

# Going Forward Together

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It gives us great pleasure to introduce ***Going Forward Together***, the Brothers of Charity Service Ethos 2001. Over the years, during which we provided services to people with intellectual disability, the Brothers of Charity have produced a number of publications in which we attempted to define the core values which described us, and to translate these into service-focused action. In taking its place with these documents, ***Going Forward Together***, in addition, attempts to address the challenges our services now face and will continue to face into the future. Our deepest hope is that we will together continue to remain responsive to all in the service and it is our intention that ***Going Forward Together*** will spur us on to do this.

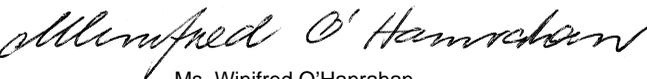
In publishing ***Going Forward Together*** we openly acknowledge failures in the past to live up to aspects of our ethos. However, the fact that there are questions about particular issues in the past is no good reason for keeping silent in the present. In all institutions in society, trust has to be continuously earned and built and we look forward in the coming years to working towards building this trust in partnership with all those associated with our services. The word ethos can be a much over-used and misused word.

It is also a very powerful word and is defined as the “distinctive spirit and attitudes of the people”. The Brothers of Charity, being founded within a religious context, are inspired by the spirit and values of the gospel. The essence of this, as we interpret it, is that it is all embracing and inclusive of everyone regardless of race, religion or ability. We sincerely hope that our ethos can be interpreted in this way.

We wish to thank everyone who worked on **Going Forward Together** at every stage in its development and we especially recognise the continuing contributions of these members of the Working Party who continue the arduous work demanded by our services everywhere, Dr. John Dunne, Brother John O'Shea, Ms. Anne Connolly, Ms. Eileen Dolan, Ms. Orla Healy, Ms. Noreen Watts.

Signed 

Brother John O'Shea  
Regional Leader

Signed 

Ms. Winifred O'Hanrahan  
National Director of Services

# The Brothers of Charity Services Ethos

The Brothers of Charity Services in Ireland today are made up of nearly 3,000 service users and their families, over 1,800 staff members, and a small number of Brothers. Our services had their origin in the vision and dynamism of Canon Peter Triest (1760-1836) who founded the congregation of the Brothers of Charity in 1807. The Brothers came to Ireland in 1883 and today are a major service provider for people with a learning disability.

The core values of our services have always been the dignity and humanity of each person. How these are expressed has evolved over time with our greater understanding of the rights of all people with a disability, with the changing hopes and expectations of the individuals and families with whom we work, and with the growing expertise of all associated with our services.

As our services are now at a time of transition, with new challenges and opportunities to be worked on, it is helpful to review the principles that underline our work. There are growing expectations as to the range, type, and quality of service we offer. In evaluating our present work and in planning for the future, we need to be clear about the values that motivate us and to be able to share them with others. *Going Forward Together* has been developed for these reasons, following wide consultation in our services.

In making this renewed statement, we continue the Brothers of Charity Services' tradition of being open to the best contemporary influences. We want to be inspired by the most creative ideas emerging in disability services throughout the world and to ask how we can give them concrete expression. We draw on current Brothers of Charity Services' literature and on a wide range of national and international statements of rights and standards regarding the lives of people with disabilities and the services they need.

This coming together of traditional and contemporary influences finds expression in our service ethos. *It is difficult to describe or analyse an ethos, yet you immediately sense its power and effect. When the ethos is positive, wonderful things can happen. It is a joy to come to work because the atmosphere comes out to meet you. It is a happy atmosphere. It is caring, kind and creative.*  
(O'Donoghue 1998)

We are deeply conscious that the many gaps between our ethos statement and our achievements may cause frustration and hurt at times. This tension between our ideals and reality urges us continuously to improve the quality of our services. Our ethos statement will be effective to the degree to which it affirms our present work while challenging us to bridge the gaps between what we say we believe and what we actually do. We will then remain responsive to all the people in the Brothers of Charity Services.

