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Fire and Emergency New Zealand
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Ref: 18767

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request of 21 July 2025 to Fire and Emergency New Zealand requesting information relating to workplace bullying, harassment, and sexual harm from 2020 and 2025 under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). We copy and respond to your questions below.

1. *What data do you collect about workplace bullying, harassment or sexual harm incidents occurring in your organisation? (For clarity, this includes requests for advice, assistance, informal notifications or formal complaints relating to these types of behaviour.)*
2. *Please provide a list of the data fields used to record information about workplace bullying, harassment or sexual harm, at each stage of the process you follow (from first contact and initial inquiry through to case closure).*
 - a. *Please include an explanation of the classifications used in each data field and any specific terminology, so it can be easily understood by someone from outside your organisation.*

Fire and Emergency previously managed complaints through the Behaviour and Conduct Office (BCO), with the interim BCO first being established in March 2019, and the permanent BCO being stood up in October 2021. It was formally disestablished on 30 June 2024 and did not assume responsibility for any new complaints after this date.

Since 29 April 2024, Fire and Emergency has contracted an external complaints service for bullying, harassment, and sexual harm incidents, Speak Safe @ Fair Way (Speak Safe). The Speak Safe service offers confidential workplace coaching for all workplace issues and concerns, as well as complaints management and investigation services. Mediations and facilitations are also offered and approved on a case-by-case basis.

Paid employees, volunteers and contractors can use Speak Safe to discuss options, engage in its coaching service ([Kāpehu](#)), or make a formal complaint, and must consent for an investigation to proceed should their complaint be identified as meeting the threshold for investigation. Callers to the Speak Safe service are labelled initially as “Service Requests” regardless of which service they engage with.

Data is collected by Fair Way, and through their triage system they categorise the nature of the issue by the most serious of the issues that the caller presents with. Most Service Requests involve a caller presenting with several issues.

Fair Way report on Service Requests broken down by category: sexual harassment, bullying, victimisation, and complex relationship issues. They also report on the same subcategories for Kāpehu use. These categories are defined and detailed in the [International Ombudsman Association Uniform Reporting Categories](#).

Fire and Emergency also records the nature of formal complaints alleging bullying, harassment, and victimisation internally under one or more of the following categories:

- Bullying
- Racial harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Sexual harm
- Sexual harm/harassment
- Inappropriate and/or unacceptable behaviour

Regarding the stage at which complaints are at, each of them is recorded as either open or closed. We do not record information around advice or informal enquiries relating to bullying, harassment, and victimisation.

3. *Please provide a list of all reports produced by your organisation concerning workplace bullying, harassment or sexual harm?*
 - *Please include a brief explanation for each report of:*
 - * *who is responsible for its creation (i.e. the job title/role, not individual names)*
 - * *how often they are produced*
 - * *to whom they are distributed (job titles/roles)*
 - * *the purpose of the report, and*
 - * *the information and any data fields contained in each report.*

Fire and Emergency’s People Branch produce and disseminate a six-monthly Complaints Management Dashboard. The Independent Review of Fire and Emergency’s Workplace Culture and Complaint Handling Practices report (Clark Report), released in December 2022, recommended that “*There is improved communication around complaint handling*”. This recommendation talks to Fire and Emergency ensuring visibility of our complaints data and information to ensure insights, behaviour, and patterns can be interpreted and addressed accordingly.

The dashboard has been built to show high level key data across the complaints system bringing both Fair Way and Fire and Emergency’s data into one place to provide a complete picture of our end-to-end complaints management process. The aim of the dashboard is to:

- Provide transparency to stakeholders into the nature and frequency of complaints with the aim of fostering trust.
- Identify trends by visualising complaint data, allowing us to identify patterns of recurring issues and therefore prioritise areas of improvement.
- Monitor performance particularly around length of time cases remain open.
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement through regularly reviewing data and making changes based on feedback and trends.

Overall, this dashboard enhances visibility into complaints data, enabling proactive management and fostering a responsive organisational culture. As the volume of data surrounding our complaints system grows, the dashboard will be updated to show year on year trends across the system.

The dashboard is available to all personnel in Fire and Emergency (via our Portal) and run on a six-monthly cadence in line with Fair Way reporting. Our key stakeholders include our personnel (volunteers, paid employees and contractors on the organisational chart), as well as our unions and associations, and employee led networks are also provided with a copy of this report.

Fire and Emergency also receives reporting from Fair Way, who provide monthly statistical data and quarterly insights reports that include data on bullying, harassment, victimisation and sexual harassment. This information is distributed to the Manager Strategic Relationships, Corporate Services. The report(s) are then shared with Deputy Chief Executives (DCE) Corporate Services and People Branch. Within People Branch, it is shared with the People Advisory team who engage with appropriate managers around lessons and trends identified.

