

"SOMETHING'S GOT TO CHANGE"



**Only 1% of young people felt they could
talk to their parents about their concerns**

Report published 5 February 2007 by
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beatTM
beating eating disorders

"SOMETHING'S GOT TO CHANGE"

Imagine you are thirteen years old. You are worried about food, maybe you are convinced you are too fat or you are being bullied about your size, where would you go for help and support?

We asked 600 young people affected by eating disorders where they went for help and support. This is what they told us.

92% couldn't tell anyone that they had a problem

I was worried what people would think of me and whether they would think I was a bad person.

I did feel a lot of shame, grief, anger and embarrassment because I am male and thought eating disorders were only for women.

Only 1% could talk to their parents

My dad thinks that I only have anorexia to get attention.

My mum treated me like it was my fault... because the norm is still to label people with eating disorders as vain and stupid but they are far from it.

Only 9% felt they might be able to talk to someone at school.

One teacher noticed, but she didn't confront me, she spoke to my friend. I could really have benefited from somebody acknowledging it.

Just 17% felt they might be able to talk to a doctor or nurse

My first GP put me off. I was told that lots of women have this problem and it doesn't make you any different and it will just be a phase. I felt I had no right to help.

So let's just clarify, 92% of young people couldn't talk to anyone, not their teachers or school nurses, their doctor, not even their parents.

Everyone thinks they know about eating disorders, we see features in our newspapers, in our magazines, on the TV. We've known for years that eating disorders damage young lives, destroy bright futures. We are even beginning to understand more about what causes an eating disorder, how we can help, what sorts of treatments need to be in place to help people recover.

But year on year, young people tell us that the help isn't there. That people don't understand, that they have nowhere to turn to and that they have no hope.

Every young person needs to know that their worries and problems matter; that they will be helped, that they can recover.

You need to know someone in the world cares or even notices that you are alive.

I got so lonely and felt so worthless, I tried to kill myself.

**SOMETHING'S GOT TO CHANGE
AND IT STARTS TODAY**

THE MEDIA

I know the media doesn't cause eating disorders, but it doesn't help.

The media talks about eating disorders all the time, it focuses its energies on how thin she is, how much weight he's gained. We have created a size 0 world, where people are vilified for gaining weight, then stigmatised for losing weight.

I keep comparing myself to all those models and I feel ashamed.

No wonder young people keep their problems a secret. No wonder young people struggle to understand their own issues with food and eating.

Why would you want anyone to know you had a problem which is so sensationalised, so trivialised and so misunderstood?

The **beat** challenge

We call on the media to tell the truth about eating disorders. Eating disorders are about losing, but they are not about losing weight, they are about losing opportunities: the chance to shine, the chance to enjoy life, to be the best you can.

But the truth is young people do recover, they do beat their eating disorders. Beating an eating disorder is about courage, about determination – it's a great story and it can have a happy ending.

Recovery taught me so much about myself, about the people I love, the person I am and how much I want to live and be happy.

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TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

Is it too much to ask that when a young person goes to their doctor, they talk to somebody who understands? Someone who is not going to tell them that it is just a phase, who is going to provide the best support and treatment?

And yet a recent research study has shown that no doctors were following national guidance on treatment.¹

The **beat** challenge

We call on government and the NHS to ensure that doctors implement their own guidance about what works best.

We call on GPs to really listen to what young people and their families are telling them and give them the support they need.

Young people need to know they can beat their eating disorders, they must believe recovery is possible and feel they are not alone.

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¹ Entry into eating disorder services. NHS audit information and analysis unit Feb 2006 L Currin & U Schmidt

AND WE'RE CHANGING TOO

The *beat* Vision

Our vision is so simple

EATING DISORDERS WILL BE BEATEN.

It is a manifesto, a call to action and a message of hope.

Young people need to know that their eating disorder can be beaten, parents want to help beat eating disorders too. That's why we're changing. For 18 years, EDA has told you about the problem. Now it's time for *beat* to be part of the solution.

Let's all tell young people that they can beat their eating disorders.

Let's get young people the help they need, when they need it.

Let's help parents have the confidence and information they need to make a difference.

Let's challenge the myths we have about real beauty- nobody is perfect.

Let's champion the courage of young people who are recovering.

Let's celebrate every time an eating disorder gets beaten.

SOMETHING'S GOT TO CHANGE AND BEAT IS STARTING IT TODAY.

beat understands about eating disorders, we are the organisation that listens: to young people, adults, parents and carers. Their views shape what we do, their pain and anger sets our agenda.

Every time someone calls our helpline or joins our self-help network, eating disorders are being beaten. Every time a magazine refrains from making a story out of a skinny celeb, eating disorders are being beaten.

And when we all know and believe the truth about eating disorders, the lies and myths they feed on will be shattered. Eating disorders will be beaten.

Eating Disorders The Facts.

There are at least 1.1 million people in the UK directly affected by an eating disorder. Young people between 14 and 25 years old are at greatest risk. Initially they may not realise they have a serious problem and in any case they find it extremely difficult to locate good quality, useful information. Any delay in seeking treatment can lead to serious long term consequences to physical health and mental wellbeing. Sadly about 20% of those who become seriously ill may die prematurely.

beat.

beat is the UK's only national charity supporting people affected by eating disorders, their families and professionals who treat them. *beat* started life as the Eating Disorders Association and becomes our name on 5 February 2007. *beat* continues to provide nationally recognised services including helplines, a self-help network and comprehensive information services.

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beat is the working title of Eating Disorders Association a registered charity Registration number 801343

Cover illustration © S Bloomfield 2006