

At Beat, in March 2020, we were just putting the finishing touches to our plans for the coming year when Covid 19 turned everything on its head.

People with eating disorders were terribly affected by the pandemic. For many it was about increased anxiety, struggling with the restrictions of lockdown and increasing isolation.

For others it meant longer waits for treatment, difficulty finding certain foods, or disruption to the strategies they use to cope with the illness.

Not surprisingly, this led to many people's eating disorder getting worse or being re-triggered, while others fell ill for the first time.

For Beat, a lot of the income we were hoping to raise was simply not there for us any more, our offices were closed, and all our planning had to start again.

At this point, YOU stepped up. My overriding memory of last spring and summer is that our supporters really had our backs, and were determined that we weren't going to fail. And you didn't just save us, you really knocked it out of the park.

Each month through the pandemic, more people have been seeking support from Beat's helpline than ever before. We helped almost 3000 people in March 2020. But a year later, in March 2021, we supported over 12000.

We managed to keep up with this rising demand thanks to our supporters. Despite lockdown, you found so many creative ways of raising funds for us, from making and selling masks to doing sponsored events in your back gardens, and our bigger funders were quick to offer emergency grants.

This meant that we could do even more. So we created new services to help people who are struggling to get treatment in the face of longer waiting times. We trained over 100 new volunteers who are helping to deliver much of our work. And we moved all our training online, so that you can attend from your own homes.

We also increased our campaigning, supporting a review of eating disorder services in Scotland, challenging the government in England over the harm to people with eating disorders likely to be caused by its attempts to promote weight loss and, more recently, pushing our medical schools to ensure that all newly qualified doctors are able to respond to eating disorders properly.

This year has been tough. For people with eating disorders, it's been especially difficult. But through all the fear and uncertainty, Beat has been here to help. And it was your support that made that possible.

In the year ahead, we have many new challenges. We need to keep pace with the ever growing demand on the helpline. We're starting a two year project to provide extra support to 50,000 carers. And we will make serious in-roads in ensuring that all health and medical professionals have the knowledge they need to deal properly with eating disorders.

And I know, that if we have your support this year like we did last, then together we can do all this and much much more.