NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

Tipsheet: Policy into Practice: Supporting the Workforce

Policy to Practice essentially means that the **principles, expectations, actions and desired behaviours** laid out in your policies and procedures, can be seen consistently in the delivery of your services and are reflected in the experience of people receiving services.

This resource includes tips, ideas and resources for engaging and supporting your workforce through:

- **Consultation**
- **Communication**
- **Education**
- **Monitoring and Support**

The information is general in nature and is a starting point and should be used and adapted to meet the size and scope of your organisation and the supports you provide.

Policy into Practice: Supporting the Workforce

A barrier to policy into practice could be your workforce not being aware of, or on board with your policies and procedures.

Key steps to getting the right balance for turning policy into practice are:

Consultation **Communication** **Education** **Monitoring and Support**

Consultation with your workforce at all levels when you are developing and implementing your policies and procedures can be an effective tool to increasing awareness and ownership. Understanding the reason for a policy or procedure and having agreement on how to implement them can lead to better outcomes.

Policies and procedures are likely to be more successful if they are realistic. It is important that they reflect your shared values and represent the different views and skills of people who work in your services or are affected by the supports and services.

Fairwork have developed a guide to [Consultation and cooperation in the workplace](#) which looks at the benefits of consultation including:

- better decision making when workers have input
- easier change implementation, as worker have been involved in the process
- better business performance during change and
- improved engagement and performance.

NDS [Employee Engagement Fact Sheet](#) also offers some useful tips and resources in engaging with your workforce.

Ask your workforce for feedback

Consider asking your workforce at different levels to give you feedback, to gain an understanding of how the information is received by them. Adapt the template below on to make it suitable for your workers, and the supports and services you are reviewing.

Workforce survey questions

1. Are our policies and procedures clear and easy to understand?

☐ Yes

☐ No – please give more information or suggestions of how we can improve.

2. Do you think that our policies and procedure represent our values and purpose as a provider?

☐ Yes

☐ No – please give more information or suggestions of how we can improve.

3. Do our policies and procedures give you enough detail to do your job well?

☐ Yes

☐ No – please give more information or suggestions of how we can improve.

4. Do you think our policies and procedures reflect the people who access our supports and services?

☐ Yes

☐ No – please give more information or suggestions of how we can improve.

5. Do you know where to go to access our policies and procedures when you need them?

☐ Yes

☐ No – please give more information or suggestions of how we can improve.

Communication of policy and procedures, including when any changes occur is integral to helping your workforce remained informed and up to date with your expectations. Effective communication is even more important in today's working environments where workforces are more dispersed and operating independently in the community or in services.

It is important to think about how you will communicate your values, policies and procedures and have a plan for this happening.

Questions to consider:

- **Do you need a communication plan** for when this will happen, how will you define roles and responsibilities. An example of a communication plan template can be found NDS Communication Plan Handout
- **How will you raise awareness** when new policies and procedures are released? Consider using your different touchpoints with your teams such as meetings and supervisions.
- **How you will communicate updates and changes** in policies and procedures to workers that affect the operating environment. Consider the best ways to communicate to reach your intended audience.
- **Are your policies and procedures accessible** and inclusive for all workers. See IncludeAbility's Creating accessible and inclusive communications
- **Can your workers access and find your policies and procedures easily.** Are you storing your policies and procedures in a central place which is accessible to everyone?

Tips and resources for reinforcing your values policies and procedures

Through your recruitment procedures, consider:

☐ Developing job advert that set the scene, provide context for the role and set expectations.

☐ Using the insights of people with disability in developing your processes, to assist develop questions or be part of the interview panel or process.

☐ Using values-based recruitment to recruit staff whose personal attributes and experience align to organisational commitments on human rights and responsibilities. See NDS Values Based Recruitment Toolkit

☐ Having role specific actions/requirements which relate to NDIS Rules or Practices in Job Descriptions for each position.

☐ Ensuring staff have a copy of their Job Description.

During the on-boarding process, consider:

☐ Supplying hard copies of policies and procedures which are a priority for you organisation.

