



Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Service

Multi-Family Therapy (MFT) for eating disorders

What is Multi-Family Therapy (MFT)?

The MFT programme has been used successfully with hundreds of children and young people, from all over the country, since 2000.

It is an innovative way of working with anyone up to age 18, and their families, where anorexia nervosa has taken hold of their lives. By participating in this intensive, therapeutic group treatment programme alongside four to six other families with similar problems, young people and their families can reach a significant turning point – where real recovery becomes achievable and hospital admission is averted.

The MFT group encourages everybody, parents included, to play critical roles in helping to promote change. MFT can facilitate a new way of thinking about habits and behaviours leading to positive improvements which further supports recovery.

How does the programme run?

We invite families to first attend an introductory meeting with the team who will be running the programme and a graduate family who has completed the programme. The meeting will take place in the evening and there will be an opportunity to discuss the nature of anorexia nervosa and hear about what the programme will entail.

The following week all the families attend (often with siblings) for four days. Here, we work closely together to guide every person through the structured programme, which includes eating together in a supported environment. The whole group then takes part in two to three further MFT follow-up days/workshops over the next six months.

Who comes to MFT?

We invite:

- The young person with anorexia nervosa
- Parents and significant adults - we regularly invite step-parents, grandparents and partners and are open to any family set-up.
- Siblings - for sessions that they are able to attend (we may ask siblings to visit specific days and will discuss this with you)

The MFT team

The team consists of two/three lead therapists and up to four additional supportive therapists.

What happens in MFT?

MFT combines group therapy, family therapy, and psycho-education with creative and supportive activities and interventions.

There are exercises for the whole group, some just for the young people and their siblings on their own, and some for parents as a separate group. Each one gives different opportunities to share experiences and ideas to support one another. Our experience has shown us that working together to beat anorexia works.

"It was an intense four days. My daughter didn't want to attend at all and was set against participating but as the days progressed she became more engaged.

The group therapy gave us all a huge amount to reflect on, to work with, and to talk about together. The other families, the other young people, and the professional staff all contributed very positively to our learning and our experience on the programme. I feel it has been very beneficial for our family."

Rosemary, 44, a mother

"I think that the 4 days have been really helpful and I am grateful for all the hard work and preparation put in by the facilitators. I now understand more about what my daughter is going through and I know that our family experience is not unique. We have hope again."

Neil, 52, a father

Neil, 52, a father

"I would have no hesitation in saying that if a family is offered a place they should grab it with both hands."

Alex, young person

A

typical workshop day

10.00am	Family introductions and take part in a whole group task
10.30am	Morning snack - parents to bring snacks and lunch according to meal plan
11.00am	Separate activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent group - Young people's group
12.30pm	Lunch - families eating together and helping each other
1.30pm	Break
2.00pm	Group feedback from morning and lunch Individual activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent group - Young people's group - Siblings group
3.00pm	Afternoon snack
3.30pm	Main group reflection

How does MFT Help?

“Anorexia had us beaten but now we’re fighting back”

MFT can help young people and their families:

- feel more confident and empowered
- gain a better understanding of the illness and put together a ‘toolkit’ of skills and techniques to beat it
- build up existing family relationships and develop new ones with other families in MFT
- take charge of anorexia and “boss it back” – with renewed strength

We are confident that committed participation in the MFT programme offers young people and their families a real hope of overcoming anorexia, even where other, more traditional treatments have failed.

“The group was immensely helpful to both me and my family. It benefited me because I was given the opportunity to voice my opinions to other people who were not necessarily biased like my parents.

It was also comforting to meet other people in a similar situation. I hope that some of the insights we shared and I gave them will have helped them realise things about what they were doing etc. that no one else could”

Molly, 17, young person

"It helped my family, my parents most of all, because it gave them a chance to share and discuss their problems with people in a similar boat and to vent their frustration on someone other than me. The activities we did provided good talking points and allowed us to discuss subjects that may have been too awkward or difficult otherwise."

Matthew, 15, young person

"More than anything I would say to just 'go for it' with an open mind"

Louise, 15, young person

"For siblings who are struggling to accept and understand the illness, I think it is reassuring to see that their family is not the only anomaly and that if they have harsh words to say then the group meetings are the place."

Ben, 13, sibling

Contact details

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Concerns and complaints

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. However, if you have any concerns, complaints or comments about your experience of our service then please tell a member of the team or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on freephone 0800 328 7971.

If you need the information in another language or format please ask us

Nëse ky informacion ju nevojitet në një gjuhë apo format tjetër, ju lutem na kontaktoni

আপনি যদি এই তথ্যাদি অন্য কোন ভাষায় বা মাধ্যমে (ফরম্যাট) পেতে চান তবে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી ભાષામાં અથવા બીજા આકારમાં ખોઈએ, તો કૃપા કરીને અમને પૂછો

यदि आपको यह जानकारी किसी दूसरी भाषा या आकार में चाहिए हो तो कृपया हम से पूछें

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