

# FACTFILE: GCE HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

## A2 3 PROVIDING SERVICES - POLICIES



### Policies

#### Students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content and purpose of policies and evaluate their effectiveness, for example:
  - confidentiality;
  - whistle-blowing;
  - special educational needs;
  - safeguarding adults; and
  - child protection policy.
- You need to understand what the content of any policy is likely to be and to evaluate how effective they are in improving the quality of service provision in health, social care and early years' settings.



### Course content



Policies are principles or rules adopted by an organisation to meet standards and they should be accessible to all staff and service users.

Most workplaces have their own policies and guidelines which are drawn up and agreed within the organisation. Many of these are related to different pieces of legislation. Policies cover many situations which may arise in health, care and early years settings. You need to look carefully at an example of each policy to note its content and understand its purpose. Policies are widely available on websites of health, social care and early years organisations, and you can also ask to see the policies of your workplacement setting.

Some policies are relevant in all settings and for everyone who works in an organisation. For example, a whistle blowing policy is relevant to all organisations and all staff. This is because every organisation faces the risk of things going wrong internally. Where such a risk arises, usually the first people to realise or suspect the wrongdoing will be those who work in or with the organisation. Whistle

blowing occurs when an employee raises a concern about a dangerous or illegal activity that they are aware of through their work. A whistle-blower might take action for any of the following reasons:

- a criminal offence has been/is likely to be committed;
- a miscarriage of justice has or is likely to occur;
- the health and well-being or safety of any individual has been/is likely to be endangered; and
- the environment has been/is likely to be damaged.

Policies should reflect the law but they themselves are not laws. For example, the policy on confidentiality should reflect the Data Protection Act 1998. Therefore those responsible for developing the policies in any organisation need to have a clear understanding of the relevant law before writing any policy. Managers are usually responsible for ensuring that the organisation which they manage has a range of policies which put the law into practice.

It is not enough to simply have policies in place; rather all staff must be familiar with the policies of their organisation and all must adhere to them. Adherence to policies helps to improve standards of care. For example, in all care settings there is a policy on safeguarding which should be followed by all staff and if this happens then it should mean that the service users are cared for safely.

In your exam you may be asked to discuss how individual policies are effective in raising the standards of care. Policies can be effective in raising standards in many ways. For example the complaints policy allows service users to complain if the quality of service provision is not as it should be. This policy being in place makes it more likely that service users will be treated well, as staff will generally not want complaints to be made about them. Similarly the confidentiality policy contributes to improving quality by making clear the need to maintain confidentiality of information and identifying the grounds for breaching confidentiality. This means service users will know that information should be kept about them in confidence and so any breach of confidentiality can result in disciplinary action being taken against the individual responsible. Again this makes it less likely that confidentiality

will be breached and so improves quality of service provision. The whistle blowing policy can also be effective in improving quality of care provision because it gives staff the confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviour by others, even those senior to them and this means service users are more likely, because of this policy, to be cared for in an environment which provides quality care.

It is very important that you do not claim that having a policy in place means or ensures poor care doesn't happen. For example, you need to understand that simply having a confidentiality policy which explains to staff the rules for maintaining confidential information does not mean that all staff at all times adhere to the policy. For example, a member of staff could leave a service user's notes on a desk or gossip about a service user, despite the policy instructing staff that these are offences that will lead to disciplinary action being taken against them. Simply having any policy in place does not guarantee the appropriate care and treatment of service users.

Here are some ways that policies can be effective in promoting high standards of care.



#### **Confidentiality Policy:**

- Promotes a sense of trust between staff and service users and better relationships may lead to improved quality of care.
- Guides and informs staff regarding rules for maintaining confidentiality so that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Identifies clearly when confidentiality can be breached so that service users are protected, for example if a vulnerable service user is being abused.
- Recognizes and respects service users' rights to privacy and dignity and makes this clear to all staff.

**Staff Training Policy:**

- Keeps staff up to date regarding training and practice issues and so care provision for any service user group should be better.
- Staff should provide better standards of care for service users because they are properly trained.
- Staff training policy should help to promote health and safety for service users and staff. For example all staff should have regular training updates in manual handling, first aid etc.
- It should help to promote anti-discriminatory practice because staff are regularly trained and updated on matters relating to equal opportunities.

**Whistle Blowing Policy:**

- A whistle blowing policy allows staff to report other staff who are behaving inappropriately in the course of their work and in doing so can protect vulnerable service users.
- Staff are less likely to behave inappropriately due to the existence of a whistle blowing policy.
- Standards of care are likely to be higher in an environment where whistle blowing is encouraged as poor care could result in whistle blowing.
- Roots out bad practice and poor practitioners and in doing so protects service users.
- Provides procedures for addressing problems such as poor practice in care.
- Gives staff the confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviour by others, even those senior to them.
- Because whistle-blowers are protected by confidentiality procedures, they are more likely to report bad practice.
- The policy places a legal obligation on staff to disclose or report inappropriate behaviour.

**Complaints Policy:**

- This policy empowers service users and their



families, as they know they can complain if they feel their needs are not being met or care is not up to standards expected.

- It provides a clear route for service users and/or their families to complain and so this may help to promote high standards of care.
- Staff are less likely to provide inappropriate care as they want to avoid the risk of being reported by service users or their families.
- Complaints policies allow reoccurring problems to be highlighted. For example if a number of service users complain about a member of staff then management will be obliged to investigate this and implement necessary changes.
- A complaints policy may give staff the incentive to work harder as they will want to avoid being complained about.

**Safeguarding adults or child protection policy:**

- It makes it less likely that service users may experience abuse or neglect because all staff are aware of what abuse is, as the policy clearly defines abuse.
- Helps staff to identify abuse in a setting – provides details of what to watch out for e.g. patterned bruising.
- Promotes a sense of security for service users and their families.
- Makes it clear to staff how incidents of abuse or suspected abuse should be reported thus protecting vulnerable service users.

## Activity 1

Obtain a copy of the special educational needs policy from a primary school. Read the policy and:

- Summarise its content.
- Explain its purpose.
- Explain three ways it could be effective in raising the quality of provision for children with special educational needs.

## Activity 2

You have been appointed as manager in a residential home for adults with learning disabilities. You can appoint a working group to help you. You have been asked to draw up the following policies:

- Safeguarding adults policy.
- Confidentiality policy.

Once complete, compare your policy with those available on-line or alternatively you could ask a local nursing home for a copy of their policy for comparison.

