

SQS 2

The service unit should review and update the documented policies and procedures describing how it will approach key service delivery issues.

- 2.1 The service unit has a mechanism to review and update its policies and procedures.
- 2.2 The service unit has a mechanism for obtaining service users and staff input in the process of reviewing and updating policies and procedures, as appropriate.

A. INTRODUCTION TO SQS 2 – REVIEW AND UPDATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Service Quality Standard 2 deals with the way in which the service unit reviews and updates its policies and procedures. The SQS specifies that a service unit must have a mechanism to review and update its policies and procedures stipulated under the various SQSs and to involve service users and staff in reviewing and updating the policies and procedures.

A policy is a statement of a service unit's philosophy and general approach to an issue. Procedures set out the steps that will be taken to implement the policy. The primary purpose of developing and documenting policies and procedures is to provide an agreed framework within which consistently high quality services can be provided.

Policies and procedures are important because they:

- provide clear guidance to consumers about the nature and quality of service they can expect to receive;
- provide clear guidance to staff about what is expected of them in specific situations;
- provide a focus for considering and implementing any changes to the way the service operates; and
- ensure the services provided are of a consistent quality for every individual.

There is a danger that where there is a reliance on unwritten policies and procedures, the absence of a key staff member might result in confusion, lack of direction or duplication of policy effort.

Some of the SQSs require a service unit to have policies and/or procedures to cover a particular area; others do not strictly require the preparation of policies and procedures, though in many cases they may be useful. In the sections of the Implementation Handbook that deal with the various SQSs, you will find specific guidance on how to develop the contents of policies and procedures.

This section of the Implementation Handbook will therefore provide overall guidance in reviewing and updating policies and procedures.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR MEETING SQS 2

In order to meet this SQS, your service unit will need to:

1. Have a documented mechanism to review and update its policies and procedures

The service unit should have an established mechanism for reviewing and updating each of the policies and procedures stipulated under the various SQSs related to key service delivery issues spelling out:

- whether it would be reviewed regularly and for how often, and/or under what circumstances it would be reviewed,
- the person or post or committee responsible for the review, and
- when the policies and procedures last reviewed and updated.

The policies and procedures stipulated under the following SQSs must be included in the reviewing and updating mechanism, although the unit is free to add any other policies and procedures to the list:

- SQS 6 on Planning, Evaluation and Feedback
- SQS 10 on Entry & Exit
- SQS 11 on Needs of Service Users
- SQS 12 on Informed Choices
- SQS 13 on Private Property
- SQS 14 on Privacy & Confidentiality
- SQS 15 on Complaints
- SQS 16 on Freedom from Abuse

2. Have a documented mechanism for obtaining service user and staff input

The service unit should demonstrate that it has an established mechanism spelling how input from service users and staff members are obtained in the process of reviewing and updating policies and procedures.

3. Ensure that the above mechanisms are implemented

The above mechanisms to review and update policies and procedures, and to obtain input from service users and staff should be implemented so that current policies and procedures are available.

C. RESOURCES TO ASSIST YOUR SERVICE UNIT TO MEET SQS 2

This handbook contains the following documents:

- Guidelines and options for reviewing and updating policies and procedures, including suggestions on how to involve service users and staff
- Guide for developing a checklist for listing policies and procedures
- Generic template for procedures

The guidelines provided may be used either as:

- a basis for developing mechanisms specific to your service unit, in the event that you do not already have existing documented mechanisms in this area; or
- a checklist for reviewing and, if necessary, amending your service unit's relevant mechanisms, if you already have such items in place.

It is important to remember that the resource documents provided in this handbook are intended only to provide guidance. The final documents implemented in your service unit should be specifically tailored to reflect the unit's nature, operations and your service user's needs.

GUIDELINES AND OPTIONS FOR REVIEWING AND UPDATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

These guidelines are intended to set out processes and arrangements to review and update policies and procedures.

The service unit will have policies and procedures stipulated under the various SQSs. While policies and procedures are not always required, writing policies and procedures to guide the major tasks of the service unit is a good practice.

The processes and arrangements that we set out in these guidelines can be used to review and update policies and procedures for those, which are mandatory, and those which are not.

In these guidelines, we have set out a number of different options, which you could use to review and update your policies and procedures. Some of the options will be more appropriate to your service unit than others. It is important to assess each of the options to determine whether it suits your service type and your service users.

2. Steps involved in reviewing and updating policies and procedures

There are several steps involved in reviewing and updating policies and procedures. These include:

- letting staff, service users and other interested parties know that the policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated;
- providing opportunities for feedback on policies and procedures;
- drafting amendments to the policies and procedures, or if necessary, write new policies and procedures;
- calling for comment on amended or new policies and procedures;
- finalizing policies and procedures;
- distributing policies and procedures; and
- setting the time for the next review.

3. Scheduling the steps involved in reviewing and updating policies and procedures

The SQS does not specify how often the policies and procedures should be reviewed, so it is important that the service unit determines a schedule for review and updating. It is required that the service unit should determine whether its policies and procedures would be reviewed regularly and/or under what circumstances reviewed. For policies and procedures with regular review, the frequency/timing for the review should be specified. For those which are not reviewed regularly, the service unit

should spell out the circumstances (such as when there are changes in relevant legislation or central referral system) under which they will be reviewed and updated. The service unit also needs to decide how the service users, staff members and other interested parties are informed of the changes on the policies and procedures of the key service delivery issues.

All of the steps outlined need to be scheduled, and sufficient time allowed for review, drafting, commenting and finalizing.

There are many ways in which the service unit can schedule policy and procedure review and update. Depending on the type and size of the service unit and the complexity and concern over policies and procedures, they could be reviewed at one time, or there could be a rolling timetable for review. Reviewing the policies and procedures at one time will concentrate the activity whereas scheduling the review of policies and procedures over an annual (or other) cycle will distribute the workload throughout the year.

