

Quality Pathway Information Sheet 4

Policies and Procedures

This Information Sheet provides guidance on implementing organisation policies and procedures.

Policies and procedures are the foundation of quality management. They document the way in which all key activities in the organisation are to be conducted, setting standards and maintaining consistency.

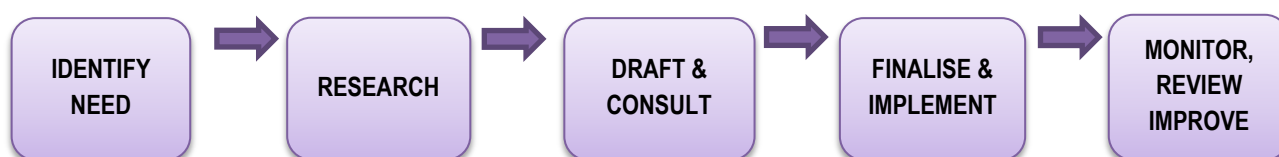
Policies are concise formal statements outlining what the organisation adheres to and aims to achieve on matters of service delivery and operations. Procedures are the details and steps of how a policy is to be applied and achieved. Policies and procedures are often accompanied by supporting documents that are used in the practical application of policies and procedures (for example, the organisation's standard forms and checklists).

Service providers need policies and procedures to communicate to and instruct the governing body and staff in consistent and good practice. They must clearly articulate expected levels of performance, activities, roles and responsibilities.

Policies and procedures are also a critical tool for ensuring the rights of customers are protected and that their safety and quality of service are guaranteed. Service providers have an ethical and legal responsibility for directing and managing procedures such as privacy protection, complaints management and critical incident or harm reporting.

Although it may seem strange, the service provider should also have a policy on how to develop, implement and review policies and procedures.

Implementing policies and procedures involves a number of steps from identifying the need for a new policy to continuously monitoring, reviewing and improving.



IDENTIFY NEED

► **Action: Assess policy need**

- Consider the effects of changes to internal and external environment and if new policies and procedures are needed, or if existing policies and procedures need amending.



Practice tip: Staff consultation

- ✓ Consulting with staff starts the policy communication and engagement process.
- ✓ Input from staff can provide unique and hands-on perspectives that may otherwise be missed.
- ✓ Successful policy implementation is more likely if staff have been engaged and the policy is relevant to them and what they do.

- Review self-assessment against standards and/or external audit reports to identify policy changes or development needed.



Practice tip: Triggers for policy review and development

- ✓ *Changes to government programs, policy, funding or legislation*
- ✓ *Implementation of quality standards or industry guidelines*
- ✓ *Implementation of new strategies, programs, services or relationships (both formal and informal)*
- ✓ *Following the outcome of complaints process or critical incident*
- ✓ *New premises or equipment*
- ✓ *Schedule of policy review and improvement*
- ✓ *As a result of self-assessment and independent audit activities.*

► **Action: Assign responsibility**

- Assign responsibilities to individuals and teams for researching, developing, approving or endorsing and implementing policies and procedures.
- Consider the time, knowledge and skills required and best fit with staff and their positions.

RESEARCH

► **Action: Research**

- Analyse the potential scope of the policy, who it will affect and relationship with other policies and procedures.
- Identify minimum requirements and desired best practice as per quality standards, industry guidelines and legislation
- Research policy topic to inform content development.

DRAFT AND CONSULT

► **Action: Draft content**

- Draft content based on policy need, minimum requirements, desired best practice and research findings.
- Use the organisation's standard policy and procedure templates.

► **Action: Consult**

- Consult with relevant staff and governing body members on the draft policy and procedure, particularly those that are likely to be impacted by the policy and procedure.
- Consult with customers and stakeholders on relevant draft policies and procedures.

FINALISE AND IMPLEMENT

► **Action: Finalise content**

- Incorporate appropriate changes to finalise policies and procedures.
- Where major changes to intent or content, a second (even if limited) consultation may be required.
- Develop supporting resources.

▶ **Action: Obtain endorsement or approval**

- Obtain and document formal endorsement or approval from designated authority (usually the governing body or delegated senior staff).

▶ **Action: Implement**

- Apply version control to all documents – recording details to ensure the most current version is able to be identified and distributed and to track changes made to previous versions, e.g.

<i>Version number</i>	<i>Date approved</i>	<i>Approved by</i>	<i>Summary of changes from previous version</i>
2015/3	2 June 2015	CEO and governing body	Updated to comply with 2015 privacy legislation. Incorporates more detail on staff responsibilities.

- Notify staff of new/updated policies, procedures and supporting documents – email, internal news, staff meeting, etc.
- Advise customers of any new/updated policies or procedures affecting them directly (such as complaints management, privacy and confidentiality etc)
- File hard and/or electronic copies in accessible locations for relevant staff.
- Provide opportunities to raise any policy implementation issues
- Check immediate impact and effectiveness to identify and prevent any unexpected risks.

MONITOR, REVIEW AND IMPROVE

▶ **Action: Monitor policy application**

- Monitor new policies to ensure they are understood, applied and if they have achieved their purpose and outcomes.
- Document significant implementation issues or policy concerns to inform review and further development.

▶ **Action: Review and improve**

- Review all policies, procedures and supporting documents as part of a scheduled cycle.