

VISA PAK ISSUE 559— 16 OCTOBER 2023

PROCESS FOR MANAGING CHALLENGING COMMUNICATIONS TOWARDS IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND STAFF

Introduction — Information for immigration staff that sets out the processes to follow if a person's behaviour towards staff is challenging

This Visa Pak supersedes the information provided in [Visa Pak 444](#).

From time to time, Immigration New Zealand (INZ) staff may receive abusive or distressing emails, phone calls or messages from individuals who are feeling desperate about their immigration situation or the immigration situation for their whānau/family or others.

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

INZ does not expect staff to tolerate this behaviour. This principle extends to written and verbal communications received at work, and communications received through social media.

The processes set out below must be followed when a person's behaviour towards staff is challenging. This could include behaviour that is:

- a) Abusive, disturbing, upsetting, or uses profanities or offensive language,
- b) Involves threats of harm to staff/self/others or indicates a potential offence.

Action for INZ staff

If a person's behaviour is abusive, disturbing, upsetting, threatening harm to staff/self/others, uses profanities or offensive language, indicates a potential threat, or presents another challenging factor, staff must:

1. report this behaviour to their people leader, and
2. report this behaviour through Camms as a 'challenging communications' event. Camms is available on your desktop and this [quick start guide](#) sets out how to use it.

Staff must not respond to any correspondence of this nature until their people leader is informed and an approach has been agreed.

If you need more information on reporting a 'challenging communications' event, please contact the Health, Safety and Security Operations team.

If a challenging communication involves a threat to damage an MBIE site, a bomb threat, or a threat towards a member of staff:

Call: MBIE's On-Call phone

Email: The Protective Security team and/or the Health, Safety and Security Operations team.

Action for INZ people leaders

When a people leader is made aware by a staff member's report of 'challenging communications', the people leader must ensure that the staff member reports the matter through Camms in the first instance as soon as practicable and before the end of the day. Camms is available on your desktop and this **people leader guide** sets out how to use it.

The people leader should consider the staff member's wellbeing throughout their response to the report and ensure the staff member is aware of the wellbeing support available to them. If the staff member feels that one or more communications are having a negative impact on their wellbeing, the people leader may need to consider particular actions that could be taken to reduce the pressure.

Consider the appropriate response

The people leader 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. An email template is provided in **Appendix A** 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 in **Appendix A** can be used.

If the behaviour does not change after sending the template in Appendix A, then people leaders 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 people leader);
- 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, Operations Director, Chief Operating Officer 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. People leaders must consult their own people leader to assist in determining appropriate and proportionate restrictions.

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/self/other) people leaders must immediately escalate the matter to the General Manager or the Chief Operating Officer who will notify the Deputy Secretary Immigration, Protective Security and the Health, Safety and Security Operations team. In addition, people leaders must complete a **No Surprises Fact Sheet** (noting whether the matter has been referred to New Zealand Police) and follow the existing MBIE processes through Camms.

If you need more information on reporting a challenging communication event, please contact the Health, Safety and Security Operations team.

Learning material and other resources

Situational Safety and Tactical Communication training is available for field and front facing staff, with manager's approval. The skills that are covered in this training enhances both your personal safety and will assist you in communicating more effectively, particularly in difficult situations.

There are also Wellbeing Programme courses targeted at leaders and team members that embed the Wellbeing message and build wellbeing and resilience.

All staff are encouraged to read the Staff Personal Security Procedure for steps to protect personal identity on publicly accessible forums.

More detailed information about what to do when you come across behaviour and situations that can put your safety and wellbeing at risk whether you are on site or off site, is set out on Te Taura - Haumarū whaiaro - Personal safety

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, it is recommended that they discuss this with their people leader and agree on whether there is any particular action that can be taken to reduce the pressure.



If a staff member would like to talk to somebody external to MBIE, 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.

Where further support is required, a wellbeing event can also be reported on the CAMMs reporting tool. If you would like to discuss other options available for wellbeing support, please contact the Wellbeing, Health and Safety team.