



Social Sector Accreditation Standards

Level 4

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About us

Te Hītori | History

We were established in 1989 as part of the Department of Social Welfare (which later became the Ministry of Social Development), to assess social service organisations against a set of standards.

In 2016, a group of government agencies developed and published the Social Sector Accreditation Standards, which included ten core standards and specialist standards. Our unit became Social Services Accreditation and we expanded to provide assessment services for other government agencies.

In 2021 we became Te Kāhui Kāhu, which was endorsed by Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo (Māori Language Commission). We identified with 'Te Kāhui Kāhu' which refers to a cluster of hawks, a metaphor for the keen and sharp sight of our assessors.

We assess organisations on behalf of several government agencies. These agencies are listed on our website.

Our work means government agencies can be confident that approved or accredited providers have the systems in place to operate effectively and to deliver services that are safe for people to use.

Moemoeā | Vision

New Zealanders are confident to use social services that help them live the lives they choose.

Kaupapa | Purpose

We help to make sure that social services are safe for New Zealanders to use.

Aronga | Mission

We assess social services against a set of standards to help them succeed.

Ngā Uara | Values

In February 2025, we launched our new uara, co-designed with kaimahi (staff). To help embed these meaningfully, *tohu* (symbols) were created. Each *tohu* draws on *toi Māori* principles and tells the story of the uara it represents.

Introduction to the standards

There are 10 core standards and three specialist standards. Each standard has a set of criteria with guidance to help you understand how to meet the criteria.

Using the guidance

We collaborated with a group of social service organisations to understand how they use our information to meet the standards, what works for them and what causes problems. The providers told us they want us to be clearer about what they must do to meet the standards.

The guidance now explains this more clearly. Under each criteria we will ask you for documents or a conversation to understand whether your organisation has met the criteria. We may also ask for further information to confirm that what you have shown or shared with us is reflected in your practice.

We provide a series of prompts, which are explained below:

- **Show us** means we need to see an electronic or physical document
- **Share with us** means we need you to explain how something works in your organisation
- **Notes** are additional information that will help you meet the standard
- **Important** highlights significant information
- **Recommended resources** link you to additional information
- **Legislation** links you to legislation
- ☐ Tickable circle if you want to tick off each show us/share with us when they are done.

Acknowledgements

We extend our humble appreciation to the community leaders and social service providers, who generously contributed their time, expertise, and insight to the preparation of this document. Their involvement was fundamental to ensuring inclusion, cultural integrity, and māramatanga (understanding). Their partnership has enriched this project and its outcomes.

Contributing organisations

- Barnardos Aotearoa
- Christchurch Resettlement Services
- Kainga Pasifika Services
- K'aute Pasifika Trust
- Kura Kārearea
- Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services
- Out of School Care Network (OSCN)
- Te Rūnanga o Kirikiriroa
- Raukawa Whānau Ora
- Wellington Women's Refuge

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Client-Centred Services

The organisation treats people with respect and delivers services in a manner that has regard for their dignity, privacy and independence.

Why this standard matters

People using your service have the right to be heard, respected and actively involved in decisions that impact them. They deserve to be treated with manaaki and mana.

Criteria 1

The organisation promotes client-centred practice as central to its service development and delivery.

Guidance

Share with us

- ☐ How you involve clients in developing your services, and how you seek their feedback on the services they receive.

Show us

- ☐ Your policies and procedures for managing allegations of abuse and other concerning situations. These must include:
 - clear information about the different types of abuse or neglect
 - the steps staff must follow when responding to a concern, and how it will be recorded
 - a process for reporting concerns to Oranga Tamariki, NZ Police or relevant professional bodies when required.

Legislation:

Reporting of child abuse | Oranga Tamariki Act 1989

Recommended resources:

Identifying Elder Abuse | Office for Seniors

What is Child Abuse? | Child Matters

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Staffing

The organisation has the staffing capability and capacity to deliver services safely.

Why this standard matters

Taking steps to employ and engage people who can keep others safe will uphold the mana of your organisation and the communities you serve.

Criteria 1

The organisation's staffing and staff relations policy and procedures comply with the relevant legislation.

