DEBRA IRELAND

CODE OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

2013

Prepared by Patient Care committee (JF/DC/VF/KG) in close consultation with advisors & expert opinion
The purpose of the code of ethical behaviour is to encourage optimum levels of practice, to establish and maintain ethical standards and to inform and protect those who seek and use any service offered by DEBRA Ireland. In joining DEBRA Ireland, employee’s and volunteers agree to the provisions of the code of ethical behaviour. The code of behaviour applies to their professional activities and any behaviour that might impinge on those.

Although the standards outlined in this document are guidelines and good practice and must be adhered to and followed by all employees and volunteers, this document it is not a legal document with the exception of any breach of the Children’s First Guidelines as outlines by the HSE National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare for Children 2011. The code of behaviour seeks to minimise the occurrence of accidents / allegations and seeks to contribute to the protection of all from intentional harm / allegations. This document is subject to change and review on an annual basis.

DEBRA Ireland requires all employees and volunteers working with each other and our service users to provide a safe space, ensuring they are safe-guarded physically and emotionally, in a healthy environment. The welfare of all employees, volunteers and our service users is paramount in all decisions, activities, plans and standards of good practice by the charity.

**Definitions for the purpose of this document**

**Employee** is deemed to be any person who has a contract written or verbal with DEBRA Ireland and is in receipt of payment for their services. For the purpose of this document employee is extended to any consultants or experts that engages in work, long term / short term and are in receipt of payment for their services.

**Volunteer** is deemed to be any person who acts on behalf of DEBRA Ireland with the knowledge and approval of DEBRA Ireland but does not receive payment for their services. Volunteers choose to act on behalf of the charity as a gesture of goodwill.

**Service User** is deemed to be any person who has EB or has a family member who has EB and uses any or all of the services DEBRA Ireland provide. This extends to all families including those who have lost a family member from an EB-related illness.

**Supervisor** is deemed to be a member of management or an external accredited professional that is available to staff for support. Supervisors provide a place for debriefing and should have no direct relationship to any of the service users. All employees should be clear who is available to them for support on commencing work with the Charity.
**Contract** is deemed to be any agreement written or verbal with an employee, volunteer or service user.

The code of behaviour is based on four overall ethical principles.
**Principal 1:** Respect for the rights and dignity of each other
**Principal 2:** Competence
**Principal 3:** Responsibility
**Principal 4:** Integrity

**1.0 Respect for the rights and dignity of all persons**
This principal requires employees and volunteers to treat all service users and each other as persons of intrinsic worth and to respect each others dignity, cultural and moral beliefs. To ensure we value each other and each others contribution to the organization, by enabling all persons to be part of its operational development. Acknowledging that employees at all levels have rights and that these come with responsibilities that should be clearly defined, acknowledged and valued. DEBRA Ireland will ensure that all personal information is treated confidentially and that service users and employees understand and consent to professional actions within their profession.

**1.1 General**
- Have general respect for all employee and service users
- Have sensible regard for each others beliefs and values
- Do not allow the service, to employees or service users; be diminished by factors such as gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, race, ethnicity, age, national origin.
- Work in a way that promotes respect for each other
- Fairness and equality for all
- Do not accept violence, bullying, sarcasm, name calling, favouring some to the exclusion of others, abusive language or gestures, racism
- When using Social Media adhere to DEBRA Ireland Social Media Policy See Appendix II to this document

**1.2 Privacy and Confidentiality**
- Privacy and confidentiality is paramount at all times and is guaranteed. Such information or any description of the service user’s life and circumstances must be treated sensitively and not used in any way outside of agreed consent with the service user.

- The only exception to this break in confidentiality is where law requires, or where there are grounds for believing any service user will cause harm to themselves or others. Where possible the employee must try to obtain
consent and consult their line manager, supervisor or experienced
colleague in advance of such disclosures.

1.3 Consent
- Written consent must be obtained for all use of photographs or mention of
  name in any/all literature including websites, interviews or PR literature
- Written consent can be obtained electronically or in hand-written form.
- This consent extends to service users, volunteers and employees.

2.0 Competence
This principal requires all employees and volunteers to acknowledge their
own expertise, the capacity for work boundaries and to take care not to
exceed these limits. Employees and volunteers must provide only those
services and use those techniques that they are qualified or experienced in. It
acknowledges the need for regular maintaining or assessment of skills and the
need to update their professional skills.

