Emotionally Based School Avoidance:

Guidance for Educational Settings

Staffordshire County Council

Educational Psychology Service

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Purpose/Aims

Staffordshire County Council's Recovery Plan has been devised in the context of COVID-19. This plan incorporates a number of projects across SCC services, including the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to support educational settings in the aftermath of emergency restrictions. The EPS have devised materials in a number of areas with the aim of providing educational settings with support that can be accessed immediately in the new academic year, without the need to refer into the service directly.

It is likely the extended absence from educational settings will have exacerbated existing needs linked to emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), meaning intervention and support will be required to return pupils to regular attendance. Additionally, it is likely the contextual experience of COVID-19 will lead to increased numbers within the EBSA population.

This document aims to provide educational settings with guidance that highlights good practice/recommendations/resources and enables them to work collaboratively with parents/carers to support children and young people (CYP) with EBSA needs. A key objective of the guidance is to facilitate educational settings in their planning, assessment and intervention with EBSA, at a school level.

It is acknowledged that EBSA is a complex area of need and involvement from other services/professionals can be advantageous, appropriate and, at times, necessary. However, the aims/scope of the current guidance is to support early and effective intervention for the EBSA population, which could prevent the level of need escalating further and promote positive outcomes for the child or young person (CYP).

Contents

1. <u>Background and Context</u>

1.1 Definitions and Terminology in EBSA

Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) is the term which will be used throughout this resource. This is a term used to describe those CYP who find attending school difficult due to emotional factors, including anxiety, which leads them to being absent from school for extended periods of time (West Sussex Educational Psychology Service, 2018).

This notion of school avoidance has been conceptualised in a wide variety of ways, and within the literature is referred to using a number of terms including 'school refusal' and 'school phobia'. 'School refusal' is commonly used; however, this can be seen to be problematic, as it implies wilful behaviour on the part of the CYP (Pellegrini, 2007). This suggests that individuals are choosing not to attend school, which implies the 'problem' is located within the child, rather than considering a range of wider environmental factors which may also support an individual to return to school.

Other terms such as 'extended school non-attendance', may also be used, which can be seen to be more neutral. However, through using this term to describe those who are not attending school due to emotional reasons, the risk is that the term may also include those who could be described as truants. Truants comprise of those whose lack of attendance may be more likely to relate to an unwillingness to conform to school expectations, or lack of motivation or interest, and fail to attend school without their parent's knowledge (Elliott, 1999). This is in contrast to those presenting with EBSA, where parents are aware of their child's school absences, and such individuals do not present with 'antisocial behaviour' and do not attend due to experiencing severe emotional distress at the prospect of going to school (Pellegrini, 2007, Hughes et al., 2010).

1.2 Prevalence

Attendance statistics released by the Department for Education (DfE, 2020), outlines that within England, 'persistent absenteeism' was at a rate of 10.9% during the academic school year 2018/19. The DfE go on to define persistent absenteeism as when a pupil misses more than 10% of possible sessions within school. However, such statistics exploring 'persistent absenteeism', also include those children and young people absent from school due to truancy.

Research further investigating the rates of EBSA within children and young people, estimate a range between 1 and 5% of school populations (Egger et al., 2003, Pellegrini, 2007, Elliott & Place, 2019). For example, using a large sample of 5,465, 11–15-year olds, Havik et al (2015) found that one child in each class, approximately 4% of the sample, reported being absent due to school refusal behaviour. However,

some participants did not provide answers, and therefore, Havik et al. (2015) highlights how 4% may represent an underestimate.

Pellegrini (2007) states EBSA is not specific to any particular population, sex, ethnicity or level of socio-economic status. School avoidance behaviours tend to peak at points of key transition, such as entry into primary school and when a pupil moves into high school (Pellegrini, 2007). Other points of risk for EBSA may include moving to a new school, or following a major holiday (King et al., 2001).

1.3 Impact of EBSA

EBSA can have a significant impact on CYP, in addition to the wider society (Pellegrini, 2007), and the negative outcomes of EBSA can affect an individual on both a short and long-term basis (Hughes et al., 2010, Kearney, 2002). EBSA is likely to impact an individual's social and emotional development, alongside their educational progress. This may then subsequently affect an individual's exam results and future career options (Miller, 2008, Nuttall & Woods, 2013, Pellegrini, 2007, Hughes et al., 2010).

Furthermore, EBSA can also be associated with individuals leaving school prematurely (Kearney, 2006), in addition to also being at a greater long-term risk concerning their mental health during adulthood (Flakierska-Praquin et al., 1997, McCune and Hynes, 2005).

2. <u>What is Anxiety?</u>

Mind.org.uk provides the following definition:

'*Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Anxiety is a natural human response when we perceive that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.'*

Symptoms of anxiety can include:

- anxious thoughts, such as detailed mental pictures of a bad event, or thoughts that the person cannot cope or is not good enough
- feeling nervous, on edge, or panicky
- feeling overwhelmed and out of control
- having trouble sleeping
- low appetite
- finding it difficult to concentrate
- heart beating really fast
- having a dry mouth
- trembling
- stomach cramps
- wobbly legs
- getting very hot

Anxiety is a normal human experience that, at lower levels (or higher ones that are temporary), can be useful to us as a stress response linked to survival. It is a natural reaction to something which is perceived as threatening. Anxiety helps prepare and mobilise the body for fight, flight or freeze by releasing a quick burst of the chemical adrenaline.

However, anxiety can become a problem when it moves beyond short-lived experiences and begins to persistently interfere with everyday life. Such difficulties are thought to be common. The charity Young Minds identified that 1 in 6 young people will have significant anxiety at some point during their school life. This equates to 5 pupils in an average class of 30.

2.1 Anxiety & EBSA

The term 'school refusal' is employed to refer to those for whom absenteeism is associated primarily with emotional difficulties, particularly anxiety (Elliott & Place, 2019). Maynard et al (2015) indicated that nearly 50% of clinic-referred youth characterised by school non-attendance have an anxiety disorder.

When anxiety is linked to school avoidance, the young person may experience anxious and fearful thoughts around attending school and their ability to cope with school, which may be accompanied by physiological symptoms of anxiety.

Separation anxiety can also be a precursor to school avoidance in some cases (Hella & Bernstein, 2012). In order to avoid these overwhelming emotions associated with school attendance the young person may withdraw from the situation, refusing to get ready for school or to leave the house or enter the school. The young person may also turn to hostile behaviours as a means to avoid the threatening situation and to try and control what feels like a very 'out-of-control' situation (Thambirajah et al., 2008). These behaviours, and the avoidance of school, may then contribute to the maintenance of EBSA over time, as illustrated in the diagram below:
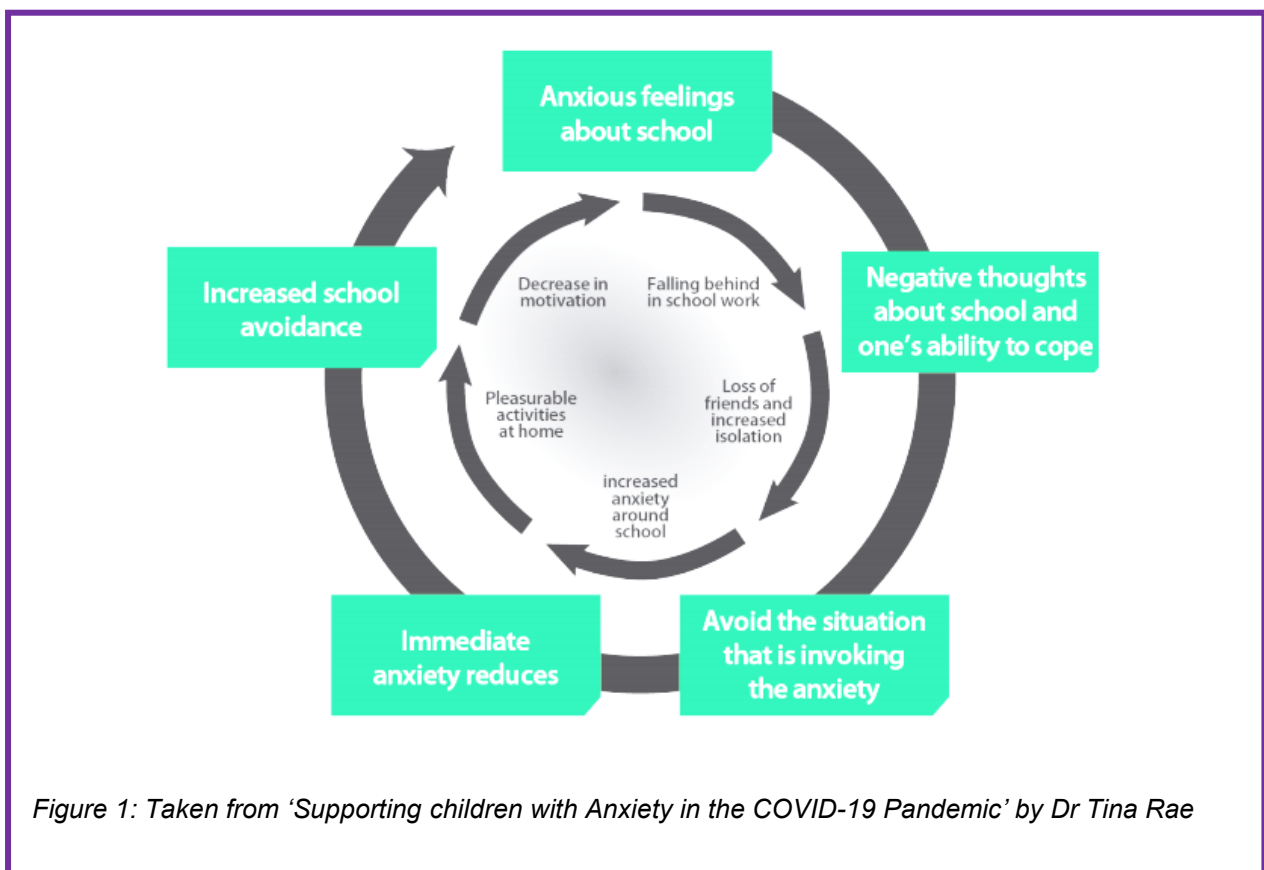

Figure 1: Taken from 'Supporting children with Anxiety in the COVID-19 Pandemic' by Dr Tina Rae

There may be one key trigger or several triggers for anxiety related to attending school, some examples include:

- Changes to class structure / teachers / routine
- Poor class behaviour / inconsistent classroom management
- Not understanding work
- Fear of getting something wrong
- Fear of exams/poor performance
- Group activities
- Break and lunchtimes (social anxieties)
- Bullying/peer pressure
- Being away from loved ones for some reason (separation anxiety)

In addition to identifying triggers, Heyne and Rollings (2002) suggest that it is crucial to consider the CYP's perceptions of their ability to cope, including perceived social and academic competence, as negative thoughts about one's ability to cope can lead to further feelings of worry and if left unaddressed, may undermine attempts to improve attendance.

