

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) – Guidance for Schools and Settings in Milton Keynes

Part Two: Practical Support



MK

milton keynes council



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Please note, this Practical Support document is intended to be read and used in conjunction with the following document:

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Guidance for Schools and Settings in Milton Keynes, Part One: Information

Introduction

The Milton Keynes EBSA Guidance comprises two parts: Information and Practical Support. Both parts aim to draw upon evidence-based theory and practice to provide useful guidance for schools, parents and other professionals when supporting children and young people who experience EBSA.

These guidance documents have been developed by Milton Keynes Educational Psychology Service in conjunction with the Milton Keynes EBSA Working Group and are intended to complement the introduction of a joined-up Milton Keynes EBSA Support Pathway.

There has already been a lot of excellent development work in this area from colleagues across the Educational Psychology profession, and the current guidance draws heavily upon this. Particular appreciation and warm thanks are given to the following Educational Psychology Services: West Sussex, Solihull, and Staffordshire.

Both parts of the guidance and any relevant resources can be found in the 'Resources' section of the Milton Keynes Educational Psychology Service website: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/educational-psychology-service

In line with national good practice, the Milton Keynes approach to supporting children and young people who experience EBSA is underpinned by the following principles associated with positive outcomes:

- ❖ Early intervention
- ❖ Collaborative, person-centred working- working with parents and schools, as well as the young person
- ❖ Understanding individual needs and contexts
- ❖ Emphasis on the need for a rapid return to the educational setting alongside support and adaptations within the school and home environment

Milton Keynes Approach to Support

As described in Part One of this guidance (page 11), a graduated approach to responding to EBSA is promoted in Milton Keynes, in line with national good practice. This enables children and young people to receive support from those who know them best at home and school, and who will be working with them regularly.

The following four evidence-based stages of response should be considered throughout involvement with individual children and young people. This Practical Support document provides tools and strategies for each stage of response.



Figure 2. The Milton Keynes 4 Stage Model

Identify

There are a number of useful of checklists and prompts, provided below, which may help to identify children and young people who may be showing early signs of EBSA. These are based on the risk and resilience factors identified within the EBSA literature (see pages 7&8 in Part One of this guidance).

Completing a brief ‘indicators’ checklist when concerns are first raised about the possibility of EBSA is useful. It can be used by school staff to support awareness, curiosity, and recognition of the signs of EBSA, and to instigate fast action if potential risks of EBSA are identified.

School/Setting EBSA Indicators Checklist

Schedule Instructions:

Highlight ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or ‘not sure’ to give a quick visual overview. A decision can then be made by school as to whether to continue to assess risk of EBSA in order to get support in place quickly.

Early indicators of EBSA:			
Sporadic attendance and/or lateness?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Parent/carer reporting that child / young person does not want to come to school?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Physical signs of stress believed to be linked to stress, e.g., stomach-ache, headache or complaining of feeling ill?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Behavioural changes or fluctuations e.g., in interactions with others; reduced motivation and engagement in learning tasks etc.	Yes	No	Not Sure
Further specific indicators of EBSA to consider:			
Has the absence been prolonged?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has there been prolonged absence in the past?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Is there persistent lateness to school?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has there been persistent lateness in the past?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Is there persistent lateness or absence with identifiable patterns, e.g., specific days, subjects, staff members?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Are parents/carers aware of the absence?	Yes	No	Not Sure

Have parents/carers expressed concern about struggles in getting their child to school?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Do parents report other anxiety issues e.g., going out, eating, mixing with other children?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Are minor reasons provided for school absence, either from child / young person or parents/carers?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person often try to persuade parents to allow him/her to stay at home?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person experience anxiety in relation to home factors e.g., parental separation, divorce, conflict, loss, bereavement?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person display greater reliance upon family members e.g., separation anxiety; increased proximity?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Are there concerns around academic progress due to school non-attendance / missed education?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person display increased anxiety in relation to their learning and/or poor self-concept as a learner?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person display low self-esteem and/or lack of confidence in school?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person struggle in relation to peer relationships and/or social situations?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person show physical signs of stress believed to be linked to stress, e.g., stomach-ache, headache, sickness etc.?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person display antisocial behaviour such as aggressive behaviours or fighting?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person mix with other peers engaged in anti-social activities?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person stay at home during the school day?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does the child / young person struggle to complete homework?	Yes	No	Not Sure

Adapted from Solihull & Solar EPS.

Profile of Risk of EBSA Schedule

Schedule Instructions:

When completing the schedule, it is important to be as objective as possible, and to base assessments on evidence. Therefore, the schedule should be completed jointly with home and school, so that checking and questioning can lead to the best judgements in terms of item importance. During the process of completing the schedule, it may be useful to note factors associated with particular items, such as:

- ❖ This has been an issue in the past, but appears less so now
- ❖ This has been an issue in the past and has persisted as an important item

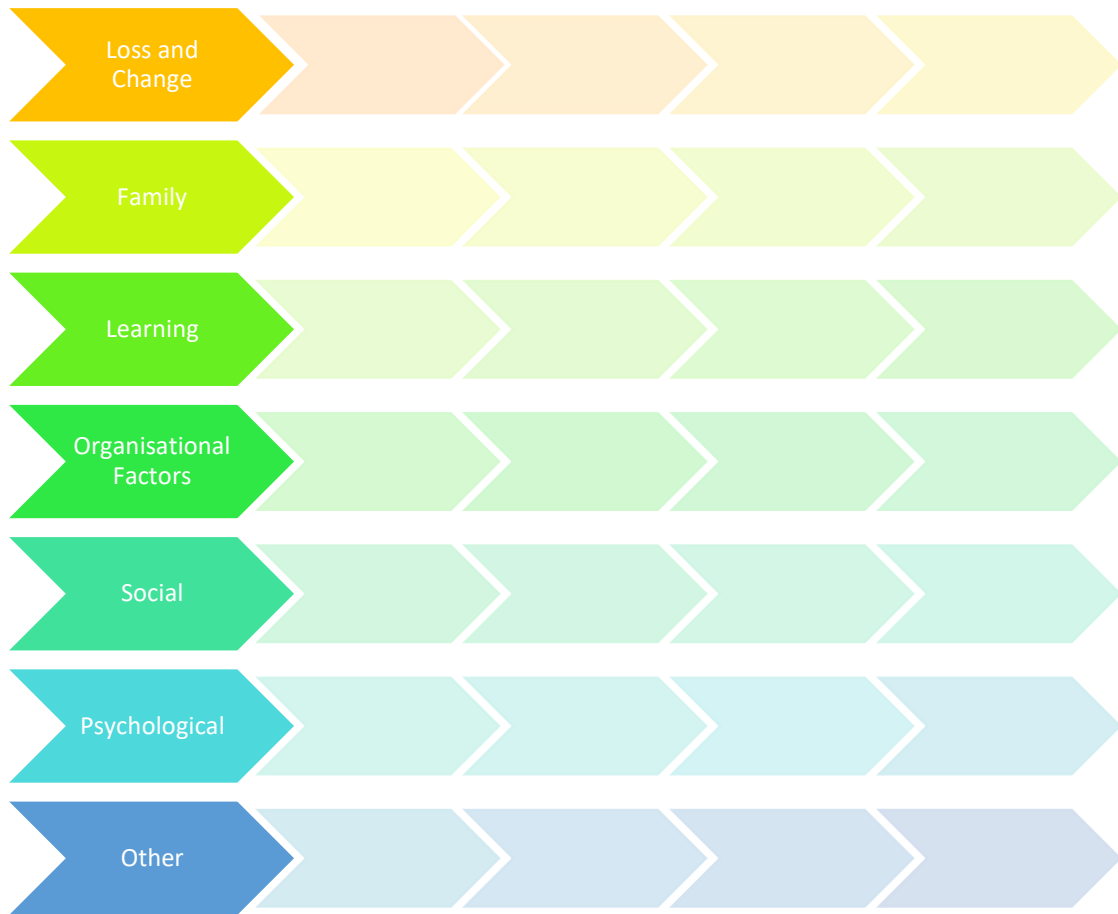
Items are not quantified by a typical rating scale. This is because it may be that one single item (e.g., death of a parent) is so important that it cannot be rated numerically in the same way as other items might be rated. Its influence could be proportionally much greater than a rating scale could accommodate. As such the schedule asks you to make notes on the key items of importance that you identify. These can then be visually represented in the overlapping arrows that follow the schedule.

