

FACTFILE: GCE HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

AS1 PROMOTING QUALITY CARE



Policies

Students should be able to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of policies in promoting quality care in health, social care and early years settings, for example:
 - whistle-blowing;
 - complaints;
 - use of social media;
 - safeguarding;
 - consent, for example to a child being photographed or to a hospital treatment;
 - records and information management;
 - management of medicines; and other policies specific to the setting.



Course Content

In response to current legislation health social care and early years settings have policies in place to help protect the staff, service users and their families.

Policies are effective in promoting quality care in a number of ways, for example:

- they encourage reporting of poor care, such as physical or emotional abuse, so service users are protected;
- as staff can be disciplined for failing to adhere to a policy it is likely to encourage them to practise according to the values of care;
- policies empower staff to report poor practice by others making it less likely to occur in the first place;
- policies mean there are clear procedures in place so staff understand what they need to do to provide quality care;
- policies make managers aware of their responsibility to regularly update staff training and make sure staff comply, so staff understand their role and can be safe and effective in their practice; and
- policies recognise the rights of service users and encourage staff to respect those rights.

Policies may, nevertheless, fail to be effective in promoting quality care, for example:

- policies can be in place in a setting, but staff are not adequately trained in them;
- insufficient staffing levels exist to allow staff to effectively implement a policy;
- policies are not accessible to all staff for example due to language barriers, and
- staff are unaware that the policies exist.

Whistleblowing policy

A whistleblower is a person who raises a concern about wrongdoing occurring in an organisation or body of people. Whistleblowing encourages and enables employees to raise serious concerns within the care setting rather than overlooking a problem. Employees are often the first to realise that there is something seriously wrong within their workplace however, they may not express their concerns as they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or fear everyone will know they lodged the concern. The whistleblowing policy helps to ensure that all concerns are treated in confidence encouraging more staff to come forward.

A whistleblowing policy contributes to quality care as:

- it provides staff with a framework for doing something about practice by others which is not appropriate;
- it gives staff the confidence to report poor practice as it is an obligation under the policy;
- it helps to eliminate bad practice as people fear being reported so service users experience appropriate care and treatment; and
- staff know inappropriate behaviour is likely to be reported so are less likely to engage in it.

Complaints policy

A complaint is a statement which is made about a situation/service that is thought to be unsatisfactory or unacceptable. A complaints policy sets out an appropriate procedure for service users or their families to make a complaint and tries to ensure that the process is not difficult. If a service user is unhappy with the care or treatment they receive the policy makes it clear they have the right to complain, have the complaint investigated and be given a full and prompt reply. Complaints are important as they help to identify problems that can be fixed, this will overall improve the quality of service given. Having a complaints policy in place will encourage people to come forward and report their concerns.

A complaints policy promotes quality care as it:

- helps to ensure best practice as problems can be identified and addressed, thus improving the service for users;
- gives service users an opportunity and a clear way to voice concerns or inform managers about anything they are not happy with so improvements can be made;
- helps to identify bad practice so that it can be dealt with;
- makes service users feel safe and that their opinion is valued when action is taken as a result of a complaint;
- defines the standard of care service users can expect to receive; and
- provides a route for redress when poor practice happens.

Use of social media policy

This policy is intended to help service providers make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn etc. The policy should outline to the service providers clear expectations and guidance regarding their use of social media both privately and as method of communication within the setting.

The purpose of the policy is to protect health, social care and early years settings from legal risks, to help ensure that the reputation of the setting including the staff is upheld and to safeguard all service users.

This policy contributes to promoting quality care as it:

- protects service users' confidentiality and so avoids the disclosing of identifiable information about service users without consent;
- prevents breaches of the service users' privacy;
- makes staff aware of their ethical responsibilities when using social media platforms;
- reduces the risk of unauthorised videoing/photographing of service users, so protecting their rights; and
- helps to maintain professional boundaries between service providers and service users so the latter feel respected.



Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. It is fundamental to quality care.

Safeguarding adults policy

The aim of this policy is to improve safeguarding arrangements for adults who are at risk of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect.

A key objective is to reduce the incidence of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect of adults who are at risk to provide them with effective support and, where necessary, protective responses and access to justice for victims and their families.

This helps to ensure that any adult at risk of abuse, exploitation or neglect is able to access support to enable them to live a life free from violence and abuse. These procedures also help to ensure that any suspicion or allegation that any vulnerable adult is at risk of abuse, exploitation or neglect is followed up.