3. EBSA in a COVID-19 Context

3.1 Why EBSA Behaviours and Occurrence may Increase

There are CYP in Staffordshire schools who, before the closure of schools due to COVID-19, were avoiding school due to emotional needs. The extended period of time that CYP have spent away from their educational setting and in the home is likely to exacerbate the difficulties attending school that this group of CYP experience. In addition, for some CYP, learning at home will have felt safer and more comfortable than the anxiety evoking experience of the school environment and related stressors. It is therefore anticipated that there is likely to be an increase in EBSA.
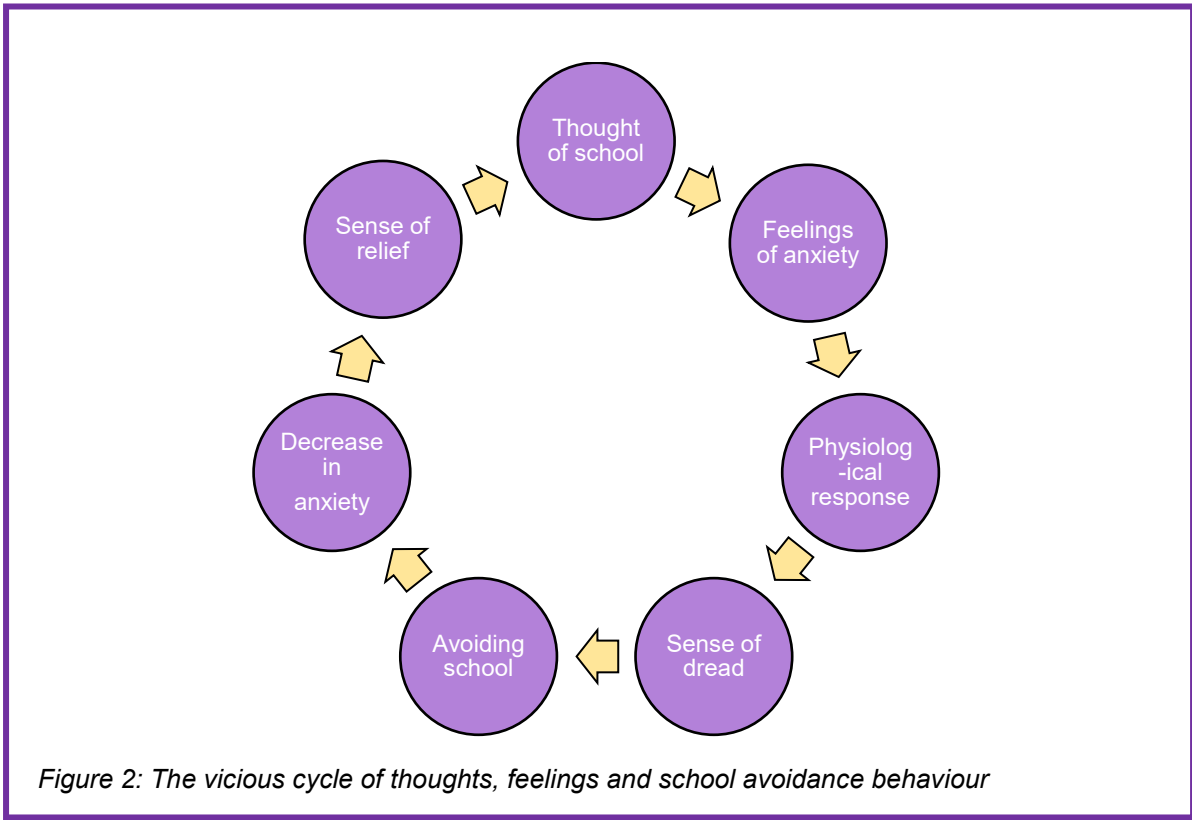

Figure 2: The vicious cycle of thoughts, feelings and school avoidance behaviour

The figure above illustrates how thoughts and feelings influence behaviour. Thinking about returning to school may evoke difficult memories and prompt a plethora of questions, heightening anxiety and resulting in a physical response which might include:

- increased heart rate
- rapid breathing
- sweating

- shaking
- nausea
- dizziness

The CYP consequently fears going to school, anticipating it will result in challenging thoughts and feelings. The avoidance of thinking about or attending school leads to a decrease in anxiety and a sense of relief. These avoidance behaviours are subsequently reinforced, as is the CYP's perception that school is too difficult to manage. Heightened anxiety could therefore result in a pattern of non-attendance as avoidance behaviours are maintained.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented and unique circumstances, the emotional impact of which may intensify the impact of factors that were contributing to previous EBSA. The following factors might increase anxiety and maintain school avoidance behaviours:

- 'Lockdown' and social distancing measures resulting in overall feelings of disconnection with others
- Limited contact with school staff meaning there is a need to rebuild relationships
- Interacting with peers in different ways leading to changes in relationships, and potentially peer-group dynamics, so there are concerns about friendships
- Reduced access to the curriculum meaning that the CYP has fallen behind with school work, or is worried about catching up
- Concerns about catching or passing on COVID-19, being unwell or family and friends becoming ill

4. <u>Identification</u>

4.1 How do we identify EBSA?

It will be important to identify CYP who may be 'at risk' of EBSA as soon as possible so that links can be made with the family to collaborate on a transition plan. This group of CYP might include:

- CYP who had a re-integration plan prior to school closure
- CYP whose attending was below 90% before school closed
- CYP with a history of:
  - attendance difficulties
  - anxiety
  - social communication and interaction difficulties
- CYP whose parents/carers have expressed concerns

It is acknowledged there may be some CYP who did not previously present with attendance issues but begin to as school starts to re-open. It is therefore important CYP who are not attending school as expected are identified and these concerns explored.

4.2 Early Identification

There may be signs that are noticed in CYP prior to the re-opening of schools and as CYP begin to re-attend including:

- Talking negatively about school
- Becoming anxious on separation from caregiver
- Physical symptoms of anxiety (e.g. headaches, stomach aches), often on a Sunday night or a Monday morning, which may improve when the CYP stays home from school
- Sharing worries about particular aspects of school
- Refusing to get ready for school
- Difficulties sleeping
- Becoming distressed when school is talked about
- Engaging in self-harming behaviours

- Becoming withdrawn, spending increasing amounts of time in their bedroom, avoiding trips outside of the home

Early intervention is key. Baker and Bishop (2015) advocate a quick return to school alongside intervention, support and adaptations within the school and home environment. Implementation of an individualised support plan, informed by an analysis of the factors influencing EBSA, and developed collaboratively by families, school staff and the CYP has been shown to have positive outcomes.

5. Factors Influencing EBSA

Badcock Integration LLP (2016) carried out case studies to develop an account of relevant factors for each CYP experiencing EBSA. Findings added to the existing research base which recognises that "for most, there are no clear or identifiable 'causes' (of EBSA) but a complex interlinking of factors" …. "linked to child, family context and school factors" (p.6)

Factors influencing EBSA, according to the research, include:
- Risk and protective factors
- Four functions of school non-attendance (Kearney, 2008)
- 'Push' factors and 'pull factors' (Thambirajah et al, 2008)

Thambirajah et al (2008) suggest, *"School refusal occurs when stress exceeds support, when risks are greater than resilience and when 'pull' factors that promote school non-attendance, overcome the 'push' factors that encourage attendance"* *(p.33)*

5.1 Risk Factors

Research indicates that 'risk factors' occur at different times:

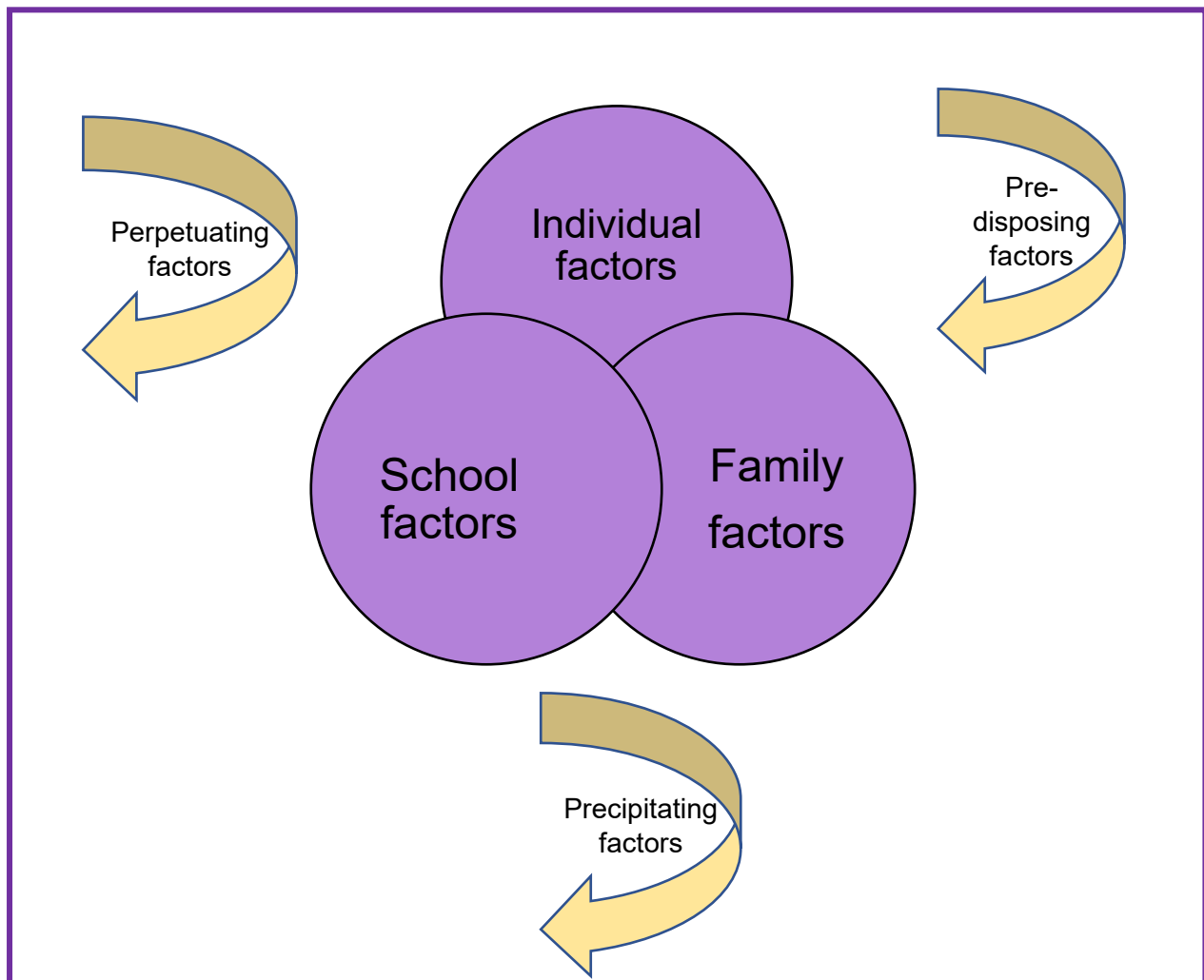| Factor	Definition
Pre-disposing factors	Factors which make anxiety more likely to develop
Precipitating factors	Recent events which have an influence on anxiety: - Transition from primary to secondary - Loss/ bereavement

	- Changes in friendship groups or bullying - Returning from a prolonged absence	
Perpetuating factors	Factors which are likely to maintain anxiety	

(Thambirajah et al, 2008, p36)

Research has identified the following contributing 'risk' factors to EBSA:

Level	Individual	Familial	School
Contributing Factors	-Challenges with emotional self-awareness and self-regulation -Fear of social and personal failure -Previous exclusions -Separation needs -Social interaction anxiety -Low self-confidence -Worries about those at home -Fear of parental separation/loss of a parent -Over-dependence on parents/carers -Illness/health needs	-Siblings being at home e.g. home educated, due to health needs -Limited social interactions within the home -Family dynamics -Loss -Frequent conflict -Family transitions – moving house, divorce -Loss in the family -Significant changes in the family -Mental health needs with parents/carers -Absence of a parent -Child's anxiety causes stress easily in parents/carers -Over protective parents	-Noise and organisation levels in the classroom -Unpredictability of environment, leading to feelings of being unsafe and insecure -Consequences from staff being viewed as being unfair and harsh -Teachers who are perceived as having an aggressive nature -Peer relationships – including elements of conflict, isolation and anxiety -Poor communication which then leads to inconsistency -Class sizes -Bullying -Transitions – secondary/change of school/class -Unidentified/unsupported learning needs -Needs with specific subjects -Activities the young person cannot cope with e.g. P.E., assemblies, talking in front of others. -Poor relationships with staff
Sources: Havik, Bru Sigrun & Ertesvag, (2013), Thambirajah, Grandison & Hayes, Garfi, Lachlan (2008), Hansen, Sanders, Massaro and Last, (1998) Kearney and Silverman, (1995).			

