morning tea every Friday. You might grumble about not getting a morning tea like that every day, but this is not a problem that you would make a formal complaint about.

Example of a serious complaint

You bring money to work every day so that you can buy your lunch. Twice last week, someone took the money from your locker. This is a serious problem and you should make a formal complaint about that.

How can you tell the difference between a grumble and a complaint?

Asking yourself these questions might help.

- ▶ Is it the first time this has annoyed me?
- ▶ Has this been annoying me for a long time? Is it going to keep happening?
- ▶ Is it making me work badly?
- ▶ Is it making someone else work badly?
- ▶ Is it making me or anyone else unsafe?
- ▶ Is it making me or my workplace look bad?

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

When should you make a complaint?

You should make a complaint when you have a problem or worry at work that you cannot work out on your own.

When you first start work, part of your induction explains how to make a complaint if you have a problem.

The Australian Government has rules called Disability Services Standards that tell your workplace how to do things. Standard 7 is one of these rules. It says that your workplace must help you to get something done about your complaint, if it is related to work.

We will talk more about Disability Services Standards in other topics.

Igor's story

Now watch and listen carefully to Igor's story.



This is Igor, a supported employee.



This is his manager, Theresa.



And this is Clive, another supported employee who works with Igor.



Igor goes to Theresa to make a complaint about Clive.



Clive always asks Igor the same questions, 'How are you going, Igor?' and 'Have you seen Brian O'Keefe?'. These questions are OK, but Clive asks them up to 20 times a day, whenever Igor goes anywhere near him. Clive does this with most people.



Clive's behaviour is really starting to annoy Igor. He tries hard to be nice to Clive, but it is not easy sometimes.



For a long time, people have asked Clive to stop asking these questions, but nothing seems to work for long.

Lots of people have complained about Clive's behaviour in the past. The workplace counsellor has talked to Clive about his behaviour, and even that has not helped the problem.



Igor tells Theresa that he is feeling very stressed because of Clive's behaviour. Igor asks Theresa to help him with getting something done about his complaint.

Workbook activities

What did you learn from Igor's story?

Your trainer will talk with you about what you learned. You might want to write down some of the things you learned. The trainer will help you if you are not sure what to do.

1 What does Disability Services Standard 7 tell you about?

.....

.....

.....

2 Does your workplace have to listen to you?

.....

.....

.....

3 Does your workplace have to try to fix your problem?

.....

.....

.....

4 Would you make a formal complaint about a work problem if:

› something has been annoying you for a long time

.....

.....

.....

› you think the problem is going to keep happening

.....

.....

.....

› the problem is making you work badly

.....

.....

.....

› the problem is making someone else work badly

.....

.....

.....

› the problem is making you or anyone else unsafe

.....

.....

.....

› the problem is making you or your workplace look bad?

.....

.....

.....

5 What did you learn from Igor's story?

.....

.....

.....

6 What would you do if this happened to you?

.....

.....

.....

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

Topic 2

- ▶ *How can a complaint make things better at work?*
- ▶ *What are my rights?*
- ▶ *What does my workplace have to do if I make complaint?*

What you will need

You will need:

- ▶ this workbook
- ▶ something to write with.

You're ready so let's start ...

Watch the first three slides and listen carefully. They will tell you what this topic is about.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Complaints can make things better

You have the right to make complaints. Your workplace must try to sort them out quickly for you.

It is important to fix something if it is wrong. That is one way things improve and become better. That is why you need to let someone know about the problems you have.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Disability Services Standards

The Australian Government has rules for Disability Employment Services. These rules are called the Disability Services Standards.

Standard 7

Standard 7 is about what your workplace must do if you make a complaint. Your workplace has to give you information about how you can make a complaint, and what happens if you do. Your supervisor will talk with you about this information.

Disability Services Standard 7 says that if you make a complaint, your workplace should:

- ▶ listen to you
- ▶ be happy to help you
- ▶ help you to explain what the problem is
- ▶ try to fix your problem
- ▶ tell you about other people or places you can talk to about your complaint if you need to.

