**South Yorkshire Eating Disorder Association: Work in Schools**

Since 2013, the South Yorkshire Eating Disorder Association has been delivering a number of initiatives in schools and in the community which aim to intervene early in eating disorders. SYEDA’s work forms part of Sheffield’s Future in Mind Transformation Plan, you can read more about it here.

Eating Disorders are the most common mental illness affecting, 1.6 million people in the UK (NICE 2012). An estimated 26,000 people are affected in South Yorkshire. The consequences are often severe: 20% of those with severe anorexia die and the remainder suffer years of struggle and often permanent health damage.

A national survey by B-eat (October 2013) highlighted the length of time most sufferers have to wait before accessing treatment, with 26% waiting more than six months and some for even longer. This wait led to a worsening of their illness and in the most severe cases it led to death. Quicker access to support services also prevents infertility, osteoporosis and increased risk of heart problems. In young people, delay in accessing appropriate support can have an enormous negative impact upon academic attainment and future employment prospects.

In 2013, South Yorkshire Eating Disorders Association (SYEDA) approached Comic Relief to fund a number of initiatives aimed at reducing the prevalence and impact of eating disorders amongst young people. We were awarded a grant which enabled us to establish a multi-disciplinary team. Our clinical team consisted of an occupational therapist and a counsellor, and our non-clinical team consisted of an education and outreach worker. Over the following 3 years our clinicians saw over 200 young people, from our base in S6 and in the community. Over 80% of young people who received a clinical intervention recorded an improvement in their relationship with self and food.

Our education worker established links with schools, colleges, youth and community groups and designed and delivered a variety of workshops, and educational sessions aimed at raising awareness, changing behaviour and providing hope. Over 3000 people accessed one of our sessions in the 3 year period including a number who attended targeted and specialist sessions i.e. autism and eating disorders and mindful eating.

We have also developed a relationship wit one secondary school in which we established and ran a weekly food and mood clinic for the students. In year 1 we provided 1-2-1 therapy for 20 students, some of whom required more intensive input outside of school.

In 2016, Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group and Sheffield City Council agreed to continue the Comic Relief funded project for a further 2 years. This has allowed us to deepen the relationship we have with schools and explore replicating areas of best practice in other schools i.e. expansion o f weekly eating disorder clinics. We are very much looking forward to working with schools, college and community groups over the next 14 months and beyond, so we can reduce the incidents and impact of eating disorders on young people and their families.

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