

## The Recovery Context Inventory (RCI) -an innovative response to mapping mental health recovery

An exciting and innovative mental health recovery profiling tool is being developed by EVE, a programme within the Health Service Executive (HSE) in the Republic of Ireland. Known as the Recovery Context Inventory (RCI), this new web-based questionnaire allows people to measure the presence of contextual factors in their lives which they believe are important to their wellbeing and recovery.

While traditionally the term recovery has been used to denote 'cure' and people being 'symptom-free', in more recent years an alternative understanding of recovery has been proposed by people with lived experience of mental health recovery.

Recovery in this sense is a universal human experience involving the creation of a fulfilling and meaningful life, sometimes in the face of ongoing challenges. Mental health difficulties are viewed as one part of a person's overall life and the person is not defined by them.

From sharing their experiences, it is becoming clearer that whilst recovery is a deeply personal and unique process common themes have emerged.

In particular, we have learnt that people who experience mental health difficulties (i.e. all of us at different times in our lives) use both personal resources and strengths (e.g. hope, resilience, etc) and other environmental resources (e.g. positive relationships, good housing, supportive services, etc) in their lives to develop and sustain a positive identity and a satisfying life.

**RECOVERY CHALLENGE** This 'new' understanding of recovery is beginning to have an impact on mental health service delivery and now underpins mental health

policy in a number of countries.

Our services are now challenged to transition from a model focussed on "treating symptoms" to one which supports people in a far more holistic way, taking account of all aspects of a person's life.

When we in EVE sought to commence this transformative process, we identified a lack of well tested models and tools to assist services to make this transition.

To meet our strategic vision in EVE – to **create contexts for recovery** – the idea was born to develop our own questionnaire which would not only assist respondents to engage in recovery planning if they wished, but would also support services to respond to each individual, based on those aspects of their life which they believe have the greatest impact on their mental health and wellbeing.



### THE RCI

As a result, the questions contained within the RCI address a broad range of life circumstances and invite respondents to make judgements on areas such as the quality of the relationships in their lives, the community they live in, levels of choice in their lives, the activities engaged in on a daily basis, the extent to which basic

needs are met, the supports received from services and the impact of various stressors.

In its current format, respondents are invited not only to rate the degree of presence or absence of these factors but also critically to rate the relative importance of each factor to their mental health recovery, as they see it, thereby taking account of the unique nature of recovery.

For the individual who chooses to complete the RCI, it is hoped that the experience and resulting profile will support an increase in self-awareness, aid personal reflection and encourage action in those areas, which in their view, can support their mental health recovery.

For service providers, the requirement to develop personalised and targeted supports to individuals who experience mental health difficulties is a critical component of a progressive health care system. The RCI offers a potentially highly effective solution to address this need by assisting with the accurate identification and measurement of service user priorities.

A recent report on Patient Outcomes commissioned by the Bamford Implementation Rapid Review Scheme has recommended that the RCI is considered for use in Northern Ireland as a service-user rated measure of recovery-orientation.

At a time when we are conscious of the need to target limited resources in mental health services, the RCI provides an opportunity to gather good quality data on service users needs and aspirations which ultimately can guide effective person-centred resource allocation and service design.

## RCI BACKGROUND

The development of the RCI has involved a rigorous, scientific development process spanning five years with an extensive literature review and consensus building with a range of stakeholder groups in both the UK and Ireland, underpinned by support from the School of Psychology, University College Dublin and Ulster University.

Representatives from service users, family members, policy makers, mental health professionals and community-based service providers have contributed to the development of the current draft questionnaire, which has received a Plain English Mark.

## CURRENT STAGE

Funded by Genio, the next phase of the project, due for completion in May 2012, will test the tool with up to 400 respondents to ensure an easy to use, high quality mental health recovery tool is available for routine use. We are also developing a recovery planning workbook to support those who wish to reflect on their RCI profile and develop a personal recovery plan.

In EVE, we believe the RCI can positively change the way service users and providers engage by introducing a solid platform from which the development of a personal recovery plan can be a truly collaborative and effective process.

### Key Features of the RCI

- Designed in a user-friendly web-based format
- Provides a personalised profile of mental health recovery factors and priorities
- Supports services to become more responsive and effective in meeting service user needs
- Offers a unique rating system consistent with recovery ethos
- Based on consensus from service users, providers, family and other key stakeholders
- Fully developed in Ireland and the UK
- Underpinned by a rigorous, scientific development process

EVE is a programme within the HSE which provides community-based and recovery-oriented supports for people experiencing mental health difficulties, intellectual disabilities and those with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome in Dublin, Kildare and North Wicklow.

**For more information** on the RCI contact Tom O' Brien, Principal Psychologist, EVE, [tobrien@eve.ie](mailto:tobrien@eve.ie)

A short version of this article will appear in the Spring edition of the HSE magazine 'Health Matters.'