



20 November 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 15 October 2025, requesting policies and assessment criteria for Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) clients who are managed by specialist teams or subject to contact restrictions.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

- 1. I particularly want to know how behaviours are assessed before customers are managed differently, and how often they may be reviewed. It would also be helpful to know what management options are used for these customers.*

The Ministry has a range of policies to assist staff when dealing with clients who may be considered a risk to our staff.

Please find attached five appendices with the information from the Ministry's internal guidance system, Doogle, to answer this part of your request.

- **Appendix 1** – Addressing Harmful Behaviour Policy
- **Appendix 2** – Managing and responding to unreasonable behaviour Policy
- **Appendix 3** – Options to manage or respond to escalating Behaviour Policy
- **Appendix 4** – Serving a Notice
- **Appendix 5** – Services and Interactions while Trespassed

You will see that Appendix 1 discusses how the Ministry identifies and addresses harmful behaviour. Appendices 2 and 3 discuss the management options the Ministry uses for those of our clients who demonstrate harmful behaviour.

Appendices 4 and 5 discuss situations where a client has displayed a degree of unreasonable behaviour that meets the threshold where we would serve a Trespass Notice.

When a notice is issued and served to a person, stopping them from entering our office(s), the letter they are served advises the person to consider appointing an agent to act as their representative if they wish to deal with us without breaching the trespass notice.

While it may be beneficial to do so, we cannot insist that they appoint an agent. A trespass notice bans a person from entering specific Ministry offices but does not prevent them from communicating with us by phone, letter, or email.

We cannot refuse phone-based services to a person who is trespassed without managing and responding to unreasonable or escalating behaviour first.

If neither of these mitigations impact interaction toward Ministry staff, then a referral for that client may be submitted to the Remote Services Unit to provide further services.

2. *any information on the process and review of any customers that may be managed under contact restrictions or by specialist teams due to being 'unreasonable' or customers that may be considered a risk to staff members*

Appendix 6 provides a detailed description of the Ministry's Remote Services Unit, which provides an alternative Case Management model for clients that present a risk of violence or psychosocial harm to Ministry staff.

- **Appendix 6 – Remote Services Business Process**

Remote Services is an independent service delivery unit that provides a similar service to that of a Ministry service centre.

The unit provides income, housing and in some cases, employment assistance to clients via phone, email, online and postal services. Staff from the unit do not meet with clients face to face. Contact with clients under case management via the Remote Services Unit is through telephone, email and letter communication channels only.

Remote Services is intended to be a temporary case management approach for most clients. When a client is accepted to Remote Services a review period will be agreed with the region. At review, recent interactions with the client will be considered. If interactions have improved and the harmful behaviour has ceased, the client may be considered for transfer back to locally based case management. Where the harmful behaviour has continued the client will remain with Remote Services. Clients who are currently on "papers only" (letters) or have made recent threats will not be suitable for transfer back to locally based case management.

The Remote Services team utilise a reporting tool to record information about each client. This includes information about the client's demeanour and behaviour during their interaction with the service. This information will be utilised as part of the eligibility review.

Appendix 6 of the attached Business Process does not state when a "review" should be considered for a client managed by Remote Services. The "review" process as advised by Manager Remote Services is on an "ad-hoc" basis. However typically if a client shows good behaviour as outlined in the "Review of Remote Services Approach" section, then this will be a contributing factor for their re-assignment back to their local region.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request regarding clients who are managed by specialist teams or subject to contact restrictions, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp.



Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

**MINISTRY OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**
Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

Remote Services Business Process

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Author:
Owner: Graham Allpress

Release Date: 16/08/2022

Sign off

The following signatures indicate approval and acceptance of the above document, subject to any caveats below

Name	Role	Signature/Date
Graham Allpress	Director, Client Service Delivery	 16/8/22
Caveats:		
Caveats:		

Purpose

Remote Services is an independent service delivery unit that provides a similar service to that of a service centre. The unit, originally established under the name Remote Client Unit in 2004, is to provide an alternative Case Management model for clients that present a risk of violence or psychosocial harm to MSD staff.

The unit provides income, housing and, in some cases, employment assistance to clients via phone, email, online and postal services. Staff from the unit do not meet with clients face to face.

The goal of the Remote Services team is to work with each client in a way that helps them to make positive steps and changes that see them return to independence, including accessing services and assistance through normal MSD channels (Service Centres, Contact Centres, Centralised Services and Online Services).

Due to the nature of their clientele, the safety and wellbeing of Remote Services staff is paramount. There are provisions in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff working in Remote Services. These include but are not limited to; protecting the unit location, the management of mail, the phone system set up, threat management, personal security assessments, coaching and professional supervision.

Although a client may be assigned to Remote Services, they ultimately belong to the region in which they reside. The overall success of the service relies on the partnership being maintained between the regions and the service, in order to successfully return these clients to normal MSD channels, work or training.

Roles and responsibilities

Remote Services is a centralised service managed via Client Service Delivery and supported by the Health Safety and Security team. The key roles involved in the delivery of the service and their responsibilities are outlined below.

Integrated Services Case Managers

Day to day case management is undertaken by Integrated Services Case Managers, who provide Work and Income services to all clients assigned into Remote Services. This is intensive case management where staff will provide one on one wrap-around support. This service includes taking a holistic approach to their clients' needs and wellbeing.

Remote Services aims to develop a relationship that enables staff to work proactively with each client to help him or her set and achieve social development goals.

Manager Client Service Delivery Support

The Manager Client Service Delivery Support oversees the day-to-day operations of this service, including decisions needed to deliver Work and Income products and services, complaints, and issues. The Manager provides regular coaching and manages the overall performance of the team.

The Manager Client Service Delivery Support is responsible for overseeing the process of referrals into, and transfers out of, the service.

Director, Client Service Delivery

Generally, the Director Client Service Delivery will not be involved in the day to day running of Remote Services, however they are the point of escalation for the Manager Client Service Delivery Support, for any issues or complaints management.

Principal Advisor, Client Service Delivery

The Principal Advisor, Client Service Delivery provides expert advice and support to Integrated Services Case Managers and the Manager Client Service Delivery Support, on complex cases. They also support Remote Services with issues resolution, Privacy Act requests and legal advice such as reviews of decisions and benefit review committee hearings.

Health Safety and Security Team

The Health Safety and Security Team provide support to Remote Services and regions regarding safety and wellbeing concerns. This support includes risk analysis, guidance on managing threats, wellbeing support and security advice. They also support Remote Services with risk analysis to review referrals and transfers aligning with the eligibility criteria. HSS hold a national relationship with Police for significant issues and information requests.

Regional Offices and Service Centres

Regional Offices and Service Centres ensure the referral process is completed in full and that relevant information is provided at the time of the referral to Remote Services. They also work in partnership with the remote services team to ensure clients are supported in regions when required.

Referral Criteria

Violence Criteria

Client referrals to Remote Service is based on trespass due to the violent criteria.

Psychosocial harm Criteria

Client referrals to Remote Services can also be based on the psychosocial harm criteria.

