



Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Service

# Family Based Approach (FBA)

## What is FBA about?

The family-based approach (FBA) is a therapeutic intervention for the entire family of children and young people with eating disorders. FBA believes that as parents you already have the resources to support your child with getting better.

FBA consists of a number of phases to help you develop your resources and skills in order to:

- Restore the weight of your child
- Normalise their eating
- Promote healthy adolescent development

An important aspect of FBA is for parents to be united in fighting the eating disorder. It is *not* about allocating blame but rather about developing the resources as parents to overcome the eating disorders. This requires motivation and stamina to continue treatment when it feels difficult, especially during the initial weight restoration phase of treatment.

We understand it is important for the team to support the family during this time by calling on various expertise within the team such as nurses, psychologists, family therapists, dietitians and psychiatrists, as well as other services such as the crisis team if required.

## How long does FBA treatment take?

Typically, FBA takes between 10-20 sessions over 6-12 months. Sessions last up to an hour; initial sessions might last a little longer. In the early stages of treatment appointments are usually weekly or more often if needed. Although this may seem time-consuming, research has shown early engagement and change in the young person's eating behaviour and weight is likely to improve the rate and maintenance of recovery.

## What does FBA involve?

FBA consists of a number of phases. In phase 1, the focus is on getting to know you as a family, reducing physical risk as a result of malnutrition and on assisting you in re-feeding your child. Typically, you will have a supported family meal so that you have an opportunity to learn more about the eating patterns of your family and so that your therapist can support you to re-feed your child.

Phase 2 will start once your child is approaching a more healthy weight and any physical risks have been reduced. In phase 2 you will be supported to hand appropriate responsibility for eating back to your child.

Other general family relationship issues or difficulties in terms of day-to-day adolescent or parenting concerns that you might have had to postpone can now be brought forward for review.

In phase 3, treatment will then focus on getting the young person back on track, and addressing any other difficulties that may not have been resolved in earlier phases of therapy. This might include issues around adolescent identity and supporting increased autonomy as well as catching up with

things that might have been missed while your child was preoccupied with their eating difficulties.

Other key aspects of FBA which are designed to maximise change and restore health include:

- *Weighing*: Your child will be weighed at every appointment. Although this can be distressing, it is essential to ensure your child is making progress and it can provide opportunities to problem-solve together. A graph is used to record weight and is shared with you.
- *Attendance*: All members of your family will be asked to attend key appointments.
- *Family Meal*: The family meal is an important part of your treatment program. You will be asked to prepare a meal or snack and eat this during the session. Although we recognise this will be a strange and unfamiliar experience, this allows us to get a better idea what the challenges around eating are for your child as well as learn about your strengths as a family.

Throughout the treatment there will also be opportunities for parents/carers to be seen separately to help you support each other.

## Multi-Family therapy

If your child is receiving FBA for Anorexia Nervosa, you will be invited to attend Multi-Family Therapy (MFT). This will involve the whole family attending a 4 day workshop with other families, and 3 follow up days.

You will be able to take part in activities to increase understanding of your child's eating disorder, promote working together as a family and facilitate change and recovery. This is an evidence-based intervention and is recommended in the NICE guidelines for the treatment of eating disorders in children and young people.



## Why are we using FBA?

FBA is recognised as the first line of treatment for children and young people with an eating disorder, as recommended in the NICE guidelines. FBA has been shown to:

- Help increase weight in underweight children
- Improve psychological symptoms of Anorexia Nervosa
- Reduce binge eating and purging in Bulimia Nervosa
- Maintain changes made in treatment including weight restoration and eating disorder symptoms after therapy has ended
- Be more successful than individual therapies for children with more severe eating disorders.

## Alternative Treatments

Although we recommend FBA as an initial therapeutic approach, we recognise that there are alternative approaches that may suit some families better. Please note the evidence base for these treatments is not as comprehensive as FBA. These include:

- Cognitive-behavioural therapy for eating disorders (CBT-E)
- Adolescent Focused Therapy for Eating Disorders

If you wish to know more about the evidence that supports our treatment approaches please let us know and we can give you more information.

## Resources

Here are some books that give you more information about FBA. You might want to read them before or during your treatment.

Help your Teenager beat an Eating Disorder (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)  
by *James Lock*

Anorexia and other Eating Disorders: how to help your child eat well and be well by *Eva Musby*

Survive FBA: Skills Manual for Parents Undertaking Family Based Treatment (FBA) for Child and Adolescent Anorexia Nervosa by *Maria Ganci*

## Questions?

If you have any questions about FBA or any other services that we provide please contact us.

### CAMHS Eating Disorder Pathway

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**Raglan House**  
23 Between Towns Road  
Oxford  
OX4 3LX

Tel: 01865 902720

Buckinghamshire  
**The Sue Nichol Centre**  
Bierton Road  
Aylesbury  
HP20 1EG

Tel: 01865 901325

<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/ed/>

If you would like to have information translated into a different language, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team at: [EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

**Arabic** يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتسويق مختلف.

**Bengali** আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।  
**Urdu** اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

**Chinese** 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

**Polish** Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

**Portuguese** Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutra idioma ou num formato diferente.

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