New Zealand Red Cross
Pastoral Care Code Self-Review 2026

About this review

New Zealand Red Cross is committed to providing safe, inclusive and supportive first aid training.

As a registered Private Training Establishment, New Zealand Red Cross completes an annual self-review against the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021. This review focuses on Outcomes 1 to 4 of the Code for tertiary learners.

Our first aid courses are generally short courses, with most ranging from several hours to two days. This means our approach to pastoral care needs to fit a short-course learning environment while still providing learners with appropriate information, support and opportunities to raise concerns.

The 2026 review builds on our 2025 self-review and looks at how well our pastoral care practices are working in day-to-day first aid training, what has improved, and where we can do better.

How we carried out the review

The review used a range of information rather than relying on a single source. This included feedback from Training Team Leads and First Aid Instructors, examples of how learners have been supported during courses, learner complaints and feedback, learner achievement information, health and disability support processes, relevant procedures and learner communications, and progress against actions identified through the 2025 self-review.

We looked for evidence of what is happening in practice, how learners are being supported and whether there are areas where our systems could work better.

As part of the review, we also considered our stage of implementation for each applicable Code outcome using the implementation continuum in NZQA's self-review toolkit. The four stages are Well implemented, Implemented, Developing and Early stages. Based on the evidence reviewed, we assessed Outcomes 1 to 4 as Well implemented.

Outcome 1: A learner wellbeing and safety system

Stage of implementation: Well implemented

Our review found that learner wellbeing and safety are well embedded in first aid training.

Instructors use a range of approaches to create a safe and supportive learning environment. These include setting expectations at the beginning of courses, providing health and safety information, giving learners opportunities to raise concerns privately, allowing breaks when needed and responding to learners who experience distress, illness or other barriers to taking part.

During 2026, the process for identifying health, disability and mobility needs before courses has been strengthened. Information provided by learners is reviewed by Customer Support and, where relevant, passed to the First Aid Training Team so support can be considered before the learner arrives.

The review found examples where this information has helped instructors prepare for individual learners and make reasonable adjustments.

The review also identified an opportunity to provide instructors with further practical guidance for supporting learners with a range of additional needs.

A further opportunity is to consider how learners enrolled through group bookings can individually advise us of any additional support needs before attending training.

What we will work on

We will look at whether the group booking process can be changed so individual learners have an appropriate opportunity to tell us about additional support needs before attending training.

We will also review and look for ways to improve the information we already provide learners before their course, particularly around what to expect and how to contact us if they may need additional support.

Outcome 2: Learner voice

Stage of implementation: Well implemented

Learners have a number of ways to ask questions, raise concerns and provide feedback during and after first aid training.

During courses, instructors encourage questions, check learner understanding and use both verbal and non-verbal feedback to identify when learners may need further explanation or support. Learners can also speak privately with instructors or raise concerns with Training Team Leads.

Post-course surveys, complaints and appeals processes provide more formal ways for learners to give feedback.

The review identified several examples where learner feedback has resulted in changes to practice. These included changes to equipment, the pace and style of course delivery, explanations provided to learners and the way sensitive discussions are managed.

One of the actions from our 2025 self-review was to improve the way complaints and feedback are tracked. This work has been completed and provides better information about learner experiences and recurring themes. No critical incidents or complaints assessed as critical were identified during the review period.

Our next opportunity is to make better use of that information across the organisation. Useful learning from feedback, complaints and individual situations does not always reach the wider instructor group.

What we will work on

We will develop regular reporting of learner feedback, including key themes and trends, and explore practical ways to share relevant, anonymised lessons and examples with instructors.

The aim is to help useful learning from individual situations become shared learning across our First Aid Training Team.

Outcome 3: Safe, inclusive, supportive and accessible physical and digital learning environments

Stage of implementation: Well implemented

The review found many examples of instructors adapting their approach to meet different learner needs while maintaining course and assessment requirements.

Adjustments include providing physical supports for practical activities, changing positioning where appropriate, allowing movement or breaks, adapting explanations, using demonstrations and visual approaches, providing language support and working directly with learners to identify what will help them take part.