The literature also suggests that these contributing factors interact.
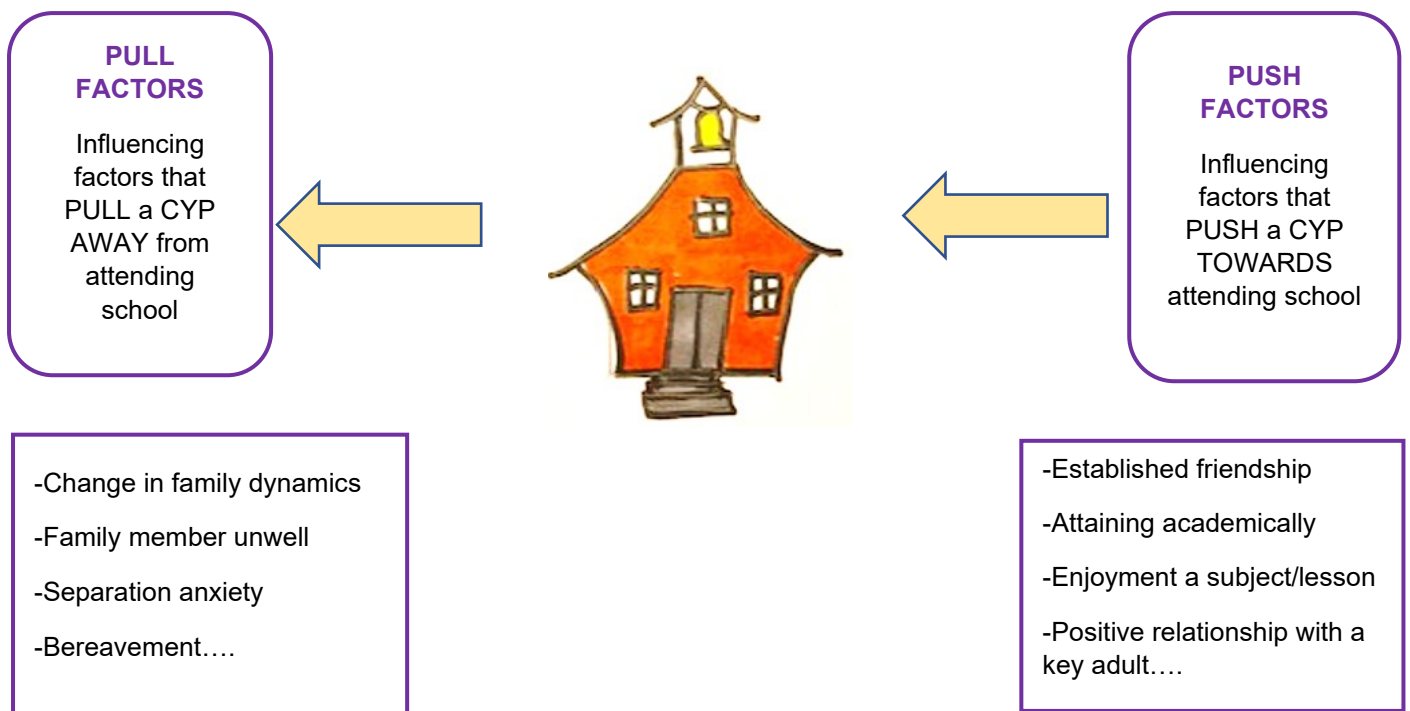

5.2 Protective Factors

It is important to consider factors which may 'protect' a CYP from maintaining EBSA behaviours including their individual strengths, areas of resilience within themselves, their family or school context, and identifying previous successes so these can be built upon. Research suggests this can also include the protective factors within the table below.

Level	Individual	Familial	School
Protective Factors	-CYP's strengths and interests -CYP's aspirations and ambitions -CYP's motivation for change - Increasing confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy	-Positive relationships in the family and/or community - Willingness to work in partnership with school and support agencies - Positive parenting skills - Developing understanding of CYP needs and feelings	- Positive relationships with a member/s of staff - Willingness to work in partnership with family and support agencies - Positive relationships with peers - Experiencing success in school - Having a flexible approach - Developing understanding of CYP needs and feelings

5.3 Push and Pull Factors

Thambirajah et al (2008) discuss 'push' and 'pull' factors, explaining that the balance between the two fluctuates. Thambirajah et al (2008) state, *"school refusal occurs when…. 'pull' factors that promote school non-attendance, overcome the 'push' factors that encourage attendance"* (p33)

PULL FACTORS

Influencing factors that PULL a CYP AWAY from attending school

PUSH FACTORS

Influencing factors that PUSH a CYP TOWARDS attending school

-Change in family dynamics

-Family member unwell

-Separation anxiety

-Bereavement….

-Established friendship

-Attaining academically

-Enjoyment a subject/lesson

-Positive relationship with a key adult….

West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2018) suggest it can also be helpful to understand 'risk and resilience' influences in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors

PUSH FACTORS

Influencing factors that PUSH a CYP TOWARDS staying at home

PULL FACTORS

Influencing factors that PULL a CYP AWAY from attending school

Bullying

Difficulties with peer or teacher relationships

Exam pressure

Difficulties with learning…..

Reduced anxiety around separation

Avoidance of challenging interactions with peers or teachers

Avoidance of school work……
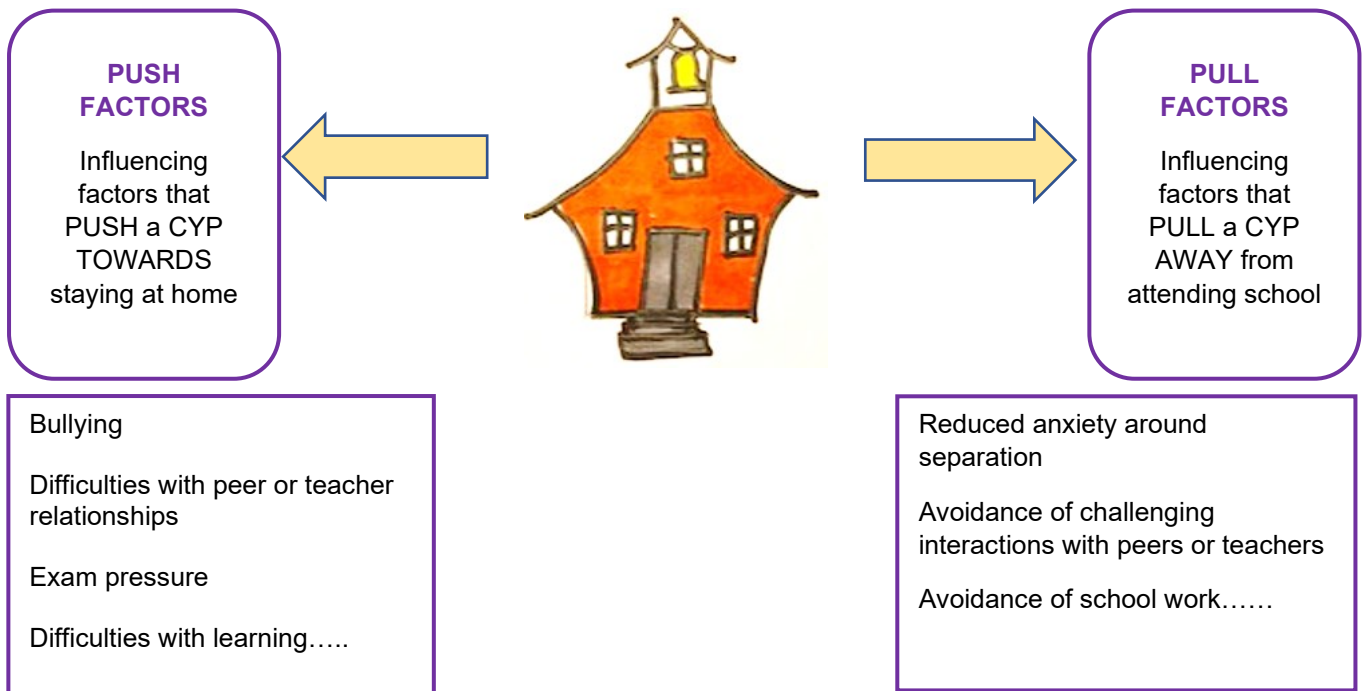
It is also important to consider secondary factors that might maintain school avoidance behaviours. Maintenance factors may include:

- Falling behind with school work
- Loss of friends and increased isolation
- Enjoying being at home
- Decrease in motivation

5.4 Functions of School Non-Attendance

Thought needs to be given to the function of non-attendance behaviours. It can be helpful to think about what unmet need, or needs, avoiding school fulfils for the CYP.

Avoiding school is the solution to what problem for the CYP?

What outcome is the CYP's non-attendance achieving for them?
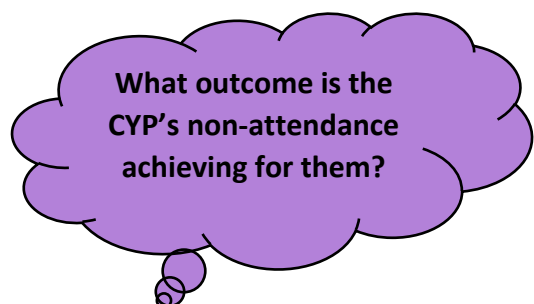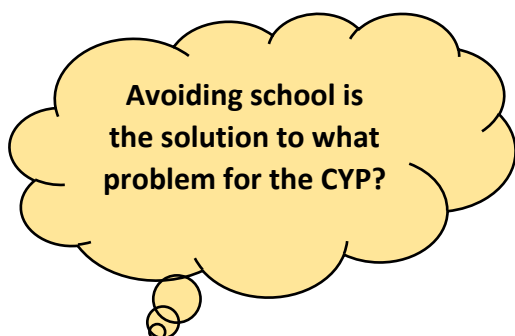
It can also be useful to consider what non-attendance behaviours are communicating, in terms of expressing feelings and/or unmet needs.

What are the CYP's non-attendance behaviours telling us about how they are feeling?

What are the CYP's non-attendance behaviours telling us about what they need?

Kearney and Silverman (1990) developed a four-function taxonomy of school refusal behaviours, identifying the purpose that non-attendance might serve for CYP. The table below, outlines the four functions and provides examples.

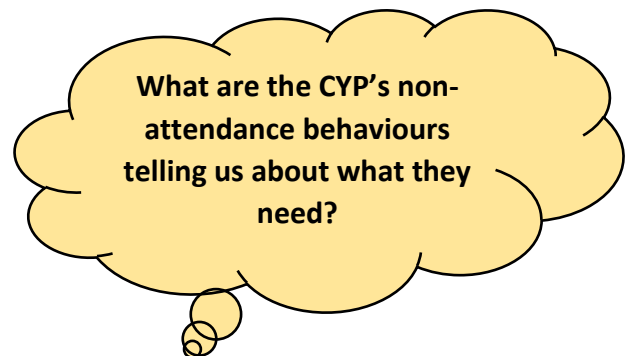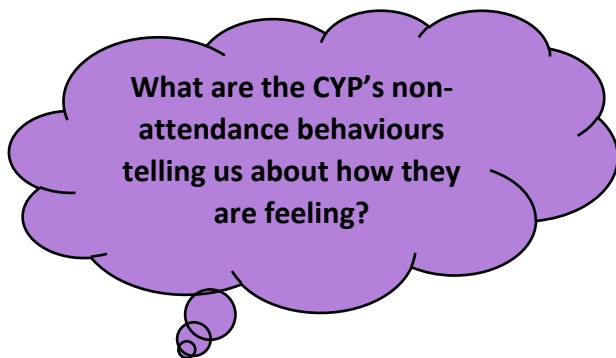| Functions of school non-attendance (Adapted from Kearney, 2008) |
| --- |
| To avoid school related stressors:
• Environmental e.g. noise, crowds, going into the building or classroom
• Social e.g. groups, break times, lunchtimes
• Transitions e.g. between lessons, to and from school |
| To avoid social situations and/or activities
• Interactions with peers which are found challenging
• Feeling disconnected or isolated from peers, not belonging to a group
• Evaluative situations: exams, presentations, physical education lessons, eating in the cafeteria |
| To gain needed attention
• Time at home with parents/carers/ family members |
| To engage in preferred activities
• Watching TV
• Playing video games
• Spending time with friend |

In instances where non-attendance behaviour functions to *avoid,* school avoidance can be negatively reinforced, as illustrated in Figure 3 below. School avoidance behaviours are strengthened as they remove or avoid negative outcomes.

