

As many know I am passionate about issues relating to mental health but quite often we talk about conditions that we are all too familiar with, such as depression and anxiety. This is in part because they are quite a common mental health condition and there is a good chance a fair number of us know someone directly or indirectly who have suffered. However next week is one that is dedicated to raising awareness of a mental health condition that is not often talked about yet affects a significant number of people, particularly, although not exclusively, young adults, and that is eating disorders.

Boys, girls, men and women from all backgrounds and ethnic groups can be affected by eating disorders. Like other aspects of mental health, eating disorders are complex; there's no single cause and not all symptoms will apply to all people. Those who suffer may feel they have a mixture of anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder or even alternate between them. They are often a way of coping with feelings or situations that are making someone unhappy, angry, depressed, anxious or worried.

Sadly, there is less of an understanding, in general, about eating disorders as there is about other aspects of mental health. I know there are mental health commissioners and practitioners who are doing all they can to raise awareness because early intervention is key, and their work is to be welcomed. There is also a role for us, as fellow human beings to help those who may be suffering. We do it with other mental health conditions so why not eating disorders. There is really good advice on how to help by organisations like "Beat" and "Men Get Eating Disorders Too".

So next week, have a look at the awareness campaign and see how you can help raise the profile. It is an important issue and one we need to work together to help combat.