Violence criteria

1. The client has a history of violent, aggressive or intimidating behaviour that has or may cause physical harm to our people¹
and/or
2. The client has relevant convictions for violence, aggression, or intimidation. This may include unlawful possession of firearms, weapons, or knives. Each conviction will be addressed and managed on a case-by-case basis to help determine the client's entry into the service and exit.
and/or
3. The client is known to other agencies as being a high risk to public or staff physical safety
and
4. Alternate case management approaches² have been considered, or undertaken and deemed unsafe or not reasonably practicable

Psychosocial harm³ criteria

1. The client has a history of behaviour⁴ that has or may cause harm to the mental health or wellbeing of our people¹ and make them feel emotionally or physically unsafe
and/or

2. The client has relevant convictions that may include those fitting the violence criteria, but can also be, and are not limited to, harassment, harmful digital communications, breach of restraining orders, or threatening behaviour
and/or
3. The client is known to other agencies as being a high risk to public or staff psychosocial safety
and
4. Alternate case management approaches² have been considered, or undertaken and deemed unsafe or not reasonably practicable

¹ **People** includes our staff, clients, contractors, professionals (e.g. health providers) associated with the services that we deliver

² **Alternate case management approaches** include case management by telephone, assigning a designated case manager, appointing an agent, partnering with a community provider, or using an alternative site

³ **Psychosocial harm** indicators include distress, anxiety, depression, increased need for psychological support, reduced productivity, longer recovery times and poor sleep

⁴ **Behaviour** that may cause **psychosocial harm** includes initiating improper pressure and harassment, in the forms of, but not limited to; repeated and unnecessary communication, repeated indirect threats, repeated attempts to manipulate decision making, repeated insistence on escalating all interactions to higher managers, lewd, racist, sexist or other discriminatory behaviour

Referral process

Where a client is behaving in a manner that could cause harm to staff this must always be reported in STAR.

If a manager believes that a client's behaviour is escalating, or a history of STAR events indicates that they are likely to be causing harm to staff, they are encouraged to link with their Senior Advisor Regional HSS to discuss the nature of the harm and the possible mitigations that can be put in place. This may include alternate case management approaches, warnings, trespass, appointment of agent(s) or Police involvement.

Where these reasonable steps to case manage and support the needs of the client locally have been considered, or undertaken and deemed unsafe or not reasonably practicable, or in circumstances where there are immediate and significant safety concerns for staff, the region should complete a referral to Remote Services.

To refer a client the completed referral form (Appendix one) should be emailed to msd_rcu@msd.govt.nz.

Client Service Delivery and HSS will review the referral form against the criteria within 2 working days of receipt.

Within 5 working days of the referral a conference call will be arranged between a representative from the referring region, Client Service Delivery and HSS to discuss the referral and determine whether the client will be accepted to Remote Services. Once an outcome is reached this will be documented on to CMS.

If a referral is urgent the Regional Director should advise Remote Services. For these urgent referrals a decision will be made within 2 working days.

Not suitable

If the referral is not approved, the decision will be confirmed to the region in writing by the Client Service Delivery team, along with advice about next steps, and what triggers may lead to the referral being reconsidered.

If the region does not agree with the decision the Director Client Service Delivery will review the referral and any information gathered during the teleconference to confirm a final decision.

Accepted to Remote Services

If it is agreed that the client will transfer to Remote Services, the team will work with the region to determine an initial period that the client will be in the unit, after which the Remote Services approach will be reviewed. There will also be a Client Plan that Remote Services and the Client will need to complete at first contact.

The Client plan will include details such as:

- What are the client's Goals?
- Where do they see themselves in 6 months' time?
- Preferred method of contact e.g., email/phone
- Frequency of contact
- Level of support required

The factors that may determine the timeframe for review are:

- The nature of harm, or potential harm, to our people
- Whether there is a trespass notice in place
- Whether there are immediate needs causing increased need for support (such as housing instability, reviews of decision or similar)

The minimum review period will be six months, and unless there are exceptional circumstances based on risk factors, the maximum review period will be 2 years.

Where required, Client Service Delivery and the region will agree on a milestone achievement before the client will return to being locally managed, along with any key partnership areas required to support the client (for example housing or employment support.)

Transfer in process

When a referral is accepted, the Remote Services team will send the region a confirmation email outlining the agreed review period, and how Remote Services and the region will work together to support the client.

Remote Services will send the client a welcome letter, introducing them to the service, outlining the service they will receive and how that aligns with the Ministry's values:

- Manaaki — we care about the wellbeing of people
- Tika me te pono — we do the right thing with integrity
- Whānau — we are inclusive and build belonging.
- Mahi tahi — we work together, making a difference for communities

A Special Caution will be added to the client's CMS record, detailing that only the Remote Services team should access and update the client's record.

All correspondence and documents received at service centres must be forwarded to the unit.

The client's SWIFT record is transferred into the Remote Services district code (307).

The postal address for the unit is added to the client record. This is done to prevent standard letters being sent directly to the client, which could in error, invite them to call the general Work and Income number or visit a Service Centre.

Case Management Approach

All clients are managed through integrated services case management principles, practice and processes, with a goal to enable the client to return to regular case management channels.

A key focus of the Remote Services team is to ensure that families and individuals receive the right support at the right time that meets their needs.

To support this approach, the first step is to ensure each client is provided with the right assistance and supports. The Integrated Services Case Managers take a 'clean slate' approach, looking towards the future and considering how best to support the client, rather than focusing on any previous behaviour or issues.

Clients can contact Remote Services by:

Phone: 0508 222 007 (Monday – Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm)

Email: msd_rcu@msd.govt.nz

Mail:
Remote Services
PO Box 31617
Lower Hutt 5040
Wellington

When a client phones the toll-free number, they can leave a message and the team will respond as soon as they're able (usually within 24 hours).

Regular reporting is available, relating to the engagement and level of support provided to the client.

All applications for assistance are informed according to the existing processes and procedures outlined in MAP for case managers.

Hardship payments will be made via the Payment Card system.

Reporting

Every client contact is recorded in the Remote Services Contact Log and CMS. This tool and system will record inbound and outbound calls, inbound mail and the subsequent action taken for each client. The log will allow case managers to record details about each interaction with the client, which will form part of the Remote Services review process, enabling the unit to provide regions with specific information about the client's needs, activity and behaviour during their time in Remote Services.

Quality and Risk Assurance

All integrated case management principles, practices, policies and procedures apply to Remote Services. ISCM utilise the ISCM Conversation guide developed in 2019, to enable improved engagement and interactions with clients.

All exceptions to the practices mentioned above, must gain Manager approval.

All correspondence must meet the Ministry's style guide and unless in exceptional circumstances should be system issued or approved template letters. All outbound client letters must be saved on the Remote Services local network and in the appropriate client's folder CMS.

Authentication guidelines are also available, to the RS team, they must be read and understood and applied consistently in all cases.

Client complaints will be lodged in HIYA and assigned to the unit and business standards to resolving client complaints will be applied.

Review of Decision and Benefit Review Committee Hearings

A client can apply for a Review of Decision when they have received formal notification of (and do not agree with) a decision which has been made. The process for Reviews will be followed, with small alterations to some correspondence to reflect the remote management of this process.

Due to the nature of the service and its client base all BRC hearings will be completed remotely. The client will be given the option of:

- Participating via teleconference
- Having their agent participate via teleconference
- Making a written submission to the committee. The hearing would then be held as 'papers only'

A Remote Services Integrated Case Manager who was not involved in the final decision will be the BRC Coordinator.

Once the way the client or agent will participate in the hearing has been determined the Remote Services ISCM will ensure that the client understands the timeframes and how they can participate.