# A summary statement of the Brothers of Charity Services ethos

1. The Brothers of Charity Services are committed to working with people with an intellectual disability to claim their rightful place as valued citizens. Inclusion is a fundamental principle that underlies all aspects of our work.
2. We believe in the intrinsic value of every person and we aim to further the dignity of all associated with our services. We want each individual to have wide opportunities for self-expression in home life, education, occupation, and leisure.
3. We want everyone in our services to enjoy dignifying relationships and to have a sense of community.
4. We are a learning organisation open to evolving ideas in service development. We implement the best of current trends in service provision.
5. We affirm the rights of the person with a disability to a high standard of expertise in any service that he or she receives.
6. We seek to empower people with a disability, their families and all those working with them. The greatest possible autonomy is given to each part of our services, while also maintaining a healthy interdependence. We create progressive and flexible organisational structures to support our fundamental objectives.

7. We work in partnership with statutory bodies and are fully accountable for the services we provide. We actively seek the resources to create the range and quality of service which each individual requires.
  
8. The Brothers of Charity Services are rooted in the values of the Christian gospel. Pastoral care is an integral part of our approach to service provision.

# Defining Characteristics of the Brothers of Charity Services Ethos

From the beginning, the Brothers of Charity Services have been identified by core characteristics that can be defined as follows:

1. **working for inclusion with people who are marginalised;**
2. **striving for the highest possible human dignity in our services;**
3. **developing caring relationships and inclusive community;**
4. **integrating the best of current trends in service provision;**
5. **valuing a high standard of expertise;**
6. **a progressive approach to the organisation and structure of services;**
7. **a willingness to function within a social framework and to work in partnership with statutory bodies;**
8. **finding final motivation in the Gospel.**

These characteristics need to be teased out at some length in order to understand their current implications. This is done here in a series of broad principles arising from each characteristic.



# Characteristic One

## Working for inclusion with people who are marginalised

- 1.1 The Brothers of Charity Services are concerned at our society's marginalisation of certain groups and are committed to working with people with learning disabilities to claim their rightful place as valued citizens. They have the same rights as everyone else, including the right to full membership of their local communities and the right to have individual needs addressed. Inclusion is a fundamental principle that underlies all aspects of our services.
- 1.2 We encourage the development of the five accomplishments that further the inclusion of people with a disability - **community presence, relationships, choice, competence, and respect.**
- 1.3 To enable **community presence**, everyone has the right to live and work within ordinary communities and use facilities available in the same locality. People are entitled to ordinary housing within natural centres of population, to attend normal educational and work placements, to use public amenities for leisure, and to participate in local cultural, recreational, and sporting activities.
- 1.4 The person with a learning disability has the right to opportunities in daily life to meet and mix with people who do not have a disability and to form valued **relationships**.
- 1.5 Everyone in our services is entitled to have **choices** and to be supported in making both major life and day-to-day decisions.
- 1.6 Every person has the right to learn and grow and so to enhance his or her **competence** in leading a full and rewarding life
- 1.7 Each person in our services has a right to **respect** and to present him or herself in such a way as to promote self-esteem. People's homes and personal appearance reflect their image as esteemed citizens. Their work activities and

forms of leisure reflect their age and enhance their value as contributing members of their community.

- 1.8 The person with a learning disability is entitled to full participation in family life.
- 1.9 We offer support to families who seek inclusive services for their family member.
- 1.10 We support the establishment of equal and appropriate educational opportunities.
- 1.11 To enable people to remain as long as possible in their own families, we establish respite care and home support services.
- 1.12 We promote open and supported employment for people with a disability in order to maximise their community inclusion and create opportunities for the development of wider social networks.
- 1.13 The programmes for individuals whose needs are met in sheltered settings pay particular attention to ensuring regular involvement in their local communities, whether through training or work experiences, by use of local facilities, or by participation in educational and recreational activities.
- 1.14 There is a “close connection between the limitation experienced by individuals with disabilities, the design and structure of their environments and the attitudes of the general population,” (United Nations, 1993), and so we work to influence society’s understanding of disability and of the human, physical and technical conditions which enhance inclusion.
- 1.15 People with disabilities are entitled to an appropriate share of our national resources to support inclusion and enhance their quality of life. We encourage the development of national legislation and social and economic policies which ensure these rights.
- 1.16 Our services are structured and led in such a way as to ensure participation by people with disabilities, their families and all who work with them.