	Level of Concern				
Loss and Change	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Death of parent, relative, friend					
Death of pet					
Sudden traumatic event					
Sudden separation from a parent					
Moving to a new house, school, area					
Loss of a classmate					
Parent, relative, friend illness					
<i>Notes on Key Items</i>					
Family Dynamics	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Birth of a new child					
Parents separated					

Parents reported to be arguing/fighting					
Practical problems in getting to school					
Child & Family Practice / Social Care involvement with family					
<i>Notes on Key Items</i>					
Curriculum / Learning Issues	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Low levels of literacy					
PE and/or games issues					
General learning difficulties					
Subject specific difficulties					
Exam or test anxiety					
Difficulties with a particular teacher / adult					
Problems keeping up in lessons					
<i>Notes on Key Items</i>					
School/Setting Organizational Factors	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Concerns about getting lost within or around the building and how to get help					
Looks lost during break/lunch times or other unstructured times					
Does not seem to know where or who to go to for additional help with learning or emotional support					
<i>Notes on Key Items</i>					
Social / Personal	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known

Being bullied (including cyberbullying)					
Seems to have few friends / friendship issues					
English language competency					
Dislikes play / break times					
Few leisure interests					
Displays antisocial behaviour such as aggressive behaviours or fighting					
Mixes with other peers engaged in anti-social activities					
<i>Notes on Key Items</i>					
Psychological Wellbeing	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Often seems tired/known sleep difficulties					
Appears impacted by social media/gaming					
Low self-esteem					
Appears depressed					
Appears anxious					
Keeps feelings to themselves					
Has a pessimistic nature					
<i>Notes on Key Items</i>					
Other Issues	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
<i>Notes on Key Items</i>					

Adapted from West Sussex EPS 2018



Profile screening for vulnerable children / young people at risk of long-term EBSA

Screening Instructions:

The six areas below are derived from research and are the essential psychological needs for healthy and successful child and adolescent learning and development. Scale (1-10) each of these needs to indicate the overall vulnerability of the child / young person at risk of having EBSA needs. 'Scale scores' of 3 or below for each of these six areas of need indicates that a child or young person may be at a 'high level of risk' and 'vulnerability'. It is helpful to get both child/young person and parent/carer to complete this screening process.

Six psychological needs for normal healthy child and adolescent learning and development

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

1.....10

Extremely unsafe and insecure

Totally safe and secure

2. **The need to belong**: This is the emotional need for children / young people to feel that they 'belong'. It is initially provided by parents and families 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 within nursery, school, and community settings with the support of significant others e.g., friends, teachers, teacher assistants, social workers, mentors, and community workers.

1.....10

A completely negative 'sense of self' as a learner

A strong, positive 'sense 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 child

/ young person having a 'voice' that is listened to, respected, and acted upon. This process is vital in developing a child / 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 children / 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 irresponsible choices

Makes mature and sensible choices consistently

6. **The need for enjoyment whilst learning:** This need is arguably the psychological need that 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 'enjoyment' or 'flow'

Experiences optimum 'enjoyment' or 'flow'

Profile completed on: (DATE)

Profile completed by: (NAME)

Profile completed for: (child / young person name)

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

Assess

Assessment should aim to explore the unique perspectives of all and so will be multi-faceted. Any assessment should include:

- ❖ Gathering the views of the child / young person, parent/carer, and school staff
- ❖ Knowledge and understanding of the child or young person's strengths
- ❖ Developmental and family history
- ❖ Possible functions of school non-attendance for the child / young person
- ❖ The risk and protective factors present (see pages 7&8 of Part One guidance)
- ❖ The 'push' and 'pull' factors present (see page 9 of Part One guidance)

Information gathering and analysis has four main aims (Thambirajah et al, 2008):

- ❖ To confirm that the child/young person is displaying EBSA as opposed to truancy or parentally condoned absence
- ❖ To assess the extent and severity of a) a school absence, b) anxiety, and c) types of anxiety
- ❖ To gather information regarding the various child, family and school factors that may be contributing to EBSA in the child / young person
- ❖ To integrate the available information to arrive at a practical working hypothesis as a prelude to planning effective interventions in the best interests of the child/young person.

Gathering Information about the child / young person

Gathering Views: children and young people

It is extremely important to make every effort to elicit and understand the current situation for the child / young person, from their perspective. This often gives a rich picture and detailed insight into their world view and understanding of what is going on for them, and this can sometimes reveal a different perspective to the adults who know them well. Acknowledging these different perspectives is important as this can then lead to more individualized and effective interventions.

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

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

It is recognized that it is not always easy for children / young people to communicate their views, for a variety of reasons. Therefore a 'mosaic' method of eliciting views is often most useful, drawing on a range of creative and adaptable resources, some examples of which are included over the next few pages. It is also important that children / young people are offered time with adults they know and with whom they feel safe and secure. The richest information will come from sessions where relationships have been established, where positive regard and respect is felt by the child / young person, where their strengths and interests are used to heighten their engagement and where the approaches used to gather their views have been adapted to their individual needs / age / levels.

Remember that any child / young person currently avoiding school will become anxious when asked to discuss returning. They are managing their feelings of anxiety by employing avoidant behaviour, so any talk about going back may appear to them as if you are attempting to take away their coping mechanism or dismissing their anxieties or worries. It would always be helpful to start conversations acknowledging that it will be difficult, but that it is important for the adults to understand how they think and feel.

❖ Conversation Starter Activity

Activity Instructions:

This is an example of an information gathering tool, which could be made into a card-based activity with conversation starters on it. The child / young person could be asked to pick a card and read the starter, then complete the sentence with something that makes sense and that is true for them, or list things relevant to that question.

	What makes it more likely that I will come to school (push factors)?	What makes it less likely that I will come to school (pull factors)?
Child / young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How I would describe myself as a learner... • Things I like about school... • What I find easy... • What I am good at... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How I would describe myself as a learner... • Things I don't like about school... • What I find hard... • What I am not so good at...
Family / home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some good things about my family are... • I would describe my family as... • How others might describe my family... • Things I miss about school when I am at home... • To help me get / feel ready for school in the morning I like to... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I don't like leaving my home / family and coming to school because... • I would describe my family as... • How others might describe my family... • When I am at home I like / enjoy... • Things I miss about home when I come to school... • People I miss at home when I come to school...
Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other children at school and / or friends make me feel... • People I enjoy spending time with at school are... • During my free times (break, lunch etc.) I like to... • Social situations / activities that I look forward to in school are... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other children at school / friends make me feel... • Activities / social situations that I do not look forward to at school are... • I don't like breaks / free times in school when...
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would describe school as... • Lessons I enjoy are... because... • Things about school that I enjoy are... • When I think about school, I feel... • I would describe my teachers in school as... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would describe school as... • Things about school that I don't like... • When I think about school, I feel... • I would describe my teachers at school as...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things that people do that helps me in school are... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things I feel worried about in school are...
Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things I like about the area I live in... • When I'm not at school I spend time doing... • Where I like spending time when I'm not at home is... • When I'm not at school I spend time with... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things I don't like about where I live are... • When I'm not at school I spend time with... • When I'm not at school I spend time doing...

Adapted from Solihull EPS

❖ Mapping the Landscape of Fear *(developed by Kate Ripley, 2015)*

The idea behind this mapping exercise is that the school environment is used to structure discussions between the adult and child / young person, in which the adult tries to elicit the child / young person's personal constructs about lessons and move towards establishing what might make non-preferred environments / lessons more manageable. It can be a way of adapting those environments the child / young person finds stressful so that the source of perceived threat can be reduced or even eliminated.

Please contact the Educational Psychology Service via the SEND Support Line to discuss this resource.