Figure 3: The negative reinforcement of non-attendance behaviours
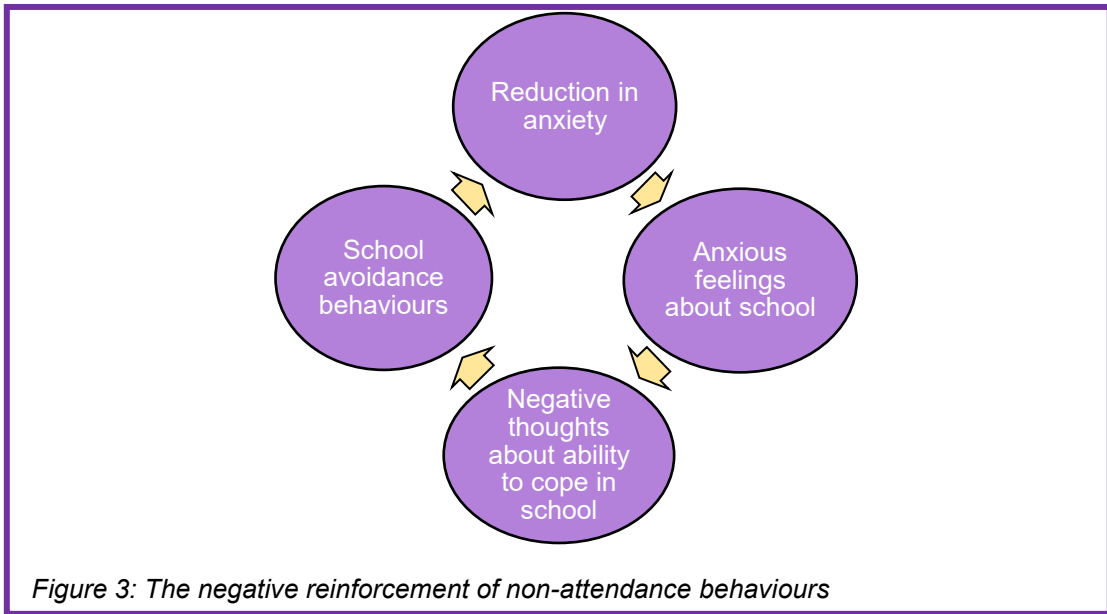
In instances where non-attendance behaviour functions to *gain,* school avoidance can be positively reinforced, as illustrated in Figure 4 below. School avoidance increases in response to the need being met.

Figure 4: The positive reinforcement of non-attendance behaviour
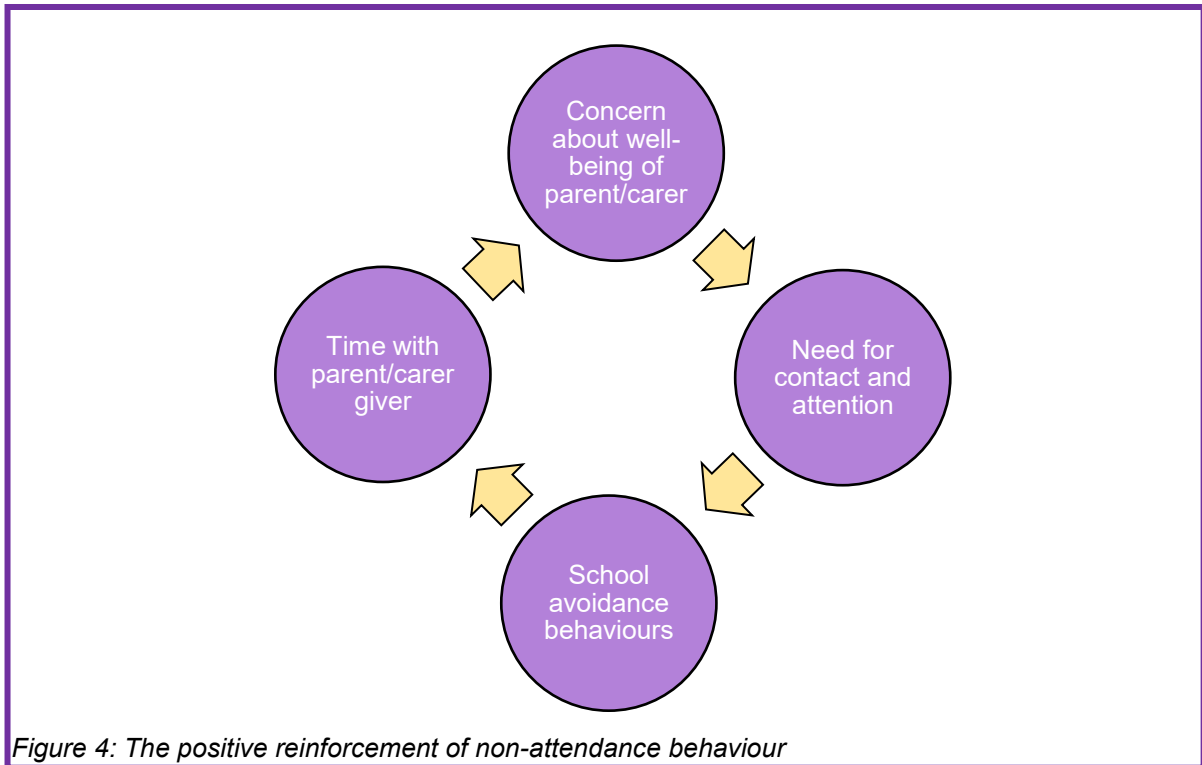
The parents/carers and CYP should be involved in the development of a transition/action plan (appendix 7), informed by information gathering which includes:

- Considering risk and protective factors

- Exploration of the function of the EBSA, considering the four functions of school non-attendance (Kearney, 2008)

- Identification of 'push' factors and 'pull factors'

To support staff, with exploration in these areas, several resources have been created (see appendix). Some of these documents (e.g. 2.1, 2.3, 3.4 & 3.6) provide a simple framework to record or mind map information during discussions with parents/carers/CYP. Some (3.1 & 4), provide the opportunity to complete richer and deeper exploration.

6. EBSA and Autism Spectrum Condition

Anxiety and Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) go hand in hand. The child with Autism lives in a worrying world hard to interpret or predict with few social skills available to help manage encounters; where all communication is problematic and processing its teeming information flow often too demanding. No wonder such children find schooling difficult, if not alien. And no wonder their attendance patterns can be fragile even in normal times - worse still in a pandemic!

Most schools have learnt, through training and advice, to support CYP with Autism better, allay their fears and smooth their individual pathways to integration. But all such children are different, and their success in the classroom can be provisional and incomplete. New challenges can easily disrupt precarious adjustment and require fresh strategies to meet and overcome them.

COVID-19 is one such massive challenge. It arrived unexpectedly and uninvited, causing havoc with schooling with everyone off guard. We should ask then - how specifically it has affected CYP with Autism and what can be done to alleviate its effects upon them?

6.1 Changes in School Environment and Routines

CYP with Autism can find change overwhelming. The 'new look' school they will encounter post COVID-19 with its social distancing rules, (never easy to gage for ASC) spaced desks, smaller year group 'bubbles', altered timetables, playtime and lunchtime restrictions, hygiene requirements and so on will take time and support to assimilate and relearn.

The following may help:

- Walkaround videos or photo sequences of the reinvented school, narrated by a trusted adult or child (or both), emphasising and giving clear rationales for changes made, but also comforting the viewer with pictures of the familiar and the unchanged. Humour, frank emotional reference and reassurance should be central to the speakers' style, as should personalisation of the CYP's upcoming experience (e.g. name cards on desk) and a convincing 'Welcome Back!'. The video or photos could be mailed home to the child to be replayed daily, with a parent present able to carry the CYP through early anxieties and confusion and recognise when this turns to curiosity and enthusiasm. Further 'film lets' around specific situations could follow-such as going to the toilet or into the playground-whatever worries the child and needs clarification. Indeed, a small library of such videos could be contemplated for all transitional or returning children, with and without ASC.
- Social Stories written to anticipate change, validate emotional concerns and assure a successful and exciting return, could be written in advance for daily

reading at home and during transition. There are many of these available pre-written that can be adapted for personal use.

- Calendars and Countdown Charts can be used to give a chronological context to the impending return and abate anxiety about upcoming events.
- Simple practises to restart the 'school-going habit' perhaps accompanied by a visual chart* (e.g. donning school uniform, restocking the pencil case with new 'stuff', using the lunch box, walking past the school) could be encouraged and rehearsed, perhaps tied to dates on a Countdown Chart.
- Preparatory consolidation of good hygiene habits e.g. handwashing that schools now expect.

6.2 Relationships

Existing common difficulties in making friends, handling social encounters, dealing with bullies (or just plain unfriendliness and rejection), controlling emotions in public and integrating with groups may have been exacerbated by long separation from peers and perhaps worsened by adverse social media contact during lockdown.

Helpful strategies to moderate these might include:

- Social Stories focussed upon social difficulties known to have been previously encountered and establishing short affirmative steps to take immediately on return.
- Resumption of interrupted social skills training programmes without delay. These may have to be sectionally re-run to re-establish forgotten material.
- Introduction of social support from peers e.g. through Circle of Friends or Lego 'Therapy' (details of techniques from EPS).
- Key worker contact before return and daily thereafter, from 'Meet and Greet' (perhaps as part of an 'early arrival' plan to ease school entry before the majority of pupils arrive) through classroom and playtime availability to a 'final goodbye' where affirmation of pleasurable experience, and social or learning success can be made.
- The adoption of simple reward schemes for attendance or to recognise and reinforce days socially well spent (perhaps where a specific social skill has been demonstrated).

6.3 Regulation of Emotion

Recognition and better regulation of emotions within oneself and within others (Theory of Mind) has long been a focus of ASC development programmes. Returning to school after months of relative isolation and reduced social challenge might prompt a 'spike' in adverse emotion showing that much emotional expression and control has been forgotten and has become 'rusty'. Helpful programmes to restore wellbeing and good regulation might include:

- First and foremost - frequent monitoring and assessment of the CYP's emotional state. Use well established simple techniques such as Salmon Lines, the Wonderful Five Point Scale (with positive, graduated responses to e.g. increasing anxiety or anger, linked successively to each scale point), Talking Mats and similar. It is only by accessing the CYP's own inner world that unique perceptions, thoughts and misconceptions, fears (irrational or not) and general emotional adequacy to thrive in the social world can be understood and acted upon.
- Teaching relaxation skills the CYP can call upon quickly in an impending crisis to help better self-management. These can include specific bodily relaxation protocols, breathing exercises, imagery, Mindfulness or Yoga techniques or other - there are many accessible programmes on the web. The opportunity to take simple physical exercise should not be overlooked.
- Use of Time Out cards, withdrawal spaces (even classroom tents), comfort zones, access to special toys and activities to allow retreat from stress when needed
- Varied reward programmes to consolidate specific areas of self-control currently concerning.