Guidance

Share with us

- ☐ How you ensure your staffing policies and procedures meet current employment laws.

Criteria 2

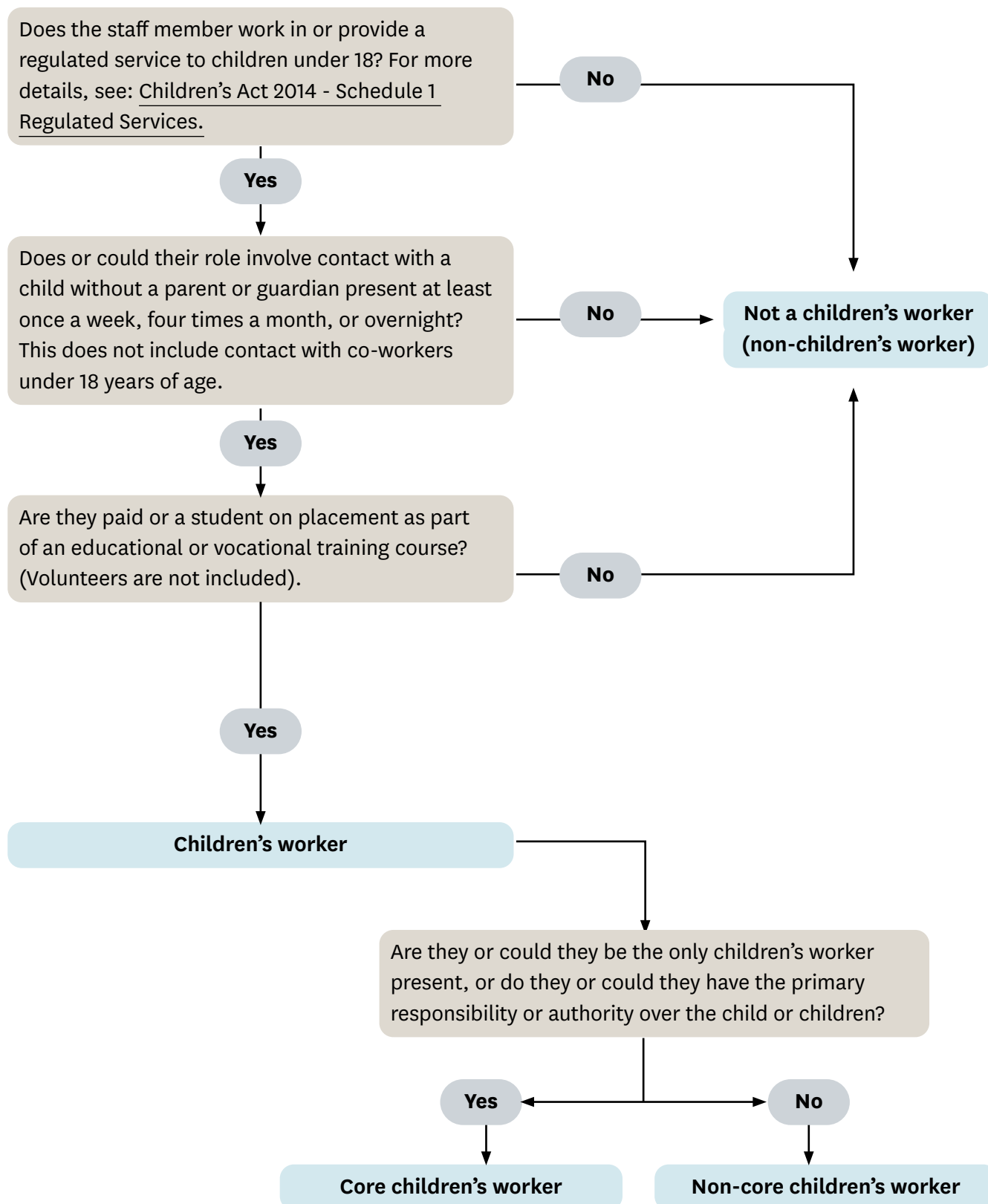
The organisation includes in its definition of staff anyone the organisation relies on to deliver its services. This includes caregivers, volunteers and contractors, as well as paid staff members.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ Your staffing policies and procedures define 'staff' as anyone working for your organisation. For example:
- paid employees
 - governance members, e.g. board or committee members
 - contractors
 - interns
 - volunteers
 - people involved in religious ministry, e.g. pastors, priests or faith leaders.
- ☐ You have identified and documented which roles in your organisation, if any, are core children's worker roles or non-core children's worker roles.