❖ Emotions Thermometer

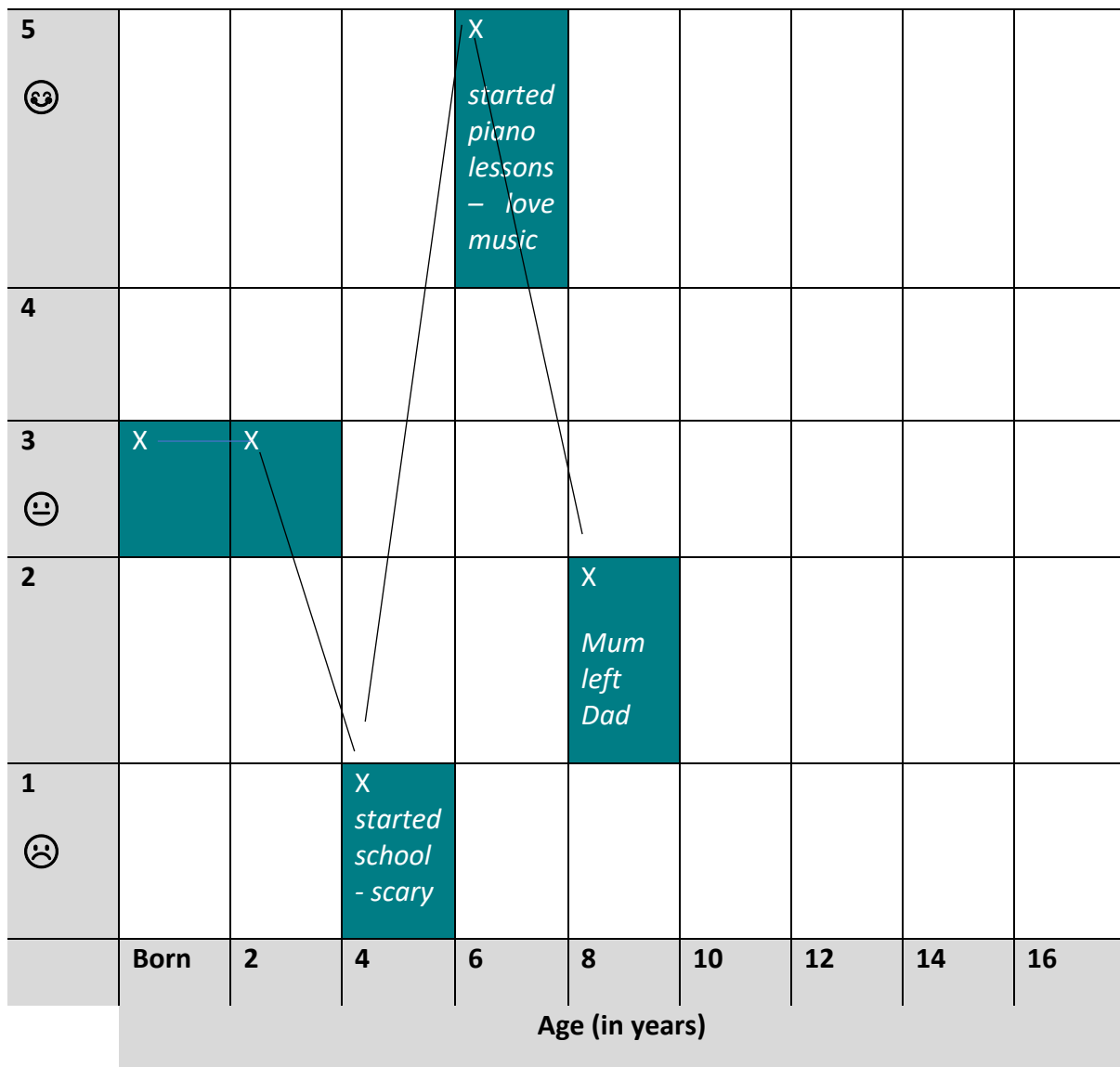
Children / young people can be asked to show on the thermometer where their level of anxiety is for different events / situations. It can aid thinking about when they are feeling heightened and what is happening around them during these times to identify links or triggers:



❖ Life Graph

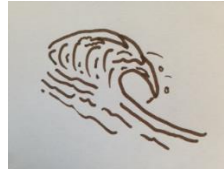
Activity Instructions:

A Life Graph or path can help children / young people tell you their 'story so far' and what they would want in the future. It can include events from home and school and opens up possibilities for discussion about the past, present, and future as felt appropriate. The child / young person can write or draw their life events and give them an overall rating on the positive / neutral / negative scale on the vertical axis. Practical and/or visual aids can be used to aid recall, e.g., childhood items, photographs etc.



❖ Externalising the Anxiety

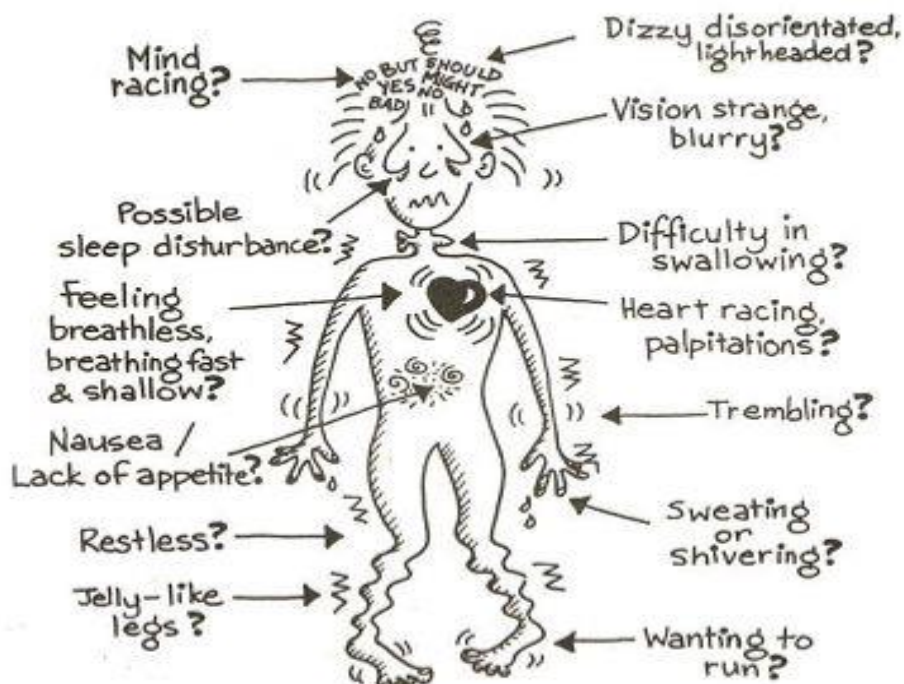
Once the child / young person has shared information about the environments and times in which they feel or have felt anxious, you could ask then the child / young person to describe their anxiety, encouraging them to externalize it by trying to describe it or paint a picture of it...



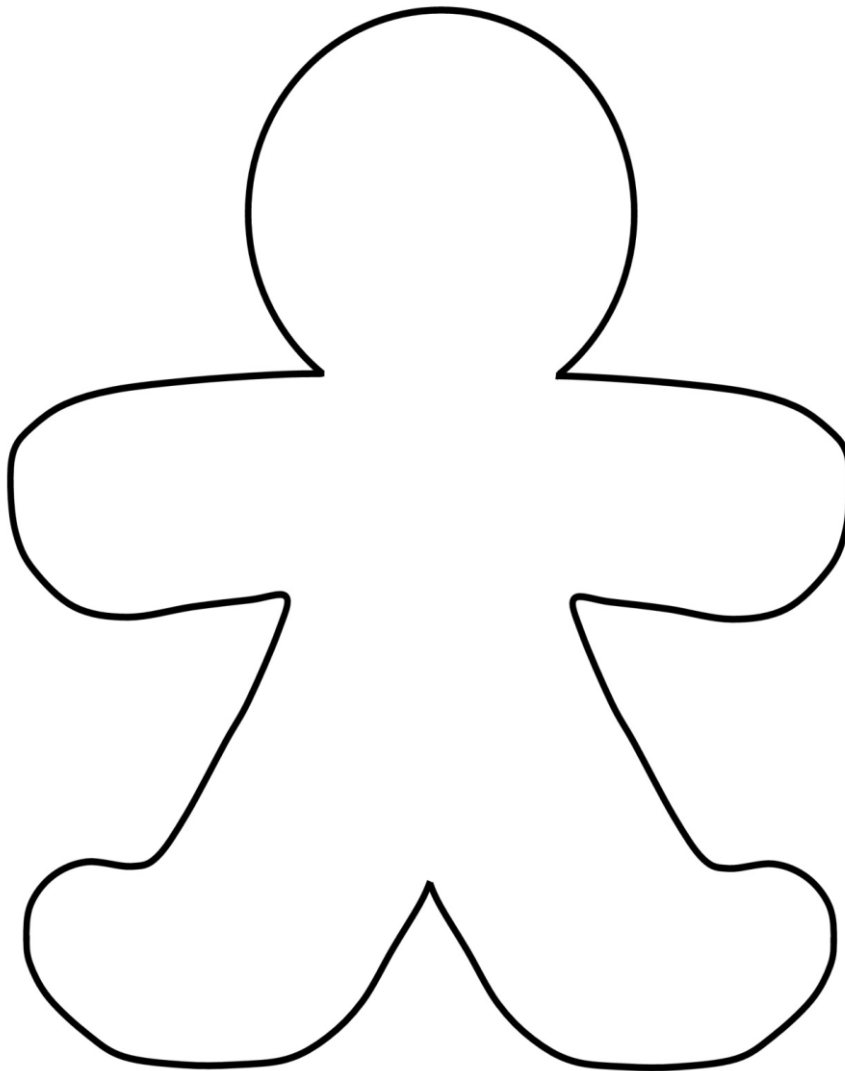
- ❖ What name would you give to the feeling that you experience when you think about going to school?
- ❖ If it was a thing, what would it look like? What would it say?
- ❖ How does the..... get in the way of you attending school? When is..... in charge and when are you in charge?

