Eating disorder service
For Children and Young People with an Eating Disorder and their Families living in Essex

Information for patients, service users and carers

www.nelft.nhs.uk
“Today I will do my best. If I have a good day, I will be proud of myself. If I have a bad day, I will not dwell on it, I will forgive myself, I will put it behind me and I will continue to move forward in my recovery.”

Anon
Eating Disorder Service

What is the Eating Disorder Service?

The Eating Disorder Service (EDS) is part of the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS) provided by North East London NHS Foundation Trust and is a specialist community service. We offer treatment to people from the age of eight, up to the individual’s 18th birthday. Our service aims to bring hope and confidence to those who have an eating disorder and their parent(s)/ carer(s) and to enable them to take back control of their life by overcoming their eating disorder.

We aim to treat our patients at our clinic based in Chelmsford, but you may be seen at a clinic nearer your home, where possible, as long as your physical health needs are stable. Our service offers specialist care management, assessments and treatments, in line with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines, to children and young people with eating disorders. As well as working with individuals, we also work with families and carers to help them support the person they care for who has an eating disorder.

The eating disorder service works closely with other NELFT services and inpatient services. This enables us to provide care that is tailored to the needs of the individual.
Who is our service for?

We offer our services to children and young people who have a primary diagnosis of an eating disorder, and their families. These diagnoses include Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder, and Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder.

Eligibility criteria

- 8-18 years
- Must meet the criteria for the spectrum of eating disorders including Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder, and Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder.
- A primary diagnosis of Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder, or mixed eating disorder symptoms
- Must be registered with a GP in Essex

Exclusion criteria

- Medically unstable
- In need of inpatient treatment
- Obesity without an eating disorder
- Low weight without an eating disorder
- The co-morbidity of another mental health disorder severely impacting your eating disorder that needs to be addressed first
Understanding eating disorders

Eating disorders involve disturbances in eating behaviour, such as extreme and unhealthy restriction of food intake and/or severe overeating, as well as feelings of distress or extreme concern about body shape and/or weight. Such disturbances can put your physical health and functioning at risk. There are a number of factors which can cause eating disorders such as genetics, psychological and social influences, or a combination of all of these.

Eating disorders are not simply a diet gone wrong. More often they are a way of coping with difficult thoughts, emotions or experiences. Commonly people with eating disorders feel that controlling their eating habits is the only way they can maintain control of their life, when in fact the eating disorder begins to control them.
What is Anorexia Nervosa?

Anorexia Nervosa is a disorder that causes people to become preoccupied with controlling their weight and shape, and consequently they engage in behaviours that result in severe weight loss. The disorder is powered by the fear of gaining weight coupled with a relentless pursuit of thinness.

Anorexia Nervosa puts someone at risk of becoming severely underweight. Overall, body shape and weight concerns dominate the individual’s thoughts and the way in which they see themselves; it also affects the way they feel.

The strategies used for weight control vary from individual to individual. Restriction of food intake is the common strategy used. Other strategies include over-exercising, self-induced vomiting and laxative misuse.
What is Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder?

Bulimia Nervosa is similar to Anorexia Nervosa in the way that those suffering from Bulimia Nervosa share the same distorted thoughts concerning body shape and weight. People suffering with Bulimia Nervosa binge regularly on large amounts of food and then compensate for the food they have eaten. Individuals with Bulimia Nervosa use extreme compensation methods such as self-induced vomiting, laxatives, diuretics and over-exercising to try and prevent weight gain. As a result, life is a constant battle between the desire to lose weight and the overwhelming compulsion to binge.

Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is also characterised by bingeing. Individuals with BED consume large amounts of food whilst feeling out of control and powerless to stop. Individuals with BED tend to eat food even when they are not hungry and continue eating long after they are full. They may also eat as fast as they can, while barely registering what they are consuming or tasting. People with Binge Eating Disorder may struggle with feelings of guilt, disgust, and depression.
What is ‘Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder’?