Should the client decide to proceed to the Social Security Appeal Authority (SSAA) after the BRC hearing the usual MSD processes will be followed

Warning and Paper only process

If a client displays continuous unacceptable and intimidating behaviour towards the Remote Services team, by way of threatening phone messages or abusive conversations, the process is:

1. Issue Warning letter giving the client the opportunity to improve their behaviour towards Remote Services
2. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, a decision is to be made by the Remote Services Manager to put the client on Papers Only.
3. Issue Papers Only letter which advises the client all direct phone contact will cease and all correspondence will be by papers only. Send out Hardship applications, Personal Details form and postage paid return addressed envelopes with the letter.

The papers only approach will be reviewed monthly. Once the client displays appropriate behaviour for the month, service will revert to the standard service provisions of Remote Services.

Privacy Act requests

When a Remote Services managed client makes a request for personal information under the Privacy Act (2020), Remote Services will adhere to the standard Ministry approach detailed in MAP: [Responding to a request for personal information - Map \(ssi.govt.nz\)](#)

HSS will support Remote Services to conduct a risk assessment for those staff who for health and safety reasons do not want their name released. To enable HSS to conduct this risk assessment, Remote Services will email the objection from the staff member

concerned as soon as it is received. The HSS client risk analyst will respond to this within 10 working days.

Review of Remote Services approach

Remote Services is intended to be a temporary case management approach for most clients. When a client is accepted to Remote Services a review period will be agreed with the region. The factors that may determine the timeframe for the review period are:

- The nature of harm or potential harm to staff
- Whether there is a trespass notice in place
- Whether there are immediate needs causing increased need for support (such as housing instability, reviews of decision or similar)
- Any milestones needed to achieve as agreed between Remote Services and Client Service Delivery at the time of acceptance to Remote Services.

At review, recent interactions with the client will be considered. If interactions have improved and the harmful behaviour has ceased, the client may be considered for transfer back to locally based case management. Where the harmful behaviour has continued the client will remain with Remote Services. Clients who are currently on 'papers only' or have made recent threats will not be suitable for transfer back to locally based case management.

The Remote Services team utilise a reporting tool to record information about each client. This includes information about the client's demeanour and behaviour during their interaction with the service. This information will be utilised as part of the eligibility review.

Review Process

Six weeks prior to the review date, Remote Services will advise HSS of the upcoming review. HSS will provide a summary report of any STAR events to Remote Services to be included in the review.

Remote Services will review their reporting tool to consider the nature of their interactions with the client and any harmful behaviour displayed.

- If the client has continued to display the same harmful behaviour for which they were referred, the ISCM will write a report to the Manager Client Service Delivery Support recommending that the client is not ready to return to local management.
- If the harmful behaviour has either stopped or significantly diminished over the period the client has been managed by Remote Services, the ISCM will write a report to the Manager Client Service Delivery Support summarising the type and frequency of interactions they have had with the client and any recommendations for the ongoing case management of the client.

Client Service Delivery and HSS will review the report and any STAR events within 5 working days.

If Client Service Delivery believe that the client is ready to be transitioned back to a locally based case management approach they will:

- Notify the client that a review is being undertaken and invite their feedback via email about being referred to a locally based case management approach.
- Email the Regional Director to advise that a review is underway. This email will invite the region to provide details of any interactions with, or information about the client since either their acceptance to Remote Services or the date of the last Remote Services eligibility review. The email will also advise the region that a

teleconference will be set up for them to discuss the case with Remote Services before a final decision is made about any return.

Information from the client and the region will be due within 10 working days and will be incorporated into the review document. The document will include a final recommendation from Remote Services as to the client's suitability to transition back to a locally based case management approach.

Two weeks prior to the review date, Remote Services will arrange a teleconference with HSS and the region.

- If it is agreed that the client will remain with Remote Services, the teleconference will be used to discuss the case management of the client to date and agree on a new date to review the Remote Services approach along with any necessary milestones.
- If Remote Services are recommending a return to the region, the teleconference will be used to discuss successful strategies for working with the client, a transition plan back to the region and any triggers for the client returning to Remote Services. Where the region does not agree with the Remote Services recommendation, they will have the opportunity to discuss the decision. A final decision sits with Director Client Service Delivery or Manager Client Service Delivery Support.

The client will be advised in writing of the outcome of the review and provided information about, either the next review date, or plans for them to transition back to a locally based case management approach. The client will be invited to contribute to the plan as part of the transition process.

Transition Process

Where it is agreed at the teleconference that the client will transition back to a locally based case management approach, Remote Services will draft a transition plan outlining the key points agreed to. Remote Services will speak with the client about the plan and incorporate any relevant feedback from both the client and the region.

The transition plan will include details such as:

- Whether the client will have an assigned case manager, and if so, who that will be
- Any steps to transition case management services (for example the transition may start with utilising MyMSD for more services or having a phone conversation with their new Case Manager while still retaining a relationship with Remote Services.)
- How the client will access services (e.g. via contact centre, online, or direct phone/ email, or face to face with Case Manager.)

The transition plan will also outline expectations around future behaviour and any triggers that would result in the client returning to Remote Services.

Transition should commence as close as possible to the review date, however, may continue for a period of weeks after that date.

Safety and Security

There are a number of security processes in place to ensure the safety of staff working within Remote Services. These include protecting the unit location, the management of mail, the phone system set up, threat management and business continuity including relocation processes.

Global Directory and Physical Location

Physical address location is removed from Global Directory to ensure the unit has 'low visibility' to the wider Ministry and clients.

Remote Services maintain a separate postal address from other business units and National Office. This mailbox is cleared daily and security procedures are in place in case suspicious mail is received, due to the nature of clientele.

Although clients and regions can post directly to the mail box, all courier mail will be sent to National Office to ensure the physical delivery location remains restricted. The Remote Services team has processes in place for recovering all courier packages from National Office.

The Remote Services team has a tailored phone system with a unique call routing set up to further support the security requirements of the unit. Phones within the unit set up with two lines, one for the RS voicemail message system and the other assigned to RS case managers. Any changes to phone system must be referred to Manager Voice Platform Services. The Remote Services team do have call recording.

Incident reporting

Where an incident occurs that could be a threat or risk to the security and safety of staff members both within the Remote Service or service centres, all details must be recorded in STAR and the Manager Client Service Support alerted. The process for STAR can be found in Doogle.

Where a threat relates to a local office or staff member the Remote Services team must also alert the region immediately to ensure that they can put safety plans in place.

All threats must be reported to Police.

Master Trouble

All abusive phone messages from identified clients are regularly transferred to Master Trouble and kept for future reference. Master Trouble is voice message system that saves messages from identified clients, where a client has made a direct threat towards the Ministry or its staff.

These recordings are maintained by the Voice Team at National Office and can be downloaded to a disc if required for prosecution or Privacy Act requests.

Only messages with serious and direct threats are referred to Master Trouble and are held for six months, unless specifically requested.

All other voice mail messages are cleared daily at the Remote Services team and deleted. Voice mail messages left on the Remote Services phone are not used to capture evidence for case management, they are a method of contact for the client to request contact from the unit.

Not all clients are assigned a Master Trouble number, a list of number allocation is held at the unit and with the voice team.

When a new RS client requires a Master Trouble number the RS will need to contact Manager Voice Platform Services of the Voice Team to have a number assigned to the client and update the Master Trouble list.

Remote Services Staff Safety and Wellbeing

The Ministry is committed to providing a safe environment and procedures in the workplace to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its Remote Services staff. This includes protecting the unit's location, the management of mail, the phone system setup, threat management and business continuity.

Staff can access personal safety support and, in recognition of the challenging behaviour displayed by some clients, have access to regular coaching, professional supervision and wellbeing support.

