

## **Eating Disorders**

This factsheet will give some background information to what eating distress is and how to go about finding help from local statutory and voluntary sector organisations in Harrow, and useful national organisations. Much of this information is from the website of the Eating Disorders Association

### **What is an Eating Disorder?**

Everyone has different eating habits. We all vary in the foods we like, how much and when we eat. Food is essential for development and health. However some eating habits can be damaging, even life-threatening.

People of different ages and ethnic backgrounds, from both prosperous and low-income families, can suffer from an eating disorder. Men too can suffer from eating disorders, though this is less common. Eating disorders provide a way to cope with conflict or unhappiness. The focus on food can be an attempt to cope with life and to gain some control.

### **Different eating disorders**

#### **Anorexia nervosa**

There are many symptoms, which will not be applicable to everyone, but anorexia sufferers usually severely restrict the amount they eat and drink, sometimes dangerously. They develop a distorted sense of their own body image, believing, against the evidence, that they are overweight. At its most severe, the condition can be life threatening.

#### **Bulimia nervosa**

Bulimia involves eating large amounts of food, and then trying to undo the effects by starving, or by vomiting or, less usually, by using laxatives (both known as purging). Frequent vomiting is extremely dangerous and can cause epileptic fits,

muscular weakness and heart problems, while taking a lot of laxatives can also cause permanent damage. Bulimia is more common than anorexia, but because a person's weight may remain stable it is not so visible.

### **Compulsive and binge eating**

A compulsive eater will generally eat all day and find it difficult to stop. A person who binge eats consumes a large amount at one sitting. Both are likely to be heavily overweight, and consequently at risk of developing health problems.

### **Over-exercising**

Research has found eating disorders are more common among certain sports. Some athletes may want to keep thin and therefore eat less, or sufferers of anorexia may see exercise as an additional way of keeping thin. However exercising when the body is not receiving enough nutrients can be dangerous.

## **What causes eating problems?**

Eating problems generally do not arise from a single cause. There is usually a combination of factors, which happen in a person's life which lead to someone using this as a method of coping. These factors could be past experiences, current events or pressures, such as health problems, conforming to an ideal, or family problems.

There is debate about the influence of popular media on people's perception of their body image, in that conflicting visual and written messages are presented about ideal body shapes. The Eating Disorders Association is clear that this does not cause eating disorders, but it may influence someone who is feeling vulnerable about themselves or has low self-esteem.

## **Where can you get help?**

It can be very difficult to overcome this problem alone, and the first step is to accept that there is a difficulty. It is then important to see someone with expertise in eating disorders. Your GP can refer you to a specialist counsellor, or if you are severely underweight, to an NHS unit which can support and manage your food intake as well as your distress. There are also private counsellors in Harrow who can assist ([link to counselling services](#)).

If someone is severely underweight, admission to hospital to ensure weight gain may be necessary and even life-saving.

# Local Statutory Services

## Harrow Outpatient and Daypatient Eating Disorder Service

The service provides specialist daypatient and outpatient care for adult patients (16 years+) with a range of eating problems.'

Northwick Park Mental Health Centre, Watford Road, Harrow, Greater London, HA1 3UJ

Tel: 020 8869 5499

Web: <https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/services/mental-health-services/adult-and-older-adult/harrow-outpatient-eating-disorder-service>

# National Organisations

## Inpatient Eating Disorder Service (National)

The national Inpatient Eating Disorder Service provides inpatient treatment for patients at high medical or psychiatric risk and those who are motivated to make changes but have been unable to do so after an effective period of outpatient treatment.

11-19 Lisson Grove, London NW1 6SH

Tel: 020 7535 7700

Web: [www.cnwl.nhs.uk/service/vincent-square-eating-disorder-service](http://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/service/vincent-square-eating-disorder-service)

## Beat

Support and understanding around eating disorders and contacts for local self-help.

Wensom House, 103 Prince of Wales Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 1DW

Helpline: 0808 801 0677

Email: [help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk](mailto:help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

Web: [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

## Overeaters Anonymous Great Britain

12 Step fellowship focusing on recovery from compulsive overeating, bulimia and anorexia. Local groups throughout the country

483 Green Lanes, London, N13 4BS

tel. 07798 587802

Web: [www.oagb.org.uk](http://www.oagb.org.uk)

## Young Minds

Committed to improving the mental health of young people. For people between the age of 16-25

Suite 11, Baden Place, Crosby Row, London, SE1 1YW

Tel: 020 7089 5050

Email: [ymentquiries@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:ymentquiries@youngminds.org.uk)

Parent Helpline: 08088025544 Email: [parents@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:parents@youngminds.org.uk)

Web: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## **British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)**

This organisation can provide details of accredited therapists in Harrow

Imperial House, Hornby Street, Bury, Lancashire BL9 5BN

Tel. 0330 320 0851

Email: [babcp@babcp.com](mailto:babcp@babcp.com)

web: [www.babcp.com](http://www.babcp.com)

## **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**

See website or send A5 SAE for details of local practitioners

BACP House, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth LE17 4HB

Tel. 01455 883 300

Email: [bacp@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk)

Web: [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

## **National Centre For Eating Disorders**

Provides effective help and treatment for sufferers of eating disorders

54 New Road, Esher, Surrey KT10 9NU

Tel: 0845 838 2040

Web: [www.eating-disorders.org.uk](http://www.eating-disorders.org.uk)

## **Private Sector Services**

### **Cygnnet Health Centre**

Provides a full therapy programme including inpatient treatment in Ealing for women over the age of 18 suffering from eating disorders.

Tel: 0207 123 5706

Web: [www.cygnethealth.co.uk](http://www.cygnethealth.co.uk)

### **Eating Disorders Unit, Institute of Psychiatry**

Provides inpatient, day-centre and outpatient appointments at a series of hospitals across the country.

Treatment enquiries: 0800 084 6189

General enquiries: 0808 115 2583

<https://www.priorygroup.com/eating-disorders>

## The London Centre for Eating Disorders and Body Image

Provides specialist treatment for several eating disorders

Tel: 020 3137 9927

Email: [info@thelondoncentre.co.uk](mailto:info@thelondoncentre.co.uk)

Web: <https://www.thelondoncentre.co.uk/>

Please call Mind in Harrow on 020 8426 0929 for a large print version of this factsheet or a summary translation.

Mind in Harrow's Mental Health Information Service is a part of SWiSH, a consortium of five local charities, offering the local Care Act Information & Advice Service for Harrow residents, funded by the Council. [www.harrowca.org.uk](http://www.harrowca.org.uk)

This factsheet was produced by Mind in Harrow



Mind in Harrow, Fourth Floor, 132-134 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BQ  
T: 020 8426 0929 | E: [info@mindinharrow.org.uk](mailto:info@mindinharrow.org.uk) | W: [www.mindinharrow.org.uk](http://www.mindinharrow.org.uk)  
Registered charity number 1067480