2.1 General
- All employees and volunteers strive to maintain high standards of
  competence of their work.
- Employees and volunteers recognize the boundaries of their competence
  and limitation of their expertise.
- Employees and volunteers provide only those services and use only those
  techniques for which they are qualified by training and experience.
- Employees and volunteers shall be aware of how their personal beliefs and
  values can influence their interactions with others.
- It is an indication of competence that employees and volunteers recognise
  when they are unable to offer a professional service.
- Assessing and monitoring competence and engaging in continual
  professional development is good practice and should be engaged on a
  regular basis

3.0 Responsibility
This principal requires all employees and volunteers to be aware of their
professional responsibility to service users, to the public and each other.
Employees and volunteers must act in a trustworthy and accountable manner.
Employees and volunteers must be responsible for their own actions whether
they are verbal, written or body language. They must cooperate with
colleagues and act positively to resolve ethical dilemmas. This responsibility
extends to all behaviour both inside and outside the office setting.
3.1 Safety

- All individuals and organisations, paid or otherwise, working with children, have a Duty of Care to all children as outlined in the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare for Children 2011.
- It is the responsibility for all employees and volunteers to seek out and be aware of these guidelines.
- DEBRA Ireland children’s first information and advice officer is our Family support worker and can be contacted on info@debraireland.org or 01 4126924.
- These guidelines are extended to vulnerable adults.
- DEBRA Ireland’s child protection policy is in accordance with the HSE guidelines.
- All outreach workers, head office and management staff will be Garda vetted on taking up employment. Any relevant findings may result in their contract being terminated with immediate effect.

3.2 Professional

- All employees and volunteers behaviour must reflect the core values of the charity.
- All employees and volunteers must act in a professional manner at all times, particularly within the guidelines of their role.
- All employees and volunteers must be aware of the implications of their actions either verbal, written or body language.
- Should an employee be operating in a specific profession, and there are ethical guidelines within that profession – both sets of ethical guidelines will be adhered to, e.g. a DEBRA Ireland -funded nurse
- Any discrepancies between the ethical guidelines will be discussed with the line manager, prior to any engagement with service users.

3.1 Code of behaviour for external work

- The professional conduct of all employees and volunteers will extend to any work, meeting, external trip or visit that is engaged in outside the office.
- If working outside, the office employees must be covered by the relevant insurance to do so.
- If an employee offers an adult service user transport, ensure that the relevant insurance is in place to do so.
- In accordance with Children’s first guidelines, no employee must offer a child transport alone.
- No employee must be left alone with a child unless another employee or adult is present.
• If going on an external trip the employees’ line manager must be aware of the detailed trip.
• Employees and volunteers must only operate within the boundaries of their competence
• Employees must not engage in requests to stay in service users homes.
• Employees must not offer for service users to stay in their homes.
• If an employee or volunteers is working within an alternative setting, certain procedures need to be sought and adhered to, i.e. hospital or clinical setting.

4.0 Integrity
Employees and volunteers must be open and honest about their expertise. Employees and volunteers must treat others in a fair and open manner. Employees and volunteers must take responsibility for their own well being and take steps to ensure support is accessed by their line manager or experienced colleague. Employees and volunteers must not use their professional relationship to exploit others. Employees and volunteers will avoid the use of deception and deal actively with conflicts of interest.

4.1 General
• All employees and volunteers clarify for relevant parties the roles which they are performing and are attempting to function appropriately in accordance with these roles.
• Boundaries include not engaging in any activity that may affect the employees’ role or the ability to carry out your role.
• All employees must be mindful of their own health and limitations and seek appropriate support or supervision regularly.

4.2 Honesty and Open
• All employees and volunteers take care to demonstrate and uphold the principles of honesty and openness in all their professional interactions.
• All employees and volunteers ensure information about their competencies and qualifications are honest and accurate.
• All employees and volunteers make clear the boundaries that their role encompasses with service users.
• When advertising, avoid misrepresentation or exaggerating about the services.
4.3 Conflict of interest

Dual relationships
Due to the unique circumstances of DEBRA Ireland, dual relationships are often formed. It is the responsibility of DEBRA Ireland to ensure that all service users and employees have clarity and boundaries around these relationships.

- A dual relationship can be deemed as friendships that are formed with service users by employees out of the working relationship and/or when a service user acts on behalf of the charity even if it’s on a voluntarily basis.
- Be acutely aware of the complex nature of dual relationships and recognise that it is not always possible to avoid them.
- If a dual relationship is created, appropriate steps to safeguard the interest of those should be taken.
- All DEBRA Ireland employees must be mindful that their primary responsibility must be to the role that they are employed, the organisation that they work for and the charity’s goals and objectives.
- Within the framework of the dual relationship, DEBRA Ireland employees must be aware that all their actions must reflect and be appropriate to the charity.
- DEBRA Ireland will take reasonable steps to protect the rights, interests and the welfare of others within the dual relationship.
- If a service user acts on behalf of the charity, they are accepting to operate within the code of ethical behaviour.
- Employees of Debra Ireland will not exploit their professional relationship for their own purpose.
- The same standard of work should be offered whether work is paid or voluntary.
- Employees must be sensitive to the possibility of becoming overly involved with a service user/family
- Employees must be sensitive to the risks of personal safety and the possibility of unfounded allegations

Complaints Procedure
A complaint can be made by any service user, employee, or volunteer, whereby a code of ethical behaviour has been breached.