☐ Have an onboarding checklist to keep you on track, have your workers sign off when they have read and understood different policies and procedures.

☐ Checking understanding through your touch points with new staff.

Through your systems and processes, consider:

☐ Having clear work instructions (guidelines, protocols, forms and templates) which link and align with your procedures. Some resources to assist you - could be:
- NDS Risk Incidents and Complaints interactive PDF
- NDS Quality Management Guide
- NDS Zero Tolerance Resources Supported Decision Making

Making your policies, procedures, systems and processes accessible to everyone that needs them, think about:

☐ Where do you store them?

☐ How are they distributed?

☐ Are there any technology barriers for remote workers, how will you address these?

☐ Can you centralise policies and procedures through an intranet, portal, sharedrive or other secure staff platform?

Education in new policies or changes to your procedures means going beyond communicating. It means taking steps to ensure that your policies

and procedures are understood, that your teams are competent in them and to any barriers to their understanding how to apply them to their role, have been addressed.

Ongoing support is required to ensure workers undertake their work in the right way at the right time.

Training and education in your policies and procedures is a compliance requirement and consistently appears in the NDIS practices standards but how this is done is up to each organisation.

Tips and resources for education in your policies and procedures

Use you organisations induction and orientation. This is your opportunity to set your organisations expectations, consider:

☐ **Having allocated sessions on key policies and procedures** that provide context, awareness and discussion of mission/values as well as role specific NDIS requirements. Follow up through one to one sessions to ensure understanding and address any barriers.

☐ **Involving people with disability who access your services** to educate your workforce to help bring your values and procedures to life. You could have face to face sessions or videos with people who access your services.

☐ Utilise the resources and eLearning's provided by the NDIS Commission such as the **Worker Orientation Module** and **New worker NDIS Induction module** NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission eLearning to provide your workers with an understanding of compliance and why policies and procedures are in place.

Establish a probationary period with focussed KPIs. Plan and meet as regularly as possible with new workers. This will help to embed the foundations.

Organise activities which allow you current workers to lead by example. This will hopefully create a supportive, positive and values led experience for your new workers.
This could include:

☐ Mapping out what needs to happen on first days, weeks and months including roles and responsibilities.

☐ Using buddies to help upskill new workers. Have buddy templates and guidance to help monitor and record good practice.

☐ Using your probation period to look at gaps in knowledge.

☐ Including your values and expected behaviours as part of probation.

Have a process for mandatory training.
This can ensure you have consistency and minimise the risk of gaps.

☐ Ensuring all staff and volunteers have completed mandatory sector training and training required to deliver their role safely.

☐ Reviewing the NDIS Practice Standards and Code of Conduct and the training requirements identified in them.

☐ Identifying any other training your organisation might make mandatory as a result of the supports and services you provide.

☐ Having a system in place to evidence and monitor when training has been completed, including how to identify when refreshers might be needed.

☐ Ensuring your internal policies and procedures align and are part of any mandatory training provided.

Monitoring and Support
Establishing opportunities for your teams around your policies and procedures through a program of ongoing learning and development

This can create consistent opportunities and resources to build skills and capacity of your workers.

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Some ideas to consider could be:

- [ ] **Development of e-learning modules or staff quizzes** around different policies and procedures.

- [ ] **Identifying and promoting good practice champions** as the 'go to' person for specific issues/topics and or the contact person on policies and procedures.

- [ ] **Train the trainer initiatives** can utilise resources within your organisation. NDS resources on how to develop and deliver Team meeting training sessions could help Train the Trainer Resources.

- [ ] **Using your team meetings -** Have a standing agenda item on quality and safeguarding or plan a calendar to focus on a different policy each week. Consider using scenario learning using conversation starter questions based on real examples from the organisation.

- [ ] **Use person centred supervision and appraisals** to develop a structured and ongoing set program of learning.

  For more information see NDS Supervision and Performance Appraisal. Performance appraisals can be used for ongoing assessment of workplace actions and behaviours. Include the organisations values in your documentation and templates to allow you to easily raise and assess against desired behaviours.