❖ Outing the Feelings

DOES THIS LOOK FAMILIAR?



Many children / young people find it hard to describe how they feel. They may need help from the adult to give them the words to verbalize how anxiety feels to them. They might need the adult to offer words which describe the unpleasant feelings in their stomach or other areas of their body – knots, butterflies, like a washing machine, etc. As the child / young person to draw out and label their physical symptoms. Then ask the child / young person to create a key and select certain colours to represent the following feelings – happy, angry, sad, scared, excited, and worried. For each identified feeling, the young person can colour where they feel that emotion in their body.



Additional Resources and Ideas:

<http://www.sheffkids.co.uk/adultsite/pages/communicateworksheets.html>

Gathering Views: parents / carers

Working with parents / carers is essential to successful outcomes. Whilst focus should be on the child / young person, it is important to acknowledge that parents / carers may find it difficult to talk about their child / young person's anxiety about school. This could be for many reasons – sometimes parents / carers may have had similar experiences to their child / young person, or may experience their own anxiety, making discussions difficult in that way. Some parents / carers may have come to view the anxiety as simply a part of daily life with their child / young person and may therefore have a different perspective on it or concern about it. So, it is important that the school / setting takes time to build a collaborative partnership working together in the best interests of the child / young person, and that the school / setting is able to provide or signpost to appropriate support.

❖ First Meeting

When meeting with parents / carers initially, ensure they are clear of the agenda of the meeting:

- ❖ to gather background information, including developmental and family history
- ❖ to establish the current situation
- ❖ to gain the parent / carers views on the current situation.

Questions should be asked sensitively and the person asking should employ Active Listening skills:



❖ Developmental and Family History

The Milton Keynes Tell Your Story Once document may be helpful in gathering information in relation to the child / young person's developmental and family history. In addition, the following questions may be helpful to consider developmental and family history:

Areas to cover	Example questions
Developmental and educational history	What was s/he like as a young child? Can you tell me about their early experiences at school, throughout primary and at the start of secondary school?
Any potential changes or losses within the family or child's life	Can you tell me about your family? Who is in it, who is like whom? Who is s/he closest to? Have there been any changes within the family recently? (You could ask them to draw a family tree / genogram)
Relationships	Does s/he talk about any other children / young people? What does s/he say? Does s/he talk about any adults within school? What does s/he say? Who does s/he get on with? Who does s/he not get on with?
Academic progress	School should be aware if the child/young person has identified SEN and should ask about these needs and the support in place. If there is no identified SEN, school could ask if they have any concerns, or if the child/young person has spoken about difficulties.
The child/young person's view about their specific fears / worries	Has s/he spoken to you about what s/he finds difficult about school? What do they say?
The child/young person's view about what is going well in school	Has s/he mentioned anything that is going well in school? (e.g., teachers, lessons, friends)
Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety	When s/he is worried what does it look like? What do they say they are feeling?
Typical day – when they go to school and when they don't go to school	Please describe a typical day when s/he goes to school from the moment s/he gets up until s/he goes to bed... and when s/he doesn't go to school? What does s/he do when they do not go to school? What do other family members do?

Impact on various members of the family	How does their non-attendance impact on you? And on other family members? Who is better at dealing with the situation? Why?
Parental views on the reasons for EBSA	Why do you think s/he has difficulty attending school? (ask each parent separately). If (other parent, sibling, grandparent) were here what would they say? Are there any differences of views about the reasons and what should be done within the family?
Exceptions to the problem	Have there been times when s/he has managed to get into school? What was different about those times?
Previous attempts to address the problem	What has been the most helpful thing that someone else has done in dealing with the problem so far? What has helped in the past when things have been difficult? What strategies have been most helpful so far in managing their anxiety?

❖ Question prompts for discussion with parents / carers:

The following are prompts to support the school / setting in having a conversation with parents / carers about their child / young person. Make sure to date the conversation notes so that any progress can be noted during subsequent review conversations.

	Notes from conversation:
What are the main issues for you?	
How do you think things are going in school?	
How has your child settled into finding their way to and from and around school?	
What lessons do they like / dislike? Have they given any reasons?	
Any issues mentioned with teachers?	
Any difficulties with the uniform?	
Any difficulties with any of the other school rules?	
Any issues with the work in class?	
Any issues with homework?	
How is this all making you feel?	
What would make life better for your child at school?	
How are things at home?	
Is everybody well?	
What would make life better at home?	
Have they made / got friends?	
What do they like doing with their friends?	
If they don't like / don't want friends, is that an issue for them?	
What do you feel is important for them in terms of friendships?	

Do they have friends outside of school?	
Do they mix socially outside of school with you / extended family / family friends?	
How are they socially?	
Can you describe any other anxieties they have?	
What support do you have?	
What support do you need?	
Anything else?	

❖ Regular Contact and Communication with parents / carers

Schools / settings should ensure that they make plans to have regular contact with parents / carers and should identify a key person to communicate with parents / carers and how they will do this.

Gathering Views: school/setting

It is important to gather school / setting views from the person or people in school who know the child / young person best. This may need to be done through conversation or through requesting completion of a 'round robin' questionnaire, using questions such as those outlined below.

child / young person name is currently experiencing difficulties attending school which we feel may be due to emotional distress. We would like to gain a picture of how they are in school. As an adult who works with *child / young person name* please complete the questionnaire below.

Your name:

Lesson / activity:

Questions:	Notes:
Please describe *child / young person name*	
What are *child / young person name*'s strengths?	
What is going well for *child / young person name*?	
What does *child / young person name* find difficult?	
How does *child / young person name* get on with their peers?	

How does *child / young person name* get on with you and other adults?	
Is *child / young person name* engaged and motivated with their learning? Are they making progress? If not, why not in your view?	
Have you observed any emotional difficulties at school? What have these been; when did/do they occur?	
What support do you provide for *child / young person name*? How do they respond to this?	
What is your understanding of *child / young person name*'s attendance problems?	
What do you think would help *child / young person name* in school?	
Aspiration Focus questions:	
What is s/he good at?	
What do they like doing?	
Do they have any hopes for their future?	
Do they know what they want their life to be like when they are an adult?	

Understanding and Unpicking the Functions of EBSA Behaviours

Consider the functions that the child/young person's behaviours are serving for them (Kearney, 2008):

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

- ❖ Avoiding school is the solution to what problem for the child/young person?
- ❖ What outcome is the child/young person's non-attendance achieving for them?
- ❖ What are the child/young person's non-attendance behaviours telling us about how they are feeling?
- ❖ What are the child/young person's non-attendance behaviours telling us about what they need?