Personal Safety

The Ministry is committed to assisting Remote Services staff to remain as safe as possible both at work and outside of the workplace. To support this staff are able to access the following advice and support:

- **Home Security Assessment**

The HSS team can arrange for a Remote Services staff members home to receive a security assessment. If deemed necessary following the assessment, the HSS team can arrange for the installation of quality locks, security lighting or a home intruder alarm monitored by a security company at the cost of the Ministry. If the staff member leaves Remote Services and there is no reasonable belief of a security threat, then the alarm can remain installed, and the staff member invited to pay home intruder alarm monitoring costs themselves.

- **Emergency SOS / Personal Duress Alarm**

Remote Services staff members are encouraged to have the Emergency SOS function enabled on their work iPhones. If a specific threat is identified the HSS team can issue the Remote Services staff member with a personal duress alarm monitored by a security company. These devices contain a GPS and upon activation by the staff member the security company attempt to contact them directly before dispatching a Police patrol to their location.

- **Unpublished Electoral Roll**

Remote Services staff and their family members can apply for registration as a parliamentary elector on the unpublished roll. Forms are held by the HSS team and are required to be accompanied by a support letter from the staff members manager explaining that their work position means that their personal safety or that of their family could be prejudiced by the publication of their name and details. The completed form and letter can be returned to the HSS team for endorsement and forwarded to the Electoral Enrolment Office.

- **Social media**

Remote Services staff member social media sites may be searched by people seeking to identify individuals. Staff should consider whether their security settings on Social media (including LinkedIn) are set at an appropriate level. We recommend that they do not advertise that they work for MSD or put their address, phone details on Facebook. HSS can support the staff member to check their privacy settings and give advice to keep their personal information safe online.

At times, clients may use websites, blogs, and social media to share their opinions and comments about the work of MSD. If at any stage these discussions become personal or abusive towards Remote Service staff members, there is guidance provided on Google: [Support for staff who are identified or targeted on the internet - Google \(ssi.govt.nz\)](https://www.ssi.govt.nz)

- **Confidential Motor Vehicle Register applications**

Remote Services staff members can apply to the New Zealand Transport Agency for confidential motor vehicle status if they are on the unpublished roll. (The letter from the Electoral Enrolment Office that the staff member is on the unpublished roll can be used to support this).

- **Phone Directory Listings**

If a Remote Service staff member has a landline telephone service their details may be available in a telephone directory and/or white pages online service. If

they do not want this, they can either have these details 'not listed', which means the details will still be available if someone rings 018. Or they can apply for a restricted number which means that this will not be released in the telephone directory or White pages online service. To obtain either a 'not listed' or 'restricted number' listing they can contact their telecommunications company and request the listing status they require. Then follow their request up with a telephone call to Yellow Pages Directory Services (a business entity that maintain both the White pages and Yellow pages) and request the same status from them as well.

- **New Zealand Companies Office**

If Remote Services staff have an officially registered a company or a business their details may be available online in the NZ Companies office register. They should keep this in mind when registering or becoming involved in a Registered Company. It can be practicable to use your Lawyers or Accountants address, rather than you own address, as these are often more useful for the service of documents.

- **Property Ownership**

Local Councils may make information available to the public via their Rating Information Databases. Remote Services staff can go to their local councils' website and check to see if they have a link to the Rating Information Database. Do a query on your property and fill in and submit the section on non-disclosure and confidentiality of your name and postal details.

Or, you can go to the council office and make a direct application for non-disclosure and confidentiality of your name and postal details on the Rating information Database.

- **Quotable Value New Zealand**

Quotable Value New Zealand run publicly accessible databases where individuals can obtain property ownership details by either querying a specific address or an individual's name. Remote Services staff can request Quotable New Zealand to keep their ownership details confidential.

- **Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)**

Land Information New Zealand holds a title's register which contains all property ownership details. LINZ are legislatively bound to by statute to disclose property ownership details upon request and cannot give confidentiality to people who own property.

Wellbeing Supports

- **Professional Supervision**

Remote Services work can be difficult, and it is important that the staff feel supported in the work that they do. We need to ensure that the staff have opportunities to reflect on practice, learn new or different ways of doing things, and maximise the sharing of their skills and experience so that their individual and collective practice strengthens over time.

Remote Services staff are encouraged to undertake Professional Supervision by a Registered Psychologist at least quarterly. This can be undertaken either personally or in a team environment.

- **Counselling Sessions**

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) sessions are available to all MSD employees as well as their immediate family members who live with them. The number of sessions used will depend on individual needs. Staff can usually access

up to 6 sessions at first and their counsellor can request further sessions if that is what they both decide is required. If they've previously used EAP and something else comes up that they need support with, they are always able to access the service again. Sessions can be face to face or on the phone.

Remote Services staff are encouraged to access counselling sessions if they need support, and they may access unlimited sessions because of their type of work.

- **HSS Welfare checks**

HSS team welfare checks will be undertaken to check on the safety and wellbeing of Remote Services staff. This will include the identification and monitoring of reported and unreported safety concerns.

Business Continuity

The Manager Client Service Delivery Support holds a business continuity plan for Remote Services. This plan ensures that clients can continue to receive service where MSD experiences any significant interruption such as a natural disaster or, telecommunications outage. The business continuity plan also covers staff absences and unit relocation due to security breaches.

Remote Services Referral Form

Referral Criteria

Client referrals to Remote Services can be based on the Violence criteria or the Psychosocial harm criteria; or both.

Violence criteria

1. The client has a history of violent, aggressive, or intimidating behaviour that has or may cause physical harm to our people
and/or
2. The client has relevant convictions for violence, aggression, or intimidation. This may include unlawful possession of firearms, weapons, or knives
and/or
3. The client is known to other agencies as being a high risk to public or staff physical safety
and
4. Alternate case management approaches have been considered, or undertaken and deemed unsafe or not reasonably practicable

Psychosocial harm criteria

1. The client has a history of behaviour that has or may cause harm to the mental health or wellbeing of our people and make them feel emotionally or physically unsafe
and/or
2. The client has relevant convictions that may include those fitting the violence criteria, but can also be, and not limited to, harassment, harmful digital communications, breach of restraining orders, or threatening behaviour
and/or
3. The client is known to other agencies as being a high risk to public or staff psychosocial safety
and
4. Alternate case management approaches have been considered, or undertaken and deemed unsafe or not reasonably practicable

Definitions:

People includes our staff, clients, contractors, professionals (e.g. health providers) associated with the services that we deliver

Alternate case management approaches include case management by telephone, assigning a designated case manager, appointing an agent, partnering with a community provider, or using an alternative site

Psychosocial harm indicators include distress, anxiety, depression, increased need for psychological support, reduced productivity, longer recovery times and poor sleep

Behaviour that may cause **psychosocial harm** includes initiating improper pressure and harassment, in the forms of, but not limited to; repeated and unnecessary communication, repeated indirect threats, repeated attempts to manipulate decision making, repeated insistence on escalating all interactions to higher managers, lewd, racist, sexist or other discriminatory behaviour

Email this form and any supporting documentation to: msd_rcu@msd.govt.nz

Remote Services will respond to this referral within five working days of receipt

Client Details

1. Client's name	Click here to enter text.
2. Client number	Click here to enter text.
3. Client's address	Click here to enter text.
4. Which criteria is the referral based on?	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence <input type="checkbox"/> Psychosocial harm <input type="checkbox"/> Both

Benefit Information

5. Benefit type	Click here to enter text.
6. Is the benefit current?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. Have all actions been completed on the client's record?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. Does the client have a current payment card?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (If safe to do so please arrange for one to be issued to the client)

Note: The referral may be declined if there are outstanding actions.