Disability Services Standard 7 also says that your workplace must keep your complaint private. This means that if you make a complaint, your workplace cannot tell anyone else that you are the person who has made it.

Standard 4

Standard 4 says that your workplace must respect your privacy and confidentiality, and that includes when you make a complaint.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Your right to complain

You have a right to complain and also to know how your workplace must deal with your complaint.

It is your right to know:

- ▶ what your workplace will do to make sure that you can make a complaint if you want to
- ▶ how your workplace will look after your complaint
- ▶ who to go to if you want to make a complaint
- ▶ what information you will need to give
- ▶ how you will be treated
- ▶ how long it will take before something is done
- ▶ what might be written down about your complaint
- ▶ what you can do if you are not happy with the way your complaint is looked after.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Do not be afraid to complain

Remember that:

- ▶ you should not be scared to complain about something
- ▶ your complaint should be treated seriously
- ▶ you should not be treated badly if you make a complaint and tell your side of the story.

Dianne's story

Now watch and listen carefully to Dianne's story.



This is Dianne, a supported employee.



And this is Lenny, the manager of the cafeteria at Dianne's workplace.



At Dianne's workplace, employees order their lunches from the workplace cafeteria. A staff member collects the orders each day and hands them out to the employees at lunchtime.



Dianne orders the same meal each day – sausages, gravy and chips but by the time she receives it, at least half an hour has passed, and the food has become cold and is not very appetising.



Dianne wants to complain to Lenny about her cold food but she's a bit afraid to because she doesn't want to make a fuss. What if Lenny is angry with her for complaining? What if she loses her job because of it?



After talking to her supervisor about it, Dianne decides to speak with Lenny. He listens carefully to Dianne's complaint, and explains that the problem is the time delay between the food being cooked and Dianne receiving it. He is glad that Dianne spoke with him about this, as he didn't know the food was cold.



Lenny says that, from now on, he will keep the lunches warm until they are collected, so that they will still be hot when Dianne and her co-workers receive them.




Dianne is happy to hear this. The next day, her lunchbox is nice and warm when she receives it, so she knows that the food inside will be nice and warm too.

Workbook activities

What did you learn from Dianne's story?

Your trainer will talk with you about what you learned. You might want to write down some of the things you learned. The trainer will help you if you are not sure what to do.



1 How can a complaint make things better at work?

.....

.....

.....

2 What are some of your rights if you want to make a complaint?

.....

.....

.....

3 What are some of the things that your workplace has to do for you if you want to make a complaint?

.....

.....

.....

4 What did you learn from Dianne's story?

.....

.....

.....

5 What would you do if this happened to you?

.....

.....

.....

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.

Topic 3

- ▶ *What are the steps to take in a formal complaint?*
- ▶ *What will I have to do if I make a complaint?*
- ▶ *What can I do if my complaint is not taken seriously?*

What you will need

You will need:

- ▶ this workbook
- ▶ something to write with.

You're ready so let's start ...

Watch the first three slides and listen carefully. They will tell you what this topic is about.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

What happens when you make a formal complaint?

You make a formal complaint about a problem at work if the problem is serious.

Making a formal complaint means that your workplace will do special things to help you sort the problem out.

- ▶ You will have to tell the whole story about the problem.
- ▶ Other people will have to tell their whole stories about the problem too.
- ▶ Someone will write down everything that you and other people say about the problem.
- ▶ You and any other people who tell their stories will have to sign what was written down.

Making a formal complaint is very serious. You have to tell the whole truth when you make a formal complaint.

Remember that if you have complained about someone else, that person has the right to know what has been said about them but they do not have to know who has said it.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

What happens if people do not take your complaint seriously?

If you make a complaint at work, the people you talk to about it must respect what you say. They must not tell anyone else what you say.

If you feel that people do not take your complaint seriously, then you have a right to tell someone else about it.

