

## **Module 5: Consultation of guidelines**

### **What happens at consultation?**

SIGN gathers feedback on a draft version of a new guideline from the wider health and social care community through:

- open consultation
- a national open meeting
- peer review.

When the guideline development group asks for input, they get helpful feedback and ideas about other evidence they could look at. This feedback might include different ways to understand the evidence and if it's realistic to follow the recommendations they're suggesting.

### **Open consultation**

The draft guideline is posted on the SIGN website for a month and widely publicised to relevant stakeholders. This includes:

- health and social care professionals
- third sector organisations
- other groups representing people with lived experience.

Comments are only accepted if the reviewer completes a declaration of interests form. You can read more about this in the volunteer handbook.

When there's a small change to published guidelines, we send the updated part directly to expert reviewers instead of putting it on the website.

Feedback is put into a consultation report for the group to consider.

### **National open meetings**

During the open consultation, SIGN might host a national meeting, either in person or online. At this meeting the group will talk about the draft recommendations in the guideline. National open meetings are open to the same groups as the open consultation. Particular efforts are made to ensure that all equality groups with a potential interest in the topic are invited to participate.

Delegates are encouraged to give feedback through discussion at the meeting, on social media and via the online consultation.

When we're updating existing guidelines or making new ones based on existing ones, there's no meeting. Instead, the guideline is put up for open feedback on the SIGN website for a month.

## Peer review

Before we publish any of our guidelines, health and social care professionals and academic experts review them independently. The draft is also sent to people who can provide us with comments from a lived experience perspective. This is known as the peer review process. We ask peer reviewers to comment on the guideline, particularly:

- the way the guideline development group has interpreted the evidence
- whether the recommendations are clear and easy to understand
- whether the guideline is useful
- whether the guideline reflects views of people with lived experience.

We also ask the peer reviewers to suggest improvements to the guideline.

We invite third sector organisations and members of the Patient and Public Involvement Network to participate in the peer review process. We have written specific guidance for non-clinical peer reviewers and shared this on our website. It is important that we get the views of people with lived experience at this stage. If an organisation or individual has concerns about any of the recommendations in the draft guideline, they can let us know. People with lived experience and organisations representing them can also give feedback on the wording in the guidelines.

Although we write our guidelines for health and social care professionals, we aim to make them available to as many other people as possible. When people with lived experience and members of the public review the guidelines, we ask them to consider the following:

- overall use of jargon, and whether there are any terms they do not understand
- whether we can explain anything more clearly or more briefly
- the tone of the guideline
- if they can, suggest plain, non-technical wording to help healthcare professionals
- explain areas of the guideline to people living with conditions.

Each guideline contains a section called 'Provision of information.' This section is designed for professionals to use when they discuss a condition with people with lived experience. We particularly ask public representatives to comment on this section and make a note of the following:

- whether there is any jargon or any technical terms that we need to explain
- the tone of this section
- whether the wording deals with the condition sensitively
- whether the information is useful for people with lived experience.

Comments from peer reviewers will not be considered if a declaration of interests form has not been submitted.

We put all the comments from reviewers into a report. The guideline group discusses this and we make changes to the draft guideline, if appropriate. If no changes are made we will record the reasons for this. Before publishing the guideline, the SIGN editorial team checks that the reviewers' comments have been dealt with. Once the guideline has been checked, we will publish it and make all relevant NHS staff and third sector organisations in Scotland aware of it. We publish the peer review report with the guideline.

### **Do the quiz**

**To complete this module, take a few minutes to do the end-of-module quiz. It's a quick way to make sure you've learned everything you need.**