

FIRST STEPS ED STRATEGIC PLAN

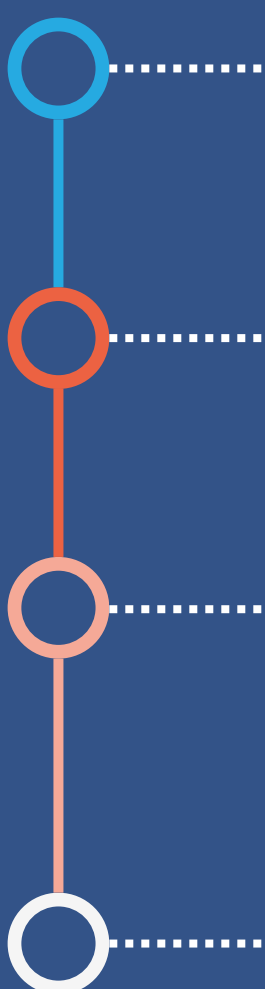
2024 - 2026

First Steps Eating Disorders is a national eating disorder charity providing help and support to individuals and their families of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. We offer training and education to professionals and, together with our stakeholders, we advance the latest evidence base for service developments through our service-user-led approach.

In the field of eating disorders, we offer the widest range of high-quality care focused on the needs of the individual.



BACKGROUND



The charity was founded in 2004 as a grassroots, Derby-based initiative. Since then, we have expanded across the Midlands and further afield to become a national charity with regional partnerships.

We continue to grow as a not-for-profit organisation that is driven by people with lived experience of eating disorders and co-occurring mental health conditions, whether through personal experience or by caring for a loved one.

As always, we are committed to adapting to the changing landscape of disordered eating and mental health. By working closely with healthcare and education partners, we use our lived experiences and service user voices to advance research, shape policy, and co-produce services. Our aim is to ensure that individuals and families receive the joined-up, integrated support they need and deserve.

In 2024, we launched a new strategy, using a test-and-learn approach to refine and adapt. This process has enabled us to present a clearer vision of our path forward as we continue to make a meaningful impact

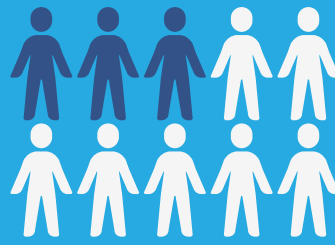
KEY STATISTICS



of people affected by an eating disorder have a diagnosis of Anorexia Nervosa.

Between 1.25 & 3.4 million people

in the UK are affected by an eating disorder.



Approximately 25% of those affected by an eating disorder are male.

The earlier someone gets eating disorder treatment...

The better their chance of recovery.

Our Values



Our values are being passionate about recovery and believing in what we do – we define these as our core 5-P’s:

We believe that support should be available for all those affected by eating difficulties and disorders, including family, carers, parents and support professionals.

Our Vision

A world where all people with eating disorders are understood and cared for

At First Steps ED, we envision a world where everyone affected by eating disorders and related mental health conditions is truly understood and cared for. We strive for a future where effective support is accessible to all.

Our Mission

To ensure everyone impacted by eating disorders and disordered eating has access to professional care

We are committed to placing those we serve at the forefront of our decision-making. Together, we can build a supportive network that empowers individuals to embrace their journeys with confidence and hope.



First Steps ED

Supporting Every Step of Your Eating Disorder Journey

We are a leading eating disorder charity offering wide ranging, person-centred support for individuals of all ages, at every step of their journey.

KEY MESSAGES

- Guided by lived experience, we offer support to everyone at every step.
- We are with you when you are ready to take your first step.
- We put you first and lead the way in partnership with local communities and other professionals.
- We are here to support you and your loved ones through each step, meet and guide you wherever you are.
- Walking together in your journey, we support you in a way that champions choice.

Our foundation is built on a clear and purposeful framework that guides everything we do. Our Pathways represent the core elements that shape our organisation, ensuring that we remain focused on delivering compassionate, effective support. These pathways are designed to be flexible and accommodating, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity and understanding.