You can use this flowchart to help you work out whether a staff member is a **children's worker** under the Children's Act 2014, and whether they are **core** or **non-core**.



Recommended resources:

[Definition of children's worker | The Children's Act 2014](#)

[Guide to children's worker safety checking | Oranga Tamariki](#)

Criteria 3

The organisation uses a clear, transparent and open process for recruiting and vetting suitable staff including members of the organisation’s governance body. Vetting of staff is to include, but is not limited to, a New Zealand Police vet

Important: A children’s worker safety check has several components. The safety check is not complete until every component has been completed. The risk assessment must be completed last, as it should consider all information gathered during the earlier steps. A risk assessment is required even when no concerns are identified.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ Your recruitment policies and procedures include processes for:
- assessing the skills, experience and qualifications relevant to the role
 - completing reference checks
 - checking the status of professional registration, if required
 - completing an MoJ check or NZ Police vet
 - completing safety checks for children’s workers before they are employed or engaged.

Important: Send us your policies and procedures that explain what type of vet or check your staff need. Do not send any completed vetting results.

Use this information to help you decide which vetting checks to include in your staffing policies and procedures.

A NZ Police vet is required for:

- core or non-core children’s workers, and must be completed as part of the safety check, before employment
- any staff member or volunteer who:
 - works or volunteers with vulnerable adults
 - volunteers with children
 - works with children but is not considered a children’s worker.

A MoJ check is required for:

- all other staff, including governance members.

Note: A NZ Police vet must match the role of the staff member. If they move into a role that requires a NZ Police vet, a new one must be completed. If they become a children’s worker, a full safety check (including receiving and reviewing the NZ Police vet result) must be completed before they begin the new role.

Note: If you request a NZ Police vet for an applicant and your request is declined by the Vetting Service, complete a MoJ check and keep the decline in your records.

Show us

- ☐ If you employ children's workers, your recruitment policies and procedures include the process for completing safety checks for them before they are employed or engaged. These checks include:
- **identity confirmation** confirming the person is who they say they are by sighting one primary form of ID and one secondary form of ID (or by using an electronic identity service like RealMe), then confirming their identity has not been used by someone else in your organisation
 - **work history from the last five years**, or as much as possible if they've worked for less than five years or have had a break in employment
 - **at least one reference check** where the referee was asked questions about whether the person is safe to be around children
 - **interview notes** that show questions were asked to help determine if the person is safe to work with children
 - **professional registration** if required
 - **NZ Police vet results** including a review of the result
 - **a completed risk assessment** which should consider
 - all information gathered during the safety check
 - whether the person is safe to work with children, any risks they present and how serious those risks are
 - whether a core worker exemption has been granted (if relevant see criteria 3.2).

Note: If you employ or engage a children's worker who is registered and has a current practising certificate from the Teaching Council of New Zealand, they will already have been police vetted as part of their three-year certification process.

Recommended cover sheet for children's worker files:

Children's worker initial safety checking cover sheet

Recommended resources:

Children's (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Workers) Regulations 2015

Criminal record check | Ministry of Justice

NZ Police Vetting Service | NZ Police

Vetting | Te Kāhui Kāhu

Important: If you employ or engage core children’s workers (see definition on page 6), your recruitment policies and procedures must include a process to identify whether an applicant has a specified offence under Schedule 2 of the Children’s Act 2014, or an equivalent overseas offence.

It is illegal to employ or engage any person as a core children’s worker if they have a conviction for a Schedule 2 (Children’s Act) offence in New Zealand, or an equivalent offence overseas, unless they have a core worker exemption.