❖ Functional Analysis

Completed on: (DATE) by (NAME)

To avoid school related stressors:	To avoid social situations and/or activities:
<p>E.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental (noise, crowds, going into the building or classroom) • Social (groups, breaks, lunch times) • Transitions (between lessons; to and from school) 	<p>E.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions with peers which are challenging • Feeling disconnected or isolated from peers; not belonging to a group • Evaluative situations: exams, presentations, PE lessons, eating in the cafeteria
<p>Where non-attendance behaviour functions to avoid, school avoidance can be <i>negatively reinforced</i>: school avoidance behaviours are strengthened, because they remove or avoid negative outcomes</p>	
To gain needed attention:	To engage in preferred activities:
<p>E.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time at home with parents / carers / family members 	<p>E.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching TV • Playing video games • Spending time with a friend
<p>Where non-attendance behaviour functions to gain, school avoidance can be <i>positively reinforced</i>: school avoidance increases in response to the need being met.</p>	

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

❖ Risk and Protective Factors Checklist

Checklist Instructions:

The Risk and Protective Factors checklist should initially be completed by school / setting staff and not presented to the child/young person or parent/carer to complete. Some areas within this checklist need to be explored sensitively and in a supportive context. Staff can however use this framework when engaging in discussions with the child/young person 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 child/young person's views in this area.

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

If there are any areas within the 'risk factors' checklist rated as 'low', staff should monitor and respond accordingly. For areas rated as 'medium' 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 child/young person's strengths and areas which can be drawn on to make their educational experience more successful and positive. Any 'low' ratings could indicate that support in that area may be beneficial.

Child / Young Person Name:	D.O.B:	Year Group:	Date of completion:
Name and job title of person completing this checklist:			
Who contributed to this information? (e.g., child / young person, staff names and job titles, parents/carers, professionals)?			

Level	Risk Factors	Risk Rating		
		Low	Medium	High
Individual	Challenges with emotional self-awareness and self-regulation			
	Fear of social and personal failure			
	Previous exclusions			
	Separation anxiety / fear of loss of a parent/carer			
	Social interaction anxiety			
	Low self-confidence			
	Worries about those at home			
	Apparent over-dependence on parents / carers			
Family	Illness / health needs			
	Siblings being at home e.g., home educated, due to health needs			
	Reported limited social interactions within the home			
	Loss or bereavement			
	Frequently reported conflict			
	Family transitions – moving to a new house; divorce			
	Significant changes in the family			
	Mental health needs with parents/carers			
	Apparent absence or over-involvement of a parent/carer			
Child's anxiety causes overt stress 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., PE, talking in front of peers			

Level	Protective Factors	Risk Rating		
		Low	Medium	High
Individual	The child/young person can identify their own strengths			
	They can identify their own interests			
	They want the current situation to change			
	They have a positive level of self-confidence			
	They have a positive level of self-esteem			
	They have a positive level of self-efficacy			
	They have a positive level of emotional literacy			
Family	The family are developing an understanding of the child/young person's needs and feelings			
	There are positive relationships in the family and/or community			
	They family are willing and able to work in partnership with school and support agencies			
School	The child/young person has positive relationships with a member/s of staff			
	They show a willingness to work in partnership with family and support agencies			
	They have positive relationships with peers			
	They are experiencing success in school			
	The staff have a flexible approach and show a willingness to work in partnership with the child/young person, family, and support agencies			
	The staff are developing an understanding of the child/young person's needs and feelings			

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

❖ Risk and Protective Factors Sorting Cards activity for completion with child/young person

Activity Instructions:

This card sorting activity has been created to help gain the child/young person's view of possible EBSA 'risk' and 'protective' factors, which have been included in the corresponding checklist. Some of the statements have been re-worded to make them more accessible and positive.

This activity should be carried out by an adult that the child/young person 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 child/young person to become upset, so there needs to be freedom to extend the session if required.

The child/young person should be told that the aim of the activity 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 child/young person and discussed prior to beginning the activity. The adult should then pass the child/young person each card and read it to them / explain its meaning. The child/young person 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 a card asks about friends / teachers then ask the child/young person 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 child/young person'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 child/young person should also be asked if they have any ideas about what might make things better or 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, or 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.

Child / Young Person Name:	D.O.B:	Year Group:	Date of completion:
Name and job title of person completing this card sort activity with the child / young person:			

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 I know my family are ok when I am in school				
	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 somebody / something 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 / carers 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 students / children who are unkind to me				
	32	I find learning easy				
	33	I like my teacher(s)				
	34	I like all activities in school				

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

**Not
True**



**Sometimes
True**



**Often
True**



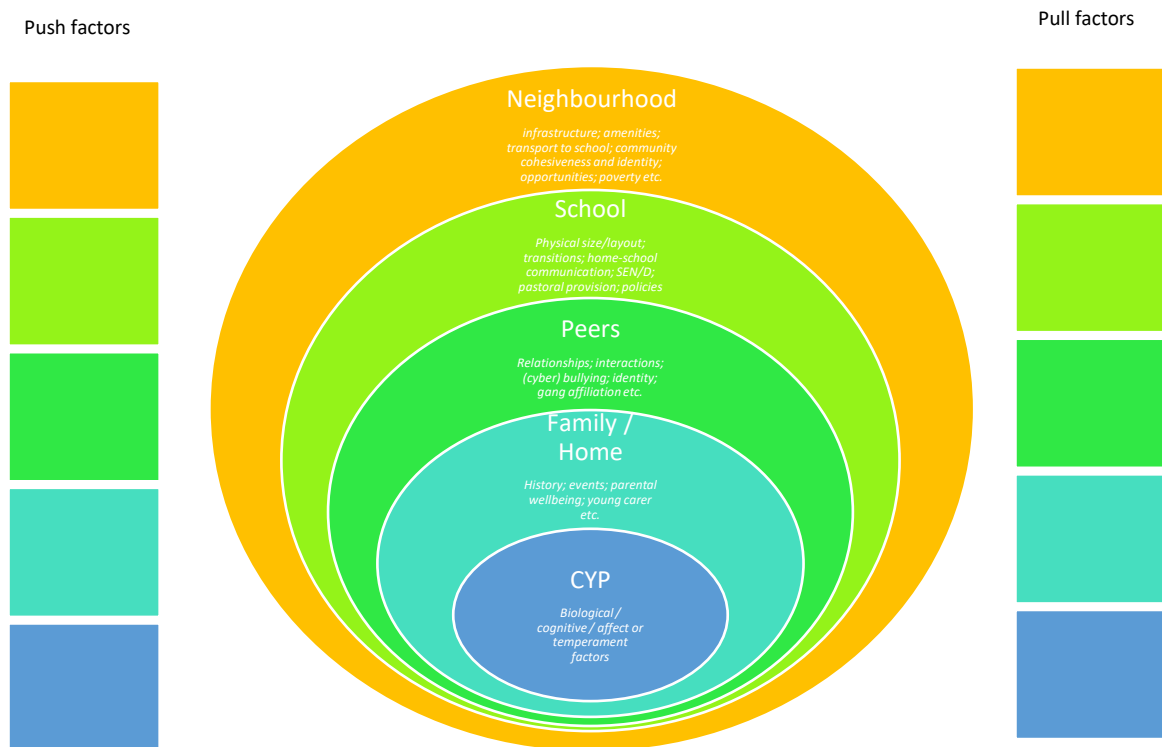
<p>I find it easy to understand my feelings</p>  <p>1</p>	<p>I find it easy to talk to others about my feelings</p>  <p>2</p>	<p>I know how other people are feeling</p>  <p>3</p>	<p>I think I will do well in school</p>  <p>4</p>
<p>I think the work I do in school is good</p>  <p>5</p>	<p>I have a lot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

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

❖ Push/Pull Factors Analysis

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”.

Jointly consider the range of ‘Push’ and ‘Pull’ factors at play for the child / young person using the [Push/Pull Factor Framework](#)



There is a diverse range of ‘influencers’ that may exist across the systems in which children and young people live in, which are referred to in research literature as ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors.

Towards school



Towards home

Push and pull factors are likely to be present across systems and at different times, and the balance and interplay between these factors is likely to fluctuate. The diagram above helps in formulating the push and pull factors present for individual children and young people.