# Characteristic Two

## Striving for the highest possible human dignity in our services

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- 2.1 We believe in the intrinsic value of every person and aim to further the dignity of all associated with our services - people with disabilities, their families and those who work with them.
- 2.2 Each person is recognised as a spiritual, physical, emotional, sexual, and social being, with individual needs and ambitions.
- 2.3 The uniqueness of each person means that he or she has the right to be treated as an individual with opportunities for self-expression in home life, education, occupation, and leisure.

### *DIGNITY AND RIGHTS*

- 2.4 In keeping with his or her dignity, each person has the same basic rights as everybody else, and in particular we recognise the following:
  - the right to form meaningful and satisfying relationships;
  - the right to express feelings;
  - the right to be in a safe and comfortable environment;
  - the right to a home which best suits his or her wishes and needs;
  - the right to appropriate educational and leisure opportunities;
  - the right to a wage sufficient to meet basic needs and to give a reasonable quality of life;
  - the right to breaks, sick leave, days off and holidays;

- the right to have and use personal property including earnings, allowances, savings, pensions or other moneys;
- the right to an individual programme plan based on stimulating, age appropriate activities, where possible in ordinary community settings;
- the right in retirement to a lifestyle suitable to one's interests, needs and capacity, and to continue to live at home for as long as possible;
- the right to staff who are competent and have appropriate qualifications, expertise or experience;
- the right to be referred to people with particular expertise or to a more appropriate service if needs so require;
- the right to privacy and confidentiality, particularly at times of personal difficulty;
- the right, when challenging behaviour is being addressed, to a high quality, positively oriented programme in the least restrictive environment, ensuring personal dignity at all times;
- the right to access personal records oneself or through a representative;
- the right to attend in person or be represented by an advocate, at meetings regarding oneself;
- the right to take reasonable risks.

### *THE DIGNITY OF BEING HEARD*

- 2.5 Dignity begins with every person involved in our services being heard. We want to learn from each person what will bring about his or her happiness and fulfilment.

- 2.6 Each person is enabled to develop his or her communication potential.
- 2.7 Through self-advocacy, people with a disability ensure that they are heard. Self-advocacy groups are represented on service teams and are part of regional and national service structures.
- 2.8 Families and all working in our services share a primary role in ensuring that each person is heard, understood and responded to appropriately.
- 2.9 Outside advocates are sought for those who cannot speak for themselves, to offer friendship and to ensure that their needs are being appropriately addressed.

#### *THE DIGNITY OF FAMILIES*

- 2.10 In partnership with parents, appropriate objectives are identified for their children. The type and level of support, information, and service that each family and child need is offered insofar as resources permit. Where a desired service is not available, additional resources are actively pursued.
- 2.11 We value the expertise of families and what they contribute to our services. We encourage their participation in service teams, regional councils, working parties, and other forums.
- 2.12 Where questions arise regarding the most appropriate forms of adult service, full dialogue is sought with the person concerned and with his or her family, seeking outcomes that offer most to the individual's development.
- 2.13 Care is taken not to intrude unduly on families' privacy and all information obtained in the course of working with them is treated confidentially. The only exceptions arise where the safety of the person or of others is endangered or where disclosure can be shown to be in a person's best interest. Written information is restricted to what is relevant to the person's overall well-being.

- 2.14 Service admissions, transfers and discharges are based on a formal process undertaken by an admissions committee. Following admission, a service contract is made with the family, stating clearly what is being offered, under what conditions and for how long. These contracts aim to ensure mutual understanding and co-operation and are reviewed on a regular basis.
- 2.15 Family members have a key role in our evaluation process and in planning new developments.

### *THE DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON WORKING IN OUR SERVICES*

- 2.16 The personal and professional dignity of every person working in our services is upheld. Each person is recognised and valued in his or her own right. Opportunities for ongoing development are available to all.
- 2.17 Every person working in our services is listened to and afforded the opportunity to make a full contribution.
- 2.18 Our services are structured in such a way that unreasonable demands or expectations are not placed on people working in them.
- 2.19 Those in leadership have a particular role in helping people to feel valued and in facilitating support networks.
- 2.20 Where difficulties arise in our services we aim to resolve them in a manner that maintains the dignity of each person concerned.
- 2.21 Confidential support is available to anyone working in our services who is having personal difficulties.