Show us

☐ If you employ or engage core children’s workers, your recruitment policies and procedures for checking overseas convictions include how you:

- identify whether an applicant for a core worker role has an overseas conviction
- decide whether any overseas offence is equivalent to a Schedule 2 (Children’s Act) New Zealand offence
- inform the applicant they can seek a review of any assessment that the offence is equivalent
- advise the applicant to apply for a core worker exemption if required, and
- document the process, including how you have decided whether or not an overseas conviction is equivalent to a Schedule 2 (Children’s Act) New Zealand offence.

Note: A NZ Police vet will identify specified offences committed in New Zealand. You can request an Australian police vet through the New Zealand Police vetting service but this will not inform you if the offence is equivalent to a Schedule 2 (Children’s Act) New Zealand offence. For information on obtaining checks from countries other than New Zealand and Australia and for determining whether overseas offences are equivalent to specified offences, see the Ministry of Education’s guidance.

Recommended resources:

[Core children’s workers and overseas convictions | Ministry of Education](#)

[Core children’s workers and overseas convictions | Te Kāhui Kāhu](#)

[Core worker convicted of specified offence not to be employed or engaged | Section 28 of the Children’s Act 2014](#)

[Specified Offences | Schedule 2 of the Children’s Act 2014](#)

Show us

- ☐ For staff who are not children’s workers, your recruitment policies, procedures and the letter of offer or agreement clearly state that:
- job applicants must be vetted (including but not limited to a NZ Police vet or MoJ check, as required)
 - job offers will not be made until the vet or check results have been received and reviewed, or will be conditional on a satisfactory result from the vet or check.

Share with us

- ☐ How you made sure clients were not exposed to undue risk if a staff member who is not a children’s worker started in their role before vet or check results were received and reviewed.
- ☐ What actions were taken, if any, once the results were received.

Important: If a re-check of your staff’s vetting uncovers new information since their employment or engagement, it is your responsibility to consider the results and decide any further action.

Show us

- ☐ Your recruitment policies and procedures include a process to repeat the following, at least every three years:
- NZ Police vet for staff and volunteers who are children’s workers and/or work with vulnerable adults
 - MoJ check for all other staff (including governance board or committee members).
- ☐ If you employ or engage children’s workers, your recruitment policies and procedures also include a process to repeat the following parts of the safety check at least every three years:
- identity confirmation if the person’s name has changed since the last safety check
 - professional registration, if required
 - risk assessment.

Recommended cover sheet for children’s worker files:

Children’s worker periodic safety checking cover sheet | Te Kāhui Kāhu

Criteria 3.1

The organisation will follow a robust decision-making process in responding to the results of vetting, including safety checking.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ Your staffing policies and procedures include:
 - how you respond to and record concerning findings from vetting of new or existing staff
 - who is responsible for decisions to appoint or retain staff, and any action taken when concerns arise
 - a decision-making process for addressing concerns about new or existing staff that considers
 - how serious the concern is
 - conviction history, how recent, if it shows a pattern of behaviour, and any rehabilitative steps they have taken
 - how it affects their suitability for the role
 - any risk to the safety and wellbeing of the people you support.
- ☐ The policy or procedure you follow to decide whether to appoint or retain any staff whose vetting checks raised concerns.

Criteria 3.2

The organisation effectively manages any staff with a conviction, including members of governance.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ Your staffing policies and procedures include a documented risk management plan for any new or existing staff who may present a risk to other people. This covers:
 - what risk has been identified
 - who is involved and their responsibilities
 - the staff member's agreement to the risk management plan
 - review timeframes
 - any required supervision, restrictions or supports.

Show us

- ☐ If you employ or engage core children’s workers, your staffing policies and procedures state you will not employ a core children’s worker who has been convicted of a specified offence, unless they have a core worker exemption.

Recommended resource:

[Core worker exemption application process | Te Kāhui Kāhu](#)

Criteria 4

All staff members have a written agreement of service.

Show us

- ☐ The agreement of service templates your organisation uses for each staffing role you employ or engage include the following:
- an employment agreement that includes or is accompanied by a job description or position description
 - a volunteer agreement
 - a contractor agreement
 - an agreement for people involved in religious ministry, e.g. pastors, priests or faith leaders
 - any other relevant agreement.



