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EVERYONE'S A WINNER!

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SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF A KILLER

Call for action in eating disorders week

Joseph Keith

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A LEEDS student is today sharing her battle with an eating disorder to encourage others to spot the signs.

The 20-year-old spoke about her struggle with anorexia, as the YEP be-

gins a series of features in Eating Disorders Awareness Week, as part of our #SpeakYourMind campaign.

"I think there is an image now in society of skinny being good - but it's a distorted image in of what you should look like," said the student, who did not want to be identified. "It went on

for about five months and I was quite lucky in that respect, that it was caught early."

Beat, the national eating disorders charity, is calling on health bosses today to help raise awareness.

Full story: Pages 6&7.



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AWARENESS: Eating Disorders Awareness Week starts today.



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'It completely and utterly changed my life'

Student tells about her anorexia treatment

HEALTH

Joseph Keith

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THOSE WEEKS and months spent waiting for treatment over an eating disorder can be agonising.

After being referred by a GP, people battling conditions like anorexia or bulimia often face lengthy waits to access the care they need.

As part of the YEP's series marking Eating Disorders Awareness Week, a Leeds student is today opening up about her own journey to recovery following her anorexia diagnosis.

Those suffering from eating disorders can encounter an average wait of up to three and a half years before they get access to specialist treatment, according to the national charity Beat.

Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the Seacroft-based Yorkshire Centre for Eating Disorders, became the only trust outside London to launch a pilot scheme in 2017 called FREED, which offers early intervention by fast-tracking young adults

for eating disorder treatment. "It has just completely and utterly changed my life," says Anna, now 20.

And it really has.

The student, originally from Nottingham, battled anxiety, depression and anorexia after moving to the city.

"I had a very disjointed view of what I thought anorexia actually looked like," she says.

"I went into a psychiatrist assessment, I was there for about two and a half hours and at the end of it she said that I had anorexia.

"And I was just like, 'Are you joking?' Because I didn't look like skin and bones, I was just quite skinny.

"I think before I thought, 'I don't need help, I don't need treatment, I'm fine, I don't need to put on weight, it's not affecting my life, I'm still studying at university'.

"That initial diagnosis was like 'oh my gosh, okay'. From then on I just felt completely and utterly supported."

Anna was among the first patients to embark on the FREED study, which is part of the trust's Leeds Community Treatment Service for eating disorders.

Instead of spending weeks waiting to access outpatient care through the service – the alternative to staying on a ward – she received a call from a member of its dedicated team within two days.

Focusing on early intervention for people aged between 18 and 25, FREED offers patients several hours of treatment every week, sometimes even daily, rather than just the one weekly hour that outpatients can usually access.

"I was seeing CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) counsellors before but the problem is that without having a ridiculously low BMI (Body Mass Index), there was nothing they

could do for me, other than my doctor telling me to eat more," Anna says.

"I was really lucky that FREED was there because I struggled for just over a year before it started.

"At the time I needed more than just an hour a week of therapy.

"If I hadn't got help when I did I would have ended up as an inpatient because I wasn't getting any better.

"I got worse before I got better – even when I went into FREED – because it was just a complete shock to the system.

"If I hadn't got the support I did at the time, it could have ended up disastrously for me

While opening up about her anorexia to those she lived with was a difficult conversation, she reflects on how supportive they became. "I think the hardest thing I ever had to do was to tell my house-mates that I was struggling with it because there is so much stigma around this and they didn't know what it meant," Anna says.

"But I didn't want them to change how they act around me, all I wanted them to know was that I'm going through this, that they might see me frowning or looking chaotic inside.

"As soon as I told them, it was nothing but support.

"If someone judges me for having an eating disorder, then that's their problem, isn't it?"

Through the FREED study, Anna started with two to three hours a week of specialist sessions with the team, ranging from treatment with dietitians, therapists and support workers.

But the majority of those sessions were either at her home or a place she chose, and part of the scheme's success, organisers say, is down to its flexibility.

Nearing the end of her journey, Anna is now just weeks away from being discharged.

But she stressed that the early intervention was a key

part of her treatment. "I see people around me and I think that is what I used to do," she says.

"I always think when was the point when someone could have said to me 'look, you need to get help or talk to someone' – and I don't know.

"It just escalates extremely fast."

As a sign of how far she has come, Anna is now running in the executive elections to be Welfare Officer at Leeds University Union.

"FREED has made me want to do this," she says.

"If you told me a year ago what I'm doing now I would think you were having a laugh because it's meant having to publicise my

face everywhere, to go up with the fear of being judged.

"What I'm really campaigning for is early intervention – not just with eating disorders but with other mental health conditions.

"It just completely makes sense that if you stop problems before they escalate it's going to be easier to treat. It's opening that conversation: how bad does a problem have to get before you reach out? Because it will always get worse.

"I'm a different person now. I look back and think I was a shell of the person I am right now.

"And I hope right now that I'm a shell of the person I'm going to be in a year."



JOURNEY TO RECOVERY: Anna Doherty at the Seacroft-based

Yorkshire Centre for Eating Disorders.