OUR 4 STRATEGIC AIMS

TEAM

Aim: To retain, empower, and hire diverse and skilled people to shape the charity, including those with lived experience.

Summary: At First Steps ED, our strategy prioritises strengthening our foundation through a skilled and well-supported team. Our workforce team comprises of staff members, freelancers, volunteers, and trustees. Together, they drive the charity forward and deliver our mission. Recognising their skills, passion, and value, we are committed to investing in their development to ensure we evolve and grow as one cohesive organisation.

To support this pillar, we have hired a dedicated HR Manager and established a People Committee to advise the Board and oversee our workforce strategy.



OBJECTIVE 1

INVEST IN OUR TEAM, OUR CULTURE, AND OUR VALUES.

- Increase the staff base by hiring additional professionals to supervise, mentor, and support service delivery.
- Maintain manageable caseloads by expanding the team in line with demand.
- Develop a strong, relevant, and fresh policy register for our workforce.
- Ensure we are benchmarking pay and benefits against the sector to recruit and retain.
- Diversify our team's knowledge, experience, and outreach.

OBJECTIVE 2

UTILISE AND DEVELOP STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SKILLS.

- Conduct a 'roles and responsibilities' exercise to understand gaps, utilise the right people for the job, and pave the way for development.
- Provide training to ensure all team members feel equipped to support diverse service users.
- Ensure the team access regular CPD, including trauma-informed care and cultural competence, and focusing on relevant therapies such as CBT-E.

OBJECTIVE 3

BUILD AN ENVIRONMENT BASED ON TRUST AND EMPOWERMENT.

- Organise annual get-togethers focusing on strategy and team building.
- Establish a programme to celebrate success, reward staff, and recognise achievements
- Create a KPI measurement tool and share it across the organisation so we are working towards the same goals.
- Put in place effective tools to ensure open, honest, and transparent communication throughout the organisation.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE THESE?

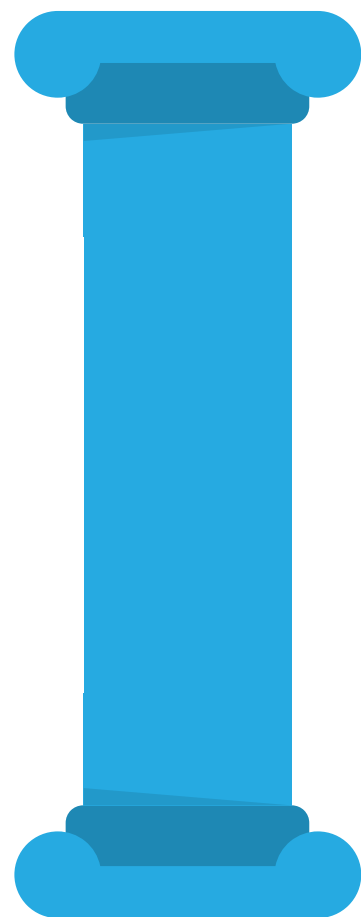
- Annual surveys
- Pulse checks
- Appraisals
- Reports to People Committee

AWARENESS

Aim: To educate and influence the national agenda to reduce stigma and increase understanding.

Summary: As a result of the ongoing stigma and limited awareness around eating disorders, there is an urgent need for stronger evidence, statistics, and information regarding national demand. Our charity will support those affected by eating disorders with free services in specific regions and reach people, regardless of location or circumstance, with our private practice. We aim to extend our free support in areas not supported by our REDCAN partners to further regions when NHS funding becomes available. By offering evidence-based, accessible services, we seek to eliminate gaps in care across age transitions.

Our plan outlines steps to expand our reach through digital innovations, community-based initiatives, resource distribution, strategic partnerships, and awareness campaigns.



OBJECTIVE 1

WE WILL LET PEOPLE KNOW WE EXIST.

