

# Eating Disorders

### Condition:

The term 'eating disorder' covers a wide range of conditions including anorexia (severely restricting food intake), bulimia (binging and purging) and a number of other non-specific disorders relating to food.

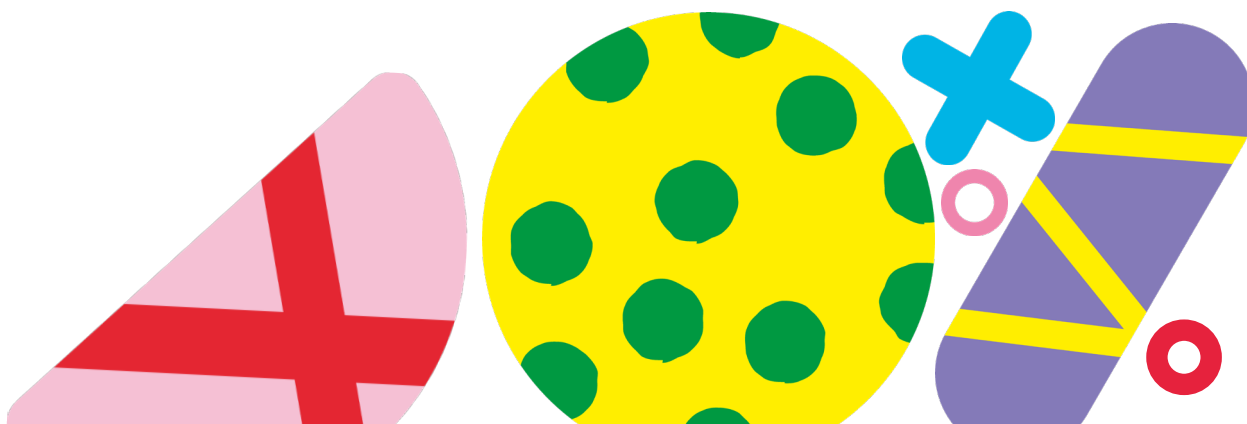
Eating disorders are most common among young people. Contrary to popular belief, an eating disorder is usually a way of coping with underlying issues rather than being about a person's weight.

### Problem Areas:

- It's not just about food, there may be some underlying issues that the young person is trying to cope with and the eating disorder may be part of their coping strategy.
- Young people with eating disorders may well feel more alone and isolated, and may compound this by spending a lot of time on their own and by putting pressure on their friendships.
- Eating disorders affect the whole family and cause tension between family members, sometimes putting an incredible strain on individuals and their relationships.
- Statistically, it is likely that you have at least one, if not more, teenage girls in your youth group with an eating disorder, and figures for boys and younger children are increasing too.

### Support strategies for your Group:

- Encourage a person with an eating disorder to talk about their difficulties, but avoid confrontation.
- Help them to build confidence in you, to know that you are there for them.
- Don't talk with them too much about food, but focus more on how they are feeling and how you can help/support them in that way.
- Empathise with them, don't judge them. Let them know that you understand how they feel and that you are in this with them and want to help them to feel better and happier.
- Try not to engage the group in a discussion about healthy eating as a strategy to get a message across to a particular member of the group. They will probably see this for





what it is.

- Try to avoid discussion with them about body shape, weight etc. It will probably not be productive and may well just lead to frustration and bad tempers all round.
- If possible, and if they are not doing so already, see if you can help them find a way to see their GP. If they won't see their GP, try to help them to contact ABC (details below) or another support organisation for those with eating disorders.

### **Further information:**

ABC (Anorexia Bulimia Care)

[www.anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk](http://www.anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk)

*'Invited to Belong' has been developed in partnership between Urban Saints and Youthscape.*



*Youthscape*

[www.urbansaints.org/invitedtobelong](http://www.urbansaints.org/invitedtobelong)