Handout 9: Implementation

It is crucial that good policies are implemented rather than sit on a bookshelf and never get used.

Long before the stage of implementation, issues about the implementing of the policy should have been considered. Way back at policy analysis, resources needed for implementation should have been identified and methods of implementation determined. Poor design at the earlier stages will be one of the causes a policy may fail.

When the implementation of the policy fails, poor design has failed to consider the number of constraints an agency may face when enacting the policy. Constraints such as:

- The depth of the problem
- The range of other issues faced by staff
- The large number of stakeholders affected by the policy
- The degree of behavioural change required by those affected by the policy
- Insufficient expertise and resources
- Competing priorities of the organisation
- Lack of staff expertise or commitment
- Lack of cooperation between different sections of the agency
- Too few incentives to encourage compliance
- Those implementing the policy/program do not understand what is required.

Drawing on the work of Ingram 1990 and Davis and Weller 1993 there are a number of factors that will contribute towards successful implementation.

The theory was based on the values of the organisation, however if these values are mistaken or have changed then the policy will fail. If, on the other hand the policy is simple and sound and tested through experience then a policy can survive.

There should be only a few stages between the formulating of the idea and the implementation. The more complex, then the more likely misunderstandings occur or competition between different stakeholders arises causing a policy to fail.

Implementation of the policy should be the responsibility of one or two people. As more people become involved then coordination becomes difficult to manage and control.

One person must be responsible for the success of the program and have the capacity to intervene when the implementation of the policy/programme gets into difficulties.

Those who deliver the policy/program should be involved in its design, to have been informed and consulted at every stage to ensure their cooperation.
Policy Implementation Plan

A policy implementation plan should be developed to ensure maximum impact of new or revised policies. Such a plan should involve the following:

- Staff training for all staff in the new policy or program
- Involve all staff affected by the policy to be involved in its development
- Management Committee responsibility for the implementation of the policy
- Identify one person who is responsible for the success of the program. This will usually be the coordinator, manager
- One person responsible for the updating and maintaining of the policy. This is usually the responsibility of the Secretary or personnel section
- Amend staff job descriptions to reflect the responsibility of implementing, coordination and maintenance of the policy
- Staff supervision and performance appraisals should monitor staff’s performance in following policies
- Users of the service and other stakeholders should be consulted to check that the policy is being followed.

Strategies should be identified to ensure wide dissemination of policy information. Usually more than one method needs to be used for successful implementation. The choice of disseminating the information is inevitably a judgement about factors such as available resources, the target group and the risks and failures of one method over another.

Some of the likely methods of disseminating the information about the policy could include:

- Public hearings
- Community information pamphlets
- A form letter to key stakeholders
- An article in the local newspaper
- Staff bulletin
- Email.