'You would not accept that length of wait for

charity Beat) before people get specialist treatment for eating disorders and that is unacceptable.

"You would not accept that for things like cancer or even diabetes."

Latest figures from Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the services, show that there has been at least a 30 per cent fall in the number of hospital beds occupied by eating disorders patients since the community service was introduced.

Following its success, plans are also now in the pipeline to expand the service across the region.

Dr Jones said: "Before we would have people on a ward for a year. For that specialist intensive care, it needs to be in the community – and in that person's home.

The Leeds Community Treatment Service, part of the Yorkshire Centre for Eating Disorders, launched in 2013.

It is staffed by a wide-ranging team, including medics, psychiatrists, dietitians, therapists, health support workers and nurses.

The service, among the first of its kind in the country, offers community-based tailored treatment, either at home or a GP practice, offering flexible weekly or daily sessions.

"There is an average three-year wait (according to the

charity Beat) before people get specialist treatment for eating disorders and that is unacceptable.

"You would not accept that for things like cancer or even diabetes."

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cancer treatment'

ish later this year, as a success. Launched as a pilot and research scheme in January 2017, it offers a crucial early intervention service for young adults with eating disorders.

He said he hopes it will now be permanently implemented and expanded to become part of the trust's community service, and eventually rolled out across the region.

Dr Jones said new NICE guidelines, introduced in 2017, placed a particular emphasis on early intervention with regard

to eating disorders. "It's promoting early change so as soon as the referral comes in you're starting the whole process," he said.

"Those people do really well and clinical outcomes are far better than you would normally see, drop-out rates are far lower than you would expect.

"It's groundbreaking really."

For information, message boards and online support groups about eating disorders visit the charity Beat's at www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk.

SUPPORT

YEP's mental health campaign

#SpeakYourMind
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#SpeakYourMind

THE YEP is running the week-long series to mark Eating Disorders Awareness Week as part of our #SpeakYourMind campaign.

We launched our campaign in 2016 to raise awareness of mental health issues in Leeds and combat the damaging social stigma surrounding them.

Last year, it received top-level support, as the Prime Minister and Princes Harry and William officially backed #SpeakYourMind and praised the YEP's brave readers for sharing their stories and personal experiences with mental health.

Our campaign continues, and we want to keep raising awareness and highlighting the issues the matter to you.

Share your stories by email to joseph.keith@jpress.co.uk



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Students helped by peers to tackle eating disorders

HEALTH

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FOR THE final part in the YEP's Eating Disorders Awareness Week series, we are showcasing some of the help on offer for students in the city.

Leeds Student Minds offers peer-led support to those struggling with eating disorders while studying in Leeds.

To mark the national awareness campaign, the charity this year held its own week of activities aimed at supporting students.

Volunteers have been manning information stalls and organising peer-led support groups (ones run by students, for students) this week, culminating in a get-together with spoken word performances at the LS6 Cafe, in Headingley Lane, to raise awareness to-night.

Their efforts come as the YEP is calling on people across Leeds to talk more about mental health issues as part of our #SpeakYourMind campaign.

Laura Chapman, 22, is one of the volunteers with Leeds Student Minds, who works as a 'facilitator' at weekly support groups.

"I went to an all girls school when I was younger and there were a lot of girls with eating disorders," she told the YEP. "A lot of people don't know what to



HELP: Leeds Student Minds charity has been supporting those who are struggling with eating disorders, while studying in the city, this week.

do or how to help and support is a problem."

Miss Chapman, a fourth-year University of Leeds student, who is studying medicine, said the support groups give people a chance to hear from their peers.

The volunteers organised a session giving advice to people on how they can help family or friends who have an eating disorder. "There are a group of us

at Leeds Student Minds who help out as facilitators. A lot of people just don't know what to do - they want to help but they aren't sure what to say or how to approach it."

The event at LS6 Cafe starts at 7.30pm tonight. For more information, contact leeds@studentminds.org.uk

HELP: For support from Beat visit www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

AWARENESS WEEK

ALL THIS week the YEP has been running a special series to mark Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

We began with hard-hitting figures from the charity Beat, revealing that one third of adults cannot name symptoms of an eating disorder.

Our series has also featured emotional interviews and first-person pieces with people who bravely shared their own experiences of eating disorders, from students battling anorexia to women who struggled with binge-eating.

IN BRIEF

STORAGE PLANS ARE APPROVED

PONTEFRACT: Planners at Wakefield Council have approved proposals for industrial units at Park Road Retail Park in Pontefract.

Applications for an industrial and storage building and another for three industrial and storage units have been given the go-ahead.

The buildings will be accessed from Park Road off the A639. They will be built on land next to Travis Perkins builders merchants.

The land was once part of the former Prince of Wales Colliery site.



WHERE TO DRINK

THE REGENT: In the trendy suburb of Chapel Allerton this little pub brings you the classic cocktails, bottled beers, proseccos and shots at two for a fiver and a wine list to suit all tastes too. And a tasty little treat is the coffee and cake deal if you are the designated driver.





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