

HIPS/25/21 - Adaptation, implementation and evaluation of early intervention services for eating disorders in Scotland (FREED-Scot)

Eating disorders (EDs) are mental illnesses which can disrupt typical development and bring significant distress and disability. There is a growing awareness of the need for early intervention for people with eating disorders. FREED (First Episode Rapid Early Intervention for Eating Disorders) is an early intervention service that has been rolled out in NHS England. It targets 16–25-year-olds who present with an ED for the first time and uses tailored strategies to engage patients in treatment quickly. Research suggests that FREED services are associated with good clinical outcomes and reduced inpatient admissions. However, this type of approach has not yet been introduced in Scotland. We propose to determine what adaptations are needed to support full FREED implementation across Scotland, which has a different population and different mental health services. To do this, we will first explore Scottish specific adaptations that need to be made, with a focus on sources of health inequality that are of relevance for Scottish ED services (e.g., rurality, poverty etc). We will then test out the adapted model in three health boards (NHS Lothian, Highland and Tayside), which together roughly mirror the demographics found across Scotland. We will evaluate whether each service can successfully implement the adapted model in their local context and which factors support this. We will examine routinely collected data to determine whether expected improvements in early intervention indicators (e.g., shortened duration of untreated ED) are observed. This will allow us to develop guidance to support a national implementation of FREED across Scotland.