Working hypotheses:

- ❖ If push (towards school) factors are low and pull (towards home) factors are high, there is likely to be a high risk of EBSA.
- ❖ If push (towards school) factors are neutral but pull (towards home) factors are high, there also likely to be increased risk of EBSA.
- ❖ If push (towards school) factors are low and pull (towards home) factors are low, there may be a risk of EBSA and/or truancy.
- ❖ If push (towards school) factors are high and pull (towards home) factors are low, there is likely to be less risk of EBSA or truancy

❖ Summary of Push / Pull Factors

Adult Version:

Pull Factors (<i>towards home and away from school</i>) Influencing factors that are pulling a child/young person away from school and towards home:	Push Factors (<i>towards school</i>) Influencing factors that are pushing a child/young person towards attending school (i.e., positive factors at home and/or school making this child / young person want to attend school):

Child/Young Person Version:

Pull Factors (<i>towards home and away from school</i>) What makes me want to stay at home? What makes me want to avoid school?	Push Factors (<i>towards school</i>) What makes me want to come to school? What do I like at school? What makes me want to leave the house in the morning? / What makes me want to avoid staying at home all day?

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

Plan-Do-Review

Plan:

❖ Information Gathering Summary and Formulation

Once information has been gathered from the child / young person, family, school and any other professional it is essential that this information is collated, and 'sense' is made of it to form an overview of the whole picture and the various factors involved. This involves forming working hypotheses about what is going on and should then inform the return to school support plan.

Information Gathering; Summary and Integration Form:

The form below is designed to help with integrating all the information gathered. It is not designed to be a questionnaire but a tool to be completed after the information gathering to help collate, integrate, and analyze the information gathered from the various sources.

child / young person NAME	School
Year Group	Date of Birth
Key School Staff	Other agencies involved
Description of behaviours	
<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early indicators e.g., when was EBSA first noticed? When did school avoidance begin? What was being communicated by child / young person at that time? Are there any incidents that occurred near the time EBSA started? • Current rate of attendance? • Particular patterns to non-attendance – days, times, or lessons? Particular events or relationships that seem challenging for the child / young person? Any triggers within the home context? • History of behaviour e.g., have there been similar difficulties before (if so, what happened at that time?) • Behaviours and symptoms of anxiety – what does it look like? What does the child say about any specific fears and difficulties? 	
Risk Factors: individual; family; school	
<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental and educational history (health, medical, sensory, or social factors) • Any changes in family dynamics (separation, loss, birth of a sibling, health issues of other family members) • Any other needs within the family? <p>Consider:</p>	

- Risk and protective factors from information gathering
- Push and pull factors
- Functions noted about what purpose the behaviour is serving the child / young person

Strengths and Protective Factors

Consider:

- What strengths do they have?
- Do they have aspirations or ambitions?
- What positive relationships do they have at home and at school (peers and staff)?
- What positive experiences have they had at school?
- What positive experience opportunities do they have on a daily basis at school?
- What was different about the times when the child/young person was able to get into school?
- What has been helpful in the past?

Formulation and Integration of various factors

Consider:

- What is people's understanding of why the young person is demonstrating these behaviours?
- Are there any differences of view?
- What risk factors have been identified (individual, family, school)?
- What strengths have been identified that can be built upon?

Consider:

What is the function of the behaviour – is it:

- To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress (e.g., fear of the toilets, the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes; tests/exams?)
- To escape difficult social situations (e.g., feeling left out at play time; feeling 'lost'; reading out loud in class or other public speaking/group task; working as part of a group)
- To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g., change in family dynamic, concerned about the well-being of a parent)
- To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or more stimulating (shopping, playing computer games, hanging out with friends)
- Transitions?

Are there any maintaining factors, i.e., what is keeping this behaviour going?

Blank Form for school / setting use:

child / young person NAME	School
Year Group	Date of Birth
Key School Staff	Other agencies involved
Description of behaviours	
Risk Factors: individual; family; school	
Strengths and Protective Factors	
Formulation and Integration of various factors	

Action Planning

❖ Key Elements of any Action Plan

Once 'sense' has been made of all the information gathered, a plan can be developed which has an overall aim of supporting the child / young person back to school at the earliest opportunity. The plan should be clearly informed by the assessment process and views gathered from all concerned. This will help ensure that it is person-centred, flexible and individualised, recognising that what has worked for one child / young person before will not necessarily work for another. This will also help ensure that it is clearly linked to the factors identified as contributing to EBSA both at the home and school / setting levels.

As discussed on pages 15-16 of the EBSA Guidance: Information document, it will be important to:

- ❖ Be realistic and break down larger goals into small, achievable steps – an overly ambitious plan is likely to fail
- ❖ Be clear about roles and responsibilities from the outset and ensure that all parties agree to actions and keep to them until the next review period
- ❖ Write agreed review dates into the plan
- ❖ Be consistent and follow through on agreements until the next review:
 - Build into the planning process the anticipation that there may be 'bumps' in implementing the plan and include a commitment from all parties to finding solutions when that happens. Ensure that any concerns about the re-integration process should not be shared in front of the child or young person, a 'united front' is recommended. Concerns should be communicated away from the child / young person.
 - Having said this, keep optimistic – if a child / young person does not attend on a day as planned, start again the next day, but equally, don't be tempted to move the goalposts if the child / young person is doing better than expected. This can reduce trust. Wait until the next review point to make changes.
- ❖ Agree expectations regarding frequency of contact and set realistic response times for direct telephone contact between parent / carers and key workers in school
- ❖ Recognise that the child/young person is likely to be more unsettled at the beginning of the plan, and that school and parent/carers need to work together to show a consistent approach to managing heightened emotions and anxieties around this time
- ❖ Plan for a gradual and graded re-integration – early home visits by a designated member of staff, ideally with whom the child / young person has a positive relationship with may be appropriate to support a sense of connectedness and 'school-belonging', and a part time timetable may be appropriate in the short term




- ❖ Detail the strategies and approaches that will support the child or young person achieve the outcomes agreed. A personalised plan should include consideration of things such as flexibility in the timetable, arrangements for transport, buddying opportunities, safe havens in school; key member of staff in school who the child / young person can 'check in with' during the time they are in school; differentiation of curriculum to address any potential gaps from missed lessons
- ❖ Ensure that all school staff (including supply staff) that the child/young person will come into contact with are aware of the plan and the child / young person's difficulties, particularly during changes of class or other transition times
- ❖ Consider whether a family assessment, accessed via MASH, would be helpful to identify whole family support.

❖ Action Planning: example action / support plans

Example 1 – Child / Young Person-Centred:

Milton Keynes Council

Educational Psychology Service

• Name:	• Date:																																																																		
At school these things can make me feel upset:																																																																			
<div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 50px;">  </div>																																																																			
My key adult(s) in school is/are:																																																																			
<p>When I can speak to my key adult</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 50px;">  </div> <p>Where I can speak to my key adult:</p>																																																																			
Until _____ my return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance:																																																																			
(Identify any changes to the days or times they come in)																																																																			
																																																																			
Changes to my timetable include:																																																																			
(Identify any changes needed and what should happen/where they should be instead)																																																																			
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Any other changes include:

(Identify any other changes to routines, classroom expectations or homework)



When I start to get upset, I notice these things about myself:



When I start to get upset, others notice these things about me:



Things I can do to make myself feel better when I'm at school:

Things that other people (staff and friends) can do to help me feel better when I'm at school:



Things that my family can do to support me to attend school:



Place in the school I can go to where I feel safe and supported:



This plan will be reviewed regularly so that it remains helpful.

