Beat
Eating disorders

HELPLINE VOLUNTEER

Role Description



WHO WE ARE:

Beat is the UK's eating disorder charity. We exist to end the pain and suffering and loss of life among people affected by eating disorders:

- We help them to understand their illness, support them to get treatment and help them towards recovery.
- We help families and carers know how best to support a loved one into, through and out of treatment.
- And we train teachers, health professionals and other key individuals to spot when someone is showing the early signs of an eating disorder, how to talk to them and how to encourage them to seek and get treatment as quickly as possible.

We use our experience to campaign for better government policy and health service practice that addresses the challenges faced by people with eating disorders, always guided by the experience of our beneficiaries and the expertise of clinicians. We work both nationally and locally, focussing on three priority areas: early intervention, family empowerment and prevention & cure.

ABOUT EATING DISORDERS:

Eating disorders destroy lives. They steal childhoods, devastate relationships and pull families apart. And they can be fatal. They are serious mental illnesses and include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder. There are **3.5 million people in the UK** with an eating disorder at any one time, which is around **1 in 20 people**. While more women are affected than men, and eating disorders commonly emerge during adolescence, they affect people of all ages and genders.

On average, it takes someone over 3 years from falling ill before they seek treatment, followed by more than 6 years of waiting, therapy, semi-recovery and relapse before they get better. PwC estimates that this costs the NHS £4 billion per year. However, it doesn't have to be this way: if someone starts treatment early, they have a good chance of making a rapid and sustained recovery.

Parents, siblings and other family members are also seriously affected. They should be enabled to help their loved one into a quick and sustained recovery but they can only play their role if they have full understanding, are fully supported and engaged by the health services, and if their own wellbeing is protected. However, they commonly report not being given useful information when a loved one is diagnosed, so they can't stop things getting worse while waiting for treatment to start and they don't know how to support their treatment regime. Families and carers also find that supporting the sufferer has a negative impact on their own physical and mental health.



DESCRIPTION:

Title	Helpline Volunteer (Calls & Emails)
Team	Beat Helpline
Hours per week	3 hours per week. This will be part of a recurring weekly shift pattern of either 3–6pm, 4–7pm or 5–8pm, with current openings for the next recruitment round primarily focused on Tuesday to Friday.
Agreement	Volunteers are requested to commit to 3 hours per week for a minumum of 12 months.
Location	This is a remote role, see page 8 for more information on volunteering remotely. We particularly encourage applications from Welsh speakers for this role; we have received funding from the Welsh government and are looking to improve our service delivery for our Welsh-speaking beneficiaries. This role requires volunteers to be based in the UK - this includes all training and observation sessions due to compliancy regulations.

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER ROLE:

- **Be part of something meaningful:** provide compassionate support to people affected by eating disorders, helping ensure they have somewhere to turn when they need it most.

- **Build your skills and career prospects:** develop valuable experience in active listening, empathy, communication, problem-solving, safeguarding and boundaries.

- **Grow your confidence:** build confidence in supporting people through sensitive and sometimes challenging conversations.

- **Access quality training and development:** receive comprehensive induction and specialist training, alongside ongoing opportunities to develop your skills through internal and external learning.

- **Connect with a supportive volunteer community:** take part in monthly group support and drop-in sessions, connect with fellow volunteers and receive dedicated support from your supervisor.

- **Volunteer from home:** this is a fully remote opportunity, allowing you to volunteer from the comfort of your own home.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Support people via the helpline:** provide compassionate, non-judgemental and action-focused support to people contacting Beat by phone or email. Calls are typically around 30 minutes, although this can vary depending on the needs of the individual.

- **Record contact notes:** accurately record relevant information from each contact, including key themes discussed and any safeguarding concerns that may require further action.

- **Support safeguarding:** follow safeguarding procedures where concerns arise, including contributing to appropriate follow-up and, where there is an immediate concern about someone's safety, liaising with emergency services. You will be supported by the on-shift helpline supervisor throughout.

- **Work as part of a team:** communicate effectively with on-shift helpline supervisors, seeking guidance and support when needed and contributing to a supportive team environment.