- Develop a fresh and clear brand identity.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing and communications plan to share information about our services.
- Expand our outreach through events, podcasts, PR, and community engagement.

OBJECTIVE 2

WE WILL REDUCE STIGMA AND INCREASE UNDERSTANDING.

- Run awareness campaigns to increase visibility, educate, and influence the public on key issues.
- Build an ambassador and 'Friends Of' network who will focus on targeted community outreach. This should pave the way for a PPIE Committee.
- Conduct school visits to inform and inspire younger audiences about our mission.
- Use our platform to share real-life experiences.

OBJECTIVE 3

WORKING WITH THE PEOPLE WE SERVE, WE WILL SHAPE THE NATIONAL AGENDA.

- Use recognised tools (e.g. EDE-Q/EDE-A) to monitor service effectiveness, share insights, and use feedback.
- Provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training to enhance professionals' skills.
- Build relationships through networking events to increase partnerships, support, and industry connections.
- Support relevant campaigns and gain a parliamentary voice to ensure our network and service users are heard, without harming our partnerships.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE THESE?

- Data from Google, PR platforms, social media, newsletters, and our website.
- Increase in e-resources downloads and purchases.
- Increase in referrals and submission forms.
- Feedback.

PARTNERSHIPS

Aim: To increase our range of services and support through partnerships.

Summary: The charity has an established partnership programme with education services, VCSEs, community settings, healthcare providers, and the NHS. This makes up the majority of our income. Our focus is on expanding and refining our services to better meet the needs of individuals, ensuring quality assurance and safe delivery through collaboration with regional and national eating disorder charities.

By addressing gaps in service, developing staff capabilities, and enhancing our reach and funding, we can deliver complementary services that support corporate social responsibility, shape the national agenda, and amplify our impact in areas where we currently face limitations.



OBJECTIVE 1

WE WILL GENERATE INCOME IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NHS.

- Develop models to understand, support, and manage sustainable growth.
- Foster networking and develop strong partnerships.
- Map out gaps in national support and understand how we fill them.
- Keep updated on and predict service demand trends to remain responsive.

OBJECTIVE 2

WE WILL EXPAND OUR REACH INTO NEW AREAS OF THE UK.

- Create beneficial new and repeat funding applications.
- Work with Universities to grow our EDISS service.
- Develop a diverse fundraising strategy to grow in areas such as traditional corporate fundraising.
- Identify and pursue opportunities for new contracts with government and private entities.

OBJECTIVE 3

WE WILL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER CHARITIES AND COMMUNITIES TO FILL GAPS AND INCREASE OUTREACH TO HARD-TO-REACH PEOPLE.

- Conduct peer reviews to enhance service quality and accountability.
- Contribute to REDCAN initiatives for sector-wide improvement.
- Participate in steering groups to influence sector direction.
- Pursue collaborative funding opportunities with other organisations.
- Collaborate with organisations that can support outreach efforts, diversify resources, and address language barriers.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE THESE?

- Data analysis.
- Stakeholder feedback.
- Organisation-wide workplans.
- Repeat business.
- Reports to Board and Committees.

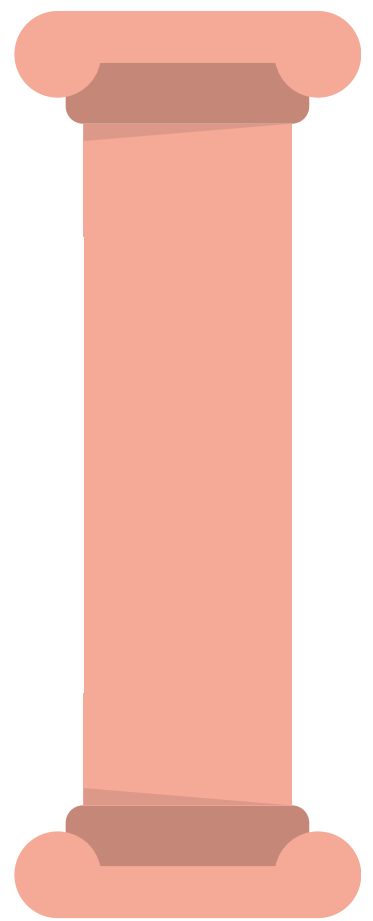
GROWTH

Aim: To expand our reach across the UK to help more people access care and support.