# Characteristic Three

## The development of caring relationships and inclusive community

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- 3.1 The person with a learning disability has the same needs as everyone else for love, comfort, and companionship.
- 3.2 Adults in our services are supported in the development of the personal relationships of their choice.
- 3.3 People in our services can avail of personal development programmes and practical supports to enhance their relationship skills and understanding.
- 3.4 The primacy of family relationships for people with a disability is fully recognised and family involvement is actively supported.
- 3.5 A positive environment is created in the person's home and local community to facilitate a diverse range of valued relationships. Networks of friendship are developed through work and leisure.
- 3.6 To ensure stable relationships, people need the security of a permanent home, moving only if they are happy to do so.
- 3.7 Training and support are offered in addressing the sensitive area of personal relationships and sexuality in the lives of people with a learning disability.
- 3.8 Good relationships are fostered between all involved in our services in whatever role, whether people with a disability, those working with them, family, or friends.
- 3.9 Good relationships between those in leadership roles and those working with them are critical to morale and to the success of our work.

- 3.10 We want each person to have a sense of belonging, to find that he or she matters and is able to influence our service as well as be influenced by it, within a shared vision and commitment.
- 3.11 In furthering a sense of community, we try to meet each other's needs insofar as is appropriate and possible. We value our common history and the time and experiences we share.
- 3.12 We seek to strengthen a sense of community with the wider communities where our services are based. Local communities are enriched when they know, care for, and share with their members who have a disability.

# Characteristic Four

## **Integrating the best of current trends in service provision**

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- 4.1 We are a learning organisation open to evolving ideas in service development. We implement the best of current trends in service provision.
- 4.2 We attend workshops and conferences, read current literature, and encourage research, innovation and evaluation of our work. We encourage training and development and share our knowledge and skills.
- 4.3 The managerial, financial and legal frameworks governing our services reflect best practice.



# Characteristic Five

## Valuing a high standard of expertise

*The high level of shared commitment, expertise and experience that has been developed over the years is an irreplaceable asset of the services.* The Brothers of Charity, 1987

- 5.1 The person with a disability has a right to a high standard of expertise in the service that he or she receives.  
The Brothers of Charity Services have valued such expertise over many years.
- 5.2 We are committed to a reciprocal sharing of knowledge, skills, and expertise with families.
- 5.3 Our commitment to the ongoing development of staff expertise is carried out through a process of review and commitment to continuous training.
- 5.4 Expertise is applied to the prevention of disability through public education and the promotion of services such as genetic counselling.
- 5.5 We draw on expertise from outside our services as required.
- 5.6 We share our expertise through the teaching and supervision of students, and highlight for them how their discipline and skills can enhance the lives of people with disabilities.
- 5.7 We welcome all opportunities to contribute to national and international debate on best practice in service provision.



# Characteristic Six

## Having a progressive approach to the organisation and structure of services

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- 6.1 Our structures serve our fundamental objective and are progressive and flexible.
- 6.2 The empowerment of people with a disability, their families and all those working with them, is achieved through a team-led approach to service provision.
- 6.3 As relationships are a primary value, the concept of *community* is fundamental to the way we organise our services.
- 6.4 The greatest possible autonomy is given to each element of our services. At the same time our structures enable a healthy interdependence between various service areas and regions.
- 6.5 Leadership in our services is based on mutual respect, on the building of trust, on the ability both to challenge and affirm, and on nurturing the fulfilment of our shared vision.
- 6.6 Formal linkages to the international Brothers of Charity Services support the development of bonds and enable communication and exchanges with our services in other countries.
- 6.7 We realise that the development of good structures is an ongoing process that takes time and continuous learning and we expect our future structures to evolve in ways which we currently do not envisage. Even the best structures have to be set aside at times in order to give an appropriate response to individual need.
- 6.8 Given the diversity of our work, different forms of structure may be appropriate to different types of service, but all bear the qualities just noted.