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Health and Safety

The organisation ensures clients, staff and visitors are protected from risk.

Why this standard matters

People who come to your premises, including staff, clients and visitors should be kept safe from harm. They need to know how you will keep them safe, and what you will do if something goes wrong.

Criteria 1

The organisation ensures clients, staff and visitors are protected from risk.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ You have health and safety policies and procedures that include:
- how you identify and manage hazards
 - how staff are involved in health and safety matters
 - safety and emergency plans that explain what people need to do in an emergency
 - reports of regular maintenance inspections for all premises
 - reporting all notifiable events to WorkSafe, and to NZ Police if the event involves suspected criminal activity.

Note: A notifiable event involves serious injury, illness, incident or death. Notifiable events must be reported to WorkSafe.

Show us

- ☐ You have a detailed business continuity and disaster recovery plan that is tailored to the size of your organisation and the services you provide, that describes your civil defence supplies and how you make sure they are easy to find.

Recommended resource:

Get your work ready for an emergency | getready.govt.nz

[Managing Work Risks | WorkSafe NZ](#)

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Governance and Management Structure and Systems

The organisation has a clearly defined and effective governance and management structure and systems.

Why this standard matters

Clear reporting lines help people understand what their roles are, how decisions are made and who is responsible for them. As kaitiaki, this means decisions are made responsibly and the safety, wellbeing and privacy of all people is protected.

Criteria 1

The organisation has clearly defined and effective governance and management structure and systems.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ Your New Zealand Business Number (NZBN).

Note: We will use your NZBN to check your legal status is current.

Show us

- ☐ You have documents that clearly define your governance and management structure. This could include any of the following:
- an organisational chart that shows all staff and their reporting lines and relationships, including governance and management
 - governance and management meeting minutes, management reports or other records of decisions that show how you operate
 - processes for monitoring and responding to management's performance
 - a succession plan for key positions.

Criteria 2

The organisation collects, records, stores and uses information in keeping with the relevant legislation.

Guidance

Share with us

- ☐ How you manage the collection, storage, and use of personal information to ensure you meet relevant legal requirements.

Recommended resources:

[Collecting personal information | Office of the Privacy Commissioner](#)

[Holding personal information | Office of the Privacy Commissioner](#)

[Using and disclosing personal information | Office of the Privacy Commissioner](#)

Criteria 2.1

The organisation will follow policies and procedures for the collection, use and retention of personal information.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ Your policies and procedures clearly explain:
- what personal information is
 - how you collect it
 - the reasons you collect it
 - how you make sure it is only used for the reasons it was collected, unless the law allows otherwise
 - who will have access to it
 - that people have the right to review and correct information held about them
 - how you store it securely
 - how long you will keep it, and how you safely dispose of it when it is no longer needed
 - how privacy concerns are handled, including how you report serious breaches to the Privacy Commissioner.

Note: A privacy breach is when personal information is accessed, shared, changed, lost, destroyed, or made unavailable without authorisation or by accident. If a privacy breach has caused, or is likely to cause serious harm to one or more individuals, it is considered serious and must be reported to the [Privacy Commissioner](#).

Recommended resources:

[For organisations to report privacy breaches | Privacy Commissioner](#)

[Protecting customer and employee information | business.govt.nz](#)

Criteria 2.2

The organisation will have appropriate information technology and cybersecurity safety measures in place to protect the privacy and security of information.

Guidance

Share with us

- ☐ You have security measures that include:
- digital security tools like firewalls, system updates and antivirus software
 - regularly reviewing passwords and system access
 - security to protect against theft or damage of devices
 - secure electronic waste disposal processes for devices.

Criteria 2.3

The organisation will ensure staff members understand privacy requirements.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ You have appointed one or more privacy officers.

Share with us

- ☐ How your privacy officer(s) understands and carries out their responsibilities under the Privacy Act 2020, including how they support your organisation to comply with its privacy obligations.

