POLICY DOCUMENT DEFINITIONS - DRAFT

“STRATEGY”
Definition:- A high-level plan designed to achieve a particular long term aim for the future success of the Trust e.g. the Human Resources Strategy, The Governance and Assurance Strategy. Strategies are likely to apply for a number of years and must have an agreed review date. Strategies will always be organisation-wide and not local, documents.
Characteristics:- Addresses major issues, principles and beliefs. Often arising from Government aims across a number of policy areas. Ratified by Board or delegated Committee. Widespread dissemination and implementation. Less frequent reviews. Contents expressed in broad terms.

“ORGANISATION-WIDE POLICY”
Definition:- An organisation-wide policy is a ratified corporate plan of action. Organisation-wide policies apply to all relevant staff as a ‘must do’ requirement. The policy document is a formal document that is regarded as a legally binding document and therefore its purpose, definitions and the responsibilities outlined within its content must be upheld in order that it may be used to support an individual or the Trust during legal action. Policies provide a consistent logical framework for Trust action across different functions or directorates. Not all issues require a policy. Many routine matters can be dealt with by the formulation of procedures or guidelines. Policies must be reviewed at least every 3 years. Earlier review should be undertaken if there is a significant change impacting on the issue.
Characteristics:- Trust-wide issues. Often arising from national policy or Trust Strategy. Ratified by Board or delegated Committee Statement of the standard that is to be achieved rather than how to implement the standard. Equality Impact Assessment required. Widespread dissemination & implementation. Less frequent reviews (at least every three years). Contents expressed in broad terms. Statements of “what” and / or “why”. Addresses significant operational or administrative issues

“LOCAL POLICIES”
Definition:- The same principles as organisation-wide policy apply but local policies impact on a specific part of the Trust.
Characteristics:- Team/Department /Directorate, local issues. Approved locally by an appropriate: group, committee or individual Local dissemination & implementation. Less frequent reviews (at least every three years). Contents expressed in broad terms. Statements of “what” and / or “why”. Addresses local issues

“ORGANISATION-WIDE PROCEDURE”
Definition:- A procedure is a standardised series of actions taken to achieve a task so that everyone undertakes it in an agreed and consistent way to achieve a safe, effective outcome. The procedure is a formal document and must be complied with as it may be used to support an individual or the Trust during legal action. Procedures and must be reviewed annually. Organisation-wide procedures apply to all relevant staff as a ‘must do’ requirement.
Characteristics:- Sets out “how” to implement a required standard of working. Ratified by Board or delegated Committee. Breaks process into detailed actions. Written from staff/ policy user perspective. Trust-wide issues. Often arising from organisation-wide policy. Equality Impact Assessment required. Widespread dissemination & implementation. Frequent reviews
“LOCAL PROCEDURE”
Definition:- The same principles as organisation-wide procedure apply but local procedures impact on a specific part of the Trust.
Characteristics:- Sets out “how” to implement a required standard of working. Approved locally by an appropriate group, committee or individual. Breaks process into detailed actions. May contain flow charts. Written from staff/policy user perspective. Local issues. Frequent reviews (at least annually). May be incorporated into a policy document.

“CLINICAL GUIDELINES”
Definition:- Clinical Guidelines are statements of good practice. “Clinical guidelines are recommendations on the appropriate treatment and care of patients with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS in England and Wales. They sit alongside, but do not replace, the knowledge and skills of experienced health professionals.” (NICE, 2003). They allow for deviation from a prescribed pathway according to the individual circumstances and where reasons can be clearly demonstrated and documented.
Characteristics:- Detailed statements of ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘how’. Describe process. Ratified at trust or local level as appropriate. Reflect evidence based and effective practice. Applicable to the area defined. Any exceptions require risk assessment and documentation. Either local or widespread dissemination & implementation. Frequent reviews (at least annually). Ratified at appropriate Clinical Committee.

“NON-CLINICAL GUIDELINES”
Definition:- Guidelines represent the written instructions about how to ensure high quality services are delivered. Guidelines must be accurate, up to date, evidence-based, easy to understand, non-ambiguous and emphasise safety.
Characteristics:- Detailed statements of ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘how’. Ratified at trust or local level as appropriate. When followed they should lead to the required standards of performance. Applicable to the area defined. Reflect good practice. Any exceptions require risk assessment and documentation. Either local or widespread dissemination & implementation. Frequent reviews (at least annually).

“PROTOCOL”
Definition:- Detailed descriptions of the steps taken to deliver care or treatment to a patient and are sometimes called the “integrated care pathway”. They are designed at local level to implement the national standards and determine care provision by using the best evidence if national standards are not available may include recommendations or detail competencies or delegation of authority. Less rigid than a procedure.