

WHERE EXPERIENCE MEETS... AMBITION



## Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

Presented by: R J Hanson  
22 November 2008  
Prepared for: The South Link Health Conference

© PolsonHiggs 2008

### Policies . . .

But they are so boring

- why do we need human resources policies
  - They give managers and employees the information and guidance they need for the decisions and actions they must take every day

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

### Specific policies

- Give managers and employees the **confidence** to make decisions without referring upwards
- Frees top management from routine matters
- They only have to be involved in new or exceptional circumstances
- HR policies help the organisation to be prepared. when something unexpected happens or an employee makes a request, it tells us how we should respond

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

### Specific policies

- Avoids the need for hasty, and possibly ill prepared and ill judged decision making in crisis situations

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

### Policies offer greater certainty

- People know what is expected from them
- Employees know how their requests and applications will be handled
- They will know what behaviour is acceptable and what is not
- They will know what the consequences will be if they fail to comply
- Policies encourage consistency in decision-making

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Policies offer greater certainty

- Managers know what they can and cannot do
- They enable us to comply with the minimum requirements of cornerstone accreditation that enables us to reassure our patients and staff that we will act consistently

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## HR policies and employment agreements

- Employers commonly regard their HR policies as an organisation's prerogative
- They may be willing to consult about the contents and application of policies but not to negotiate
- They may be willing to consider suggestions and recommendations from employees but want to preserve management's right to make final decisions

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Condition of employment

- Employment agreements make it a condition of employment that employees abide by the organisation's policies and procedures
- Employers in these situations must take specific steps to ensure that their employees know what is the organisation's policies and procedures

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Employment agreement

- To cover this situation, an employment agreement might provide:  
*"the employee agrees to abide by any policies, rules and procedures of the employer which are in effect from time to time and which apply generally to the employees of . . . (business name)"*
- So the employee is making a contractual undertaking to abide by the policies and procedures in other words, they don't have to agree but they just have to comply with them

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Part of the agreement?

- Another approach is for the employment agreement to provide the organisation's policies as part of the agreement
- These policies are said to be "incorporated" into the agreements. This approach is simple and straight forward, however it may have unintended consequences of people thinking these policies are negotiable
- Would not advise this course

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Thinking about policies

- There are some questions to think about before beginning to prepare your policies
- Why do we want policies?
- What should the policies cover?

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

### Thinking about Policies

- Some policy areas are obvious
  - Recruitment
  - Remuneration
  - Termination
  - Handling complaints
  - Training, and so on

### Others are more administrative

- Allowances
- Reimbursement of expenses
- Use of internet and email
- Privacy
- Storage of data, etc

### But are you going to try to legislate for every eventuality?

- Some organisations try to, unsuccessfully
- Others have broadly written statements which articulate the organisation's values and attitude
- It is actually a matter of balance and choosing an approach which suits the organisation and its style!

### But are you going to try to legislate for every eventuality?

- Draw up a list of policy areas and policy topics to be covered, drawing up a list of policy areas to be covered is a good first step, then you can check that the coverage is balanced across a wide range of policy areas

### How detailed should the policies be?

- Policies generally provide guidance for decision-making, describe the organisation's objectives and set out a framework within which decisions are to be made
- But sometimes they need to be prescriptive, setting out specific and detailed rules and procedures
- Where possible policies should allow managers some flexibility to meet the different needs of particular situations

### How detailed should the policies be?

- In these cases, the reasons for requiring compliance with specific rules and procedures should be very clear

### What is needed in a policy statement?

- Policy statements in HR policies vary in length and detail but all of them are aligned to answer this series of questions:
  - What is this policy about?
  - What does it cover?
  - Who does the policy apply to?
  - What is the purpose of the policy and why do we have this policy?

### What is needed in a policy statement?

- What are the benefits or entitlements conferred and requirements or restrictions imposed by the policy?
- Who may give approval under this policy and what are the consequences of failing to abide with the policy?

### What is needed in a policy statement?

The image shows a screenshot of a policy document template. It includes sections for 'PURPOSE', 'SCOPE', 'APPROVAL', and 'APPROVED DATE'. The text is partially obscured by a watermark and is mostly illegible.

### How should the policies be presented?

- There are obvious advantages in having all the policy statements in a folder or binder making copies available through the organisation
- There are equally obvious problems in keeping a manual of this form as it may quickly outdate
- Controlled dating (come on guys, you know what I mean) means that you will know when the policy was current and when it was replaced

### How should the policies be presented?

- Computer files and internet versions are another alternative for easy access, easy storage and easy amendment. Please note, some employees may have difficulty accessing this electronic format)
- You need to think about what will be best for you

### Preparing your HR Policies?

- Have you thought about the scope and style of your policies? The next step is to prepare the actual statements and documents

## Be systematic

- Take a systematic approach to preparing your HR policies. Depending on your circumstances, these steps might be appropriate:
  - Get the support of management and other key people for the development of a set of policies
  - Find out what the requirements of cornerstone accreditation are so we can design them
  - Appoint a project leader to co-ordinate this exercise

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Be systematic

- Let management and staff know about the project
- Gather as much info as possible about current policies
- Use functional experts (or people with experience in particular activities)
- Get managers to review the edited drafts and take their comments into consideration
- Review the drafts
- Produce your policies as a manual or computer file in your choice of format

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Your Practice and Policies

“Indicator D.11.2

All practice team members have employment agreements . . .”

- [wwwers.dol.govt.nz](http://wwwers.dol.govt.nz)
- [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz)
- [www.nzma.org.nz](http://www.nzma.org.nz)

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

## Summary

- Why do we need policies
- How can we establish them
- What level should they be at
- Where do I go for help?
- RNZCGP Standard for New Zealand General Practice

Policy Writing for Cornerstone Accreditation

PolsonHiggs  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

WHERE EXPERIENCE MEETS... AMBITION