COVID-19

▶ Pandemic having a disruptive impact for everyone

   ▶ E.g., disruption to daily routines, living situations and social interactions

▶ Recognised the pandemic may be particularly problematic for vulnerable populations

▶ So we set out to **ask individuals with <u>experience</u> of eating disorders how the pandemic was impacting their lives**...

▶ Including individuals currently experiencing an eating disorder and those in recovery

▶ 129 individuals completed our anonymous, online survey - approximately 2 weeks after the start of the UK lockdown (April)

87% said their symptoms had worsened as a result of the pandemic

1. Disruption to living situation
2. Increased social isolation and reduced access to usual support networks
3. Changes to physical activity rates
4. Reduced access to healthcare services
5. Disruption to routine and perceived control
6. Changes to relationship with food
7. Increased exposure to triggering public messages

Branley-Bell, D. & Talbot, C.V. (in press). *Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdown on individuals with experience of eating disorders*. Journal of Eating Disorders.

87% said their symptoms had worsened as a result of the pandemic

1. Increased social isolation and reduced access to usual support networks

2. Reduced access to healthcare services

3. Increased exposure to triggering public messages

Branley-Bell, D. & Talbot, C.V. (in press). *Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdown on individuals with experience of eating disorders*. Journal of Eating Disorders.

Social isolation & reduced access to usual support network

*"Less pressure as not seeing those close to me who would recognise my losing weight and deterioration has put me under **less pressure** to challenge my ED as I can **unwitnessed** lose weight without challenge from others which is less pressure for me"*

*"The MAJORITY of my **"safe" eating** takes place outside of the house. E.g. getting coffees, going to Pret for food I am familiar and comfortable with. There is something less **shameful** and "**holding**" for me about eating out, and that isn't the case at home."*

86% felt more socially isolated

Branley-Bell, D. & Talbot, C.V. (in press). *Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdown on individuals with experience of eating disorders.* Journal of Eating Disorders.

Exposure to triggering public messages

"There is a lot going around social media such as putting on weight during COVID-19 due to not doing as much and that is really triggering for people like myself as straight away my head thinks, that can't happen to me! I must change the way I am towards food etc"

"There is a heavier push on ALL social platforms to 'stay for' and 'stay in shape'. Any coping mechanisms I did have before have changed. I struggle with exercise mainly, and with everything being in the spotlight it's harder to look away from it and ignore it"

81%
spent more time online

Branley-Bell, D. & Talbot, C.V. (in press). *Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdown on individuals with experience of eating disorders*. Journal of Eating Disorders.

Reduced access to healthcare services

*"People are going to **die** during this from their ED because they are unable to be physically monitored"*

*"Because I no longer can go to the day service, my anorexia makes me believe it's a chance to '**get away**' with me e.g. **losing a ton of weight**"*

Branley-Bell, D. & Talbot, C.V. (in press). *Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdown on individuals with experience of eating disorders*. Journal of Eating Disorders.

Experiences with technology during COVID-19

▶ Technology may play a promising role in keeping individuals connected with friends and loved ones, and - *when available* – healthcare services.

▶ However there are challenges:

|		
• **Challenges:** Home monitoring & "Postcode Lottery" • **Call for action:** More cohesive approach needed across healthcare services	• **Challenge:** Video calling & self monitoring • **Call for action:** Technology not always appropriate. End-users should be consulted	• **Challenge:** Public messages around eating & exercise • **Call for action:** Protective steps & guidance needs to be made available
Healthcare Provision	Technology	Social/Public messages

▶ More research needed (two follow up studies on their way!)

We would love to hear from you
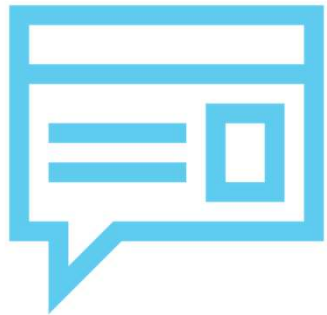
Would like a copy of the full research paper?
Would like to be involved in our future research?
Or do you have any questions or comments?

Dr Dawn Branley-Bell (Twitter **@TheCyberPsyche**)
dawn.branley-bell@northumbria.ac.uk

Dr Catherine V. Talbot (Twitter: **@CatherineTalb**)
catherine.v.talbot@northumbria.ac.uk

Thank you!

Branley-Bell, D. & Talbot, C.V. (in press). *Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdown on individuals with experience of eating disorders.* Journal of Eating Disorders.