

# Effective Relationships in a Recovery-Oriented Service

A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE



EVE Slánú





This guide was produced by EVE, a programme in the HSE, and was reviewed by Plain English Ireland. Based on this review, the guide has received the Plain English Clarity Award.

For more information about EVE, please visit [www.eve.ie](http://www.eve.ie)

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## Foreword

Welcome to the EVE<sup>1</sup> guide to *Effective Relationships in a Recovery-Oriented Service*. This guide is one of a series that EVE has developed for staff to help strengthen and continuously improve our ability to provide first-class, recovery-oriented community based services.

While traditionally the term 'recovery' has been used to mean 'cure' and becoming 'symptom-free', in more recent years a new understanding of recovery has been suggested by people with lived experience of mental health recovery. Service providers are now challenged to change from a model focused on treating symptoms to one that supports people in a far more holistic way, taking into account all aspects of a person's life.

Adopting a recovery ethos for services, as recommended in *A Vision for Change* (2006), initiates a realignment of power and personal responsibility for members/participants. Service providers are required to carefully consider new ways of working to meet the changing nature of the relationship between staff and service users. Whilst welcomed in principle, in practice this has led to some confusion around what is now expected of staff and requests were made for clarification on a range of practice issues that can arise when delivering recovery-oriented services.

This guide looks at the topic of *Effective Relationships* and describes the kinds of behaviours that are acceptable and appropriate in our relationships with members/participants. As relationships work two ways, all issues addressed in the staff guides have been included in a members'/participants' handbook and also our induction process to ensure that EVE's expectations of staff are clearly explained to each member/participant.

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<sup>1</sup> EVE is a programme within the HSE, whose primary ethos is to provide community-based recovery-orientated programmes for adults who experience mental health difficulties, intellectual difficulties, Asperger's Syndrome, and Physical and Sensory disabilities. We do this through our network of Vocational, Rehabilitative and Clubhouse services in 21 locations across the HSE Community Healthcare Areas 6, 7 and 9.

## A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

In this way, we hope that this guide and the member/participant handbook will support us in ensuring that EVE offers contexts for recovery that are profoundly respectful, welcoming and safe for everyone.

The guides have been developed in consultation with EVE staff and members/participants and are consistent with good practice across the sector, and we are delighted that Plain English Ireland has given us the Clarity Mark for each publication.

It is our hope that the series will prove to be a useful resource and that it will support EVE's services, staff and members/participants to achieve our shared vision of creating high-quality, recovery-oriented programmes and services.

**Margaret Webb PhD**  
**General Manager**  
**EVE**

## Contents

Introduction	4
What is mental health recovery?	4
What is the Strengths Model?	5
Practical implications of the organisation's recovery-oriented principles	6
Ensuring healthy working relationships	7

## Introduction

EVE expects all staff to approach their work with members/participants in a professional and ethical manner at all times, consistent with the Mission and Vision of EVE as described in *EVE Strategic Plan 2014-2018* and *A Vision for Change* (2006).

Our work is guided by the organisation's stated principles of delivering recovery-oriented services to members/participants. Accordingly, staff should always treat members/participants with the same degree of respect with which they would wish to be treated themselves.

As the recovery ethos and the Strengths Model strongly underpin how we work with members/participants, we will now briefly outline the main aspects of each.

## What is Mental Health Recovery?

Traditionally, recovery was used to mean 'cure', but people who have experienced mental distress and recovery have defined recovery in a different way. Recovery, in this sense, describes how people who have mental health difficulties use both personal and other resources in their lives to develop a positive identity and a satisfying life. It is a different process for each person.

This definition does not always mean 'cure' in the traditional sense (clinical recovery), but involves a person creating a good life despite their mental health difficulties (personal recovery).

People in recovery tell us that this ongoing process involves the growth of:

- ▶ hope
- ▶ meaning
- ▶ purpose
- ▶ control over the decisions affecting their lives
- ▶ participation in their communities

Recovery is linked with a person's overall well-being, including feeling at ease in yourself, with other people around you and being content with different parts of your life.

### What is the Strengths Model?

*The Strengths Model* (Rapp & Goscha, 2006) states that all people respond well to receiving positive feedback. By supporting and recognising the strengths and skills that each individual possesses, including their connection to the community at large, staff support and enhance a person's path to wellness.