Agent(s)

9. Does the client CURRENTLY have an agent?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (please advise why) Click here to enter text.
10. Can the agent continue to represent the client?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (go to question 10) <input type="checkbox"/> No (go to question 11)
11. Are there any issues, limitations or instructions regarding the agency?	Click here to enter text.
12. Explain why the agent can no longer represent the client	Click here to enter text.

VIOLENCE CRITERIA	<p>13. <i>If your referral is based only on the psychosocial harm criteria skip to question 13</i></p> <p>Describe the violent, aggressive or intimidating behaviour that has or may cause physical harm to our people</p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p> <p>What relevant convictions for violence, aggression or intimidation are we aware of? <i>This may include possession of firearms, weapons, or knives, also include any relevant information from other agencies.</i></p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p> <p>What has been the impact of this behaviour on our people's physical safety so far? <i>For example: police referrals, site lockdowns or restricted access, trespass notices, trespass breaches, additional security required for staff safety</i></p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p>	
	<p>Note: Where there is a significant risk of harm please send your referral with the information you have available. Do not wait for information from other agencies</p>	
	<p>14. <i>If your referral is based only on the violence criteria skip to question 14</i></p> <p>Describe any behaviour that has or may cause psychological harm to the mental health or wellbeing of our people and make them feel emotionally or physically unsafe</p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p> <p>What relevant convictions are we aware of? <i>This may include violence convictions but also harassment, harmful digital communications, threatening behaviour or breach of protection order.</i></p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p> <p>What has been the impact of this behaviour on our people's mental health and wellbeing so far? <i>For example: distress, anxiety, depression, increased need for support, debriefing or psychological support, reduced productivity, longer recovery times, poor sleep etc.</i></p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p>	
	ALL RE	<p>15. Complete this section for all referrals</p> <p>How frequently are our people exposed to this type of behaviour? <i>(include all types of contact – phone, email, social media and face to face)</i></p>

REMOTE SERVICES REFERRAL FORM

Click here to enter text.

What alternate case management approaches have been considered, or undertaken and deemed unsafe or not reasonably practicable?

Click here to enter text.

Referral

Please provide the name of the appointed contact person regarding this referral

Click here to enter text.

I recommend that this client be case managed by the Remote Client Unit.

Click here to enter a date.

Date

Service Manager Signature

Service Manager Name

Click here to enter a date.

Date

Regional Director Signature

- AGREE
- DISAGREE

Regional Director Name

Click here to enter a date.

Date

Regional Commissioner Signature

- AGREE
- DISAGREE

Regional Commissioner Name

REMOTE SERVICES APPROVAL FORM

Remote Services approval

This section will be completed after a teleconference with the referring region

- AGREE
- DISAGREE
- E

RS Manager Signature

Click here to enter a date.

Date

RS Manager Name

- AGREE
- DISAGREE
- E

Client Service Delivery Advisor Signature

Click here to enter a date.

Date

Client Service Delivery Advisor Name

- AGREE
- DISAGREE
- E

Health Safety and Security Signature

Click here to enter a date.

Date

Health Safety and Security Name

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Services and Interactions while Trespassed

Services while Trespassed

When a notice is issued and served to a person, stopping them from entering our office(s), the letter they are served advises the person to consider appointing an agent to act as their representative if they wish to deal with us without breaching the trespass notice.

While it may be beneficial to do so, we cannot insist that they appoints an agent. A trespass notice bans a person from entering specific MSD office but does not stop them from communicating with us by phone, letter, or email.

Trespass person with an agent

Agents will be able to attend appointments and/or act on the person's behalf at the office where that person is trespassed from. Agents cannot attend work related activities such as seminars or compliance activities.

If a trespassed person has appointed an Agent:

You'll need to add details of the Agent to the person CMS record.

Doogle Information: Appointing an Agent [<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/core-procedures/agents/index.html>]

Trespassed person without an agent

A person without an agent may visit offices not listed on the notice. For all other interactions, contact can be made via phone, MyMSD, letter, or email. While most interactions are positive, occasionally the person may demonstrate behaviour that could cause harm to us. If this is the case:

reinforce why the behaviour is not acceptable, and
end the interaction immediately if the staff member feels unsafe, or if the behaviour continues after being told the behaviour is unacceptable.

We cannot refuse phone-based services to a person who is trespassed without managing and responding to unreasonable or escalating behaviour first.

Doogle Information: Managing and responding to unreasonable or escalating behaviour [<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-responding-to-unreasonable-or-escalating-behaviour-guidelinesindex.html>]

Low Trust Client Management (LTCM)

Low trust clients are managed under LTCM. Traditionally, LTCM clients are managed face-to-face; however, for trespassed LTCM clients, case management will be conducted remotely by the office. For each transaction, the client will be required to validate information by providing supporting documentation, either online or by mail. Alternatively, if the client has an agent, the agent can attend appointments and/or act on the client's behalf at the office. LTCM have the following CMS record identifiers:

LTCM Special caution

Person event MVN LTCM with duration expiry date

Secured 'LTCM'.

Doogle Information: Low Trust Client Management [<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/low-trust-client-management.html>]

Remote Services

Remote Services is an independent Service Delivery team that offers a service similar to a service centre. It provides an alternative case management model for people who pose a high risk of violence or psychosocial harm to MSD. Contact with Remote Services is made via phone, letter, or email. Remote Services can be identified by the CMS Special Caution note on their file.

Doogle Information: Remote Services [<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/remote-services-unit-rsu.html>]

Interactions while Trespassed

MyMSD

A person has limited access to MyMSD due to the potential security risk of breaching their trespass notice through online booking of appointments. The person can view or cancel an agent's appointment but are unable to book appointments online.

Doogle Information: MyMSD [<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/products-services/service-delivery/mymsd/index.html>]

Assistance Cancelled

Where a person cancels their financial assistance during their trespass period, their CMS record retains the CMS Special Caution for the duration of the notice. The Special Caution ensures that staff are alerted should the person present for assistance during the trespass period.

If the person has a current debt at the time of cancellation, the Case Manager (CM) or Contact Service Representative (CSR) is required to discuss with the person how they will manage their debt and repayments.

Doogle Information: Repaying debt [<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/debt/repaying-debt-not-on-a-benefit.html>]

Reapplication for Assistance

If the person cancels their financial assistance and then reapplys during their trespass period, they are still to be managed as trespass. The CMS Special Caution will still show that the person is trespass for the duration of the trespass.

Contact Centre

No face-to-face appointments should be scheduled for any person who is trespass from an office. Booking such appointments is an invitation to the person trespass and risks voiding the notice if the person re-enters the office, putting staff safety at risk.

Face to face appointments can only be made for the agent to attend on behalf of the person, and cannot be work related i.e., seminars or compliance.

Content owner: Health Safety and Security | Last updated: 14 April 2025

Serving a Notice

While only an MSD staff member with delegated authority may issue a trespass notice, notices under section 4(2) of the Trespass Act 1980 [<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1980/0065/latest/DLM36944.html>]to warn a person to stay off MSD offices for a period of 2 years can be served to the person by Tautiaki or Police. The commencement date is the date the trespass notice is served to the person, and the end date is two years from the commencement date unless MSD void or review the notice before that time.

