**How to support a member of staff with an eating disorder**

Eating disorders are little talked about and often remain hidden – although an estimated 1.25 million people in the UK have an eating disorder. Anyone can be affected by an eating disorder. Eating disorders are complex and everyone's experience will be different.

Employees struggling with eating disorders may conceal their illness. However, there are some warning signs that managers should be aware of, which may prompt an initial conversation. These include:

* Marked changes in behaviour and mood
* Distorted beliefs about body size
* Excessive exercising or agitation when sitting down
* Tiredness or difficulty concentrating
* Frequent visits to the toilet after eating
* Obsessive behaviour regarding food, for example constantly talking about food or specific rituals
* Withdrawal or isolation

Eating disorders may constitute a disability under the Equality Act 2010, entailing a duty to make reasonable adjustments. This could include allowing employees time off to attend appointments, adjusting their working hours or workload or providing separate eating facilities.

Concerns that an employee's performance may be being impacted by an eating disorder should be addressed privately. Try not to leap to conclusions – there could be other explanations for the warning signs listed here. Try to highlight your concerns supportively and encourage the employee to speak openly.

Signpost to sources of support such as the Counselling Service. DASS may also be able to provide support and advice to the individual and their manager. More information (including details on different types of eating disorders and external sources of support ) can be found [here](https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/uploads/documents/2018/7/workplace.pdf).