Examples of each are provided in the annual calendars shown below.

Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, and it is important to select an approach, which is suited to your service unit. In part, the approach you take will depend on the opportunities you provide for service users, staff and other interested parties. We consider this in the next section.

Periodic review conducted once each year		
January	February	March
Advise staff, service users and others of review timetable		Call for comments and conduct feedback sessions for all SQSs
April	May	June
Draft	Call for comments	Finalize
July	August	September
Distribute		
October	November	December

Periodic review with policy and procedure review and update timetabled over a year		
January	February	March
Advise staff, service users and others of review timetable		Call for comments and conduct feedback sessions for SQSs 6, 10, 11 and 12
April	May	June
Draft SQS 6, 10, 11 and 12	Call for Comments on SQS 6, 10, 11 and 12	Finalize SQS 6, 10, 11 and 12
July	August	September
Distribute SQS 6, 10, 11 and 12	Call for comments and conduct feedback sessions for SQSs 13, 14, 15 and 16	Draft SQSs 13, 14, 15 and 16
October	November	December
Call for comments on SQSs 13, 14, 15 and 16	Finalize SQSs 13, 14, 15 and 16	Distribute SQSs 13, 14, 15 and 16

4. Strategies for obtaining feedback on policies and procedures and involving service users, their families and other stakeholders in review and updates

There are many ways in which service users, staff and others can provide feedback and be involved in reviewing policies and procedures. Your service unit may implement one or more of the following ideas to provide feedback opportunities:

- setting up a policy committee which involves both service users and staff for the purpose of reviewing and updating policies and procedures;
- calling for comments on policies and procedures in the service unit newsletter;
- asking for feedback on policies and procedures by putting up a notice on the service unit's bulletin board;
- displaying policies and procedures on the service unit's notice board and asking for feedback;
- scheduling the review of a policy and its procedures at regular service user liaison meetings;
- conducting special meetings to consider policies and procedures; and
- sending out draft policies and procedures along with a service user response form and asking for feedback.

The service unit has to decide when or under what circumstances the service users, staff and other interested parties' opinions on the policies and procedures are sought.

For some service types, it may be necessary to provide additional support to service users and their families to encourage their involvement. It is important to ensure that all service users, staff and other interested parties have a chance to be involved if they wish. Whilst some staff and service users may be specifically tasked with reviewing and updating policies and procedures through their membership of a committee, it is nevertheless important to provide opportunities to those not on committees to be informed about and involved in the review and updating process.

5. Assigning responsibility for reviewing and updating policies and procedures

The service unit needs to decide who will be responsible and accountable for reviewing and updating policies and procedures in a way which satisfies SQS 2. Furthermore, the service unit needs to decide whether that person will be supported through formal mechanisms, such as a policy review committee.

These decisions will depend on the size, complexity and type of service provided. For many service units, involving service users in the policy development, review and updating process will be new. As a consequence, staff will need to develop new skills to ensure service users are effectively involved. It is also likely that many service users will be unaccustomed to being involved in these tasks, and they will need support in order that they can effectively contribute.

The service unit staff will have the ultimate responsibility for reviewing and updating policies and procedures. They also have the responsibility for working out the best ways to involve service users and/or their families.

6. Maintaining current policies and procedures

Policies and procedures should show:

- the date that they were updated; and
- the date of the next review

These details may appear in a separate section of the policies and procedures titled “Administration Issues”, or may appear as a footnote on each page of the policies and procedures. Showing these details will ensure that the service unit is clear about the currency of each policy and procedure.

7. Making policies and procedures available

At this stage, the service unit also needs to decide the distribution of policies and procedures, where they will be stored and how and under what circumstances they will be made available to service users and other interested parties.

GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING A CHECKLIST FOR LISTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

This template has been designed to assist you to record the policies and procedures stipulated under the various SQSs that need to be reviewed. It also assists you to assign dates when policies and procedures were reviewed and the responsible person/post /committee to review.

2. Checklist

The following format provides a structure within which to record your information.

SQS	Policies and procedures	Frequency of review	Context of review	Responsible person/post/committee	Date of last review and updating
<i>For example:</i>					
10.1	Policy on entering the service	Whenever there are changes in the Funding and Service Agreement or central referral system	<i>(specify the platform for review, e.g. staff meeting)</i>	<i>(identify staff member/post/Committee responsible, e.g. service co-ordinator)</i>	<i>(specify the date)</i>
14.1	Procedure on protecting service users' privacy	Yearly <i>(specify a date)</i> and after a complaint on related matter has been received.	<i>(specify the platform for review, e.g. staff meeting)</i>	<i>(identify staff member/post/Committee responsible, e.g. unit-in-charge)</i>	<i>(specify the date)</i>

GENERIC TEMPLATE FOR PROCEDURES

For each of the SQSs that require policies and procedures, we have provided guidance on how to develop policies and procedures. The core information that is required for procedures related to all SQSs is outlined below.

1. Introduction

In this section of the procedures, you would describe the purpose of the procedures.

2. Contents of the procedures

In this section of the procedures, you would outline the key issues that the procedures address.

3. Links

Each procedure document will relate to one SQS. Some SQSs overlap, or have links with other SQSs. In this section, you should specify any other procedure documents that are relevant to this particular SQS. This will ensure that staff and service users are aware of the associated issues.

4. Administration

In this section, you will include the way in which you ensure the procedures are up-to-date, and that all people who need to access them are able to do so. In this section you will specifically include:

- the date of the procedures;
- how and to whom the procedures will be distributed; and
- how and when the procedures will be reviewed.

- End -