Please see full business process [<http://dongle/documents/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/trespass-business-process-v2-2-.docx>]for how warnings under section 3 of the Trespass Act [<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1980/0065/latest/DLM36943.html>]should be delivered.

Tautiaki serve notice process (step by step)

Role	Step by step
Staff member with delegated authority	Generate trespass notice in STAR. Print and sign 2 copies of the notice: 1. One copy to be served to the person 2. One copy for proof of service.
	Complete <u>MSD Guard Request</u> [https://forms.ssi.govt.nz/ldap_login?orig_path=%2Fforms%2Fnew%3Fform_template_public_name%3DMSD%2BGuard%2BRequests] Form requesting Tautiaki to serve notice.
Tautiaki	Collect both copies of the trespass notice from office and physically serve notice to person.

Auckland Region

****ONLY APPLIES TO AUCKLAND REGION****

To avoid unreasonable delay in service across the Auckland region, you have the option to email the notice to Tautiaki as opposed to completing a Guard Request. You do not need to do both methods for the notice to be served.

All notices sent to Tautiaki by email must be encrypted and follow privacy requirements to protect the privacy and security of the information we're trusted to manage.

Guidance: Auckland Allied Guidance [<http://dongle/documents/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/auckland-allied-guidance.docx>]

Police serve notice process (step by step)

Role	Step by step
Staff member with delegated authority	Authorises Police to serve trespass notice.
	Records name and QID of Police serving the notice.
Police	Serve and confirm date notice was successfully served to the office or staff member with delegated authority.
Office/Staff member with delegated authority	Update STAR to reflect the date the notice was served, including the service details.

Other ways to serve a notice

MSD's standard practice is to have Tautiaki or the Police serve the notice. However, in some cases, you may need to use alternative methods. Before exploring the options below, you must **first try Tautiaki or the Police**.

Registered Post

Notices can be served by registered post, which offers a secure, tracked method requiring the person's signature as proof of delivery. You'll need to arrange a tracked courier to the person's usual place of residence. Once you have received verification that the notice was served, you'll need to:

Update STAR to reflect the date the notice was served, including the service details.

Upload proof of service to STAR under Notes and Documents.

Complete [105 Non-Emergency Report](https://www.police.govt.nz/use-105/trespass#main-content), attaching proof of service.

Corrections

Notices can be served by Corrections. You'll need to provide Corrections with the notice and then:

Update STAR to reflect the date the notice was served, including the service details.

Upload proof of service to STAR under Notes and Documents.

Complete [105 Non-Emergency Report](https://www.police.govt.nz/use-105/trespass#main-content), attaching proof of service.

Verbally

While it is not standard practice to serve a trespass notice verbally, there may be situations where this is necessary—such as when the person has no fixed address or it is otherwise not possible to physically serve the notice. In such cases, the following information must be clearly communicated:

the address(es) the individual is trespassed from (e.g., *195 Willis Street, Te Aro, Wellington 6011*)

the duration of the notice (*two years from the date of the verbal warning*)

the reason for the notice (e.g., *the stated reason for the trespass*).

Once the notice has been served, you'll need to:

Update STAR to reflect the date the notice was served, including the service details.

Upload proof of service to STAR under Notes and Documents.

Complete [105 Non-Emergency Report](https://www.police.govt.nz/use-105/trespass#main-content), attaching proof of service.

A notice is only enforceable where reasonable steps have been made to serve the notice. If your finding it difficult to have a notice served by Police or Tautiaki, registered post, or verbally contact [Health, Safety, Security and Wellbeing](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-safety-and-security-contacts.html) to discuss alternative options.

Content owner: [Health Safety and Security](#) Last updated: 15 April 2025

Options to manage or respond to escalating behaviour

Every situation is different. When a client is demonstrating escalating or unreasonable behaviour you will need to make decisions based on those unique circumstances. It is important that we consider any context, including any health conditions or disabilities and MSD's role in the situation. No matter the context staff should not continue to endure behaviour that is causing them harm, however the response to the behaviour may be different depending on the situation.

Below are some options that have been used successfully by managers across the Ministry. If you would like support developing a plan please contact your [Senior Advisor Regional HSS for support \[https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/business-groups/organisational-solutions/who-we-are/health-safety-and-security/health-safety-and-security-contacts.html\]](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/business-groups/organisational-solutions/who-we-are/health-safety-and-security/health-safety-and-security-contacts.html).

Assign a Case Manager to work with the client (consider who is the right person based on their skills, experience and 'fit' with the client). Depending on the client this may even be a Case Manager from another site who manages the client remotely. Make sure that the Case Manager has the right supports in place.

Develop a plan on how the Case Manager will manage situations and support them to stick to the plan. Write a clear special caution on CMS to tell staff what they should do if the client makes contact.

Support staff to set boundaries with the client regarding their behaviour. This could include:

Setting clear expectations about what is and is not acceptable behaviour

Warning the client about inappropriate behaviour and what will happen if this continues

Ending interactions where the agreed behaviour standards are not met

Setting limits on communication (for example emails will not be responded to immediately, asking the client not to send multiple emails about the same issue, specifying which channels the client should use when applying for financial assistance etc.)

Be clear with the client about the process and behavioural standards for making requests for financial assistance so that they are not lost in other communication.

Encourage the client to appoint an [agent \[https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/core-procedures/agents/index.html\]](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/core-procedures/agents/index.html).

Empower staff to end phone calls or interviews if the agreed behaviour standards are not met

Ensure that accurate notes are recorded in CMS regarding interactions and any boundaries set.

Ensure that all decisions regarding financial entitlements are based upon policy and legislation and an identified need, not on threats, fear or intimidation.

Ensure any threats, intimidation, verbal abuse or aggression are recorded in STAR.

Any direct threats should be reported to Police. There may also be instances where Police can provide support to warn people regarding their behaviour. In some situations Police may also consider offences under the Summary Offences Act or Harmful Digital Communications Act related to harassment or sending and publishing harmful content.

Note: It is up to Police to determine the appropriate charges or response to threats, harassment or intimidation. You may be asked by Police what response you are looking for. Individuals affected by incidents may become involved in the court process so can choose whether to make a statement. However MSD strongly support Police charging people where there is the appropriate evidence of an offence. Staff involved in any court process will be provided with support. Please contact your Senior Advisor Regional HSS for advice if Police are asking about charges. Both HSS and Legal Services are able to provide support with any court processes.

For high risk situations, or where the above options have been tried and the behaviour has continued, consider a referral to [Remote Services \[http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/remote-services-unit-rsu.html\]](http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/remote-services-unit-rsu.html).

Managing and responding to unreasonable or escalating behaviour Guidelines

Every day the Ministry deals with thousands of clients. While the majority of interactions are positive, occasionally a client may demonstrate behaviour that could cause harm to our people. This guidance is intended to support managers with options to keep people both physically and psychologically safe while providing great service.

What is unreasonable or escalating behaviour?

One off inappropriate, unreasonable or harmful behaviour

Threats or intimidation must be reported in STAR and in all instances we must be clear about what is or is not acceptable behaviour. This helps us to provide a good service, supports us to keep people safe and can also be a key technique for preventing behaviour from escalating in the future.

When responding to these events, it is important that we maintain professionalism and remain calm while addressing the behaviour. Consider what has led to the situation, the person's circumstances and the context when deciding on your response.

What is escalating behaviour?

Escalating behaviour is behaviour that, if not managed, could cause either physical or psychological harm to staff. The behaviour may be considered unreasonable and is often disproportionate to the situation.