For example, if you are not happy with the way your supervisor looks after your complaint, then you should tell your manager about your complaint. If your manager does not take your complaint seriously, then you have the right to talk to other people about it.

Your workplace must tell you who to talk to if you think that people do not take your complaint seriously. We will talk more about that later.

Lisa's story

Now watch and listen carefully to Lisa's story.



This is Lisa, a supported employee.



And this is Sue, Lisa's supervisor.



Here's Dawn, another supported employee and also Lisa's friend.



And Peter, another supported employee.



Lisa approaches Sue to talk to her ...



... about what she sometimes sees happening on the bus, on the way home from work.



Lisa's friend Dawn likes to sit by herself in the middle row on the bus, but is often joined by Peter, another supported employee.



Lisa has seen Peter touch Dawn. Lisa is fairly sure that Dawn does not want this happening, but she seems frightened to tell anyone about it.



Sue is not sure that she believes what Lisa is saying. Peter is one of her best workers and has never done anything wrong. Sue decides she'll ask everyone involved to tell their stories about what's been happening on the bus.

Workbook activities

What did you learn from Lisa's story?

Your trainer will talk with you about what you learned. You might want to write down some of the things you learned. The trainer will help you if you are not sure what to do.

1 What are some of the things that you will need to do if you make a formal complaint about someone or something at work?

.....

.....

.....

2 Did Lisa do the right thing to tell Sue about Dawn's problem?

.....

.....

.....

3 Is there anything that you can do if nobody at work will take your complaint seriously? What?

.....

.....

.....

4 What did you learn from Lisa's story?

.....

.....

.....

5 What would you do if this happened to you?

.....

.....

.....

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.

Topic 4

- ▶ *What are some hints to make a proper formal complaint?*
- ▶ *What happens when decisions are made about my complaint?*

What you will need

You will need:

- ▶ this workbook
- ▶ something to write with.

You're ready so let's start ...

Watch the first three slides and listen carefully. They will tell you what this topic is about.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Tips for making a complaint

If you need to complain about something or someone at work, you can start by doing these things.

- ▶ Talk to a friend or your supervisor if you are not sure what to do.
- ▶ Try to sort the problem out yourself if you want to, and you think you can.

When you tell someone about the problem, talk about:

- ▶ exactly what is happening
- ▶ who or what is involved in the problem
- ▶ how long this has been going on
- ▶ what it means to you
- ▶ what you think should change.

If you make a complaint, the decision will not always be in your favour. If you are not happy with the decision made, there are further steps you can take.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Making decisions about complaints

The people who help sort out your complaint will listen to all sides of the story before they decide what to do.

If you are not happy with what they decide, you can ask other people to help you. We will talk more about those people later.

Melissa's story

Now watch and listen carefully to Melissa's story.



This is Melissa, a supported employee.



And this is Charlie, a supported employee who works with Melissa.



This is Sue, Melissa and Charlie's supervisor.



Melissa brings \$10 to work each day to buy morning tea and lunch.



Charlie asks her most days to lend him \$4 or \$5. This has been going on for months already.



Melissa does not like lending him the money because she does not have enough for herself then, and also because Charlie does not pay the money back to her.



She is scared though, because Charlie has threatened that he will tell all the other workers something about her. Melissa is not sure what he is going to tell, but she is very worried about it.



Melissa feels too afraid to tell anyone about her problem, but she doesn't want to keep giving her money to Charlie. She decides that when Charlie is not around, she will tell Sue. She trusts Sue and thinks she might be able to help.

Workbook activities

What did you learn from Melissa's story?

Your trainer will talk with you about what you learned. You might want to write down some of the things you learned. The trainer will help you if you are not sure what to do.

1 What are some things that you need to think about before you talk to someone about making a complaint?

.....

.....

.....

2 Should you be afraid to tell someone if something or someone is making you uncomfortable or unhappy at work?

.....

.....

.....

3 Should your workplace listen to everyone's side of the story when a complaint is made?

.....

.....

.....

4 What can you do if you are not happy with what the workplace decides about your complaint?

.....

.....