6.4 Sensory Differences

Most CYP with Autism display aspects of hyper or hyposensitivity; for instance, to noise, light, temperature, texture, pressure and taste, and often to overcrowding or chaotic environments. The post COVID-19 school environment may present unanticipated sensory challenges which the CYP reacts to adversely. In particular, use of Personal Protective Equipment, the need to handwash regularly, the feel and smell of sanitisers, may all upset the CYP and trigger tantrums and refusal. It may be possible to compromise or desensitise in some instances, or it may be necessary to make a 'special case' in some circumstances to ensure overall compliance and indeed attendance.

Conversely, the use of sensory rooms, fidget toys, music, ear defenders, pressure pads, textured toys and so on might act positively on the CYP, improving mood and concentration. Their ready availability should be considered as assets to support transition and school return.

6.5 Special Interests

It is not uncommon for CYP with Autism to show a deep interest in highly specific subjects e.g. birds, dinosaurs, historical epochs, special objects like locks or toy cars to the point where that interest can dominate daily routine. However, sensibly used, that personal interest can be recruited positively (as a reward, an attraction to attend, a medium of social communication, a calming technique) and become a tool to build adjustment. Examining or questioning the CYP's likes and dislikes, sensitively combined with close observation will establish the full extent of such enthusiasms

and how they can be used to encourage a smoother return to school and compliance thereafter.

6.6 MAIN MESSAGES

The main messages therefore to aid returning to school after episodes of school avoidance or some enforced absence such as caused by COVID-19 lockdown are:

- **ACT EARLY** - anticipate problems and prepare the CYP for change more strenuously than you might other CYP
- **SUPPORT STRONGLY** - dedicate Keyworker time to support and personalise the school return experience
- **MONITOR CLOSELY** - track the CYP's views and reactions daily; use information obtained to mentor and problem-solve
- **RECONNECT SWIFTLY** - ensure resumption and continuity of good practice, child training and programming halted by lockdown or school avoidance.
- **COMMUNICATE CLEARLY** - between members of staff collaboratively, with parents constantly, with the peer group informatively and with the CYP proactively and reassuringly.

Should further staff training needs become apparent and desirable, many local agencies (e.g. AOT, EPS) and national bodies (e.g. National Autistic Society) can be approached to supply both training and advice.

(Please refer to the 'useful resources' section for details of the different approaches/materials discussed.)

7. Working Collaboratively with Parents/Carers

To find an early and effective route to intervention, it is important that staff work collaboratively with the CYP's parents/carers. Information gathered from parent/carers can be valuable and provide an insight into the current situation that is not seen or perceived within the educational setting. The quality of this information relies heavily on the relationship staff establish with parents/carers, and the approach that is adopted during their interactions/exploration.

All educational settings should aim to have practices in place which develop positive relationships with families. This is likely to create an environment where parents/carers feel staff are approachable/supportive, which in turn supports earlier communication /identification of any needs/concerns.

When engaging in discussions with parents/carers it is important that a sense of trust and support is established, opposed to feelings of judgement/accusations. If there are areas within the home context that require intervention/support, this is more easily achieved if staff are working collaboratively with parents/carers. Parents/carers are more likely to accept ideas/intervention when they feel the purpose is supportive not corrective.

To facilitate exploration of familial/home factors within the context of EBSA there are several resources within the appendix which provide frameworks to unpick the areas detailed within section 5. These discussion frameworks/resources should be utilised to facilitate a discussion but not limit the contributions parents/carers wish to communicate e.g. allow them to talk freely and not just answer the questions. All staff joining these discussions need to be mindful that some of the areas which may be discussed can be very sensitive topics, which can be quite difficult for parents/carers to talk about; a safe and secure context is key.

Following assessment of the CYP's needs an action plan (appendix 7) should be formulated with parents/carers and reviewed on a regular basis with all parties (including parents/carers/CYP). Throughout the 'do' stage of support, staff should maintain regular contact with the parents/carers to offer support/guidance and adapt the support in place in view of any changes within the home/school context.

It is also important to consider any areas within the home context which require support e.g. should morning routines and Sunday evenings be included into the action plan? Additionally, any contributing factors within the familial level which are raised by the CYP need to be discussed sensitively with the parents/carers to ensure a holistic approach is taken.

8. Eliciting the Child or Young Person's Voice

When exploring the current situation for any CYP it is important that every effort is made to gain their views/perspective. Eliciting the views of the CYP can provide us with a much richer/truer and more detailed insight into 'what is going on', which in turn leads to more individualised and effective support/intervention. Although information gathered from key adults can be helpful and informative, it is important to acknowledge that every individuals' perspective can be different and hold different meaning for them; therefore, these views may not be a true reflection of what the CYP is thinking/feeling themselves.

A well-known psychologist (Kelly, 1955) once said:

'..if you don't know what is wrong with someone, ask them, they may tell you.'

It is acknowledged that this is not always easily achieved. Some CYP may find it very challenging to communicate their views for a number of reasons. Therefore, those working with the CYP need to be creative and adaptable to provide the CYP with different ways to communicate their thoughts/feelings using a variety of methods.

To facilitate this process, and provide some ideas/frameworks, some resources have been created. Within the appendix (3.2 & 4) there are a number of card sorting activities that can support staff to elicit the CYP's views and perspective. This can be a useful approach for all, but especially in cases where the CYP is not ready to engage in direct conversations (about the current situation/their needs) as they can physically move the cards under different headings, rather than having to use verbal communication. Using these card sorting activities will also provide an insight into the areas detailed at the end of section (5).

It is important that any sessions held with the CYP are carried out by an adult they feel safe and secure with. If this relationship has not already been established, then prior to discussing the current situation/EBSA it would be advisable to engage in sessions

which build a positive rapport e.g. 'All About Me'. Staff should base the exploration/support sessions on the individual CYP, using their strengths and interests to heighten engagement, adapting approaches to their individual needs/age/levels.

Additionally, it is important that the CYP is included (if they wish to be) in the action planning and review stages of EBSA support. This will allow them to feel a greater sense of control, and predictability about next steps.

9. Strategies and Approaches

9.1 Whole School Approaches

Educational settings should aim to create policies that adopt whole school evidence based appraoches to promote wellbeing to reduce the likliehood of EBSA occuring. The National Institue for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) advises that school settings should adopt a 'whole school' approach to promote the social and emotional wellbeng of children and young people.

Public Health England (2015) highlighted eight whole school principles to promote emotional health and well-being

1. An ethos and environment that promotes respect and values diversity.
2. Curriculum, teaching and learning to promote resilience and support social and emotional learning.
3. Enhancing student voice to influence decisions.
4. Staff Development support their wellbeing and that of student.
5. Identifying need and monitoring impact.
6. Working with parents/carers.
7. Targeted support and appropiate referral.

Further information about each of these principles can be found in the 'Promoting Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing' document by Public Health England (2015) which can be accessed here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414908/Final_EHWB_draft_20_03_15.pdf

Useful information and resources around whole school responsbilties to promoting social, emotional and mental health can so be found on the Staffordshire graduated response toolkit which can be accessed here:https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Access-to-learning/Graduated-response/Social-emotional-and-mental-health/Whole-school-responsibilities/Whole-school-responsibilities.aspx.

9.2 Supporting a Successful Return to School
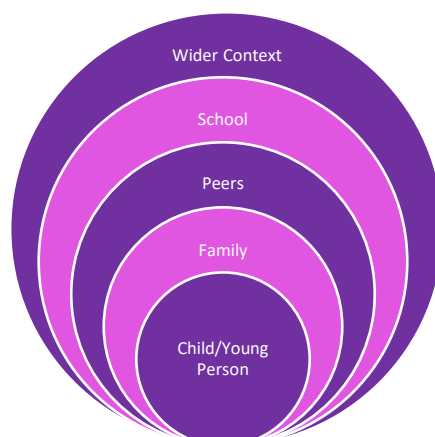
Supporting children with EBSA can be complex and mutlifaceted. Person centered stratergies and interventions should be developed through the Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle to support a sucessful integration with interventions at the level of the child, the family, peer and school and wider context. However, there are a number general strategies and examples of good practice at each of these levels (see table).

Table 2: General Strategies and Good Practice for pupils demonstrating EBSA.

Child/Young Person	• Develop feelings of safety and belonging. This could be achieved through having consistent support staff and/or a small welcoming space with no pressure to talk but opportunities for interaction. • Promote confidence, self-esteem and value through personalised rewards or responsibility. • Promote aspiration and motivation by making learning meaningful and relevant. • Build upon strengths and interests. • Opportunities for positive experiences and opportunities to develop friendships. • Taking an interest in the child or young person e.g. through personalised rewards and positive individualised feedback.
Family	• Maintain regular communication with parents/carers and ensure that the relationship between school remains positive. • Consider what support the family needs and refer to other support agencies as appropriate. • Encourage the family to spend time together e.g. engaging in shared interests and activities.

Peers	• A peer mentoring system to provide guidance and encouragement and reinforce attendance.
	• Social provision for long-term non-attenders to enable them to establish or maintain peer relationships e.g. continued access to after school clubs.
	• Support the pupil to make or maintain friendships with peers.
School	• A strong pastoral system and identified senior member of staff to coordinate the response for a pupil with EBSA.
	• A positive and nurturing environment with a person centred and solution focussed approach with a focus on listening to the child or young person's voice.
	• Involve the pupil in the development of their support plan in order to promote their investment in it.
	• A holistic view of students and a good understanding of the context surrounding the child or young person.
	• Persistent and resilient school staff recognising it may take time, and strategies may not always work first time and/or may need to be adapted.
	• Effective communication between staff and stress management systems for staff working with the pupil and opportunities to debrief as this work can be difficult.
	• Identify a key adult/s for the pupil who has time to dedicate to building a genuine relationship and can support the pupil at times of high anxiety.
	• A flexible and individualised approach including reintegration planned according to individual need such as a flexible and reduced timetable. Individualised support plans should be created for the young person based on their individual needs.
	• An awareness of barriers to learning, making relevant adjustments and reviewing strategies over time. Work should be achievable and delivered at an appropriate level.
	• Opportunities to make a positive contribution such as increased participation at school.
	• Opportunities for children and young people to express their views and feel listened to.
	• Promotion of independence through giving choice and control and involving them in decision making through collaboratively developed realistic targets.

	• Raising awareness of school non-attendance through staff training and ensuring a key member of staff is responsible for monitoring attendance, with the support of outside agencies. • Enforcement of anti-bullying policies. • Realistic plans with small steps, agree actions with all parties and keep them until the next review date. • Access to a safe space with increased adult support who can then work on transitioning back into the main school. • Consider how to support the journey to and from school, for example, being escorted to the school building by a family member and met at school by a member of staff or close peer to ease the transition.
Wider Context	• A clear understanding of the role of external agencies and referral routes • Collaborative working between professionals. • Utilising multi-agency working to consider the impact of the wider environment on the child.

9.3 Early Intervention

Educational settings should provide **all** staff/parents with knowledge on early signs/indicators of EBSA, including those detailed in section 4.2.

Monitoring the more subtle patterns which can occur in the early stages can be advantageous. This includes CYP who begin to arrive later, even if they still manage to arrive in time for registration. Sometimes this can slowly escalate, but if explored early can minimise higher levels of EBSA. Therefore, all staff, including office colleagues, should be included in training and awareness raising.

Having open communciation with parents/carers is important to ensure any early indicators of EBSA can be identified. Patterns of EBSA or contributing factors may begin to emerge within the home context. Having a positive relationship with parents/carers is likely to mean that these aspects will be communciated and addressed early on.

