

# Eye to Eye Counselling Service

“Sometimes we all need someone to talk to”



## Eating Disorders: Parents and Carers

Every young person's eating habits are different and can change over time. This is normal, but they may have an eating disorder if they:

- Appear underweight
- Worry about their weight/size
- Avoid eating around others and/or are secretive about food.
- Binge eat (eating a lot in one go) or eating very little
- Cutting up food into small pieces to make it appear they have eaten more than they have
- Being sick after meals or making themselves sick
- Excessively exercising

It is good to acknowledge that there are a number of eating disorders, each with different signs and symptoms. See [BEAT](#) for more info on the different disorders and their signs.

### What are the causes?

It is not always clear what causes eating disorders, but there are things that may influence or trigger it, such as:

- Controlling your emotions
- Anxiety or depression
- Feelings around perfection
- Fear of being or becoming overweight
- Bullying or peer pressure
- Traumatic events
- Loss of control in other parts of your life
- Social and media pressure

Be mindful that eating disorders are **never the fault of the young person**, it is considered to be a **complex mental health disorder** and often a result of the need to feel in control.

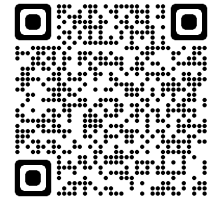
### How can I help ?`

The most important thing to do if you are concerned that a young person has an eating disorder is to **seek professional help**, such as speaking with their GP. An eating disorder requires specialist support and is needed to ensure a successful recovery.

Other ways you can support them are:

- Have an open conversation, remember to be mindful of your reactions, stay calm and let them know you are there to listen and want to understand. See [BEAT](#) for more info on how to have a conversation
- Don't force them to eat more, this can cause more distress and may make the problem worse.
- Be patient, eating disorders can't just suddenly stop, it takes time.
- Support them to build upon their self esteem and develop a good healthy view on their bodies.
- Encourage them to keep talking to others

Supporting a young person with an eating disorder can be emotionally difficult and it is also important that you **look after your own well-being** and seek support if needed.



[www.eyetoeye.wales](http://www.eyetoeye.wales)

### Useful Contacts

**Eye to Eye Counselling Service:**  
01443 202940  
Email: [info@eyetoeye.wales](mailto:info@eyetoeye.wales)

**Beat Eating Disorders**  
[www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)  
Online chat and online peer support  
via website

**Childline**  
0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) (online chat available)

### Helpful Resources

**National Eating Disorder Association:**  
[Parents tool kit](#)

**BEAT:** [Eating disorder guide for friends and family](#)

**Recovery Record:** Eating Disorder management (APP)

**Rise up and Recover** (APP)



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