Note: Under the Privacy Act 2020 your organisation is required to have at least one privacy officer, who can be any member of staff.

Recommended resource:

[Privacy Officers | Privacy Commissioner](#)

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Financial Management and Systems

The organisation is financially viable and manages its finances competently.

Why this standard matters

Strong financial systems and processes support provider accountability, mana, pono and tika. Clear and transparent financial practices build trust and confidence in your services.

Criteria 1

The organisation is financially viable.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ You have signed and approved annual financial statements, prepared on the basis of your legal entity type, that confirm your organisation is solvent. These must be:
- signed by the accounting professional who prepared them
 - signed and dated by a governance representative or a senior leader responsible for financial oversight (if there is no governance structure)
 - no more than 18 months old from the end of your last financial year.

Note: If you're a sole trader or small company that isn't required to prepare full financial statements under IRD rules, you can provide two consecutive years of IR10 Financial Statements Summaries filed with IRD instead.

Recommended resource:

[Financial reporting requirements for companies | Inland Revenue](#)

Show us

- ☐ You have a current financial year projected budget, prepared on the same basis as your financial statements, showing expected income and expenses.
- ☐ You have a 12-month cash flow projection (GST inclusive) showing how you'll cover your bills on time, including:
 - income and expenses
 - new asset purchases
 - financing obligations, e.g. hire purchases, loan repayments
 - tax payments
 - drawings (for companies)
 - projected closing cash position.

Note: Larger or higher-risk organisations may need to provide more detailed projected budgets and cash flow forecasts, e.g. if you have different streams of income, rely on multiple funding sources or there is evidence that you may have financial challenges.

Recommended resources:

[Budgeting and Financial Management Guide | Business.govt.nz](https://business.govt.nz/guides/budgeting-and-financial-management-guide)

[Cash Flow Forecasting Guide | Business.govt.nz](https://business.govt.nz/guides/cash-flow-forecasting-guide)

[Cashflow template for providers | Te Kāhui Kāhu](https://kahui.govt.nz/cashflow-template-for-providers)

Show us

- ☐ You have evidence that you are compliant with tax rules, for example, GST, PAYE, income tax and other tax obligations.

Criteria 2

The organisation has financial management systems appropriate to the size and complexity of the organisation.

Guidance**Show us**

- ☐ You have policies and procedures appropriate to the size and complexity of your organisation, including policies and procedures for forward financial planning.

Show us

- ☐ How your day-to-day financial management practices align with your financial policies and procedures.

Criteria 3

The organisation has adequate insurance cover for the size and complexity of the organisation.

Guidance**Show us**

- ☐ You have liability insurance and insurance for any properties, vehicles and assets you own.
- ☐ For each type of insurance, you have a current insurance certificate or policy document (from your insurer) that includes:
- the insurer's name
 - policy coverage details
 - expiry date.
- ☐ If your organisation decides not to have certain insurance coverage, show us your written rationale for this decision.

Note: Insurance policies should align with your organisation's specific needs and consider its size and complexity.

Recommended resource:

[Commercial Insurance Overview | Insurance Council of New Zealand](#)

Recommended resource:

[Cashflow template for providers | Te Kāhui Kāhu](#)

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Resolution of Complaints Related to Service Provision

The organisation uses an effective process to resolve complaints about service provision.

Why this standard matters

People using your service have the right to speak up when something isn't working for them. They need to know their concerns will be heard, taken seriously, and resolved fairly, safely and with manaaki.

A clear complaints process gives you the chance to learn and improve your service.

Criteria 1

The organisation uses an effective process to resolve complaints about service provision.

Guidance

Show us

- ☐ You have a complaints process that:
- is easy for clients to find and follow
 - includes how to make a complaint and the steps you will take to resolve it
 - includes timeframes
 - ensures complaints are used to improve your service.

Recommended resources:

For guidance on setting timeframes for your complaints policy, refer to the [Timeframes for responding to complaints | Health and Disability Commissioner](#)

Information about how to make a complaint to Te Kāhui Kāhu is available at [Complaints | Te Kāhui Kāhu](#)



**New Zealand
Government**

Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa

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