Within the appendix (1:1,1:2 & 1:3) there are three checklists which can help staff to explore CYP who may be vulnerable to EBSA or presenting with early indicators. Two of these are to be completed with parents/carers and/or the CYP.

9.4 Transitions

There are numerous transitons that each CYP makes throughout their educational experience. Many of these occur on a daily basis, which can be challenging, especially for a CYP experiencing EBSA.

Here are some of the transitions which should be considered by staff, to explore if there are any needs within this area for the CYP:

- Leaving the home in the morning (including leaving possessions, pets, family member)
- Accessing transport/making the journey to school
- Leaving parents/carers at the drive, gate, car etc.
- Entering the school building
- Entering the school corridors/playground
- Entering the classroom
- Moving from the classroom to another classroom/room/playground
- Transitioning from learning contexts to social contexts e.g. lessons to break times
- Transitioning from areas of strength to areas of perceived weakness e.g. lessons where the CYP does well to those where they find challenging
- Changing between different staff members/peer groups
- Through the academic years/educational settings (e.g. primary to secondary)

If any transitional needs are identified then the appropraite support should be provided, discussing with the CYP 'what could make this better/easier'. A **few** approaches/resources have been detailed below:

- Social Stories
- Photobooks to prepare CYP for transitions to new classes/schools/people.
- Transitional objects to support CYP when they are apart from key and trusted adults e.g. provide the CYP with an object to look after for you so they know you will return to them at some point.
- Meet and Greet – to support CYP to transition into the setting, classroom, from break to learning.
- Transition planning and visits.
- 'All About Me' sessions, to establish a positive rapport/relationship with new staff members.
- Provide the CYP with key factual information about areas of concern e.g. new subjects, to minimise how much they are required to anticipate what is going to happen.
- Transition document produced by the EPS (SCC) which provides links/details of transition resources/information. This can be found within the Graduated

Response Toolkit: https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Access-to-learning/Graduated-response/Graduated-response.aspx

9.5 Development of Social/Emotional Skills & Knowledge

All CYP have to manage and repsond to a variety of emotional experiences on a daily basis. For CYP with EBSA needs, these emotional experiences can often be more intense and frequent. Additionally, social and emotional apsects can be a contributing factor to the EBSA e.g. the CYP may be experiencing challenges with peer relationships leading them to avoid school or the CYP may not have suffcient social and emotional skills to cope with the challenges they are facing.

This area should be explored with the same depth and intent that is applied to identifying any needs a CYP may have with cognition and learning. It is important any social and emotional areas for development are also supported. However, it should not be assumed that any needs/challenges are due to the CYP having a 'gap' in skills/knowledge within the social/emotional area e.g. the CYP may have a high level of skills but may experiencing bullying, which needs to be addressed and resolved.

It can be challenging to know how to assess and support social/emotional needs because this area is so vast. To provide a possible way forward an Emotional Literacy framework has been included within the appendix (9). This can be used to guide areas for exploration but also to devise possible session aims. It can be useful to assess each dimensional area/aspect through observation and live situations e.g. social circles. Sessions with the CYP around emotional/social aspects can also provide a helpful insight e.g. labelling emotions, talking about when they have experienced different emotions, asking them to provide possible solutions to social conflict situations.

A **few** approaches/resources that may be helpful/effective in this area have been detailed below:

- Whole school approach - Emotion Coaching.
- Targeted interventions that can be delivered on a small group/individual basis – Emotional Literacy, LEGO 'Therapy', Circle of Friends.
- Use of concrete and visual materials e.g. story books exploring emotions, Kimochis, puppets.
- Range of books by Dr Karen Treisman which provide information on different areas of need (e.g. Self-Esteem) and a variety of different approaches /resources.
- Adult support and modelling to develop emotional co/self-regulation. For CYP who still need access to emotional co-regulation, adults should aim to provide them with support (modelling social skills/supporting emotional regulation using strategies) during real life situations e.g. break time, challenging social interactions.

- It is important that adults working with CYP validate how they are feeling, even if they do not agree. Validation of a CYP's feelings will allow them to feel supported and understood. This is especially important if they use inappropriate methods of communication. Once the CYP is calm then the adult should support them to reflect and problem solve.

9.6 Expressing and Externalising Thoughts and Feelings

To support CYP who are experiencing anxiety/heightened emotions, careful consideration needs to be given to how adults can facilitate and support students to express and externalise what they are feeling/thinking. Creativity can be most valuable in this area, often leading to approaches which are imaginative, engaging and effective. Creative thinking is seen daily in staff practices but also CYP, don't be afraid to use your own ideas!

Expressing and externalising thoughts/feelings can be supported by adults, but needs to be lead by the CYP. Some may find externalising/expressing very helpful, some may wish to process their thoughts before sharing them and their may be some that want to find solutions/work through their emotions independently, or some CYP may prefer a mixture of all of the above.

Again, a **few** approaches/ideas have been detailed below:

- Having access to a keyworker for 1:1 sessions/check ins, which are planned and protected. Provide opportunites for the CYP to discuss their strengths, needs and worries.
- A variety of verbal and non-verbal ways to express/externalise/communicate emotions/thoughts e.g. drama, art, writing.
- Use of a journal to record feelings/worries, writing these down can often provide a significant emotional release. A journal can also be helpful in providing a starting point for discussions in the 1:1 sessions, and will also create a record of worries that are based on anticipating events which can then be eased by discussing what actually happened (often what we anticipate is not as negative as what happens in reality).
- To allow CYP to move on from thoughts arising that are appropraite to 'push aside' or 'park' the following could be trialled:
  -Write it down on a post it note, which is kept safe by the keyworker until the next 1:1 time, when it can be discussed.
  -Use of a concrete method to destroy the thought e.g. write it down and then place it in the bin/put it in a shredder.
- Different methods for regulating/releasing emotions e.g. Mindfulness, breathing exercises, colouring, physical activity.

9.7 Strengths & Interests

When faced with a situation that can be viewed as/feel problematic or concerning there is often a focus on negative aspects and/or the CYP's needs. Highlighting and

utilising the CYP's strengths and interests is parmount. In all areas of the 'assess, plan and do' stages the CYP's strengths/interests should be discussed, highlighted, encouraged and celebrated. It is important that the CYP receives regular feedback about their strengths and successes, and it is just as important these are discussed and shared with parents/carers too.

Here are a **few** ideas that can be implemented to support in this area:

- Find an area that the CYP is knowledgeable about. Think of ways this can be incopoprated into the CYP's educational experience and find opportunites for the CYP to share their knowledge with others and have the oopportunity to be the 'expert'.
- Some CYP can find it challenging, especially when things become overhwhelming, to idenitfy their own strengths and successes. All staff working with the CYP should aim to provide them with very clear, specific and concrete examples of their strengths to provide them with positive reinforcement/heightened confidence.
- Create a way to record positives/successes e.g. rather than systems and approaches that focus on what went wrong, use ones that promote thoughts around what went well.
- Within 1:1 sessions always have an element, or whole session, that focuses on the CYP's strengths and interests.

10.   Useful Resources

10.1   To support CYP with Autism Spectrum Condition (section 6)

- STARS (Specialist Training in Autism and Raising Standards)

https://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources

STARS is a team of dedicated teachers and advisers working for Leeds education service. Their website resources are free to download.

They include:

Social Stories

Symbols

Talking Mats

Addressing Worries

Transition Resources

Quick Guides and Ideas for Parents and Professionals

- NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources.aspx

The main national charitable organisation for people with Autism that offers a vast range of resources, advice and support.

- WIDGIT SOFTWARE

https://www.widgit.com

Widgit is a leading commercial supplier of visual support material for helping in communication and programming with all children with special needs, including Autism

Their Autism Support Pack is a rich collection of visual materials, under headings such as:

Routines: work planners, calendars, count down charts, 'now and next' formats

Behaviour: prompt cards, reward charts, 'keeping calm' posters

Emotion: feelings flashcards, feelings strips, feelings board

Social Interaction: communications cards, social stories

- Autism education Trust (2020): 'School Stress and Anxiety-how it can lead to School Refusal and impact on family life'
- Garfi,J.(2018) 'Overcoming School Refusal'. Australia: Australian Academic Press
- Gray,C.(2015 'The New Social Story Book'. Arlington,TX:Future Horizons

10.2   Books about EBSA for Adults

- Understanding School Refusal: A Handbook for Professionals in Education, Health and Social Care. Thamirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes, 2008.
- Overcoming School Refusal: A Practical guide for counsellors, caseworkers and parents. Joanne Garfi, 2018.

10.3   Books for Working with CYP

- Starving the Anxiety/Anger Gremlin. Kate Collins.
- A Volcano in My Tummy. Whitehouse and Pudney.
- The Incredible 5-Point Scale. Buron and Curtis.
- Silly Billy. Anthony Browne.
- How to catch a star. Oliver Jeffries.
- The Huge Bag of Worries. Virgina Ironside.
- Moppy is ……. (angry, sad, scared). Asher and Scarfe.
- Everybody Feels…. (happy etc). Butterfield and Sterling.
- Have you filled a bucket today?
- Range of books by Dr Karen Triesman - http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/
- Range of books by Margot Sunderland.
- Think Good Feel Good. Paul Stallard.

10.4   Websites

SCC Graduated Response Toolkit https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Access-to-learning/Graduated-response/Graduated-response.aspx

http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/

https://www.theeducationpeople.org/events/supporting-children-with-anxiety-in-the-covid-19-pandemic/

https://www.nice.org.uk/

https://youngminds.org.uk/

https://elearning.creativeeducation.co.uk/courses/support-children-who-are-anxious-to-attend-school/

https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/

https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/ https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/

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There may be signs that you have noticed in your child before the re-opening of schools and as children begin to re-attend. Please tick any signs you have observed. This information can then be used to help you and school work together to plan your child's transition back to school and support attendance.

Part 1: Changes in attitude towards school

- Persistent reluctance to engage in school related activities ☐

- Talking negatively about school ☐

- Sharing worries about particular aspects of school ☐

- Becoming distressed when school is talked about ☐

- Refusing to get ready for school ☐

• Worried about falling behind and/or catching up with school work ☐

Part 2: Signs of Anxiety

- Has physical symptoms of anxiety
  - headaches ☐
  - stomach aches ☐
  - low appetite ☐
  - increased heart rate ☐
  - difficulty concentrating ☐
  - trembling ☐
  - shortness of breath ☐
  - difficulty sleeping ☐

• Becoming anxious on separation from parent/carer ☐

- Anxious about catching or passing on Coronavirus ❒

- Worried about family and friends becoming ill ❒

Part 3: Changes in behaviour

- Becoming withdrawn

  - Spending increasing amount of time alone in their bedroom ❒

  - Avoiding trips outside of the home ❒

  - Reduced social 'contact' with family and friends ❒

- Engaging in self-harming behaviours ❒

Checklist completed by *(name)*:

For *(name of child/young person)*:

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CYP Name:

Part 1: Pre-school closure factors

Tick statements which are applicable. If one or more are ticked, the CYP *may* be 'at risk' of developing EBSA. It will be important to have a conversation about transition with Parents/Carers and the Child or Young Person. Attendance and punctuality need to be monitored.

- A support plan was in place before school closure ☐

- There are historical patterns of non-attendance and lateness ☐

- Attendance was below 90% before school closure ☐

- Social communication and interaction difficulties were identified ☐

- There is a history of SEMH difficulties ☐

Part 2 Post- school closure and COVID-19 factors

Tick statements which are applicable to identify potential 'risk factors' for a young person. It will be important to consider the level of impact of the individual factor, or interactions of factors, on the risk of EBSA. The profile of risk and protective factors in the appendix is designed to support this thinking.

If a CYP is deemed to be 'at risk' of EBSA will be important to have a conversation about transition with Parents/Carers and the Child or Young Person. Attendance and punctuality need to be monitored.