### Practical implications of the organisation's recovery-oriented principles

All our members/participants must be:

- ▶ Recognised as individuals, addressed by their names, encouraged to do things for themselves and be given an opportunity to understand and be understood.
- ▶ Spoken to in a manner and tone that is respectful.
- ▶ Treated with respect, included in conversation, and involved in making decisions about themselves.
- ▶ Offered choices, listened to and ensured access to communication equipment, if required.
- ▶ Provided with a safe and clean working environment.
- ▶ Assured of confidentiality except where there is a risk to themselves or others or a suspicion that a child/older person/vulnerable adult is at risk.

### Ensuring healthy working relationships

The maintenance of healthy working relationships is central to the delivery of recovery-oriented services. This helps maintain a safe space for both staff and members/participants and minimises opportunities for allegations of improper behaviour to arise.

'The ability to recognise the humanity of those with whom we work, value them and recognise the importance of their lives forms the essential bedrock upon which supportive, hope-inspiring relationships are based. An individual is much more likely to begin to value himself/herself if others value him/her.' Repper J, Perkins R, 2003 *Social Inclusion and Recovery - A Model for Mental Health Practice* (p.78)

A number of good practice strategies can assist us in this regard:

- a) One-to-one meetings, internal and external, between staff and members/participants (for example, key working), are an important part of quality service provision. To ensure a useful and safe environment for these meetings, they should be conducted in a quiet but observable area. If this is not possible, the following safeguards are advised:
  - ▶ Use an office or room with inside and outside windows.
  - ▶ Blinds or curtains should be open and the room well lit. If possible, the door should be left open.
  - ▶ Inform a colleague/manager that the meeting is taking place, its location and likely duration.
  - ▶ The meeting should not be any longer than necessary.
- b) Avoid all unnecessary situations where you may be alone with a member/participant including while opening and closing the centre.
- c) Confine socialising with members/participants to pre-arranged group activities that are part of your work with EVE. One-to-one

social meetings with members/participants must not take place. Do not invite members/participants to your home.

- d) Do not give members/participants lifts in your own private car, except in absolute emergencies. In such cases, where possible, bring a second member of staff and inform your line manager.
- e) When driving in an EVE vehicle, it is recommended that staff avoid travelling alone with one member/participant, where possible.
- f) Do not borrow money from members/participants. Do not loan money to members/participants.
- g) Only gifts of nominal value, for example a key ring or souvenir, can be accepted from members/participants. Individual staff members should not give personal gifts to members/participants.
- h) Do not disclose your personal contact details to members/participants. EVE also prohibits socialising on social websites with members/participants. Inform members/participants that you are contactable during working hours only.
- i) Do not ask members/participants to do personal errands for you.
- j) Do not make sexually suggestive comments about or to a member/participant, even in fun.
- k) Do not engage in sexual activities of any nature with members/participants.
- l) If a member/participant makes inappropriate advances towards you, remove yourself from the situation and inform your line manager immediately.

This list is not exhaustive and we would actively encourage all EVE staff to be alert and vigilant in helping to identify and prevent situations which may cause or lead to problems for either colleagues or members/participants. This document should also be read in conjunction with other documents, such as:

- ▶ *EVE Strategic Plan 2014-2018* (2014)
- ▶ *A Vision for Change* (2006)
- ▶ *Codes of Standards & Behaviour* (2009)

## A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

- ▶ *Dignity at Work* (2009)
- ▶ *Trust in Care* (2005)
- ▶ *Whistle Blowing Charter* (2010)
- ▶ *New Directions* (2012-2016)
- ▶ *Protected Disclosures of Information in the Workplace* (2009)
- ▶ *Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse* (2014)
- ▶ *Children First* (2011)

If something is causing you concern, inform your line manager and/or the Slánú department.

In certain cases, you may feel it is necessary to make a protected disclosure under section 103 of the Health Act 2007, which came into operation on 1st March 2009 (*Protected Disclosures of Information in the Workplace*). The HSE Authorised Person can be contacted at (01) 662 6984.

As it is not possible, or advisable, to legislate for every eventuality, EVE therefore believes that issues/ethical dilemmas that arise relating to member/participant and staff relationships within our centres are best resolved in teams. As such, we require that boundary issues are on the agenda for formal staff meetings and management review meetings. Managers will be responsible for making the final decisions on boundary issues. A means of recording the discussion and decision for future inspection is necessary.

All new staff must be made aware of this good practice document during their induction period. Ongoing training on relations between members/participants and staff will be provided by EVE. EVE commits to reviewing this document regularly and to adapting it where necessary.

This good practice document also applies to sub-contracted staff, bank staff, employment agency staff, students on placements, volunteers and any person who may interact with or provide a service to our members/participants. It is the responsibility of local managers to ensure that all staff understand this document and sign off on it.

