

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymchwiliad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i gymorth iechyd meddwl mewn addysg uwch](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into Mental Health support in Higher Education](#)

MHHE 23

Ymateb gan: Beat

Response from: Beat

Nodwch eich barn mewn perthynas â chylch gorchwyl yr ymchwiliad. | Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference.

1. Maint yr angen | Extent of need

Beat is the UK's eating disorder charity. We exist to end the pain and suffering of eating disorders, and we are here to help anyone affected by these serious mental illnesses.

University is an exciting time but can also be a time of significant change and pressure. Students who are vulnerable can develop an eating disorder; students who already have one may find it gets worse. The university environment can mask symptoms and make it harder for students to stay connected to treatment services and their support network. In 2021 the charity Student Minds published a report examining the experiences of students with eating disorders including the issues around accessing support while at university and the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on students experiencing an eating disorder. The report makes recommendations and highlights areas for further investigation.

- Supporting Students with Eating Disorders: Lessons from an audit of UK eating disorders provision and what we can do better together. - https://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/2021_ed_final_artwork.pdf

We would also like to bring to the committee's attention Beat's best practice paper on transitions managing service transitions for patients affected by eating disorders. There are several reasons why people with a diagnosis of an eating disorder may transition between services, for example, moving between child and adolescent services (CAMHS) to adult services due to age, a change in location due to reasons

such going to/leaving university, moving between inpatient and outpatient services, and moving between different types of specialist services. These transitions are often a vulnerable time for people affected by eating disorders, and can result in the person experiencing a lapse or relapse, and difficulties in accessing treatment. The devastating consequences of this were evident in the Ombudsman report into the death of Averil Hart, who tragically died from a heart attack triggered by starvation from anorexia nervosa, at the age of 19 years old. The Ombudsman report stated that “inadequate coordination and planning... when (Averil) was leaving home to go to university” was one avoidable failing that contributed to her death. This devastating loss highlights the importance of managing transitions; best practice guidance around this process have been widely reported in relation to both eating disorders specifically, and mental health services more generally.

- Best practice in managing services transitions - <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/about-beat/policy-work/best-practice-in-managing-services-transitions/>

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on people with or vulnerable to eating disorders. From the people we support, we know that many have experienced increased stress, anxiety and isolation during the past two years. This has led to more people seeking support for an eating disorder. At Beat, our support services team helped over 3 times more people in Wales between April 2021 and March 2022 in comparison to before the pandemic.

2. Adnabod a darpariaeth | Identification and provision

As mentioned under 13, we recommend that the committee considers the 2021 Student Minds report “Supporting Students with Eating Disorders: Lessons from an audit of UK eating disorders provision and what we can do better together” and Beat’s “Best practice in managing services transitions” paper. Both documents are relevant in providing information on the issues outlined around identification and provision.

3. Polisiâu, deddfwriaeth a chyllid Llywodraeth Cymru | Welsh Government policy, legislation and funding

The 2018 Welsh Eating Disorder Service Review identified that “the prevention of eating disorders in schools and universities is considered a key step to improving the services in Wales” and that “it needs to be a broad integrated approach”. The review went on to recommend that “Welsh eating disorder services should work with Welsh Government and other agencies to develop and deliver the Whole School Approach with the aim of preventing eating disorders through promotion of emotional resilience and dealing with precursors of eating disorder such as body image issues”. A similar whole system approach to mental health and wellbeing should be applied to the post-16 education sector in Wales including both Further and Higher education sectors and Beat would welcome the opportunity to provide input into such a development.

- 2018 Welsh Eating Disorder Service Review - <https://gov.wales/eating-disorders-service-review-2018>

4. Argymhellion ar gyfer newid | Recommendations for change

- We recommend that the committee considers the recommendations made in the 2021 Student Minds “Supporting Students with Eating Disorders: Lessons from an audit of UK eating disorders provision and what we can do better together” report.
- We recommend the implementation of the best practice outlined in Beat’s “Managing Services Transitions” paper.
- We recommend ensuring that eating disorders fully feature in a new whole system approach to mental health and wellbeing for the post-16 education sector in Wales.

5. Arall | Other