



Press Release

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Eating Disorder Service Gets Physical

Eating Disorder Awareness Week 21st – 25th February

Sandwell Mental Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust is using this year's national Eating Disorder Awareness Week beginning on Monday 21st February as it's marker to launch it's 2011 -12 Eating Disorders Awareness Raising Campaign, which will focus on gyms and leisure centres.

Staff from the Trust's Eating Disorder Service, which provides support to people affected by Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder will, over the course of the year, be offering information and advice to staff and members of local gyms and leisure centres across Sandwell.

Ann Fennell, Service Manager and Dietitian said 'excessive or obsessional exercising can be a symptom of an eating disorder and we have had a good response from staff at local leisure centres and gyms, who are keen for information about this. Our 2010 -11 campaign targeted health professionals in Sandwell and our aim is to equip the people who are in a strong position to help people with eating disorders with basic knowledge and skills. It is essential that people experiencing eating disorders receive understanding, sensitivity, a consistent message and where necessary appropriate signposting to services'.

Obsessional over exercise can occur in both anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa and combines a pursuit of thinness and of fitness. In bulimia nervosa it is often an attempt to burn off the calories from excessive or 'binge' eating in order to maintain a stable weight. In anorexia nervosa it can put a strain on an already weakened heart and in both cases muscle and bone can be damaged, which may result in osteoporosis, arthritis and heart problems.

Claire Hepburn, Specialist Nurse said, 'our campaigns aim to improve awareness of eating disorders in the borough. The health professionals who received training from us in 2010 -11 reported feeling very supported by the information we provided. They felt more confident to recognise an eating disorder, establish the risk and offer some help. There is still a long way to go however, and we see awareness raising and education as a routine part of what this service provides. Recognising an eating disorder and being able to

encourage access to help early will greatly improve someone's chances of recovery'.

Claire continued 'Eating disorders usually have an emotional source, and develop as a way of coping. It is very difficult for people to just 'snap out of it'. Being listened to and given encouragement might seem like a small thing but it is often the most important. We have been fortunate to see many people recover in this service by successfully finding new ways to cope.

The Trust's Community Eating Disorders Service is for adults aged over 18 or 16 if they are no longer in education. The team offers people a range of psychological therapies plus occupational therapy, systemic family therapy, dietetics and mental health nursing. Care packages are tailored to each person's individual needs. The adult service also has strong links with the CAMHS team.

If you or anyone you know may have an eating disorder contact b-eat (the national charity for eating disorders):- www.b-eat.co.uk, 0845 6341414 or your local Eating Disorder Service for support and information.

For further information:

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NOTE FOR EDITORS:

Sandwell Mental Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust (SMHFT) is the major provider of mental health and specialist health learning disabilities services to people of all ages in Sandwell.