Review date:



My signature

Key adult's signature

Parent's signature

Other people who have access to this plan are:



Adapted from West Sussex EPS

Example 2:

My Support Plan	
My name:	Start date of this plan:
At school, these things can make me feel upset:	
My key adult(s) in school is/are:	
When I can speak to my key adult(s):	
Where I can speak to my key adult(s):	

child / young person NAME	Year Group	DoB:	Date of Plan 1:
Contributors to this plan:			
Shared desired outcomes:	Agreed actions (interventions / strategies)	Pre-intervention baseline	Post-intervention evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do we hope to see as a result of this action? What is a realistic expectation given our starting point? How can we write this as a SMART target? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What? Who? How often? For how long? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does it look like now? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does it look like now (following intervention)? Have we achieved our shared desired outcome? If not, have we made steps towards our shared desired outcome?
Review Date:			

Adapted from Solihull EPS

Example 3:

child / young person NAME	Year Group	DoB:	Date of Plan 1:
Contributors to this plan:			
Who wrote this plan?			
Agreed review date:			
What are *child / young person NAME's* strengths and interests?			
Identified Need	Support / Action	Specific Details	

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

Do:

❖ Interventions and Strategies

As part of the school's graduated approach following the plan-do-review process, it is important that evidence-based interventions are offered to the child / young person to support them to reduce the barriers to non-attendance at school. Questions to ask when considering whether a school-based intervention is appropriate include:

- ❖ Is the child / young person in the right place emotionally and psychologically to access an intervention in school?
- ❖ Does the child / young person want to change their behaviour? What is their readiness to change?
- ❖ Is the environment able to facilitate and harness change?
- ❖ Are parents/carers in agreement of such support?
- ❖ Does the child / young person require more specialist mental health support?
- ❖ When would you stop an intervention?
- ❖ What are the aims of the intervention? How will you know once you have achieved them?
- ❖ What pre- and post- measures can you use to monitor impact over time?
- ❖ Is there someone who could deliver this intervention that the child / young person has a good connection with?
- ❖ Is the person delivering the intervention adequately trained?
- ❖ Does the person delivering the intervention have access to adequate support and supervision?
- ❖ Is an individual intervention appropriate given the child / young person's needs, or are the issues broader (e.g., across home or neighbourhood) and require external agency support?

❖ General Strategies of Good Practice for Students Demonstrating EBSA

Supporting children and young people with EBSA can be complex and multi-faceted. Person-centred strategies and interventions should be developed through the Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle to support a successful integration with interventions at the level of the child, the general family, peer and school and wider context. However, there are several general strategies and examples of good practice at each of these levels, as follows below:

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 with 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 school clubs
	Support the student to make or maintain friendships with peers
School	A strong pastoral system and identified senior member of staff to co-ordinate the response for a student with EBSA
	A positive and nurturing environment with a person-centred and solution-focused approach with a focus on listening to the child / 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 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 student and opportunities to debrief / access supervision as this work can be difficult
	Identify a key adult/s for the student who has time to dedicate to building a genuine relationship and can support the student 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 next 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, e.g., 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 / young person.

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

❖ Interventions and Strategies specific to supporting the development of Social and Emotional Skills and Knowledge

All children and young people have to manage and respond to a variety of emotional experiences on a daily basis. For children / young people with EBSA needs, these emotional experiences can often be more intense and frequent. Additionally, social and emotional aspects can be a contributing factor to the EBSA, e.g., the child / young person may be experiencing challenges with peer relationships leading to them avoiding school or the child / young person may not have sufficient 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 child / young person may have with cognition and learning. It is important that any social and emotional areas for development are also supported. However, it should not be assumed that any needs / challenges are due to the child / young person having a 'gap' in skills / knowledge within the social / emotional area, e.g., the child / young person may have a high level of skills but may be 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 it is suggested that an Emotional Literacy framework is used, based on the work of Goleman (1996) and Faupel (2003), which can guide areas for exploration as well as be used to devise possible intervention session aims:

Emotional Literacy is '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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding your own feelings • Recognising and understanding different feelings • Recognising our strengths and limitations • Label different emotions • Understand how emotions can impact on what we do and say
Self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing our own feelings • Expressing emotions in the appropriate way • Containing emotions when required
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining focused during times of emotional upset • Having self-motivation to achieve • Persist when finding things difficult • Attempting to achieve personal goals • Engage in and be attentive to learning
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand other's emotions • Recognise emotions being expressed by others • Acknowledge and respond appropriately to other's feelings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being sensitive to others • To notice physical and visual cues
Social Skills / handling relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to other's emotions in a way that provides comfort and support • Manage the emotional expressions that we display during social 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

Adapted from Staffordshire EPS

Other interventions, strategies and resources that may be helpful / effective in this area include:

- ❖ Adopting whole school approaches to the development of social and emotional skills and knowledge, such as Emotion Coaching
- ❖ Targeted interventions that can be delivered on a small group / individual basis, e.g., Emotional Literacy, LEGO Therapy, Circle of Friends etc.
- ❖ Use of concrete and visual materials, e.g., story books / films on exploring emotions, Kimochis, puppets etc.
- ❖ Range of books and resources 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 children / young people 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 times or during challenging social interactions:
 - Filmed modelling – the child / young person views a film in which a child similar to him/herself approaches or interacts with the feared object or situation, e.g., bus, school, classroom etc.
 - Participant modelling – this is live modelling coupled with a school mentor or peer physically guiding the child/young person towards the feared object or situation
- ❖ It is important that adults working with children / young people validate how they are feeling, even if they do not agree. Validation of a child / young person's feelings will allow them to feel supported and understood. This is especially important if they use inappropriate methods of communication. Once the child / young person is calm then the adult should support them to reflect and problem-solve.

❖ Interventions and Strategies specific to Expressing and Externalising Thoughts and Feelings including Anxiety

Careful consideration needs to be given to how adults can support and facilitate children / young people to express and externalise what they are thinking / feeling. Creativity can be most valuable in this area often leading to approaches which are imaginative, engaging and effective. Work in this area needs to be led by the child / young person. Some may find expressing / externalising very helpful. Others may wish to process their thoughts before sharing them and there may be some that want to find solutions / work through their emotions independently. Some children / young people may prefer a mixture.

Adults should be mindful when embarking on interventions which aim to release emotions to monitor their own reactions, including not absorbing the anxiety and appearing confident in their ability to tackle the anxiety (imagine wearing a Teflon suit when talking to anxious children, young people or parents / carers).

Some interventions, strategies and approaches that may be useful in this area include:

- ❖ Having access to a Key Worker for 1:1 sessions / check ins at school or via remote / online means, which are planned and protected
- ❖ During 1:1 sessions, provide opportunities for the child / young person to discuss their strengths, needs and worries
- ❖ A variety of verbal and non-verbal ways to express / externalise / communicate emotions and thoughts, e.g., drama, art, writing etc (see pages 16-18 above).
- ❖ 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 then 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)
- ❖ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approaches can be useful. Focus on thought patterns that assist the child to replace maladaptive thoughts with adaptive thoughts (e.g., *“If I make a mistake, the whole class will laugh”* to *“I am brave. I am doing the best I can and who knows I might even get it right.”*). The Educational Psychology Service can provide advice about a variety of CBT approaches.
- ❖ To allow children / young people to move on from thoughts arising that are appropriate to ‘push aside’ or ‘park’ the following could be trialled:
 - Write it down on a post-it note, which is kept safe by the key worker 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 / shredder
 - Different methods for regulating and/or releasing emotions:
 - Mindfulness activities e.g., grounding techniques, ‘WOW’ walks
 - Colouring
 - Physical activity

- Emotive imagery can be helpful for children who have problems with relaxation. An example would be to have the child sing songs with themes that emphasise courage and strength
- Breathing and relaxation exercises:

Breathing and Relaxation Exercises:

When people are anxious, they usually engage in very shallow breathing which does little to oxygenate the body. People who are anxious tend to do more breath holding – look at the child/young person and see if they keep their lips closed as they breathe out; or appear tight lipped when working. Others may take short, fast breaths (panting - this is letting carbon dioxide out but not much oxygen in). This is not dangerous but does not help the body or mind to feel calm and relaxed.

1. Controlled breathing

Ask the child to sit or lie down and issue the following instructions to them:

- Place one hand high up on your chest and the other lower down just above your belly button/around your diaphragm.
- Take a deep breath in gently through your nose allowing your body to react naturally and then let the air slowly out of your mouth.
- Notice what is happening to your hands. Is your lower hand moving in? Good this shows that you are breathing and filling all your lungs. If you are doing shallow breaths there will be little movement.
- You should be seeing both hands moving: the rear hand should move towards your back as you breathe in and out as you exhale. The top hand hold rise as you breathe in and fall as you breathe out.
- If you are struggling to get movement, try taking deeper breaths and letting your stomach push out slightly as you breathe out.
- Practice this several times
- Breathe in slowly, gently making the in breath a continuous movement
- Pause briefly
- Before slowly exhaling/breathing out
- Pause again and just take a short while to feel the pressure of your hands on your body (this calms the body down and stops any panting action).
- Repeat this exercise trying to get a steady rhythm and aiming to for deeper in breaths and slow, long, gentle out breaths.

