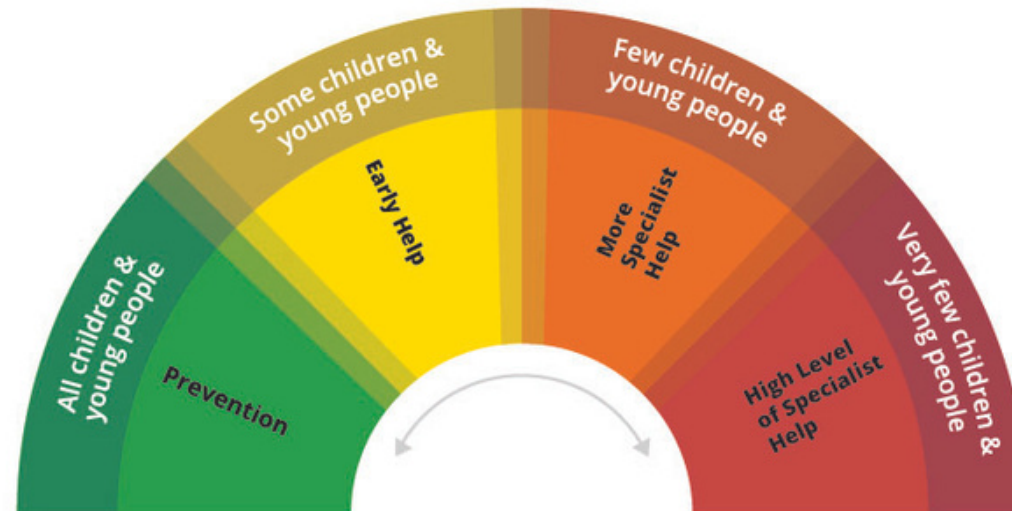


Liverpool's Eating Disorder Support for Children Aged 5-11

In Liverpool, mental health support for children and young people aged 0-25 and their families is delivered as a collaborative approach. A partnership of NHS providers and 3rd sector organisations work together to deliver services across ***different levels of need***, from prevention - being mentally healthy - to high levels of specialist help.



PREVENTION: Looking after our mental health

What does this mean?

It's about promoting mental health, self-care and building resilience. Our Whole School Approach promotes positive mental health and wellbeing in education, while training is available for professionals and parents/carers to promote resilience and equip them to identify the signs that a young person may be starting to struggle with their body image or eating.

EARLY HELP: Getting Advice and Early Help

What does this mean?

If a child struggles with their feelings around food, the Liverpool mental health support partners are here to help them and offer advice. They can also tell them about the support available and share information on getting the support they need, whether online or face-to-face.

MORE SPECIALIST HELP: Getting Additional Help

What does this mean?

If a child is experiencing moderate or severe mental health and emotional difficulties in relation to body image or eating, which are having a significant impact on their daily psychological/social and educational functioning, specialist services are here to support them.

HIGH LEVEL OF SPECIALIST SUPPORT: Risk & Crisis Support

What does this mean?

Support, advice and guidance to children who need specialist eating disorder support, including crisis care.



If a child is displaying physical signs such as fainting or vomiting, seek immediate medical help.
You should either:

- **Call 999; or**
- **Visit A&E at Alder Hey**

What's happening and what to look out for at each level of need

PREVENTION:

When children have a healthy relationship with food and a positive self-body image, they will generally:

- Feel comfortable and happy with the way they look.
- Be happy in their own body.
- Have positive self-confidence.
- Have general good mental health: They can get to sleep okay, do things in life that make them feel happy, have hobbies and are interested in playing games, sports, music and reading.
- Have relationships with friends and family that they enjoy.
- Feel they can learn at school.
- Be using digital and social media positively, not actively searching for negative content.

Sometimes, children develop fussy eating habits or are less comfortable eating in social situations—this can be normal behaviour for some children.



What's happening and what to look out for at each level of need

EARLY HELP:

When children are starting to struggle with their eating or their body image, they might:

- Show signs of changes in conversations about how they feel about their bodies.
- Adopt changes in their eating habits.
- Start cutting whole food groups out of their diet.
- Start going to the toilet straight after a meal.
- Have a distorted perception of their body shape and weight.
- Struggle to accept there is a problem. They're aware of an inner voice that challenges their views on eating and exercise.
- Display behaviours such as mood swings, secrecy, restlessness, irritability, and hyperactivity.
- Have difficulty sleeping.
- Want to wear baggy clothes.
- Skip some meals and say they've eaten or will eat later.
- Hide food occasionally.
- Purge after eating.
- Do lots of excessive exercise.
- Show signs of consuming online/social media content that encourages or reinforces negative body image & eating habits. They may follow influencers who endorse these negative messages (thinspiration).
- Compare themselves negatively to friends in relation to their body image.
- Show signs of social withdrawal and isolation - not wanting to play with friends.
- Display changes in food habits, such as eating:
 - when not hungry
 - slowly
 - rapidly
 - excessively.
- Show signs of Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder, more commonly known as **ARFID**, such as:
 - Lack of hunger.
 - Fussy eating - they will only eat specific shapes/textures/colours.
 - Not motivated by food.
 - Not wanting different foods to touch on the plate.
 - Focus on a particular food or food type for every meal.
 - Not being able to tolerate being at the table due to smells, noise, the social aspect, or the fast-paced or busy environment.
 - Getting teary at mealtimes which is out of character for them. You may feel you have to pressure your child to eat.

