

VISA PAK ISSUE 444 — 05 AUGUST 2020

PROCESS FOR MANAGING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND STAFF

Over the past few weeks Immigration New Zealand (INZ) staff have received an increasing number of threatening emails and phone calls from individuals who are feeling desperate about their situation or the situation of their family.

While as public servants we can empathise with their situation, it is not acceptable for our people to be subjected to abuse.

The process set out below must be followed when a person's behaviour towards staff is considered unacceptable. This could include behaviour that is threatening harm to staff or others, abusive, or indicates a potential offence. INZ does not expect staff to tolerate this behaviour. This principle extends to written and verbal communications.

The Ombudsman's Office provides guiding principles on the effective management of unacceptable conduct. Effective management of unacceptable conduct ensures that:

- those of us who are not mental health professionals, counsellors or social workers are able to confidently manage unacceptable conduct without being experts in psychoanalysis or behavioural psychology
- we can take a more focused approach to dealing with unacceptable conduct by responding directly to the things and behaviours we observe, rather than the things we assume or suspect
- a complainant's behaviour does not negatively affect their complaint (if valid) or the level of attention that we give to it
- we manage unacceptable conduct and its impacts in ways that are transparent, reasonable and fair.

Process for staff

If a person's behaviour is considered unacceptable, due to threatening harm to staff or others, use of profanities or offensive language, or indicates a potential threat, staff must report this behaviour

through Zambion as a health and safety and/or security matter. Zambion is available on your desktop and this quick reference guide sets out how to use it for reporting: [\[Internal link\]](#)

Staff must not respond to any correspondence that is considered unacceptable, until their Manager is informed and an approach has been agreed.

Process for Managers

Use Zambion

When a Manager is made aware by a staff member that a person's behaviour is considered unacceptable, Managers must ensure that the staff member reports the matter through Zambion in the first instance as soon as practicable and before the end of the day.

Consider the appropriate response

The Manager is responsible for determining the appropriate course of action in response to the behaviour. In most instances it is recommended that contacting the person to tell them why their behaviour is unacceptable and asking them to change it is the appropriate first response. A template is provided for this purpose.

Correspondence that includes profanities or offensive language may be blocked, quarantined and/or automatically deleted by MBIE's systems. However in some instances this will not occur (for example if material is attached as a PDF). In these cases the template can be used.

If the behaviour does not change after sending the template, then Managers should consider whether to:

- require contact in a particular form (e.g. letters, emails) to be redirected to a specified shared inbox, rather than to an individual staff member;
- require contact to take place with a named officer only (for example a Manager);
- ask the person to enter into an agreement about their conduct and/or future contacts with INZ;
- Block an email address via a request to MBIE's service desk. A decision to restrict or block an email address must be taken by the National Manager or General Manager responsible for the Branch in which the unacceptable correspondence or behaviour was identified.

Any restrictions imposed should be appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances and have staff safety and wellbeing as the paramount concern. A decision to Block an email should also be logged in Zambion as an event.

How to respond to extreme behaviour

If behaviour is so extreme that it appears to involve a potential offence, or potentially threaten the immediate safety and welfare of a person (staff or another person in New Zealand), Managers must

complete a No Surprises Fact Sheet and follow the existing MBIE processes through Zambion. This may also require consultation with MBIE's Protective Security team and the New Zealand Police.

A No Surprises Fact Sheet must be completed for any case which involves a referral to New Zealand Police.

Wellbeing Support

These sorts of challenging communications can, individually or cumulatively, take a toll on an individual's wellbeing and it is important that people look after themselves and take action before things become too serious.

In the first instance, if a staff member feels that one or more communications are having a negative impact, consider discussing this with their People Leader and agreeing whether there is any particular action can be taken to reduce the pressure.

If a staff member would like to talk to somebody external, consider calling or texting 1737. This number makes it easy for people to connect with mental wellbeing professionals in the National Telehealth Service. 1737 is designed to meet the immediate needs of anyone who 'wants to talk' to a counsellor and is not tied to a specific mental health issue or condition. The service is completely free.

If a staff member would like something a little more structured, then consider accessing MBIE's Employee Assistance Programme service by calling 0800 327 669, booking online or through the EAP Now App (found on mobile phones under MBIE apps). The EAP service is a professional and confidential service funded by MBIE and provided by EAP Services Ltd. It provides short term, solution focussed support, to help you deal with any difficulties you may be experiencing, and to minimise their impact on your life. Three options are available:

- Telephone or videoconference appointments are the fastest option and usually offered within 24-48 hours. This phone appointment can also act as a catalyst in identifying additional support required
- Face-to-face appointments - usually available a couple of weeks following the call
- A high level support may be identified during the request process, such as a Clinical Psychologist to provide coaching and help you develop a plan to manage the issue you are facing.

Other options that may be worth exploring are:

Downloading the **Mentemia App** (found on mobile phones under MBIE apps). Mentemia is an App that helps coach mental wellbeing. This app was created by mental health advocate Sir John Kirwan and includes articles, resources and mental health 'training' tools so you can track how you're feeling and learn some practical tips.



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Having a look on **Te Puna Ora - Ask an expert**. The MBIE wellbeing hub Te Puna Ora houses a function that provides direct access to a number of specialists, including a Psychologist, who are available to respond through an online Q&A format.

If you would like to discuss other options, feel free to contact the Wellbeing, Health and Safety team either directly, by email [[internal email](#)] or by using the Wellbeing form in Zambion.