This policy helps to promote quality care as it:

- promotes a culture of zero-tolerance of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect and promotes access to justice;
- influences the way society thinks about harm to adults resulting from abuse, exploitation or neglect by embedding a culture which recognises every adult's right to respect and dignity, honesty, humanity and compassion in every aspect of their life;
- prevents and reduces the risk of harm to adults, while supporting their right to maintain control over their lives and make informed choices; and
- establishes clear guidance for reporting concerns that an adult is, or may be, at risk of being harmed or in need of protection and how these will be responded to, so providing them with the protection they need.

Child protection policy

This policy aims to protect children. Children and young people need protection and safeguarding for many reasons. They may need protection from the effects of poverty, disadvantage, exclusion and violence. But in addition to the economic, social, and political problems affecting large numbers of children, individual children may also be at risk from specific forms of abuse by adults or other children.

The policy sets out how staff can report any concerns that they may have about a child. It requires that staff receive annual child protection training, which helps staff to understand different forms of abuse, such as:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect and negligent treatment
- sexual and commercial exploitation.

It also requires that the setting has a designated Child Protection Officer, who has received regular training and support for this role.

A child protection policy promotes quality care as it:

- outlines what is meant by abuse, giving staff a better understanding of what constitutes abuse in order to minimise the chances of it occurring and increase the chances of it being reported;
- identifies the signs and symptoms of different types of abuse so that relevant staff will be able to identify abuse and take appropriate action;
- sets out clear lines of responsibility and reporting so that staff know exactly what to do if they suspect a child is being abused, thus protecting children from danger; and
- requires a designated person is in place who is properly trained to manage the process and take responsibility for child protection issues.



Consent policy

Service users have a fundamental legal and ethical right to determine what happens to them. Valid consent to treatment is therefore absolutely central in all forms of health care, from providing personal care to undertaking major surgery. Seeking consent is also a matter of common courtesy between health care professionals and service users. A consent policy can cover various issues from medical treatment or examination to the use of a child's image and obtaining of biometric information.

This policy allows the service user to be given information about how a service provider will use and protect their information. In addition the policy requires that service user is given enough information to allow an informed decision to be made and then give or withhold consent prior to any examination or treatment.

This policy promotes quality care as it:

- helps to reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings;
- promotes positive relationships between the service users and the service provider as it promotes effective communication information sharing; and
- empowers the service users by enabling them to make choices and be as independent as possible, whilst providing support and care.

Records and information management policy

Records management is the term used to describe an administrative system by which the organisation seeks to control the creation, retrieval, storage, preservation or disposal of its records, for example medical notes.



The purpose of the policy is to confirm that appropriate security measures are in place for storage, management and transportation of sensitive information and also that staff know how to secure information to comply with data protection legislation.

This policy helps to promote quality care as it:

- clearly outlines the responsibilities of all staff within the setting in effectively managing and recording information, so protecting the rights of service users; and
- makes staff more confident in fulfilling their role effectively through training, contributing to high standards in their work; and
- helps to make sure sensitive information remains confidential, so trust is established between the service user and the service provider.

Management of medicines policy

“The clinical, cost-effective and safe use of medicines to ensure patients get the maximum benefit from the medicines they need, while at the same time minimising potential harm.” (MHRA 2004). The policy aims to ensure that all staff know the correct methods of supplying and/or administering any medication. It also sets out clear guidelines for staff to follow before administering medication for example confirming the identity of the service user to whom the medication is to be administered and checking they are not allergic to the medicine before administering it.

This policy contributes to good quality care as:

- it clearly outlines the responsibilities of all staff within the setting so that service users are provided with the correct medication and dosage, helping to improve their health;
- reduces the risk of errors; and
- helps staff to be fully aware of their roles and responsibilities for administering medication so improving accuracy and safety.

Activities

- 1[a] Focusing on a health, social care or early years setting and working in small groups select ONE of the following policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy in promoting quality care in this type of setting:
- whistle-blowing;
 - complaints;
 - use of social media;
 - safeguarding;
 - consent;
 - records and information management; and
 - management of medicines; and other policies specific to the setting.

- [b] Present your findings to the class using the following headings:
- How this policy is effective in promoting quality care.
 - Reasons the policy may not be effective,

- 2[a] View the film [Whistleblowing: improving organisational practice](#) [12 minutes]

This film aims to encourage organisations to create a safe environment for staff to raise concerns openly as part of normal day-to-day practice.

- [b] Discuss the effectiveness of such a policy and the problems staff in a setting may face in its implementation.