.....

5 What did you learn from Melissa's story?

.....

.....

.....

6 What would you do if this happened to you?

.....

.....

.....

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, spanning the width of the page.

Topic 5

- ▶ *Who else can help me with my complaint?*

What you will need

You will need:

- ▶ this workbook
- ▶ something to write with.

You're ready so let's start ...

Watch the first three slides and listen carefully. They will tell you what this topic is about.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

Getting help from other people or services

Your workplace will give you information about how you can make a complaint. You can attend training about how to make a complaint properly.

If you are not sure about what you need to do, ask your supervisor or someone else who you trust and are comfortable with.

Watch the next slide and listen carefully. The words you see on the slide are a summary of the words you hear. The words you hear are printed below.

If you think you are not getting a fair go at work, your complaint has not been handled properly, or there are serious problems at work that you cannot talk to others about, you can get help with this.

People from disability advocacy organisations can help you if you need someone else to talk about your complaint for you, and sort it out quickly.

People called 'advocates' can help you and speak for you if you have a workplace complaint that needs to be sorted out.

Your workplace will be able to give you the contact details if you need someone to advocate for you. Speak to your supervisor about this.

The **Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)** is one place you can contact. The people there can help you sort out work problems.

If you do not think that you can do it yourself, you can ask a family member, a friend, or someone else who you trust to contact them for you. Remember, anything that you say to the people at CRRS is confidential. They will not tell anyone else about what you say without your permission.

Contact the CRRS:

- ▶ 1800 880 052 (free call)
- ▶ <http://www.crrs.org.au>

People at the **Australian National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline** can help you if you are experiencing abuse and neglect. You can call the Hotline to talk about your problems or to find out what the Hotline can do to help you.

If you need support to make a complaint, people at the Hotline can find an advocate to help you. The Hotline can also make referrals to other services that can help you with your problems.

The Hotline is open from 8.00am to 8.00pm across Australia, seven days a week.

Contact the Hotline:

- ▶ 1800 880 052 (free call)
- ▶ <http://www.disabilityhotline.org>

You can talk to the people at the **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission** if you want to. They look after your rights as a person. They make sure that your workplace is being fair to you.

Contact the Commission:

- ▶ 1300 656 419 (free call)
- ▶ <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/>

Jackie's story

Now watch and listen carefully to Jackie's story.



This is Jackie, a supported employee.



And this is Sandra, a supported employee who works with Jackie.



Jackie works with Sandra. Sandra's job is to shape dough for biscuits. She is making a lot of mistakes.

She has to take a teaspoon-sized quantity of the prepared dough, shape it in the mould, then flip the dough shape down onto the oven tray. She has to place six biscuits on each tray, with the correct spacing between each pair.

Sandra sometimes forgets to use the mould to shape the dough, and she often places the biscuits incorrectly on the trays.



Jackie thinks that Sandra has some personal problems but she has never said anything to her directly.



Jackie has given Sandra helpful reminders, told her about her mistakes when she sees them happen, and helped her to correct her mistakes.



Unfortunately, Sandra's poor work performance means their team rarely meets its targets.

Jackie is not sure if the team should just put up with it, or make a more formal complaint about it. She does not want to get Sandra into trouble.

Jackie decides that something needs to be done. Should she speak to Sandra herself, or should she talk to her supervisor?

Workbook activities

What did you learn from Jackie's story?

Your trainer will talk with you about what you learned. You might want to write down some of the things you learned. Your trainer will help you if you are not sure what to do.

1 Where can you get help if you think you are not getting a fair go at your workplace?

.....

.....

.....

2 Where can you get help if you want to make a complaint about anything to someone outside your work?

.....

.....

.....

3 Should you always talk things over first with your supervisor or friend or co-worker you trust?

.....

.....

.....

4 How can an advocate help to fix your problem?

.....

.....

.....

5 What did you learn from Jackie's story?

.....

.....

.....

6 What would you do if this happened to you?

.....

.....

.....

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, spanning the width of the page.