- There has been a family bereavement ☐

- There has been a death in the school community ☐

- A close family member is in the vulnerable group ☐

- Parents are keyworkers ☐

- A close family member has been seriously ill ☐

- A close family members Mental Health has declined ☐

- There has been a change in family circumstances

  - Parental separation ☐

  - Parent or sibling has lost their job ☐

  - Living arrangements ☐

  - Services have become involved (e.g. Police, Social Care) ☐

- The family have faced financial hardship ☐

- Contact over the school closure period has been irregular ☐

- Access to home learning activities has been limited (e.g. IT) ☐

- Engagement with school activities has been lacking ☐

- There has been a change in plans

  - Loss of apprenticeship ☐

  - Loss of college place ☐

- Parents have raised concerns

  - Changes in behaviour ☐

  - Increased anxiety ☐

  - Social isolation ☐

  - Difficulties sleeping ☐

- Safeguarding concerns have been raised (e.g. DA/DV) ☐

Profile completed on *(date)*:

Profile completed by *(name)*:

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Part 1: The 6 psychological needs for normal healthy child and adolescent learning and development

The 6 areas below are derived from research and are the essential psychological needs for healthy and successful child and adolescent learning and development. Scale (1 to 10) each of these needs to indicate the overall **vulnerability** of a young person at **risk** of having EBSA needs. 'Scale scores' of 3 or below for each of these 6 areas of need indicates a pupil who is at '**high level of risk'** and **'vulnerability'.**

NB It is also helpful to get both pupil and parent(s) to complete this screening process.

1. **The need to feel emotionally and physically safe:** This is the fundamental need of all young people to feel safe in their 'environment'. Initially, this is provided by parents or carers, and later by school and community.

   1……………………………………………………………………………10

   Extremely unsafe and insecure   Totally safe and secure

2. **The need to belong:** This is the emotional need for young people to feel that they 'belong'. It is initially provided by parents and family and later can be provided by friends, school and community and membership of sports teams, clubs, hobby groups or religious groups. The importance of 'belonging' is to feel accepted by 'significant others' who at times of distress and anxiety provide unconditional support and reassurance.

   1……………………………………………………………………………10

   Alone, isolated and belongs nowhere   Fully belongs and included in family

                                                                                     and social groups

3. **The need to have a positive 'sense of self' as a learner:** This is the essential need for life-long learning. This process first develops within a family and is continued in nursery, school and community with the support of significant others e.g. friends, teachers, teacher assistants, social workers, mentors and community workers.

   1……………………………………………………………………………10

   A totally negative 'sense of self'   A strong positive 'sense

        as a learner   of self' as a learner

4. **The need to feel 'empowered':** The 'empowering process' starts in infancy within a family setting and is nurtured in nursery, school and community. It involves a young person having a 'voice' that is listened to, respected and acted upon. This process is vital in developing a young person's self-confidence, independence and identity.

1..10

Totally disempowered   Fully empowered

5. **The need to make choices:** This need is linked to the empowering process above and involves young people being given the opportunity and responsibility for making choices (and making mistakes) in their life. It can involve daily choices such as personal hygiene, eating habits, dress code, and lifestyle and educational choices, e.g. music, friends, school subjects, leaving home, career choosing a partner.

1..10

Persistently makes   Makes mature and

irresponsible choices   sensible choices

6. **The need for enjoyment while learning:** This need is arguably the psychological need that most defines us as 'human beings'. It is the 'enjoyment' or 'flow' experienced when using our skills and abilities to meet life's challenges and to achieve our personal goals and ambitions. This is a learning process that involves taking and accepting risks. It is not to be confused with leisure and pleasure.

1..10

Experiences virtually no   Experiences optimum

'enjoyment' or 'flow'   'enjoyment' or 'flow'

Part 2

There are a number of additional risk factors research has identified that can contribute to a young person refusing to go to school. These are nominal i.e. they are applicable or not applicable in a young person's life. Simply apply a ☑ or ☒ to the risk factors below:

- being in care ⬜
- being in a single parent family ⬜
- ineffective parental supervision ⬜
- absence of positive male/female role models ⬜
- excessive use of physical punishment or abuse by parents ⬜
- frequent risk taking ⬜
- impulsivity (ADHD) ⬜
- poverty, ethnicity and social class ⬜
- poor school attainments and literacy levels ⬜
- school disaffection and association with deviant peers ⬜

7 or more ☑ in Part 2 above indicates a young person is 'vulnerable and at 'risk'. If these findings are considered together with a vulnerable and at risk assessment from Part 1 then a young person is extremely vulnerable and at 'high risk' of refusing to go to school.

Profile completed on *(date)***:**

Profile completed by *(name)***:**

CYP Name:

Staffordshire County Council

Educational Psychology Service

PULL FACTORS

Influencing factors that PULL a CYP AWAY from attending school (including influencing factors that PULL a CYP TOWARDS Home)

PUSH FACTORS

Influencing factors that PUSH a CYP TOWARDS attending school

Staffordshire County Council

Educational Psychology Service

PULL FACTORS

Is there anything that makes you want to stay at home?

Is there anything that makes you want to avoid school?

PUSH FACTORS

Is there anything that makes you want to come to school?

Is there anything that makes you want to avoid home?

CYP Name:	D.O.B:	Yr.:	Date:

Name of Person Completing this summary:

Who contributed to this information (e.g. CYP, staff names, parents/carers, professionals)?

Guidance

These checklists should be completed by staff, not presented to the CYP or parent/carer to complete. Some of the areas within this checklist need to be explored sensitively and in a supportive context. Staff can however use this as a framework when engaging in discussions with the CYP or parents/carers, to allow them to provide ratings that are based on richer information. The 'risk' and 'protective' factors card sorting activity can be used to help elicit the CYP's views in this area.

It would be beneficial to consider completing this checklist at future time points too e.g. reviews, timed intervals, to monitor the CYP's progress in response to support/intervention.

If there are any areas within the 'risk factors' checklist rated as 'low', staff should continue to monitor them and respond accordingly. For areas within the 'risk factors' checklist that are rated as 'med' or 'high', it would be appropriate for these to be explored further and included within the action plan/support.

The 'protective factors' checklist should be used to help identify the CYP's strengths and areas which can be drawn on to make their educational experience more successful and positive. However, any 'low' ratings could indicate support in that area may be beneficial.

Level	Risk Factors	Risk Rating		
		Low	Med	High
Individual	Challenges with emotional self-awareness and self-regulation			
	Fear of social and personal failure			
	Previous exclusions			
	Separation needs			
	Social interaction anxiety			
	Low self-confidence			
	Worries about those at home			
	Fear of parental separation/loss of a parent			
	Over-dependence on parents/carers			
	Illness/health needs			
Family	Siblings being at home e.g. home educated, due to health needs			
	Limited social interactions within the home			
	Family dynamics			
	Loss			
	Frequent conflict			
	Over protective/involved parents/carers			
	Family transitions – moving house, divorce			
	Significant changes in the family			
	Mental Health needs with parents/carers			
	Absence of a parent			
	Child's anxiety causes stress easily in parents/carers			
School	Noise and organisation levels in the classroom			
	Unpredictability of environment leading to feelings of being unsafe and insecure			
	Consequences from staff being viewed as being unfair and harsh			
	Teachers who are perceived as having an aggressive nature			
	Peer relationships – including elements of conflict, isolation and anxiety			
	Poor communication which then leads to inconsistency.			
	Class sizes			
	Bullying			
	Transitions – secondary/change of school/class			
	Unidentified/unsupported learning needs			
	Poor relationships with staff			
	Activities the young person cannot cope with e.g. P.E., talking in front of peers			

Level	Protective Factors	Protective Rating		
		Low	Med	High
Individual	The CYP can identify their own strengths			
	The CYP can identify their own interests			
	The CYP wants the current situation to change			
	The CYP has a positive level of self-confidence			
	The CYP has a positive level of self-esteem			
	The CYP has a positive level of self-efficacy			
	The CYP has a positive level of emotional literacy			
Family	The family are developing an understanding of the CYP's needs and feelings			
	There are positive relationships in the family and/or community			
	The family are willing to work in partnership with school and support agencies			
	The parents/carers are showing good parenting skills			
School	The CYP has positive relationships with a member/s of staff			
	The CYP shows a willingness to work in partnership with family and support agencies			
	The CYP has positive relationships with peers			
	The CYP is experiencing success in school			
	The staff have a flexible approach			
	The staff are developing am understanding of the CYP's needs and feelings			

CYP Name:	D.O.B:	Yr.:	Date:

Name of Person Completing this activity with the CYP:

Guidance

This card sorting activity has been created to help gain the CYP's view of possible EBSA 'risk' and 'protective' factors which have been included in the corresponding checklist. Some of the statements have be reworded to make them more accessible and positive.

The activity should be carried out by an adult that the CYP has a positive and secure relationship with. It is important that enough time has been protected to complete this activity. It is possible that discussing some of these sensitive areas could lead the CYP to become upset, so there needs to be freedom to extend the session if required.

The CYP should be told that the aim of the activity it is to help staff explore if there are any areas that need support, but also to identify positives. Category headings, 'not true, sometimes true and often true', have been included, but these can be adapted to meet individual needs/situations. These headings should be placed in front of the CYP and discussed prior to beginning the activity. The adult should then pass the CYP each card and read it to them/explain its meaning. The CYP should then be asked to place each one under the heading they feel is most appropriate.

It is important that it is not just viewed as an activity to be ticked off; if there are any areas that need exploring further, this should take place. Staff should also ask questions to gain richer information e.g. if it asks about friends/teachers then ask the CYP which teacher/friend they are thinking of or ask why they have placed a particular card under a specific heading. The table included can be used to mark the CYP's responses during the activity and note down any comments/discussion that takes place.

Once completed the information should be considered to identify areas of need/strength and the most appropriate support. The CYP should also be asked if they have any ideas what might make things better/easier e.g. if for 'I feel safe and secure in school' they responded with 'not true' then ask them if there is anything that makes them feel safe/anything adults can do to make them feel safer. It is important that any views are shared sensitively with parents/carers, so the support agreed is consistent across contexts, and outcomes can be worked towards collaboratively.

