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### Where can I find more Information?

You can call or email the Beat Helpline for information and advice.

The information in this leaflet has been provided by Beat

Beat are the UK's leading charity supporting anyone affected by eating disorders or difficulties with food, weight and shape.

Beat Adult Helpline 0808 801 0677

Website: beateatingdisorders.org.uk

The information in the leaflet was valid at the date of production Jan 2021 and is due for review in Jan 2023

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# **Eating Disorders Services**

Supporting an Employee with an Eating Disorder

Helping people to be the best they can be

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#### Worried about an employee?

Employees with eating disorders often present little difficulty at work and excel at their job.

Whatever difficulties the person has, they will usually make strenuous efforts to keep to themselves to avoid their disorder being noticed at work.

The work situation, in itself, does not cause someone to develop an eating disorder.

## How will I know if an employee has an eating disorder?

There are generally three ways that an eating disorder may be brought to the attention of an employer:

- 1. The employee will tell you personally this is an unusual but positive sign
- 2. The outward signs and symptoms for example, noticeable weight loss or low weight which is maintained over a period of time (seen in moderate to severe anorexia), or marked change in behavior over an extended time period
- 3. Colleagues become concerned and inform the employer of their anxiety about a fellow worker. This is usually the most commonly encountered situation

#### **Eating Disorder Diagnosis**

Professionals use internationally agreed criteria to make a diagnosis of an eating disorder. Diagnosis is essential to be able to access treatment. The four main diagnoses are:

- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia Nervosa
- Other Specified Feeding and Eating Disorders (OFSED)
- Binge Eating Disorder

#### **Facts about Eating Disorders**

- Over 725,000 men and women across the UK are affected by eating disorders.
- Although serious, eating disorders are treatable conditions and a full recovery is possible, the sooner somebody gets the treatment they need, the more likely they are to make a full recovery.
- Anyone can develop an eating disorder, regardless of age, sex or cultural background.
- Eating disorders claim more lives than any other mental illness—one in five of the most seriously affected will die prematurely from the physical consequences or suicide.
- Eating disorders are complex and there is no one reason as to why somebody develops an eating disorder

### The Impact of Eating Disorders in the Work Place

If your business involves the retail side of food, clothes, sports or exercise you could consider the impact of eating disorders on your customers and clients.

None of these areas cause eating disorders, but addressing the issues in a sensitive, informed and compassionate way can make all the difference.

#### How can I help?

Staff with managerial or supervisory responsibilities will benefit from understanding how best to support someone with an eating disorder.

Staff who develop or have an eating disorder may require lengthy treatment or absence to attend appointments.

Staff may need to have their working arrangements in terms of hours or responsibilities altered to take their health needs into account.

Eating disorders are illnesses and policies/procedures around staff illness will be relevant.

# I am concerned my business may have an impact on my Employee

You may find it useful to review Beat's online materials to gain more information and advice about eating disorders and how to support an employee.