- **Take part in debriefs:** have the opportunity to join regular post-shift debriefs to reflect on contacts, discuss any concerns and have space to offload following challenging conversations.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

To volunteer on the helpline, you'll need to meet the following requirements:

- **A suitable device:** due to our compliancy and security requirements, you must have access to a laptop or desktop computer that meets the minimum operating system requirements of Windows 11 25H2 or macOS 15.8.1. Tablets and mobile phones cannot be used for this role.

- **A suitable headset:** you'll need access to a headset with a working microphone that can connect to your laptop or desktop computer. This can be wired or bluetooth.

- **A private working space:** you must be able to work somewhere private and confidential where conversations cannot be overheard by others.

- **Reliable internet access:** you will need access to a reliable private and secure Wi-Fi or internet connection that allows you to work online and take calls without disruption.

- **Confidence using online platforms:** you will need to be comfortable working across different online systems and platforms. Full training and support will be provided, so previous experience of our systems is not required.

CORE SKILLS:

- **Excellent communication and interpersonal skills:** strong listening, verbal and written communication skills, with the ability to build rapport and respond empathetically to people experiencing emotional distress.

- **Teamwork, organisation and adaptability:** the ability to work collaboratively within a supportive remote team, manage your time effectively and adapt to changing helpline demands.

- **Resilience and self-awareness:** the ability to manage emotionally challenging conversations, reflect on your practice and respond constructively to feedback.

- **Good IT skills:** confidence using Microsoft 365 applications, including Word, Teams and Outlook.

- **Relevant experience or knowledge:** it is beneficial to have experience supporting members of the public in a customer service, healthcare, helpline or online support setting, as is an understanding of mental health, eating disorders and safeguarding. Full training will be provided.

RESILIENCE AND WELLBEING:

Volunteering on the helpline can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be an emotionally demanding role. As a Helpline Volunteer, you may hear about experiences and situations that can be difficult or distressing to listen to.

People contacting the helpline may talk about:

- Suicide, suicidal thoughts or immediate concerns about someone's safety.
- Self-harm or other safeguarding concerns.
- Severe or longstanding eating disorder behaviours.
- The physical impact of eating disorders and serious concerns about their own or someone else's physical health.
- Difficult experiences relating to food, body image, exercise and relationships.
- Distress, trauma, isolation or challenging circumstances.
- Situations where emergency or safeguarding action may be required.

You will never be expected to manage these situations alone. You'll receive training in safeguarding and responding to difficult contacts, have access to support from the on-shift helpline supervisor and other volunteers, and take part in debriefs where you can reflect on contacts and offload following your shift. You will also have access to monthly supervision sessions and volunteer drop-in sessions.

This role requires you to be able to maintain appropriate boundaries and remain calm, compassionate and focused when supporting someone who may be highly distressed. You'll need to be comfortable hearing difficult information without taking responsibility for resolving the person's situation yourself, and be willing to seek support when you need it.

RESILIENCE AND WELLBEING:

Resilience in this role doesn't mean being unaffected by difficult conversations. It means being able to recognise your own emotional responses, use the support available to you, maintain appropriate boundaries and look after your own wellbeing.

Because of the nature of the content you may encounter, it is important that volunteering on the Helpline does not negatively impact your own recovery or wellbeing. For this reason, we require those applying for the role to have been recovered from an eating disorder for a minimum of **two** years before applying. The same requirement applies to anyone who has provided significant care or support to someone with an eating disorder.

This requirement is in place to help protect your wellbeing and ensure that you are in a position where regular exposure to potentially triggering content can be managed safely.

If you are unsure whether this role would be appropriate for you based on your own experiences, we encourage you to consider your wellbeing carefully before applying.

KEY DATES AND HOW TO APPLY:

- Applications Close: 30th November 2026
- Interview Application Closure: 11th December 2026
- Self-Led Training Modules: January 2027
- Live Training Session: Friday 29th January 2027 from 6-8pm.
- Observations - Week 1: WC Monday 1st February 2027
- Observations - Week 2: WC Monday 8th February 2027
- Live Contacts - WC Monday 15th February 2027

Completed application forms should be returned via the website by the closure date and time of 30th November 2026 at 9am. **Please note, applications may be closed earlier if capacity has been reached.**

All applications must be via the Beat application forms. Email applications will not be considered unless by prior agreement.

Successful candidates will be informed of their training progression in December in preperation for the commencement of the self-led training modules to be completed during **January 2027**.