Escalating behaviour may include:

increasing agitation when talking to MSD staff (especially out of context to their situation)

attempts to manipulate decision makers including veiled or indirect threats (including going to the media or posting on social media)

intentionally harassing, intimidating, embarrassing or annoying staff to get their own way

repeated rude, confronting, angry or aggressive behaviour

threatening or abusive comments

refusal to follow MSD policies or procedures such as:

high volumes of repeated and unnecessary contact with MSD – either in person or by email or phone

insistence on higher and higher layers of management being involved in complaints or decision making, or copying ministers or senior management into all communication

vexatious complaints and/or unjustified claims of staff incompetence or lack of integrity

making excessive demands on resources.



<http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/options-to->



<http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/options-to->



<http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/options-to->



<http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/options-to->

Guidance
[\[http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/guidance-mreb.html\]](http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/guidance-mreb.html)

How to respond to escalating behaviour
[\[http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/options-to-manage-or-respond-to-escalating-behaviourmreb.html\]](http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/options-to-manage-or-respond-to-escalating-behaviourmreb.html)

Scenarios
[\[http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/scenariosmreb.html\]](http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/scenariosmreb.html)

Ombudsman Guidance
[\[http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/ombudsman-guidancemreb.html\]](http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/health-and-safety-in-the-workpalce/safety-in-the-office/remote-client-unit/managing-and-respondin/ombudsman-guidancemreb.html)

Duty of Care

Unreasonable complaints can and do cause considerable stress to members of the Ministry. Care needs to be taken that immediate and ongoing impact of the complainant on our staff and managers is monitored. Appropriate support for impacted staff can be accessed through EAP, Peer Supporter and regular discussions with their manager.

Content owner: [Health Safety and Security](#) Last updated: 10 January 2024

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OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Addressing Harmful Behaviour Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe how the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) will manage the risk of harmful behaviour directed at MSD staff by clients or other members of the public, wherever it arises.

Harmful behaviour has been identified as a Ministry-wide critical risk to health and safety, and as provided by the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, MSD is required to have available for use, and to use, appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise this risk. MSD is also bound by the Government's Protective Security Requirements, including the requirement to assess security risks, protect staff from threats of violence, and support them if they experience a harmful event.

Policy Statement

MSD's Leadership Team has agreed to the following statement:

In the delivery of our services we will not tolerate behaviour towards our staff, contractors, clients and public that could result in any form of harm.

We will always respond to behaviour that makes us feel physically or psychologically unsafe, in ways that are consistent with our values:

Manaaki Tangata – We care about the wellbeing and success of people

Tika me te pono – We do the right thing with integrity

Mahi Tahi – We work together, making a difference for communities

Whānau – We are inclusive and build a sense of belonging and place.

Harmful Behaviour

For the purposes of this policy, Harmful Behaviour is any action or conduct that is intended, or could reasonably be expected, to cause pain, fear, distress, or suffering to an individual. This may be verbal, physical, or psychological in nature and may occur in person, over the phone, or through social media or other digital communication. The behaviour may be actual, threatened or implied, and is likely to negatively impact the health, safety, or wellbeing of MSD staff or others. Harmful behaviour includes but is not limited to:

Verbal or written abuse

Intimidation and threats

Harassment and discrimination

Physical aggression or assault

Destruction of property

Offensive behaviour.

Threats of self-harm or suicide where the person attempts to attribute blame or responsibility to a staff member.

Harmful behaviour can be both a physical and a psychosocial risk.

Scope

This policy applies to all Ministry staff who may experience the effects of harmful behaviour directed at themselves or their colleagues in their capacity as employees of MSD, regardless of when or where it arises, including:

any location where MSD services are being delivered

any off-site location where MSD staff are working

public spaces where an MSD staff member is the target of harmful behaviour

staff working from home

social media and virtual spaces where an MSD staff member is the target of harmful behaviour

whether the harm is actual, threatened or implied.

The policy also applies to clients, contractors and members of the public affected by harmful behaviour whilst on Ministry premises.

This policy supports a broader approach to workplace safety and wellbeing that includes the [Positive Workplace Behaviours Policy](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-staff/policies-standards/hr/hr-policies/positive-workplace-behaviours-policy/index.html), covering the behaviour of other staff, contractors or co-workers.

Policy Principles

MSD will seek to detect or deter harmful behaviour by:

Applying all elements of the MSD security ecosystem, including:

intelligence-led assessment of client risk

alternative channels for managing clients representing elevated risks

site specific Safety Plans

signage and messaging that clearly communicates our zero tolerance of harmful behaviour,

physical design of workplaces to safely manage client interactions

CCTV camera systems

on-site security guards (Tautiaki)

access control protocols for imminent or escalating threats of harm

Assessing the risks of harmful behaviour in different contexts, including the delivery of offsite services, and minimising risks where elimination is not reasonably practicable

Upholding MSD's purpose and values. Manaaki is central to this policy: we lift and nurture the mana of others through simple acts of respect and aroha

Delivering the best possible service and outcomes for clients.

MSD will seek to minimise the impacts of harmful behaviour, by:

Providing role-specific training and guidance in the induction of all staff who work with members of the public, including:

managing complaints

de-escalation

working with people with mental illness

site safety practices and procedures.

Providing managers with training to support staff affected by harmful behaviour

Regularly updating HSSW training content and periodically providing refresher training

Providing support, debriefing and counselling to staff who experience harmful behaviour

Extending support to other people affected by harmful behaviour at our sites or caused by our work, where reasonably practicable.

MSD will seek to reduce the likelihood of harmful behaviour recurring, by:

Clearly communicating with anyone who threatens or commits harm the impact of their behaviour and consequences if it continues
Utilising formal police complaint procedures, and trespassing clients who are considered to represent a serious risk of harm[1]

Assessing additional security measures for persons or locations where a heightened risk has been assessed

Reviewing incidents, learning, and improving MSD systems and processes

Working with beneficiary advocates to understand the range of factors affecting client behaviour.

[1]Trespassing of clients should only be used when there is a high likelihood of repeated harmful behaviours, and after other options (e.g. alternative service channels, warning letters, and the use of agents) have been considered. See doogle for advice on the [trespass process](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/core-procedures/trespassed-clients/index/index.html) [https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/core-procedures/trespassed-clients/index/index.html].

Supporting people affected by harmful behaviour

Debriefing and post-incident support is an essential element of our response to harmful behaviour. It is also important to appreciate that individual reactions to an incident may differ, and that different reactions are valid. The appropriate support will be contextual and suited to the needs and circumstances of the affected person. For staff member(s), in addition to effective managerial support, options may include EAP, peer support, and/or community-based or culturally specific services or processes. See wellbeing@MSD [http://doogle/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/wellbeing-at-msd/index.html] for guidance.

EAP is available at any time to staff who feel affected by an incident, regardless of whether the incident is recent or historic. Support needs will change and may only emerge over some time.

For others who may have been affected by experiencing harmful physical or psychological behaviour in one of our workplaces, efforts should be made to contact them, and where appropriate offer relevant support. HSSW advice can be provided on individual cases healthandsafety@msd.govt.nz [mailto:healthandsafety@msd.govt.nz]).

STAR reporting

Incidents of harmful behaviour must be recorded in the MSD Health Safety and Security notification system (STAR) as soon as possible[1]. Reporting incidents ensures that appropriate follow-up actions can be taken, including ensuring that all staff affected by an incident have access to suitable support and that this is being provided in a timely manner. STAR reporting also enables incidents to be investigated both as specific cases, monitoring escalating behaviour for individual clients and in aggregate for trends or emerging issues.