Learner achievement information provides another useful measure. Between January and August 2026, learners who disclosed a disability had an achievement rate of 98.85%, compared with 99.30% for learners who stated that they did not have a disability.

These figures need to be considered alongside incomplete disability information, as not all learners choose to provide this information. However, the available data does not show a material difference in achievement for learners who disclose a disability.

The review also identified opportunities to improve accessibility at some individual training venues, such as seating, room layout and access to quieter or private spaces.

There are also opportunities to continue improving the accessibility of learning resources and making greater use of visual information where appropriate.

An accessibility review was already identified as an action from the 2025 self-review. The evidence gathered in 2026 will help focus this work on the areas that matter most to learners and instructors.

What we will work on

We will review the existing accessibility action from the 2025 self-review and use the findings from this review to help determine the next steps for physical and digital learning environments.

Outcome 4: Learners are safe and well

Stage of implementation: Well implemented

The review found strong examples of instructors responding appropriately when learners become distressed, unwell or experience difficulties taking part in training.

Support can include allowing a learner to take a break, providing a quieter or private space, discussing what support would help, making reasonable adjustments, involving other staff where available, arranging emergency assistance where required or allowing the learner to rebook if continuing the course is not appropriate.

There are also examples of instructors working with learners to find ways for them to demonstrate required practical skills safely. Assessment requirements are not removed, but reasonable adjustments can be made where these allow the learner to demonstrate the required standard.

The short-course nature of first aid training can present practical challenges when learners require additional individual support. The review identified an opportunity to provide instructors with clearer practical guidance about reasonable adjustments, available support, the boundaries of their role and when other options should be considered.

What we will work on

We will develop practical guidance to help First Aid instructors respond to learners who require additional support or experience distress during training. This will cover reasonable adjustments, what support instructors can provide, when to involve others, and options such as rebooking when a learner is unable to continue with their course.

Progress since our 2025 self-review

Our 2025 self-review identified five areas for improvement.

Since then, work has been completed to review pre-course learner communications and improve the tracking of learner complaints and feedback.

The remaining actions relate to instructor induction, accessibility of learning environments, and the integration of te reo and tikanga Māori in course delivery. These actions are being monitored through our normal quality assurance action process.

The 2026 review has also helped us better understand where some of these actions should be focused. In particular, the evidence gathered from instructors and Training Team Leads provides practical information that can be used in future work on accessibility and instructor guidance.

Overall findings

Based on the evidence reviewed, New Zealand Red Cross has assessed its stage of implementation as Well implemented across Outcomes 1 to 4.

The review found that pastoral care is well embedded within the context of short first aid courses. There is strong evidence of instructors responding to individual learner needs, making reasonable adjustments, listening to learners and creating safe and supportive learning environments.

Improved pre-course processes and complaints and feedback tracking have also strengthened the systems supporting this work.

The review has not identified any major concerns with our overall approach, but has identified opportunities to make good practice more consistent and proactive.

A key theme is that a great deal of useful knowledge currently sits with individual instructors and teams. By improving pre-course information, providing instructors with practical guidance and sharing lessons from learner feedback and real situations, we can make that knowledge more widely available across the organisation.

2026 Recommendations

Based on this review, New Zealand Red Cross proposes to:

1. Review the group booking process to identify whether individual learners can be given an appropriate opportunity to advise us of additional support needs before attending training, and implement a practical solution where possible.

2. Review pre-course learner information and identify practical ways to give learners a clearer understanding of what to expect from first aid training and how to contact us if they may need additional support.

3. Develop practical instructor guidance for supporting learners with additional needs or distress, including reasonable adjustments, instructor boundaries, support options, rebooking and escalation.

4. Make better use of learner feedback and complaints information by developing regular reporting of key themes and trends, and looking at ways to share relevant, anonymised lessons and good practice with instructors.

Progress against these recommendations will be monitored through New Zealand Red Cross First Aid quality assurance processes.