Level	Card No	Risk Factors	Category Placement			Additional Exploration/Comments
			Not True	Sometimes True	Often True	
Individual	1	I find it easy to understand my feelings				
	2	I find it easy to talk to others about my feelings				
	3	I know how other people are feeling				
	4	I think I will do well in school				
	5	I think the work I do in school is good				
	6	I have a lot of friends				
	7	I like being around other students/children				
	8	I like talking to other students/children				
	9	I feel ok when I have to leave my parents/carers				
	10	I feel good about myself				
	11	I know my family are ok when I am in school				

	12	My parents/carers do too much for me			
Family	13	I spend a lot of time with my family			
	14	I can talk to my family			
	15	My family do activities together			
	16	My family get on well			
	17	There is something/somebody I have lost			
	18	My family do not argue			
	19	My parents/carers give me freedom			
	20	There have been some changes in my family			
	21	My parents/cares need help			
	22	I see my parents/carers as much as I want			
	23	My parents/carers are calm			

School	24	My classrooms are organised and quiet				
	25	I know what to expect in school				
	26	I feel safe and secure in school				
	27	My teacher is fair				
	28	My teacher is kind and calm				
	29	I get along well with my friends				
	30	Other students/children like me				
	31	There are some children who are unkind to me				
	32	I find learning easy				
	33	I like my teacher(s)				
	34	I like all activities in school				

Not True

Sometimes True

Often True

I find it easy to understand my feelings	**I find it easy to talk to others about my feelings**	**I know how other people are feeling**	**I think I will do well in school**
1	2	3	4
I think the work I do in school is good	**I have a lot of friends**	**I like being around other students/children**	**I like talking to other students/children**
5	6	7	8
I feel ok when I have to leave my parents/carers	**I feel good about myself**	**I know my family are ok when I am in school**	**My parents/carers do too much for me**
9	10	11	12
I spend a lot of time with my family	**I can talk to my family**	**My family do activities together**	**My family get on well**
13	14	15	16
There is something/somebody I have lost	**My family do not argue**	**My parents/carers give me freedom**	**There have been some changes in my family**
17	18	19	20

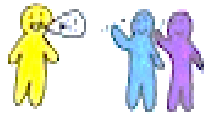| My parents/carers need help	I see my parents/carers as much as I want	My parents/carers are calm	My classrooms are organised
21	22	23	24
I know what to expect in school	I feel safe and secure in school	My teacher is fair	My teacher is kind and calm
25	26	27	28
I get on well with my friends	Other students/children like me	There are some students/children who are unkind to me	I find learning easy
29	30	31	32
I like my teacher(s)	I like all activities in school		
33	34		

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Educational Psychology Service

Level	Individual	Family	School
RISK FACTORS			
PROTECTIVE FACTORS			

To avoid school related stressors:	To avoid social situations and/or activities:
To gain needed attention:	**To engage in preferred activities:**

Functional analysis completed on: **by:**
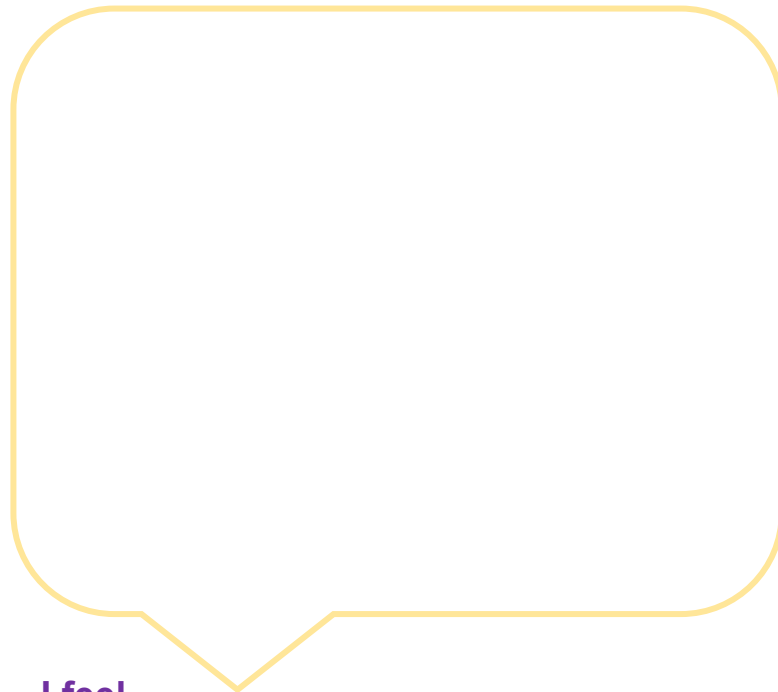
Staffordshire County Council

Educational Psychology Service

What is the CYP's non-attendance behaviour telling us about how they are feeling?

I feel…

What is the CYP's non-attendance behaviour telling us about what they need?

I need…

Guidance

These card sorting activities have been created to help gain the CYP's views about their educational experience and current situation.

The activities should be carried out by an adult that the CYP has a positive and secure relationship with. It is important that enough time has been protected to complete these activities. It is possible that discussing some of these sensitive areas could lead the CYP to become upset, so there needs to be freedom to extend the session if required.

The CYP should be told that the aim of the activities e.g. it is to help staff explore if there are any areas that need support, but also to identify positives. Category headings have been included, but these can be adapted to meet individual needs/situations. These headings should be placed in front of the CYP and discussed prior to beginning the activities. The adult should then pass the CYP each card and read it to them/explain its meaning. The CYP should then be asked to place each one under the heading they feel is most appropriate.

It is important that it is not just viewed as an activity to be ticked off; if there are any areas that need exploring further, this should take place. Staff should also ask questions to gain richer information e.g. if it asks about friends/teachers then ask the CYP which teacher/friend they are thinking of or ask why they have placed a particular card under a specific heading. The record forms included can be used to mark the CYP's responses during the activity and note down any comments/discussion that takes place.

Once completed the information should be considered to identify areas of need/strength and the most appropriate support. The CYP should also be asked if they have any ideas what might make things better/easier e.g. if they place 'maths' under angry, ask if there is anything that would make maths move to happy. It is important that any views are shared sensitively with parents/carers, so the support agreed is consistent across contexts, and outcomes can be worked towards collaboratively.

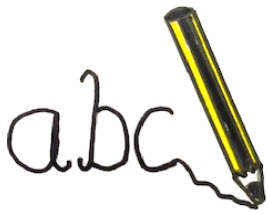| Happy	Easy
Sad	OK
Angry	Hard

Spelling	**Reading**	**Writing**	**Phonics**
Maths	**English**	**Science**	**P.E.**
History	**Geography**	**IT**	**Art**
Music	**Languages**	**Biology**	**Chemistry**
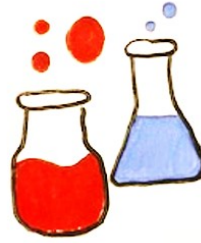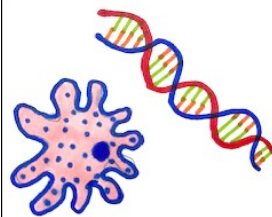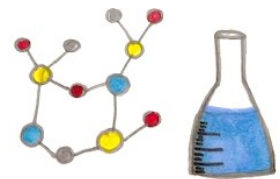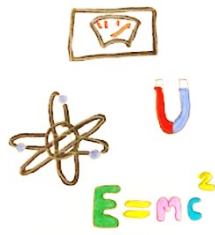
Physics	**Drama**	**Technology**	**PSHE**
Ethics and Philosophy	**Interventions**	**Assembly**	**Form Time**
School	**Home**	**Breakfast Club**	**After-School Club**
Friends	**Teacher(s)**	**Talking**	**Reading out loud**
Answering Questions	**Free time**		
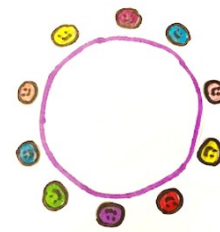
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CYP Name:	D.O.B:	Yr.:	Date:

Name of Person Completing this Activity with the CYP:

Happy	Sad	Angry

Additional Comments/Exploration

Staffordshire County Council

Educational Psychology Service

CYP Name:	D.O.B:	Yr.:	Date:

Name of Person Completing this Activity with the CYP:

Easy	OK	Hard

Additional Comments/Exploration

I don't need...

Sometimes I need...

Lots of times/often I need...

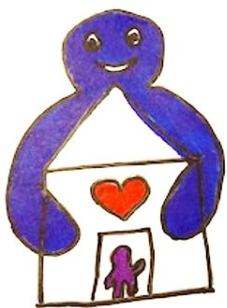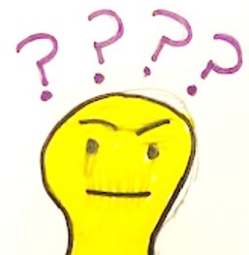|			
time	quiet	help with my work	help with my friends
help with my emotions	adults to listen	friends to listen	instructions repeated
help with food	help with my uniform	equipment for school	help getting up in the morning
help at home	to sit near my friends	a quiet place to go	harder work to do

to talk about my worries	**to know what is going to happen**	**to know who will be in the classroom**	**easier work to do**
someone to talk to	**more time with my parents**	**help with social media**	**help with bullying**
someone to make me feel safe			

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Educational Psychology Service

CYP Name:	D.O.B:	Yr.:	Date:

Name of Person Completing this Activity with the CYP:

I don't need..	Sometimes I need…	Often I need…

Additional Comments/Exploration

Staffordshire County Council

Educational Psychology Service

CYP Name:	D.O.B:	Yr.:	Date:

Name of Person Completing this summary:

Who contributed to this information (e.g. CYP, staff names, parents/carers, professionals)?

1. Early Indicators

For example: When were the first indicators of EBSA present? When did school avoidance first begin? What was being communicated by the CYP? Are there any incidents that occurred at the same time the EBSA started?

2. Patterns of EBSA

For Example: Are there any patterns of non-attendance e.g. particular days, times, lessons that appear to be challenging for the CYP? Are there particular events that the CYP appears to be finding challenging e.g. school trips, free times, certain social circles, assembly? Are there particular relationships the CYP is finding challenging? Triggers within the home context e.g. when a parent is working at home?

3. Risk and Protective Factors

(Information gathered from appendix 3&5 and other qualitative information)

4. Push and Pull Factors Identified

(Information gathered from appendix 2 & 5 and other qualitative information)

5. Functions of the CYP School Avoidance

(Information gathered from appendix 4 & 5 and other qualitative information)

6. Other relevant Information

CYP Name:	D.O.B:	Yr.:	Date:

Name of Person Completing this Action Plan:

Who contributed to this information (e.g. CYP, staff names, parents/carers, professionals)?

Agreed Review Date:

What are the CYP's Strengths and Interests?

Identified Need	Support/Action	Details

If you have used this guidance booklet, it would be helpful if you could complete this evaluation form. This feedback will allow us to explore what has been useful and what adaptions may be required.

Name of setting (optional):……………………………………………………………..

Purpose used for (tick all that apply)**:**

Individual case

Staff development

With parents/carers

Individual Cases:

Age of CYP…………

Duration and context of EBSA (e.g. for 3 months, following COVID-19, patterns of avoidance)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Qualitative Feedback:

What did you find the most useful?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Is there anything you would have found helpful that is not included?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This guidance has been useful					
This guidance has helped develop staff understanding of EBSA					
This guidance has supported staff with exploration, assessment and intervention in the area of EBSA					
This guidance has informed/facilitated the support for a CYP with EBSA needs					
This guidance has helped promote positive outcomes for a CYP with EBSA needs					
This guidance will be used in the future within our educational setting					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Please scan and email to gemma.holmes@staffordshire.gov.uk.

Staffordshire County Council

Educational Psychology Service

Description of the five-dimensional areas used within the targeted intervention based on the work of Goleman

(1996) and Faupel (2003). Extracted from Doctoral Submission – Dr Gemma Holmes.

Emotional Literacy	'The ability of people to recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express their own emotions and to recognise, understand and respond appropriately to the expressed emotions of others' (Faupel, 2003)
Dimensional Area	**Description**
Self-awareness	-Understanding your own feelings -Recognising and understand different feelings -Recognise our strengths and limitations -Label different emotions -Understand how emotions can impact on what we do and say
Self-Regulation	-Managing our own feelings -Expressing emotions in the appropriate way -Containing emotions when required
Motivation	-Remain focused during times of emotional upset -Have self-motivation to achieve -Persist when finding things difficult -Attempting to achieve personal goals -Engage in and be attentive to learning
Empathy	-Understand others' emotions -Recognise emotions being expressed by others -Acknowledge and respond appropriately to others' feelings -Being sensitive to others -To notice physical and visual cues
Social Skills / Handling Relationships	-Respond to others' emotions in a way that provides comfort and support -Manage the emotional expressions we display during interactions -To inform others that you have heard them and can see their perspective -Engage in interactions effectively to meet our own needs and those of others

Authors:

Clive Barcham, Dr Gemma Holmes, Dr Rachel Faizey, Ian Millward, Dr Joanne Page, Dr Linsey Share & Beth Thompson.

(Staffordshire Educational Psychology Service)

Illustrations:

Izzy Rae Methven (9yrs), Brooke Mottram (11yrs), Bridget Thompson, Kelly Methven & Gemma Holmes.

Please contact Dr Gemma Holmes (gemma.holmes@staffordshire.gov.uk) if you have any questions or queries about this booklet.