If someone is struggling with eating disordered thoughts, feelings and/or behaviours, but do not fit the exact diagnostic criteria of the eating disorders listed above that person may be diagnosed with Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder (OSFED). OSFED is often referred to as a ‘partial syndrome’ since the individuals often display some but not all of the symptoms of the other eating disorders. OSFED can be just as severe as the other eating disorders, and is probably the most common type of eating disorder.

How we can help

Our service provides a range of treatments that are evidence based. Physical health and medical risk monitoring is an important part of our care planning. Should the physical health of a service user change dramatically, the team will review treatment and may consider inpatient admission to keep the service user safe. Treatment varies according to each patient’s individual needs. Therapeutic sessions can run from 6 to 40 weeks depending on the diagnosis and severity of the disorder. Dietetic support and psychiatric reviews often run alongside therapeutic treatment.
The service we provide

The Eating Disorder Service (EDS) is a community service which aims to adhere to the Access and Waiting Time Standards for Children and Young People with an Eating Disorder. These standards were published by NHS England in 2015 and emphasise the importance of timely access to services and evidence based treatment provided within a community setting.

We provide a service that includes:

- A comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment
- Dietetic support
- Psychiatric review and medication management
- Specialist physical and mental health monitoring and support
- Support and skills training for carers

Therapeutic interventions including a range of individual, family, and group sessions

The Eating Disorder Service is a multi-disciplinary team. The professionals within our team include:

- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists
- CBT therapists
- Psychotherapists
- Family therapists
- Specialist nurses
- Dietitians
The initial assessment

When a young person is referred to our service, we invite them and important people in their life (usually parents, carers and siblings) for an initial assessment. The aim of the assessment is to develop an in-depth understanding of the young person's difficulties and how the family is managing these.

An initial assessment will be done by one or two members of the specialist EDS team. It lasts for approximately 120 minutes and takes an in-depth look at the symptoms and issues which have brought you to our service.

If it is thought that a young person is suffering from an eating disorder and therefore may benefit from input from our service, the young person and their family will be informed about the different treatment options available to them and offered a therapeutic intervention specific to their needs once discussed with the multi-disciplinary team. If it is discovered that the young person does not have an eating disorder, or if the eating disorder is not the most important problem at the time, we will signpost them to more appropriate services.

Extended assessment

An extended assessment is carried out when the team recognise that there is an issue with eating but are not sure as to how severe the problem is. Alternatively, the team may be unclear as to whether the eating disorder is the main difficulty or whether other issues need addressing first. Three to six further sessions can be given to help us gain a clear understanding of the issues or to simply deal with any symptoms that do not need intensive care.

Dietetic support

The dietitians meet with people individually to address their food needs and requirements. They support each service user as they accept more responsibility for feeding themselves. The dietitians also see service users within individual, family, and group therapy sessions.
Psychiatric review and medication management

Our team has a specialist psychiatrist who you may need to see in regards to your eating disorder. The doctor can help you understand more about your illness and the appropriate treatments. If you require regular physical health monitoring the doctor may arrange to see you fortnightly or even weekly until physical health has stabilised. Any medical tests or medication that you need will be prescribed by the doctor, and should your physical health deteriorate the doctor will assess the need for inpatient treatment.
Specialist physical and mental health monitoring and support

Our specialist nurses provide a skilled monitoring and support programme for individuals who are new to our service and are waiting to be allocated to a clinician for therapy. Regular phone calls and face-to-face sessions are arranged so that patients have someone who they can contact and talk to about worries or stresses. It is also the most successful way of the team being up-to-date with information regarding your personal symptoms.

Support and skills training for carers

A carers’ group offers support for families and carers of children and young people within the EDS community service. Along with gaining specialist knowledge on eating disorders, carers can benefit hugely from sharing experiences and having the opportunity to discuss difficulties and problem solving methods. Topics include:

- Dealing with difficult situations
- Meal times
- Dietitian and nutrition
- What happens in therapy
- What our community service provides
- When to consider inpatient treatment
Therapeutic interventions we offer

When a young person develops an eating disorder, we understand that this can impact on the whole family. We know that family-based interventions for young people with eating disorders have the greatest supporting evidence compared to any other intervention, and that the family can provide an invaluable resource for recovery from an eating disorder.

