

Liverpool's Eating Disorder Support for Young People Aged 18-25

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. Training is available for professionals, parents/carers and young people 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 Help

What does this mean?

If a young person 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 young person 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 young people who need specialist eating disorder support, including crisis care.



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

- Call 999
- Visit A&E [Royal Liverpool University Hospital](#) / [Aintree University Hospital](#).

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

PREVENTION:

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

- Feel comfortable and happy with the way you look.
- Be happy in your own body.
- Have positive self-confidence.
- Have good general mental health. You can get to sleep okay and do things in life that make you feel happy. You may have hobbies and be interested in playing games, sports, music, reading.
- Have relationships with friends and family that you enjoy.
- Feel you can learn at college/university.
- Be using digital and social media positively, not actively seeking negative content.

'You might find there are times when you like your body or parts of your body and times when you struggle with how you look. It's important to remember that there isn't a single type of beauty - everyone sees it differently. And there simply isn't a right or a wrong way to look.'

[Young Minds - Body Image Advice](#)

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

EARLY HELP:

If you are starting to struggle with your eating and your body image, or you're worried about somebody else who is, you or they might display or see a combination of the following over a prolonged period of time:

- Showing signs of changes in conversations about how you feel about your body.
- Adopting changes in eating habits.
- Starting to cut whole food groups out of your diet.
- Having a distorted perception of your body shape and weight.
- Struggling to accept that there is a problem. You're aware of an inner voice that challenges your views on eating and exercise.
- Displaying behaviours such as mood swings, secrecy, restlessness, irritability, and hyperactivity.
- Having difficulty sleeping.
- Wanting to wear baggy clothes.
- Showing signs of consuming online/social media content that encourages or reinforces negative body image & eating habits.
- Following influencers/sites that endorse these negative messages (thinspiration, pro-ana sites, for example).
- Comparing yourself negatively to friends.
- Showing signs of social withdrawal and isolation - not wanting to mix with friends.
- Displaying changes in food habits, such as eating:
 - when not hungry
 - slowly
 - rapidly
 - excessively.
- Showing signs of **Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder**, more commonly known as **ARFID**, such as:
 - Lack of hunger
 - Being a fussy eating - they will only eat certain shapes/textures/colours of food
 - Not motivated by food
 - Not wanting different foods to touch on the plate
 - Focusing on a certain food or food type for every meal
 - Not being able to tolerate being at the table due to smells, noise, social aspects or the fast-paced or busy environment
 - Getting emotional at mealtimes, which is out of character for them.

If you are concerned about ARFID, you may be worried about yourself or someone else in a number of ways, such as not growing.

You may look unwell, small, or thin. You 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:

If you're struggling with your eating and body image, or you're worried about somebody else who is, you or 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 or express guilt if you don't.
- Setting excessive targets using smartwatches and fitness apps to monitor exercise and food intake.
- Struggle to eat around others.
- Eat large amounts and feel you cannot stop.
- Take laxatives/slimming supplements - either purchased over the counter or online.
- Have social withdrawal - not want to go out/mix with friends.
- Have a severely distorted perception of your body shape and weight.
- Have an inability to accept there is a problem - you're aware of an inner voice that challenges your views on eating and exercise.
- Have low mood.
- Organise your life around bingeing episodes or exercise and/or eating.
- Eat until uncomfortably full.
- Experience periods stopping or become irregular.
- Experience or display physical signs:
 - Dehydration
 - Constipation
 - Abdominal pains
 - Dizzy spells, feel faint or fainting
 - Poor blood circulation may make you feel cold
 - Dry skin and damage to teeth
 - Swollen salivary glands and smelly breath
 - Calluses can form on the backs of your hands if fingers are used to induce vomiting.
 - Lethargy
 - Low blood pressure
 - Bloating stomach

If you are noticing any of these signs - seek medical support urgently. Call 111 or visit A&E.

HIGH LEVEL OF SPECIALIST SUPPORT:

If you or a young person you know is at a crisis point in relation to eating, you or 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.
- Have a BMI - 17.5 - anything under needs urgent medical review.

If you're aware that a young person is regularly vomiting or using laxatives to reduce their weight, they must seek urgent medical help from a GP or A&E.

What could help?

PREVENTION:

Building resilience

Resilience is important for young people's mental health. It enables people to manage stress, which is a natural response to difficult times in life.

[Resilience Framework](#)

Funded Training

[Liverpool Training](#)

Educate and empower professionals, parents and carers to improve their knowledge and understanding of mental health among young people, including positive body image and eating.

Self-care

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

There's also information, tools, resources and links to eating disorder support on this [page](#).

EARLY HELP:

Speak to someone

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

Visit your [GP](#).

In college/university, talk to:

- The school Mental Health Lead, Pastoral Team or a member of staff that the young person feels comfortable with.
- A school nurse.

Life Rooms

Can help you improve your mental and physical wellbeing.

Find out more about the [support available here](#).

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](#)

Get support online

BEAT

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

[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

Mersey Care Eating Disorder Service

Provides psychological assessment, formulation and intervention for young people aged 16 and over who are experiencing an eating disorder.

First Episode Rapid Early Intervention for Eating Disorders FREED

The FREED pathway offers support to 16-to-25-year-olds who have experienced an eating disorder for three years or less.

Referrals for the eating disorder service including the FREED pathway are accepted from GPs and other medical practitioners.

In university, talk to:

The Mental Health Lead, Pastoral Team or a member of staff that the young person feels comfortable with.

The YPAS Walk-In Support Hub provide a safe space for young people to come to. Trained professional staff will listen and support them through difficult times.

Online

BEAT

There is information, advice and support available on the BEAT Website.

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Crisis Care

Call NHS 111 and select the mental health option.

The YPAS Walk-In Support Hub provide a safe space for young people to come to. Trained professional staff will listen and support them through difficult times.

A&E

- Royal Liverpool University Hospital
- Aintree University Hospital