

My Story

When a timely response was key to survival

***Warren is a medical student who suffers from anorexia nervosa. Changing universities during the course of his studies caused complications with receiving timely treatment due to long waiting periods. Then *Warren was signed up for FREED (First episode & rapid Early intervention for Eating Disorders) .**

“I first had problems in my fourth year at university. I was a bit more socially isolated, had fewer friends around and wasn’t doing so well in med school. It was a time of stress. I was not eating well and exercising a lot, and started losing weight quite quickly.”

“I didn’t realise what was going on”

“I didn’t really know what was going on, but I knew it wasn’t quite right. I was referred to an eating disorder unit, who then referred me on for help but it wasn’t for another three months. I said, ‘look, I won’t be here in three months, that’s not very useful to me.’ I was actually studying in Bristol, but I was moving back to the Midlands. So then they referred me to the Midlands. In that intervening period, where there wasn’t really anything available to me, I got quite a lot worse. I didn’t know what to do.”

“...by the time I got to the Midlands, I was really unwell”

“They gave me some booklets and stuff to read, but that wasn’t really enough. I got quite a lot worse and by the time I got to the Midlands I was really, really unwell. My blood tests were quite bad and they were quite worried about me. I had tests at 7.00am in the morning because I couldn’t do it any other time. They said, ‘we just need to get you in and talk to you because we’re worried about you.’ And at that time they were saying if I wanted to be admitted and have help that way, that it was an option for me. Which was scary. I had some treatments in the Midlands - eight months of therapy - and then I moved down to London.”

“I need to nip this in the bud before it gets bad again”

“I had new challenges in my life, which were quite difficult to cope with. My general coping mechanism is not fantastic - not eating isn’t a very good way of coping with things. I started losing weight and I noticed the symptoms coming back. I thought, ‘I need to nip this in the bud before it gets bad again’. So, I spoke to my team in the Midlands who directed me to a local source of help. And the following week I saw someone who recommended the FREED treatment course. Since then, I have been going back every week and seeing the same

person, having some really helpful treatment, thinking about the problems, giving me solutions to the problems, helping me to cope, and I've got significantly better from where I was."

"You require a lot of help and you require it quickly"

"FREED has helped me to understand the sort of harmful processes that my mind goes to. So, when I'm thinking, 'oh god, I'm so bad at this' and 'I can't work on this' and 'why am I such an idiot?' which is what I would previously do, they've helped me think that through. Is that rational? Is that you being a perfectionist? Are you expecting too much from yourself? They have helped me understand why I expect so much from myself and maybe what I'm trying to achieve in that. And then to readjust my expectations and be slightly more realistic.

"The point at which you actually seek help is not a point where you've got time to wait. You require a lot of help and you require it quickly. FREED provides both of those things. I am grateful to everyone involved. The availability, the support, the innovation - it's been incredible and I consider myself so lucky to have the opportunity to be involved."

*The patient's name has been changed for confidentiality



The FREED model of care provides a rapid early response intervention for young people aged 16 to 25 years with short (three years or less) first episode eating disorder duration.

- A 2015 report estimated the UK prevalence of eating disorders at between 600,000-725,000
- FREED has reduced waiting time for treatment by approximately 50%
- 59% of patients with anorexia nervosa supported by FREED reached a healthy weight by 12 months, compared to 17% of the audit sample

For more information visit www.FREEDfromED.co.uk