Enabling Environments
Standards

Foreword

 "The young people and staff have regular meetings where they can air any concerns which they may have and then see what is being implemented and changed with regards to what they have said. The young people praised the staff for all that they have done for them as everyone there has had their views, wants and needs taken into account. The most striking thing of all was the interaction between the young people and the staff members, there was a lot of genuine respect from both parties to each other." Sally went on to say: "I felt that, as an ex-service user myself, living at O…. House will assist the young people throughout their lives as they have had professional advice and guidance given them at a crucial stage in their development."

(From a report of an inspection of a residential service for homeless adolescents)

This service, which I had unknowingly been associated with as a board member of a local housing association, demonstrated all the values that the Enabling Environments Advisory Group has been trying to grapple with over the past two years, and the outcome of which is presented here.

We believe that we have managed to isolate some of the key elements of the process that leads to the trust, emotional growth and life-long learning that Sally described. Whilst we are aware that there will inevitably be further improvements to be made, she, without her being aware of our work, clearly vindicates the approach we have taken.

It is not just in homes for young people that these values and processes can enable a secure environment where people work together not only to achieve whatever task that confronts them; but also gain confidence in themselves, enrich their relationships, and experience influencing their environment for the better. It is of course a description of how we would like: our children to be taught, to work ourselves, be treated should we become ill, and even the social club, or religious society, we might belong to.

We hope that the following continues to generate the interest and excitement that we have already met from a wide variety of sources. Most of all we hope that this will provide support, and a tool kit, for those environments that are striving to achieve the outcomes that Sally so vividly describes.

Tom Harrison, Consultant Psychiatrist
Chair of the Enabling Environments Advisory Group

Enabling Environments Standards

The places in which we live and work, the built environment and the social environment, have a profound impact on the ways we live our lives. In homes and workplaces, schools and colleges, neighbourhoods, hospitals and prisons, the nature and quality of the relationships we find and create around us can have a profound effect, not just on the efficient, smooth running of any enterprise, but also on how we feel – whether we thrive or struggle.

It is often quite possible to see common threads or themes in what is positive or "enabling" about many different environments. Yet the language used in different contexts and settings to describe this common core of experiences and principles or concerns does not always help to identify these common themes or values. This can make co-operation between agencies harder, and services may seem fragmentary and disjointed.

The Enabling Environment project aims to bridge older distinctions between clinical and non-clinical settings, to develop a single common core vocabulary, applicable across a range of agency and service environments, for those factors in the social and community "dimension" which are believed to be positive for health and well-being. This has been done by identifying a common core of key principles and value statements which underpin all such attempts to establish quality services which foster productive relationships and promote good mental health.

From these values we derive a set of ten core standards which can be found in a wide range of environments. These core standards are then supported with criteria, which give specific guidance on how the underpinning "enabling" values may be practically achieved. These form the basis for the Enabling Environments Award, a mark of quality allowing a service to demonstrate that it has achieved an outstanding level of best practice in creating and sustaining a positive and effective environment.

The development process has been a significant challenge, as the Enabling Environments Advisory Group sought to identify and make explicit which aspects and practices make some services and organisations stand out as particularly successful and nurturing for all of the people involved. From the outset, it was clear that the standards should reflect the contributions and needs of everybody in an environment, including both providers and recipients of care within a service.
As the development process knit together common strands from a variety of sectors and settings, the Advisory Group drew upon their own diverse professional backgrounds in housing, healthcare and social research, as well as rigorous academic enquiry into the relationship between social environment and clinical outcome. However, despite the complexity of source material from which these standards are drawn, they are designed to be as simple, comprehensible and applicable as possible. Thanks to a consultation and piloting process representing organisations in the NHS, the voluntary sector, social care, housing, the church, education, academia and private business, as well as to the Royal College's Service User Recovery and Carers' Forums, these criteria provide measures to be implemented which make sound common sense across a variety of sectors.

The Standards for Enabling Environments deal with essential human values and, taken as a whole, they outline a flexible and adaptable framework which can be ntegrated into the practice of a wide range of environments in order to improve relationships and well-being for all involved. And that, fundamentally, is what Enabling Environments are all about.

A note on terminology

The Enabling Environments standards apply to a wide range of environments ranging from those providing health and social care, to criminal justice settings and education. They also apply to work place settings and leisure facilities such as offices and gyms.

The generic nature of the intended audience makes it difficult to find appropriate terminology to which everyone can relate. The terms 'recipient' and 'provider' are used to differentiate between those people who receive a service (recipient), such as a customer, client, patient, prisoner, pupil etc. and those who provide it (provider) such as staff, workforce, nurses, teachers and officers etc.

Standards

BELONGING

1	**The nature and quality of relationships are of primary importance**
1.1	Recipients and providers support newcomers to get involved with others
1.2	There are opportunities for recipients and providers to get to know each other
1.3	There are ways to mark people leaving
1.4	Recipients and providers are learning about building relationships

BOUNDARIES

2	**There are expectations of behaviour and processes to maintain and review them**
2.1	Recipients and providers can describe the expectations and how they are maintained
2.2	There is a consistent approach to implementing these expectations
2.3	There is an open process to review expectations which includes recipients and providers

COMMUNICATION

3	**It is recognised that people communicate in different ways**
3.1	Recipients and providers are supported to communicate effectively

3.2	There are opportunities for recipients and providers to discuss the feelings behind the way people act
3.3	Recipients and providers are encouraged to use a variety of ways to communicate
.4	Providers recognise how the way people act is a form of communication

DEVELOPMENT

4	**There are opportunities to be spontaneous and try new things**
4.1	There is management support for spontaneity
4.2	Recipients and providers are able to try new things
4.3	Recipients and providers are supported to understand risk and risky behaviour

INVOLVEMENT

5	**Everyone shares responsibility for the environment**
5.1	Recipients and providers take a variety of roles and responsibilities within the environment
5.2	Recipients and providers are involved in planning their own development
5.3	Recipients and providers are involved in contributing to the development of others
5.4	Recipients and providers are involved in making decisions about the environment

SAFETY

6	**Support is available for everyone**
.1	It is acceptable for anyone to feel vulnerable and receive the emotional support they need
6.2	Recipients and providers feel listened to and understood by others around them
6.3	Providers have regular reflective supervision with a consistent supervisor
6.4	Peer-support is recognised, valued and encouraged

STRUCTURE

7	**Engagement and purposeful activity is actively encouraged**
7.1	There is a consistent structure or daily routine

7.2	There are regular meetings or groups that include significant numbers of both recipients and providers
.3	There are spontaneous activities that involve recipients and providers

EMPOWERMENT

8	**Power and authority are open to discussion**
8.1	Recipients and providers are able to challenge decisions and ask questions
8.2	Recipients and providers feel supported by those in authority
8.3	Recipients and providers are able to have their ideas implemented

LEADERSHIP

9	**Leadership takes responsibility for the environment being enabling**

9.1	There are clear management structures which include opportunities for involvement from recipients and providers
9.2	The leadership ensures that the environment is the right place for the people within it
9.3	People with a leadership role are active participants in the life of the community
9.4	There is continuity of staff

OPENNESS

10	**External relationships are sought and valued**
10.1	The environment is welcoming to visitors
10.2	Everyone is supported to participate in activities outside the environment
10.3	Everyone is open and responsive to evaluation and learning

Acknowledgements

The Enabling Environments Award
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www.rcpsych.ac.uk

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