The quarterly insights report is also shared with Reporting and Insights, People Branch and some of the data is used to inform the Complaints Management Dashboard.

Quarterly engagement update sessions are held with unions and associations by Fair Way on the Speak Safe service. These are organised by the Manager Strategic Relationships. Update sessions are also provided to employee led networks, leadership teams, regions, brigades, or other groups on request.

The purpose of this reporting is to:

- provide evidence of compliance with contract specifications for the Speak Safe service; agreed processes and service offerings are evidenced.
- Provide insights and data to Fire and Emergency to inform emerging trends and issues.
- Provide reporting on the uptake of the service offerings, such as the investigations opened, pending, closed, as well as the use of Kāpehu, mediations, and facilitations.
- Provide data on timeliness connected to the investigations process and Fire and Emergency's decision-making responsibilities in this process.

Please provide responses to Q4-7 for the period 2020-2025 (inclusive), broken down by calendar year and listed under the headings of

(a) workplace bullying

(b) harassment

(c) sexual harm

4. *The total number of incidents recorded.*
Please also break these down according to any sub-categorisations you use internally to differentiate types of bullying, harassment or sexual harm incidents.

Behaviour and Conduct Office – 2020-2024

As mentioned earlier, before Speak Safe, Fire and Emergency managed complaints through the BCO from March 2019 to 30 June 2024. Please see **Table 1** of the attached **Appendix** for a breakdown of BCO cases involving bullying, harassment, or sexual harm from 2020 to 2024, broken down by the categories and sub-categories each case is recorded against in the BCO register.

Please note that the BCO did not distinguish between enquiries (e.g. asking for information or support) and complaints. Our response to this question therefore captures all matters that were raised with and logged by the BCO, not just formal complaints.

Cases were categorised according to the key allegation or theme in the complaint or enquiry. Many cases involved multiple allegations which did not all necessarily fit into the same category. Therefore, while your request asks about the number of 'incidents', we have provided the number of cases raised with the BCO, rather than the precise number of instances of unwanted interpersonal behaviour (e.g. bullying or harassment).

Speak Safe @ Fair Way – 2024-2025

Please note that as Speak Safe launched on 29 April 2024, we only hold data from Fair Way since the launch date in 2024 and until 30 June 2025, the most recent reporting period before your request was made.

Please note that while your request asks about the number of "incidents", Fair Way report on Service Requests, which may relate to multiple matters. Please see **Table 4** of the **Appendix** for data representing these requests by calendar year and category.

The figures in this table may be higher than the actual number of Service Requests received in any given year, as some Service Requests fall under more than one category. The information therefore gives an overall view of the nature of the Service Requests, not the precise number of incidents or complaints.

Other cases – 2020-2025

Between 2020 and 2025, cases relating to bullying, harassment, and sexual harm have also been recorded outside of the BCO and the Speak Safe service. Please see **Table 8** of the **Appendix** for data detailing the number of these cases by category and calendar year. Please note that the figures in this table may be higher than the actual number of complaints received in any given year, as some complaints fall under more than one category. The information therefore gives an overall view of the nature of the cases, not the precise number of incidents or complaints.

5. *The number of incidents that involved a formal investigation, broken down to show:*
(i) internal investigations (i.e. those conducted by people employed by your organisation)

(ii) independent external investigations (i.e. external lawyers, investigators or other 3rd parties engaged for the purpose of conducting the investigation)

6. *The outcomes of the investigations completed in Q5 (using whatever categorisations your organisation records internally against cases).*

Behaviour and Conduct Office – 2020-2024

Regarding investigations for which the BCO was responsible, please see **Table 2** of the **Appendix**, which details the number of investigations broken down by whether they were internal or external investigations and the calendar year.

Please see **Table 3** of the **Appendix**, which details the outcome of these investigations broken down by calendar year. Please note the following about this information:

- Prior to October 2021, the interim BCO acted only as a triaging service and did not conduct its own investigations. The BCO only holds full records for the complaints which it investigated itself.
- This information does not therefore include cases that were closed before October 2021, when the permanent BCO was established and took over responsibility for commissioning investigations of new cases.
- Similarly, the decision to disestablish the BCO was made in September 2023, several months before Speak Safe began operating. In light of the BCO's impending closure, complaints received after September 2023 were generally referred on to other parts of the organisation for consideration and, if necessary, investigation.
- Our response to this question breaks the cases down by the year in which the complaint was received, not the date when the outcome was determined. We note that the commencement and conclusion of the investigation, and any resulting disciplinary process, would not necessarily occur in the same calendar year.

In respect of both **Table 2** and **Table 3**:

- Where an investigation had multiple complainants but only one subject, there is only one entry, to reflect that allegations against only one person have been made.
- Where an investigation had multiple subjects, entries have been made for each subject, to reflect that allegations against each different person have been made.