Summary: We offer services in two ways:

- Free services funded by NHS contracts.
- Paid-for support through our private practice, provided nationwide at a discounted rate.

It is estimated that up to 3.4 million people are impacted by eating disorders and eating difficulties, and the charity must grow to meet this need. This growth should be steady and supported by the strategic pillars outlined in this workplan. We will engage and build stronger bonds with a growing number of beneficiaries and supporters, increase awareness within the service community, and invest in lifelong relationships. We will diversify and expand our income sources to secure the additional funds necessary to achieve our plan and sustain the charity over the long term.



OBJECTIVE 1

WE AIM TO SUPPORT 4,000 SERVICE USERS PER YEAR IN 2 YEARS, HAVING ALREADY DOUBLED REFERRALS IN THREE YEARS.

- Collaborate with agencies to enhance our marketing and communications workplan.
- Implement targeted marketing campaigns to enhance visibility and recognition in the community.
- Develop our private practice and paid-for opportunities to sustain growth.
- Collaborate with academics, those with lived experience, and organisations to focus on areas of health inequalities.

OBJECTIVE 2

WE WILL LAUNCH A NEW MARKETING WORKPLAN.

- Ensure the website is fully accessible and regularly updated.
- Increase our social media following and diversify the audience.
- Create an engaging programme for volunteers, past service users, and caregivers.
- Create models for peer review and further involvement through a 'friends of the charity' network and volunteering.
- Create a marketing pipeline that results in an increase in volunteering, fundraising, or signing up for a service.

OBJECTIVE 3

WE WILL REVIEW, ADAPT, AND DEVELOP OUR SERVICES.

- Conduct research and collect data to inform decision-making and demonstrate impact.
- Optimise operational processes to reduce costs and improve service delivery.
- Develop robust internal processes to improve efficiency and accountability.
- Develop a diverse and comprehensive workplan to secure financial support through donations, events, and legacy.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE THESE?

- Set KPIs for marketing, fundraising, services, and research.
- Conduct surveys.
- Produce and review a yearly budget.
- Health inequalities reporting.
- Reports to Finance Committee.

STAKEHOLDERS



INTEGRATED CARE
BOARDS



GRANT FUNDERS



MENTAL HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS



VCSEs



LOCAL COUNCILS



MARKETING
PROFESSIONALS



PARENTS & CARERS



INFLUENCERS



VOLUNTEERS



AUDITORS



INVESTORS



ACADEMICS AND
RESEARCHERS



CURRENT SERVICE
USERS



PAST SERVICE USERS



UNIVERSITIES

CONCLUSION

The charity has grown and developed a healthy financial position through its last strategy. We wish to maintain this and recognise that, to do so, we must focus on investment.

First, we will ensure we have the team in place to keep our foundations safe and stable. From that foundation, we aim to increase awareness and establish ourselves as a household name, ensuring everyone understands the support available. Alongside this, we recognise the importance of working in partnership to achieve our goals; we are operating in a harsh economic climate, and competition is increasing, but together, we are stronger. Finally, with these areas in place, we can grow. For us, growth means reaching more people so that everyone has the right to dedicated, professional, and ongoing support.

At the end of this strategy, we aim to have built a recognised team, be a well-known name, fostered a greater understanding of eating disorders, grown into new partnerships, created long-standing collaborations, expanded our services, increased our reach, and paved the way for a sustainable future.

Final Measure: The charity will use the OKR (Objectives and Key Results) methodology to measure the impact of this strategy. This will be led by the CEO and reported to the Board.