If for any reason confidential support is required for staff experiencing harmful client behaviour, the STAR Sensitive Events module may also be used.

[1] HSS recommend reporting an event in STAR if any staff member has been impacted or if the behaviour (or repetition of the behaviour) could be harmful to someone else.

Our Behaviour

When responding to anyone demonstrating harmful behaviours it is important to:

Keep safety foremost

The safety of staff, clients and members of the public is paramount. Any engagement where threatening or abusive behaviour cannot be de-escalated should be terminated. If physical violence is imminent or occurring, staff should remain behind a barrier that separates staff from clients, duress alarms must be activated and all people at the location should immediately move to a safe and secure area.

Show respect and professionalism

Some clients may be feeling stressed, anxious and frustrated with their circumstances, and their anger may get directed at staff. Regardless of a person's conduct it is important to display a professional approach in all interactions. Role modelling respect can help to de-escalate situations.

Seek and model respect and cooperation

Show that we expect respect and cooperation in order to continue conversations or interactions. Where behaviour is inappropriate, address this directly and if it continues end the interaction.

Remain calm

By remaining calm we can not only prevent a situation escalating, we also role model the behaviour we expect from others.

Psychological harm

Harmful behaviour may cause physical and/or psychological harm to a worker. Psychological harm refers to adverse effects on an individual's mental health and emotional wellbeing resulting from the work environment, organisational practices, or interactions with others. This can impact a person's psychological state, social relationships, and overall quality of life, leading to stress, anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues. Psychological harm arising from harmful behaviours may include the effects of stress, anxiety, or fear arising from the experience of any form of harmful behaviour. Psychological harm may arise as a direct result of a single event, or from the cumulative impact of repeated events of a similar nature.

Psychological harm can arise from other factors in the workplace (psychosocial risks) that are outside the scope of this policy. These risks can interact and exacerbate or increase the overall level of harm a worker experiences when exposed to harmful behaviours. When assessing the impact of events, and/or considering how to respond, all contributing factors should be considered.

Any event where psychological harm has been experienced should be recorded in STAR, with follow-up actions (including post-event investigation) corresponding to the nature and severity of the event.

Contact centres and online services

Verbal abuse and threats made via telephone or email can be as harmful as those made face to face. As some elements of the security ecosystem are not applicable to or are less effective in preventing or deterring harmful behaviour directed at staff on the phone or via online channels, additional attention must be given to minimising impacts, supporting staff, and reducing recurring behaviours.

Harmful behaviour outside the workplace

As public servants, and employees of MSD, staff may experience harmful behaviour directed at them outside of the workplace, including on social media and virtual spaces. These should be recorded in STAR, and managers should provide support and assistance according to the nature of the incident.

Any offsite work activity should only be undertaken after consideration of the risks of harmful behaviour, and risk management plans should include how the safety of staff will be supported.

Threats of suicide or self-harm, or harm to others

Threats of suicide or self-harm, or harm to others, should be taken seriously and acted on with urgency. Advice and procedures for dealing with these situations can be found on Doogle [here](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/wellbeing-at-msd/workplace-mental-health-and-wellbeing/self-harm-and-suicide-facts.html) [<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/working-here/keeping-healthy-and-safe/wellbeing-at-msd/workplace-mental-health-and-wellbeing/self-harm-and-suicide-facts.html>] and [here](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/community/display/HIYA/Threats+and+security) [<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/community/display/HIYA/Threats+and+security>].

These events should be reported in STAR, and follow-up support should be provided to staff who have handled clients threatening self-harm or who are at risk of suicide.

Support to colleagues and clients

All staff have a responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of their colleagues. If it is safe to do so, they should provide immediate support and assistance to colleagues who are experiencing harmful behaviour. Colleagues and managers also have a key role in supporting their teams and each other after incidents of harmful behaviour.

Regardless of personal thresholds, it is important to be aware of how other colleagues and clients or members of the public can be affected by harmful behaviour that they find offensive or threatening.

Responsibilities

Person/Party	Responsibilities
MSD Leadership (as Officers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meet their duties of due diligence, including to ensure appropriate resources and processes are available for use, and are being used, to eliminate or minimise risks of harmful behaviour as outlined in this policy.Receive and consider HSSW reports on incidents recorded in STAR, including trends in incident numbers, types, and locations, and whether remedial actions identified have been implemented.
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uphold MSD values and respect the dignity and mana of othersEnsure new staff in client-facing roles complete relevant training modules within agreed timeframes and that all staff remain current with relevant training.Conduct regular whole-of-site training exercises that support staff safety and security.Ensure incidents of harmful behaviour are properly recorded in STAR, and that appropriate follow up and/or remedial actions are taken.Lead post-incident debriefing sessions available to all affected persons, improving processes and sharing learnings as appropriate.Ensure that suitable support is provided to any staff member affected by an incident of harmful behaviour, including paid discretionary leave, peer support, using EAP or culturally specific services as appropriate and as supported by the affected person(s).Wherever practicable, contact and extend support to clients affected by incidents of harmful behaviour.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uphold MSD values and respect the dignity and mana of others.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show care for the safety and wellbeing of their colleagues. • Complete and remain current with safety-related training, including role- and site-specific training. • When working offsite, follow approved processes and protocols. • Ensure incidents of harmful behaviour are properly recorded in STAR.
Health Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and report to MSD leadership on the implementation of this policy. • Monitor, analyse and report to MSD leadership regarding incidents recorded in STAR, including trends in incident numbers, types, and locations, and whether remedial actions identified in investigations have been implemented. • With Learning and Capability, design safety-related training for staff and managers.
Learning and Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With HSSW, design safety-related training for staff and managers.

Definitions

Word/phrase	Definition
Harmful behaviour	<p>Any behaviour that is intended or could reasonably be expected to cause pain, fear, distress or suffering, including threats or the implication of intention to cause harm, and including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical harm to a person or someone associated with them • emotional or psychological harm, such as feelings of fear or anxiety • behaviours that are abusive of or offensive to a person based on their identity.
Tolerance	<p>The MSD Health and Safety Policy states that “the Ministry will ... show zero tolerance for harmful behaviours that put our people and others we work with at risk”. A key part of this statement is “behaviours that put our people at risk”. Many clients are experiencing considerable stress and dealing with complex issues, and may express this inappropriately, but without intent to cause harm. “Zero tolerance to harmful behaviour” does not mean that events will never happen, but if there is a risk of harm then we will always respond.</p> <p>For even the most minor events, that includes reporting the event in STAR, including who was affected and what follow-up actions have been taken.</p>
Security ecosystem	The range of security features (including physical features and 'soft' controls such as training) that form layers of protection that work together to help keep people safe.
STAR	The MSD Health Safety and Security notification system STAR stands for Safety, Threats, Accidents and Risks.
Psychosocial risks	Factors associated with a person's work, work environment, or workplace relationships that have the potential to cause psychological harm.
Psychological harm	The adverse effects on an individual's mental health resulting from exposure to psychosocial risks.

Related policies and procedures

Policy/procedure	Description
Health and Safety Policy	MSD's overarching policy for health and safety
Offsite Safety and Security Policy	Processes and protocols for staff working offsite
Positive Workplaces Policy	Outlines the workplace behaviours, expectations and responsibilities for our people, as well as the support and options available for dealing with inappropriate behaviour

Content owner: [Health Safety and Security](#) Last updated: 11 July 2025

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