# Characteristic Seven

## A willingness to function within a social framework and to work in partnership with statutory bodies

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- 7.1 As a non-statutory, voluntary organisation, we are committed to working in partnership with Government Departments and Health Boards in the development and operation of quality services for people with a learning disability.
- 7.2 We actively seek the resources and staffing ratios required to create the quality and range of services which each individual needs, and to promote his or her integration in society.
- 7.3 While retaining our independent identity and operational autonomy, we are fully accountable for the services which we are contracted to provide. We implement the principles of **equity**, **quality**, and **accountability** according to the Health Strategy document (Dept. of Health, 1994).
- To ensure **equity** we develop services according to the needs in our catchment areas and not according to an individual's ability to pay or geographic location.
  - In pursuit of **quality** we aim for the highest possible standards within the resources that are available.
  - We have mechanisms of **accountability** to people in our services and to funding authorities, by which we highlight our values, address the issue of standards and demonstrate our success in achieving agreed objectives. We aim for openness and transparency in the operation of our services.
  - Equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory policies are endorsed and pursued at all levels of work practice, including staff recruitment. Issues of gender and disability are reviewed regularly.

- We welcome and actively develop association and co-operation with other service providers and participate in relevant national and international bodies. We look for positive working relationships with trade unions and professional organisations.
- We seek to influence the development of national policy which enables people with a learning disability to be fully participating members of society.
- We value the tradition of voluntary involvement in our services, both by staff who go beyond the strict definition and time commitment of their role, and by outside volunteers who support our work.

# Characteristic Eight

## Finding final motivation in the Gospel

- 8.1 As a Christian organisation in the Catholic tradition, the Brothers of Charity Services are inspired by the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 8.2 We respect people with other religious traditions as well as those with no religious beliefs. In turn, we ask that all respect the Christian tradition which is central to the Brothers of Charity Services ethos. While acknowledging the richness of our diversity, we can be at one in our shared commitment to the people with whom we work.
- 8.3 We greatly value the spiritual dimension of our lives. We facilitate the wishes of the people in our services, their families and staff to practise and grow in their particular faith tradition. Pastoral care is an integral part of our holistic approach to service provision.
- 8.4 Celebration in its many forms is vital to the life of our services, and provides rich opportunities to build community, to lift us beyond the daily routine, and to affirm the vitality of our identity and ethos.



# The Ongoing Development of the Brothers of Charity Services Ethos Statement

In order for the Brothers of Charity Services ethos statement to remain a vibrant and positive force in our services, we propose the following:

- 1. Clear methods for implementing our ethos statement at national, regional, and local levels, such as:**
  - The use of the ethos statement as a critical yardstick by which our services are measured in the regular evaluation process.
  - Regular consultation with the Brothers of Charity National Service Users Council regarding its satisfaction with the implementation of our ethos statement in the services.
  - The inclusion of clear objectives derived from named areas of the ethos statement, in national and regional annual plans, and in the future plans of local services derived from the evaluation process.
  
- 2. Regular reviews of the ethos statement and updating as necessary:**
  - The Brothers of Charity Provincial Council and the National Service Directorate retain responsibility for the development and implementation of the ethos statement.
  - The Brothers of Charity National Service Users Council is recognised as having a particular role in ensuring that our ethos statement is appropriate to the rights and dignity of all in our services

- National, service-wide consultations are held on the ethos statement every three years, to determine if it remains a satisfactory document and to seek proposals for positive amendments. Based on these consultations, draft changes to the ethos statement are developed.
- The National Conference of the Brothers of Charity Services, held every three years, will debate any proposed changes to the ethos statement and agree amendments to be made.

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**The following sources were drawn on in the development of this document.**

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# Appendix One

## **The Brothers of Charity National Working Party on Service Ethos, 1998-2000**

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The Brothers of Charity Services National Working Party on Service Ethos was made up of the following members for its full duration:

Anne Connolly (Mid-Western Region), Secretary

Eileen Dolan (Roscommon Region)

John Dunne, (Galway Region) Chairperson

Orla Healy (Southern Region)

Brother John O'Shea (Provincial Council)

Danny Wade (South East Region)

Noreen Watts (Galway Region)

The feedback of a wide range of colleagues on earlier drafts of this document made a major contribution to its development and is gratefully acknowledged.

The members of the Working Party thank their colleagues for their support and patience in facilitating absences for regular meetings.

The generous hospitality of the Bawnmore services, and particularly the catering staff, was much appreciated.

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