Both tables reflect the number of individuals whose behaviour was investigated, which differs from the number of investigations commissioned, given that some investigations had multiple subjects.

Speak Safe @ Fair Way – 2024-2025

Regarding data on investigations through Speak Safe, please see **Table 5** of the **Appendix**, which details the number of investigations opened by Fair Way, and of those investigations, how many have been closed by calendar year. Since these investigations are all undertaken by Fair Way, we consider that they are all 'external' investigations for the purposes of this request.

Please see **Table 6** and **Table 7** of the **Appendix** for information about the category and outcome of these investigations, broken down by calendar year. Please note that investigations may fall under more than one of the specified categories, so the data provides the percentage of total

investigations in which any given category was a significant issue. Please also note some investigations may have multiple outcomes.

Other investigations – 2020-2025

There have been investigations of cases relating to bullying, harassment, and sexual harm in 2020 to 2025 that have taken place outside of the BCO or the Speak Safe service. However, Fire and Emergency does not have a central system or database from which this information can be produced. In order to identify the information requested, we would therefore need to manually check and the collate individual records to provide further data in response to your request.

For this reason, we are partially refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. We have considered whether seeking refinement of the request, extending the time to respond, or fixing a charge would remove the reason for refusal, and enable us to provide the information, but do not consider it would.

While Fire and Emergency does not centrally record which cases (outside of BCO and Speak Safe) involved a formal investigation, their outcome is recorded. Please see **Table 9** of the **Appendix**, which details the outcome of cases broken down by category and calendar year. Please note that cases with unknown outcomes have not been included.

7. *The number of people who have left your organisation who were:*
(a) complainants (i.e. people who raised any inquiry or complaint)
(b) respondents (i.e. people who were the subject of any inquiry or complaint allegations)

When personnel leave Fire and Emergency, we do not routinely record whether they were party to a complaint as either a complainant or respondent. To identify this information, we would therefore have to search our individual records of every person who has left Fire and Emergency since 2020 to check whether they were involved in a complaint and categorise them accordingly. This would be a significant undertaking to complete, and we consider that it would have an unreasonable impact on our normal operations.

For this reason, we are refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. We have considered whether seeking refinement of the request, extending the time to respond, or fixing a charge would remove the reason for refusal, and enable us to provide the information, but do not consider it would. Even if the timeframe was narrowed, considerable research would still have to go into identifying this information.

Please provide responses to Q8-9 for the period 2020-2025 (inclusive), broken down by calendar year.

8. *The number of settlement agreements (or other legal agreements containing any form of non-disclosure requirement) signed by people leaving your organisation who were:*
(a) complainants who raised any inquiry or complaint about workplace bullying, harassment or sexual harm.
(b) respondents who were the subject of any inquiry or complaint about workplace bullying, harassment or sexual harm.

Please see **Table 10** of the **Appendix** which details the number of settlement agreements that we could definitively identify as being signed by individuals that were the complainant or respondent in a complaint relating to bullying, harassment, or sexual harm, broken down by whether they were a complainant or a respondent.

Fire and Emergency does not have a central system or database where record of such agreements has been routinely stored and recorded. We have therefore had to undertake a manual search of our records. There may be agreements that we were unable to identify or which we were unable to determine whether they related to a complaint about bullying, harassment, or sexual harm of any kind.

While we do hold record of these agreements that would allow us to answer this aspect of your request, identifying and bringing together this information to provide a more complete dataset would be a significant manual task. We would have to manually check and collate this information from individual records.

For this reason, we are partially refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. We have considered whether seeking refinement of the request, extending the time to respond, or fixing a charge would remove the reason for refusal, and enable us to provide the information, but do not consider it would.

9. *The amount spent by your organisation on external legal advice for:*
- (a) legal services or advice provided in conducting independent investigations in Q5 (ii)*
 - (b) other advice provided about any other matters involving workplace bullying, harassment or sexual harm*

Fire and Emergency holds information relating to bullying, harassment, and sexual harm in several different places, and there is no single central system or database that records the amount spent on legal services or advice provided in conducting independent investigations, or other advice provided about other matters involving workplace bullying, harassment, or sexual harm. To provide this information, we would therefore have to identify and collate information from several different sources, over a number of years, and we consider that doing so would have an unreasonable impact on our normal operations.

For this reason, we are refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. We have considered whether seeking refinement of the request, extending the time to respond, or fixing a charge would remove the reason for refusal, and enable us to provide the information, but do not consider it would. Even if the timeframe was narrowed, considerable research would still have to go into identifying this information.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

We trust that the information being provided is of assistance. If you require further information, please email officialinformationrequests@fireandemergency.nz

Please note that because of the identified public interest in the information that you have requested, we intend to publish this response (with your personal details removed) on our website.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Saunders'.

Aidan Saunders
Manager, Information Requests