Parents/carers may see:

- Large amounts of food disappearing from the cupboard.
- Lunchboxes coming back full/no lunch being bought on school cards.

Parents and carers who are concerned about ARFID may be worried about their child in a number of aspects, such as not growing, some may look unwell/small/thin.

The child may also be very tired due to a lack of iron.



What's happening and what to look out for at each level of need

MORE SPECIALIST HELP:

When children are struggling with their eating or body image, they might:

- Experience substantial weight loss and a drop in clothes size.
- Persistently skip meals.
- Regularly vomit after meals.
- Exercise to the point where they can't stop.
- They struggle to eat around others, eat large amounts, and feel they cannot stop.
- Have social withdrawal - not want to go out/mix with friends.
- Have a severely distorted perception of their body shape and weight.
- Be unable to accept there is a problem - they're aware of an inner voice that challenges their views on eating and exercise.
- Have low mood.
- Excessively talk about eating habits and body image in a negative way, which may also be reflected in their behaviour in terms of their choice of foods and eating habits.
- Often eat until uncomfortably full.
- They may experience or display physical signs:
 - Dehydration
 - Constipation
 - Abdominal pains
 - Dizzy spells, feel faint or fainting
 - Poor blood circulation may make them feel cold
 - Dry skin and damage to teeth
 - Swollen salivary glands and smelly breath
 - Calluses can form on the backs of their hands if fingers are used to induce vomiting
 - Delayed puberty can also be a sign.
 - Lethargy
 - Low blood pressure
 - Bloating stomach

HIGH LEVEL OF SPECIALIST SUPPORT:

When children are reaching or are at a crisis point with their eating, they might:

- Experience persistent fainting.
- Eat very little each day over a consecutive number of days.
- Vomit a few times each day after every meal - for a consecutive number of days.
- Binge eat and gain weight consistently.



What could help?

PREVENTION:

Building resilience

Resilience is important for children's mental health. Having resilience enables people to manage stress, which is a natural response to difficulties in life. Stress is a risk factor for mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

[Resilience Framework](#)

Funded Training

[Liverpool Training](#)

Educate and empower professionals, parents and carers to improve the knowledge and understanding of mental health among children.

Awareness & education

PHSE and citizenship conversations promoting positive body image and the importance of staying healthy.

Open conversations

Talking to children about eating and body image to encourage healthy habits, positive self-esteem, early detection, and resilience against societal pressures.

Self-care

On the [website](#) there's Information and support to look after children's mental health.

EARLY HELP:

Speak to someone

The [YPAS Walk-in Support Hubs](#) offer drop-in and support groups that offer information, advice, guidance, and social prescribing, including parent and family support.

Visit your GP, they can introduce you to the right service for your child's needs.

In school, talk to:

- The school's Mental Health Lead, Pastoral Team, or a member of staff with whom the young person feels comfortable.
- School-based Education Mental Health Teams offer a range of support around emerging fears, worries and self-esteem.
- A school nurse.

The Eating Disorder Young People Service (EDYS) at Alder Hey

[This page](#) provides information about EDYS and some useful videos:

- What is an eating disorder?
- How best to help if you are worried someone you know may have an eating disorder.
- Therapeutic approaches are used in the EDYS Team.

ADDvanced Solutions Community Network

supports and empowers the families of neurodiverse children and young people who may also have sensory processing and eating difficulties or associated mental health needs pre, during and post-diagnosis - or no diagnosis. This includes learning opportunities, information advice and guidance.

[Support for families in Liverpool.](#)

Online

The [Eating Disorders Pathway](#) animation explains the journey a young person experiences when receiving support.

There is information, advice and support available on the [BEAT Website](#)

For children aged over 10, [Kooth](#) provides anonymous and personalised digital mental health support, including live chat sessions, forums, magazines and activities. Qualified professionals can support you if you have any concerns about body image, food, eating and exercise.



What could help?

MORE SPECIALIST HELP:

Speak to someone

Eating Disorders Support Team (EDYS) at Alder Hey provides treatment for young people with an eating disorder.

To access EDYS, you can make a [referral online](#).

In school, talk to:

- The school Mental Health Lead, Pastoral Team or a member of staff that the young person feels comfortable with.
- Education Mental Health Teams can provide consultation support to school staff.
- A school nurse.

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HIGH LEVEL OF SPECIALIST SUPPORT:

Speak to someone

Eating Disorders Support Team (EDYS) at Alder Hey provides treatment for young people with an eating disorder.

To access EDYS, you can make a [referral online](#)

[The YPAS Walk-In Support Hubs](#) provide a safe space for young people to come to. Trained professional staff will listen and support them through difficult times.

Crisis Care

[Call NHS 111 and select the mental health option.](#)

You can also access NHS 111 online via 111.nhs.uk. Anyone can call on your behalf if you can't make the call yourself.

