

# Fact sheet

## Creating environments that do not allow bullying to flourish

The most effective way to prevent bullying is to establish positive work environments and develop workplace cultures that do not allow bullying to flourish. Workers should have a shared understanding about expected behaviours and people should be able to easily identify behaviours that are not appropriate or acceptable.

Workplaces that prevent bullying have:



Strong and well-communicated policies and processes regarding bullying



Leadership commitment to preventing bullying and intervening where it occurs



Positive communication



Practices that affirm diversity

## Policies and processes regarding bullying

Organisations must have a clear policy regarding bullying in the workplace. Policies should include but not be limited to:

- A definition of bullying
- Clearly explained organisational commitments to bullying prevention
- Clear expectations around communication and role clarity
- Clear processes for reporting and managing a complaint about bullying

In addition to a stand-alone bullying policy it is also useful to review other organisational policies and documents to ensure they reflect that bullying is not acceptable. This could include ensuring the organisation has stated values or including a commitment to a bullying-free workplace in the organisation's code of conduct.

**If your organisation does not have a current policy, WorkSafe NZ has an example template [here](#).**



## Leadership commitment to preventing bullying

**Te tohu o te rangatira, he manaaki. The sign of a chief is to support, protect, look out for – generosity and care for others.** (Whitinui, Glover, & Hikuroa, 2013)

Leaders and managers play a vital role in establishing the culture in a workplace. To prevent bullying, leaders must be able to clearly communicate and model the expectations of the organisation and these expectations must be set out by the organisational policy.

All leaders and managers should be able to access training so they have clear understandings of the factors that may increase the likelihood of bullying and the confidence to create environments and teams that are bullying-free. Leaders also need to be equipped and supported so they can have conversations regarding expected behaviour and know how to manage complaints that may arise.

## Positive communication that is mana-enhancing

Encouraging open and respectful communication and social interaction between workers is an important way to prevent workplace bullying.

The [Working Well – Positive Communication at Work](#) is a resource designed to build a culture of positive communication together, based on having clear intentions, asking more – telling less, valuing relationships and making it safe to speak up. Using the tools in this resource will assist managers and their teams to create open communication that is respectful and mana-enhancing.

In addition to this, other things to prevent bullying include:

### 1. Discuss expected behaviours and what bullying is with teams on a regular basis

It can take some time for people to realise they are being bullied as the behaviour usually happens over a period of time and can sometimes be hard to identify. Sometimes people will have a feeling something is not quite right but might dismiss it or not feel confident enough to ask for support. Talking about expected behaviours and being clear about what bullying is will help people to be more aware of any unacceptable behaviour they may be experiencing or observing.

### 2. Have a range of channels for people to speak up

It is important people feel safe to raise issues regarding bullying. People should be able to raise issues around bullying with their direct manager, but sometimes the manager may be part of the problem. It's essential for every worker to have more than one person they know they can talk with about any issues they are experiencing. Smaller organisations may find this challenging but it is important to consider. Alternative people could include a health and safety representative, another manager, a close colleague or even an external EAP counsellor.

### 3. Participate in [Pink Shirt Day](#) to help your workplace **Kōrero Mai, Kōrero Atu, Mauri Tū, Mauri Ora – Speak Up, Stand Together, Stop Bullying**

Pink Shirt Day, [a national anti-bullying campaign](#), is a great opportunity to have discussions around bullying and to affirm diversity. Use the day to educate your people about bullying and highlight your organisation's policies and processes so they know what your workplace is doing to prevent and address bullying.



## Affirming diversity

Studies suggest people who bully others are more likely to choose targets who have a different ethnicity, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation, or because they have a disability.<sup>1,2</sup>


Organisations must have clear policies and commitments to affirming the identities of all workers and acknowledge the richness that people with different experiences bring to organisations.

Where possible diversity training for people leaders and all staff can make a huge difference to increasing safety and preventing bullying in the workplace. Other ideas can include running staff networking days or holding events that provide opportunities for people to talk about their identity, culture, beliefs, who they are, and to learn more about each other.

Here are some useful resources to help you to develop policies and procedures that works towards more diverse and inclusive workplaces:

- [Rainbow Rights](#)
- [Inclusive \(policies, systems and procedures\)](#)
- [Diversity Works NZ](#)
- [Inclusive \(safe inclusive environments – for schools but relevant for workplaces\)](#)
- [Treaty workshops and other resources](#)
- [Te Reo lessons in the workplace](#)
- [Te Reo resources for the workplace](#)
- [Sign up for a Māori word of the day or week](#)

You can also get in touch with [RainbowYOUTH](#) or [InsideOUT](#) for more guidance.



**“Inclusive workplaces respect difference and value the diverse qualities people bring to their work. Real diversity is about embracing the whole person and building successful teams that recognise difference as a source of innovation, creativity, and new connections.”** (Diversity Works, 2019)

1 Gardner, D., Bentley, T. A., Catley, B. E., Cooper-Thomas, H., O’Driscoll, M. P., & Trenberth, L. (2013). Ethnicity, workplace bullying, social support and psychological strain in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

2 Westpac. (2015). Westpac survey: Kiwi workplace acceptance of Rainbow Community surface deep. Retrieved from Westpac: <https://www.westpac.co.nz/rednews/business/westpac-survey-kiwis-only-surfacedeep-acceptance-of-rainbow-community/>