- DEBRA Ireland will ensure to have a clear pathway available for service users, volunteers to register a complaint.
- All complaints should be directed to DEBRA Ireland CEO and will be dealt with according to our Complaints procedure. Appendix I
• Should a complaint be in relation to the CEO then the complaint should be
directed to the designated person on of the Board of Directors. This
information is updated and is available on our complaints procedure.
• Employees must seek supervision and / or consultation on all issues
relating to a conflict of interest.
• DEBRA Ireland must ensure the supervisor does not occupy other
significant roles in the service user’s life.
• Full guideline of conflict resolution procedures can be found in DEBRA
Ireland handbook for employees
• The DEBRA Ireland Code of ethical behaviour will be available via our
web site www.debraireland.org
APPENDIX I Complaints Procedure

General Principals

This procedure is intended to provide a process whereby complaints made against a member of DEBRA Ireland may be examined and where possible resolved. In this procedure the term Member refers to a staff member or known volunteer currently working with DEBRA Ireland.

The complaints procedure strives for:

- Ease of access for all complainants.
- Simple procedures written in plain language easily understood and widely published.
- Speedy resolution in predetermined time limits.
- Fair, full and impartial investigation without any penalty in respect of quality of service to the service user.
- Confidentiality as outlined in the Code of Ethics and practiced at all times.
- Informative methods with the aim of making it easier to extract lessons on quality from the complaints to improve the service.
- Cost effectiveness
- Written records with a review on a regular basis with management of DEBRA Ireland
- Confidentially- all correspondence to be marked "Private and Confidential or Personal"
- Recognition it is without prejudice the service users right to complain else where.

Process

All efforts will be made to resolve the complaint informally when a complaint is made verbally to a member of DEBRA Ireland.

On receipt of a written complaint, the CEO will respond in 5 working days to the complainant and undertake to investigate the matter fully.

The CEO will investigate the complaint in the first instance with the staff member of DEBRA Ireland involved.

The CEO will then communicate with the service user to inform him/ her of the outcome of the investigation.
Should the complaint be in relation to the CEO then the complaint should be directed to the designated Board Member. Ms. Rosita Wolfe and can be received from the DEBRA Ireland head office by emailing info@debraireland.org or by phone 01 4126924.

Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint informally when a complaint is made verbally to the Designated Board Member.

On receipt of a written complaint, the Designated Board Member will respond in 5 working days to the complainant and undertake to investigate the matter fully.

The Designated Board Member will investigate the complaint in the first instance with the staff member of DEBRA Ireland involved.

The Designated Board Member will then communicate with the service user to inform him/ her of the outcome of the investigation.
APPENDIX II

The bullet points below provide guidelines for all DEBRA Ireland staff and volunteers with participants on social networking sites.

- DEBRA Ireland staff and volunteers are not prohibited from appropriately communicating with service users via general instant messenger programs.
- DEBRA Ireland staff and volunteers shall refrain from any proactive one-on-one communications with persons less than 18 years on social networking sites.
- DEBRA Ireland staff and volunteers may accept invitations to profiles, groups, and events, but may not initiate any type of communication with persons less than 18 years.
- Responses to teen-initiated communications should be limited to those that are DEBRA Ireland related. Public one-on-one communications (i.e. posting a comment to a wall) are discouraged at all times.
- Mass (one-to-many) communication from these sites is not prohibited provided that the content is appropriate and DEBRA Ireland related.
- Since DEBRA Ireland is a service user led organization, staff can utilize all charity ambassadors including teen ambassador to broadcast virtual messages to service user’s online communities.
- DEBRA Ireland staff and volunteers must recognize that they are role models for all service users at all times, and should limit their public profile to information, comments, photos, etc. that are appropriate should a service user view them.
➢ DEBRA Ireland staff and volunteers agree to be respectful of DEBRA Ireland, its service users and its policies in all postings in profiles, blogs and other mediums of Internet communications.

➢ DEBRA Ireland staff and volunteers agree not to use a social networking profile, group page, blog, or other Internet medium to discuss behavior that is prohibited by DEBRA Ireland policy or the Code of Ethics.

➢ All official DEBRA Ireland program related correspondence must be initiated via email or through the DEBRA Ireland social media.

➢ The Children’s First Guideline as outlined by the HSE applies to all social media networking activity.

➢ Should DEBRA Ireland staff or volunteer choose to maintain a virtual presence and see something on a service user’s profile that is immoral and/or illegal, under the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare for Children 2011 it is the responsibility of the adult to notify their line manager.

➢ The line manager will provide guidance on any next steps.

➢ Representatives of DEBRA Ireland have a legal and moral obligation to protect all DEBRA Ireland service users.