For these reasons, where possible we advocate a family-based approach. We encourage families to play an active role in the treatment of the young person’s eating disorder, and ask that parents, carers and sometimes siblings attend for sessions with the young person. The focus of treatment will enable the young person and their family to work together to overcome eating disorders.

We are however aware that a family-based approach may not suit all of the young people we see, and we will assess on a case-by-case basis with the young person and family whether this is appropriate. In cases where family intervention is not indicated, we are able to offer individual therapy for the young person.

What to expect from treatment

We know that treatment for an eating disorder can be very effective. It is however important for young people and their families to have realistic expectations regarding to the course of an eating disorder and how this may present in treatment. The course and presentation of an eating disorder is rarely straightforward, and every young person we see presents differently. Depending on the severity and complexity of the eating disorder, treatment can be expected to last between four months and two years. As professionals we are here to help support those affected to develop the skills necessary to assist them to get through such challenging times.

Clinicians delivering treatment

The Eating Disorder Service is a multi-disciplinary team comprised of a variety of specialist professionals (outlined below). We are all trained in the delivery of therapeutic models used to support individuals with eating disorders, including individual, family and group interventions.
Clinical Team

Service Manager

The Service Manager ensures that our service runs efficiently so that you can receive the best possible care and support in overcoming your eating disorder. In addition to managerial responsibilities, the service manager also has clinical responsibilities within the service, which involves assessing, monitoring, and providing therapy for clients.

Clinical Psychologists and Therapists

We have a number of therapists with specialist therapy training. Our therapists work together with you to understand how thoughts, feelings and behaviour affect one another. They also help you try and make changes in your thinking and behaviour. It is likely that you will be asked to do some ‘homework’ in between sessions. Practising new skills in-between sessions will allow you to maximise the benefit from your therapy here at the eating disorder service and will help you to learn how to manage without regular sessions in the future.

Family Therapists

Eating disorders are known to have an impact on the whole family and family therapy is the leading evidence-based treatment for child and adolescent eating disorders. Our family therapists aim to work with the members of your family and others who are close to you, to enable all members of the family to understand how difficulties within the family are having an effect on everyone and to then find strategies that will help the family overcome such difficulties.

Specialist Nurses

Our specialist nurses are trained as both general health and mental health nurses. Their role within the team is to monitor your mental and physical health and provide therapeutic input during your treatment. The monitoring of your physical health may include regular blood tests and monitoring of your blood pressure, pulse and weight. Another part of the specialist nurse role within the team is to support
carers, as we understand that eating disorders do affect the whole family, and all our specialist nurses provide family work throughout admission to our service. They also work with people who may not feel ready for treatment, aiming to motivate them towards making small changes in their behaviour with food. The specialist nurses can also support you with your eating at some meal times, or just listen to your difficulties so you know there is someone understanding to talk to.

**Dietitians**

The dietitians role within the team is to assess your nutritional requirements, design and review eating/ nutrition plans with you. Depending on your needs, you may meet with a dietitian every week or fortnight, or for two to three times over several months and then again as needed. The dietitian will help monitor your weight and alter eating/ nutrition plans as appropriate.

**Assistant Psychologists**

The assistant psychologists analyse data collected from you about your treatment and the service. Assistant psychologists already have experience in working with people who have mental health disorders. They often shadow clinicians during treatment sessions before taking the lead in therapy in order to develop their skills and learn more about treatment for eating disorders. They are closely supervised by a senior member of the team. You will always be asked for permission before an assistant psychologist sits in on your session. Assistant psychologists also co-facilitate group therapy programmes.
Care model

1. Referral
Your GP/local EWMHS team/parent or carer/school nursing/etc. would have referred you to our team because they are concerned about how you behave and/or feel around food.

2. Initial assessment
Once you are referred, we will arrange to meet you for an initial assessment. During this assessment, we will ask you questions about your eating behaviour so we are able to understand how best we can help you get better. We will also perform a physical assessment, in order to check your weight and blood pressure. We will also require you to have a blood test and ECG.

3. Making a treatment plan
After you have had an assessment, the member of staff who assessed you will meet with the rest of the team so that together they can formulate a treatment plan. The members of staff who assessed you will then contact you to inform you what has been decided.

