

An example: Health Centre Opening Hours

Find out about who thinks that a policy is needed and why	Health staff talked : “We never get a chance to get out of the health centre to do more work out in the community. The nutritionist gave us lots of good ideas about how we could work more with the store. We could help develop a ‘good tucker’ policy. Some of the school teachers want us to get involved in doing some health projects with the primary school children. Maybe we can close the health centre for some time each week.”
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Get some background information. Find out if a policy already exists and what has already been tried (and how).	There was a policy some years ago on closing the health centre two afternoons a week but the RAN left and the AHWs changed. The policy was forgotten. It had never been written down. We will find out about health centre opening hours policies in other communities.
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Together with the health team, think about who in the community needs to be included in talking about the issues.	The health team decided to invite some council members, some of the frequent users of the health centre, the nutrition worker, the store manager and a school teacher to a meeting.
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Organise a meeting to discuss the issue.	A meeting was arranged at the school on a day that was convenient for most people to attend.
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<p>At the meeting you could talk about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obvious and underlying causes of the problem/issue - its effects - the extent of the problem (how big a problem do people think it is?) - the level of support for developing and implementing a policy 	<p>Some of the issues talked about were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health staff feel they should keep the health centre open all day and that community residents expect it to be open. - staff do not have the time to work out in the community on issues that could have an impact on preventing some of the ill health in the community, like diabetes and skin sores in children. Some of the community residents said they were worried about all the people who were getting diabetes and then kidney disease. - the store manager, nutrition worker and school teacher said they would like to work with the health staff on some of these issues. - some of the community residents said they would not like the health centre to be closed in case there was an emergency. The council members agreed.
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<p>Then consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different options and realistic solutions - who will take responsibility 	<p>Some of the options and solutions discussed were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the need for health staff to have some specific times to work outside the health centre - the need for people to feel that they could get emergency care - closing the health centre for two afternoons a week had worked well in the past - signs could be posted around the community to let people know about the times the health centre would be closed, where health staff would be and a contact number in case of an emergency - one member of staff could be rostered to be at the health centre in case of emergencies but use the time to plan health lessons for the school children - what is an 'emergency' would need to be clearly stated and the community alerted about it.
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<p>Clarify to ensure everyone is on the same track and understands what the decisions will mean for them and the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revisit the reasons to close the health centre for two afternoons a week - Decide how to handle people who are not happy with the new policy, emphasising that there are two issues to explain; the need to have time for health promotion work, while still being available to provide acute care.
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Write down the agreements that have been reached and set a date to look at the policy again to check how it is working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write down the policy. Have it endorsed by the council or health committee and THS management. - Make a plan of action for the next two months and decide who will take responsibility for each action
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<p>Obtain council/health board endorsement. ↓</p> <p>Let everyone in the community know about the new policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give a copy of the policy to the Council, other people and agencies in the community who should know and THS manager/s. - Keep a record of the meeting - who was there, what was said, what the decisions were. Attach plan of action. - Decide how to let people know (via BRAACS, posters and flyers around the community, presentation at council) - Put a large notice on the health centre door
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Trial the policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it working properly? - Talk about ways to measure whether the policy is working. - Meet again in two months to see how things are going.
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Review the policy and make any changes that may be needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at the policy again after a year to see if any changes are needed. - Consult on the changes. - Write the changes down. - Let people know about the changes.