

action
mental
health

Eating Disorders Support

Creating awareness. Reducing stigma.
Providing support.



Action Mental Health provides a range of services that aim to promote a greater understanding and awareness of eating disorders.

We have adopted a recovery approach to provide help and support to people with eating disorders and also to their friends and family. We also advocate and lobby on their behalf, for specialist services.

While over 700,000 women and men in the UK have a diagnosed eating disorder at any one time, research suggests that this number vastly underestimates the true size of the problem in the UK. Estimates suggest that up to 80% of individuals who screen positively for having an eating disorder have never accessed help or support.

- Our eating disorders support services aim to create greater awareness of eating disorders, reduce stigma and provide much needed support to both the person affected, their family and friends.

Eating disorders claim more lives than any other mental illness, with one in five of the most seriously affected dying prematurely from the physical consequences or suicide. But one of the most harmful symptoms of an eating disorder is SILENCE - we want those affected to speak up, and to know that an understanding and listening ear is there to support you towards recovery, in the strictest confidence.

What are eating disorders?

- Eating disorders are not primarily about food and weight
- People can and DO recover
- Eating disorders can affect anyone of any age, gender or background

Although an eating disorder is a complex mental health condition, it is, in its simplest form, about using food as an emotional tool. For the person with an eating disorder, controlling food and their body is a way of relieving distress or managing their emotions while achieving some degree of control over their life. Their eating disorder provides them with a sense of safety.

Eating disorders in particular are highly stigmatised, with people commonly dismissing the condition as a 'diet fad', a ploy for attention, or simply as 'normal' behaviour. But an eating disorder is not a lifestyle choice, it a serious mental health condition.

Research suggests that as many as 1 in 20 people will develop an eating disorder over their lifetime. It is important therefore, that we raise awareness of this mental health condition throughout our community and provide much needed support and training within this area of mental health.

How can Action Mental Health help?

We offer training programmes to support awareness raising, increase knowledge of eating disorders and promote early intervention and pathways to appropriate support. Programmes are offered to post-primary schools, youth and community groups and health professionals.

- Our eating disorders support services provide help and information to people with eating disorders as well as their family and friends. We will ensure that individuals are signposted to support services, as appropriate e.g. GP, Specialist Eating Disorder services, community/voluntary services.



Find out more about Eating Disorders Support and all of Action Mental Health's services at **amh.org.uk**

Action Mental Health is a local charity supporting minds and changing lives, across Northern Ireland.

To find out how you can support our vital work through donations and fundraising, or by leaving a gift in your Will, please visit **amh.org.uk**

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