

A SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR DRAWING UP RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY GUIDELINES FOR AN ESTABLISHMENT OR SERVICE

The purpose of establishment guidelines is to clarify in detail how the sexuality policies (of the Local Authority and of the provider agency) are to be carried out in the context of each service. These guidelines will affect both service users and staff, and an essential component of the process is to make sure all parties are consulted about the contents of the policy, since they are the people who will have to put it into practice. It is good practice to consult with parents and carers too.

Here are some suggestions for approaching the task of drawing up the guidelines.

Guidance on the process of producing establishment guidelines

One way of tackling what can be a time consuming task is to focus on one area at a time.

The essential element is the participation and commitment of staff and service users: without this, the guidance is less likely to be respected by everyone.

Stage One

An initial meeting with all staff, service users and family carers (either separately or together)

The aims of this meeting are:

- to look at the policies of the Local Authority, Council and the provider organisation
- to gain agreement for the process
- to identify one or two priority areas for action
- identify a small group of people to work on the first priority; a senior member of staff should be included in this group

Choosing priorities: these might be an area where a recent issue has arisen, or an area of more general long term concern.

Stage Two

The working Group

Members will use their own experience and expertise to suggest what should be included in the guidelines. They can also gather relevant information from other relevant people and external sources. This group will organise consultation with a wider spectrum of service users, should they be under represented.

Stage Three

The first draft

The information will be collated into a first draft, using the wider policies as a baseline to build upon.

Stage Four

Back to the stakeholder groups

The draft will be presented to all parties for feedback.

Stage Five

The draft is finalised

Stage Six

Making the guideline accessible to service users. Service users need to understand the guideline and how it will affect them. Re-drafting it in an accessible form is an essential part of the process.

This process can be repeated to draw up guidelines for each of the areas within the suggested headings document.

Adapted from: A policy for providers in Westminster: Adults with learning disabilities, personal and sexual relationships (November 2010)

Whilst this process may appear lengthy and laborious, the principles of consultation and participation are essential components of practice guidelines that are likely to be owned and utilised by everyone associated with the agency. Providers may therefore wish to incorporate the process elements within existing forums, to ensure that there have been opportunities for contribution to the guidelines at all levels.