4. Starting treatment
Once we have formulated a treatment plan, we will begin your treatment.
5. Treatment

You will begin your treatment as soon as possible. There is no time limit for how long treatment takes; treatment is tailored to your individual needs.

We encourage you to ask us any questions you may have and similarly to inform us if you want to change anything about your treatment. If you are very unwell, your therapist may feel it best to admit you to an inpatient eating disorder unit, so that can receive extra support to help you get better. If this is the case, your therapist will explain to you exactly what will happen.

6. Finishing treatment

When you and your therapist feel that it is time to end your treatment at the service, we will try to prepare you for any re-occurrence of symptoms that you may experience in the future. We will also ensure that you can always be re-referred to the service if you feel you need to.
Non-negotiables

Our clinicians have devised a number of non-negotiables that have been set in place to most minimise risk to you and also limit surprises for both you and our team during treatment. These non-negotiables have been carefully thought out with your well-being in mind. A clinician will explain them all clearly to you when you start treatment with our service and you will have to abide by them during treatment. You may be given a more individualised version of the below.

1. Patient’s weight and height will be checked at assessment.
2. Patients receiving treatment will have their weight checked regularly.
3. Blood tests and physical health (including pulse and BP, SUSS test) monitoring may be necessary.
4. Children and young people with body weight below 70% of ideal body weight may be referred for inpatient treatment.
5. Patients with other risk factors such as abnormal blood results (including low sodium or potassium etc) or rapid loss of weight will be referred for inpatient treatment even when body weight is above 70% percent of ideal body weight.
6. Patients who fail to attend three consecutive appointments will be discharged from the service.
7. New patients who fail to attend two assessments will be discharged.
8. The goal of treatment will be to achieve recovery. For underweight patients this includes weight restoration to a healthy ideal body weight.
Providing feedback and completing outcome measures

We greatly value feedback regarding the service we provide. Throughout treatment we therefore ask young people and their families to fill in questionnaires which ask how they are finding the service provided and about their eating disorder symptoms. These questionnaires help us to find out whether the team is offering the best possible service and also allow us to track symptoms over time to find out whether these are improving.

Additionally, we provide opportunities for young people and their families to have a say in how the service is run.

Research programme

The EDS community service takes pride in its involvement with research to improve our understanding of eating disorders. The team often take part in research studies including treatment trials. Whilst in treatment studies with our team you may be asked whether you would like to take part in the research by providing data for us or trying out a new treatment recommended for your eating disorder. It is up to you whether you take part, declining will not affect your treatment.
Attending the Eating Disorder Service

Our service runs Monday to Friday, 9am until 5pm. As a specialised service we provide care to young people and their families across Essex, and we hope that our central location in Chelmsford means that the service is accessible to all our young people and families.

We do realise that work and school commitments can make attending the service tricky, and we will do our best to accommodate this. We however hope that any disruption to school and work will be limited, allowing young people and their families to continue with their lives beyond the eating disorder as soon as possible.

Our address:
EWMHS Eating Disorder Service
125 New London Road, Chelmsford,
Essex CM2 0QT

Phone: 0300 300 1600 Option 5 Option 2

If you are in crisis call:
NELFT Mental Health Direct on
0300 555 1000
Getting to us

If you intend to travel to us by car, there is a large pay and display car park (Moulsham Street Car Park) on George Street, which is behind the building and parallel to New London Road. You can access the building via either the front entrance on New London Road, or the rear entrance off George Street.

If travelling by train, Chelmsford train station is around a 15 minute walk from 125 New London Road. Alternatively, it is short bus or taxi ride from the station.

Resources

We stock a small selection of reference books in our waiting room, and encourage young people and their families to browse through these to see if they may find them helpful. The two main books we recommend for parents and carers are:


We have also found that many individuals attending our service find the charity Beat’s website helpful: www.b-eat.co.uk
“Take every chance, drop every fear.”

Anon
NELFT provides community and mental health services for people of all ages in Essex and the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

TEL: 0300 555 1200

www.nelft.nhs.uk