2. 4-7 breathing

Practice controlling your breathing listening to your breath. As you breathe in count to 4 and then slowly release your out breath aiming to count to 7 as you do. If you run out of breath before 7 try again.

Once people are practised in this they could aim for *7-11 breathing* (in for 7 seconds and out for 11).

3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This exercise helps you to isolate different parts of your body, moving through it and tensing each group of muscles for around 10 seconds and then relaxing them. This exercise is recommended by the national sleep clinic as it can induce sleep, providing the person focuses their mind on their body while carrying out the exercise.

- i. Start to take a couple of deep breaths listening to your breathing as you do. Notice the sensation in your body; you are aiming to relax all of your muscles. Breathe slowly and gently, starting to feel your body beginning to relax.
- ii. Focus your attention on how you are seated, notice the pressure exerted by your body on your chair, feel your feet on the floor and perhaps your arms on the armrests or in your lap. Turn your attention to your *feet*, scrunch up your toes and tense your feet for 10 seconds. Continue with the controlled breathing and then relax your feet. Notice the relaxed sensation in your feet for a further 10 seconds.
- iii. Now tense the muscles in your *legs*, squeeze and hold for 10 seconds, pressing down with your heels. You should feel the tension in your calves and upper leg muscles. Relax and notice the feeling of relaxation in your legs for a further 10 seconds. They should feel heavier than they did before.
- iv. Focus on your *bottom and your abdomen*. Tighten the muscles, clenching the buttocks and squeezing in the stomach muscles for 10 seconds. Relax and notice the sensation of relaxation in your lower body.
- v. Now focus on your *chest and your shoulders*. Take a deep breath then and tense your shoulder muscles lifting them to your ears. Squeeze all of the muscles tight for 10 seconds, gently continuing to breathe in and out. Relax and take note of the sensation around your shoulder and chest area.
- vi. Now form your fists into a tight ball, tense your *hands and then arm* muscles. Breathe in deeply and out slowly, holding the tense muscles tight for 10 seconds. Relax and feel the heavy sensation in your arms and hands.
- vii. Take a deep breath and then tighten up your *facial muscles*, really contort your facial features. Hold the squeeze for 10 seconds. And relax; notice this sensation in your face.

- viii. You have now tightened all of the major muscle groups in your body and allowed them to relax for a few seconds. Take a deep breath in and then reverse the procedure, starting with your facial muscles, moving down to your shoulders, and chest, then arms and hands, before your stomach and bottom, followed by your legs then your toes.
- ix. Each time carry out slow gentle controlled breathing; focusing the attention on your breathing, muscle groups and relaxed sensation.
- x. Continue to do this working up and down your body for 10 to 20 minutes to induce deep relaxation.

4. Identifying Where Your Fear Is At

Rating scales are good for identifying how much fear different activities generate. It is a good idea to measure this before and after trying the relaxation and control activities. You can then use this as a baseline against which success can be measured.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No fear		Mild fear			Modera te fear			Severe fear		Extreme fear

Asking further questions may help you to elicit a better understanding of the perception of the fear:

- What makes that a 7?
- How did it escalate to a 7?
- How come it's not an 8?
- How come this one is only a 4?
- What do you do to keep it from going higher?
- So you are able to keep it from getting higher by...
- Where would you like that one to be?
- For this one (point to one) what would life be like if it was down here (point to a lower number)?
- What would you be doing? How much do you enjoy doing that?
- What could you do to start to introduce the (preferred life) activity back into your life?

5. Desensitization

Write a list of the hierarchy of things that would induce fear working from little fear to major panic attack caused by it. Once you have the list you can encourage the young person to engage in controlled breathing and slowly allow themselves to be exposed to each of the steps. This will take several weeks as you help the young person to see that they can remain calm whilst seeing each step of their fear hierarchy. Before exposure you should ask the young person to relax using one of the controlled breathing exercises and then after several deep breaths try to imagine how controlled and calm they are going to feel. Reminding them they

will come to no harm (ensure situations that you expose them to are controlled and not potentially harmful).

Some examples of fear hierarchies:

Encourage different feelings (i.e., empathy), how would you feel if it was your best friend? Would you shriek and run off leaving them?

Fear of dogs:	Fear of being sick (a common teenage worry):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at a cartoon picture of a dog • Looking at a photograph of a dog • Holding a small plastic dog • Taking a walk and looking for dogs • Stopping to look at a dog from across the road • Walking by a dog • Stopping next to a dog • Stroking a small dog • Stroking a big dog • Walking a dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at a cartoon of someone being sick • Seeing a photograph of sick • Looking at some joke sick • Visualising someone being sick • Seeing some sick on the ground • Hearing someone heaving • Watching someone be sick

6. More activities for tackling anxieties

Fun	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching your favourite TV show • Going to see a film, watching a DVD • Using the internet to find fun clips or ones where kind acts are shown • Listen to music, download new music • Dressing up • Using make up or face paints • Finger painting • Colouring in • Playing with play dough or modelling clay • Popping balloons • Jumping in puddles • Blowing bubbles • Planning an imaginary party • Write down your full name then make as many words out of it as possible • Playing computer games • Colouring or scribbling over pictures in magazines • Building things from Lego then destroy them and rebuild • Going to the zoo and renaming all the animals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with a distraction toy such as a movable cube, geomag, or a tangle • Doing crosswords, word searches, Sudoku etc. • Naming all your soft toys • Play with a slinky • Going shopping to treat yourself • Making a collage of favourite photos • Physical activity
Distraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally being with other people • Phoning a friend • Helping someone else • Going to a public place • Visiting a friend • Hugs • Talking about your problems with someone close to you that knows what you are going through • Counting anything, patterns on wallpaper, bricks on a wall, ceiling tiles • Physical activity
Relaxation	<p>Looking up into the sky, cloud watching or star gazing</p> <p>Watching a candle burning / water falling</p> <p>Meditating</p> <p>Picking an object, a shell or rock for example and focusing on it very closely</p> <p>Look at works of art</p> <p>Watch fish, birds or butterflies</p> <p>Yoga/Tai chi</p> <p>Physical activity</p>

❖ **Interventions and Strategies specifically addressing school avoidance behaviours**

These should be bespoke to the individual and based upon the information which was gathered in the assessment and integration stage. The choice of intervention should be governed by a careful functional analysis of school avoidance behaviour. Kearney & Silverman, (1990) describe four variables which can maintain school avoidance behaviour, although each variable may be involved to a degree at any one time and their effects will be interactive.

Below are listed Kearney and Silverman's four variables which can maintain school avoidance behaviours and the interventions that could be considered in relation to each.

1. **To avoid something or situations that elicit negative feelings or high levels of stress** (e.g., fear of the toilets, the noise on the playground, lots of people moving all together in the corridors, tests/exams etc.)
 - a. Interventions should include:

- i. Learning about anxiety and worrying, how it affects our thinking, feeling and behaviour
 - ii. Learning to understand how avoidance of the feared situation can make things worse ultimately
 - iii. Learning anxiety management techniques such as relaxation training and deep breathing
- b. There should be a gradual re-exposure to the school setting using an 'avoidance hierarchy' created with the child/young person from least feared school situations to most feared. School should consider the provision of safe spaces that the child/young person can go to, such as the library or pastoral zone, which may be less stigmatising for some children / young people than other areas of school such as the learning support area.

Example Anxiety / Avoidance Hierarchy:

MOST FEARED
Going into lunch hall without best friend (support)
Going into lunch hall with best friend (support)
Going to PE lesson
Going to next 2 favourite lessons
Going into favourite lesson
Joining a small group activity
Staying in the resource base
Entering the school going into the reception area
Entering the school when the school is closed
Standing outside the school when school is closed
LEAST FEARED

For **each situation** the child/young person will need to be supported to think about:

- What **coping technique** they will use (e.g., relaxation, thinking, distraction etc.)
- What **support** will be in place (e.g., key worker available, time out card, access to secure / quiet base)

Some situations may need to be broken down into even smaller steps.

- c. Interventions should enhance positive motivation for attending school, e.g., minimise external demands and perceived threats for 'performing' and 'conforming'; help the child / young person to explore ways to add activities that would be non-threatening and motivating
2. To escape difficult social situations at school (e.g., feeling left out at playtime, reading out loud in class or other public speaking / group task, working as part of a group etc.)
- a. Interventions should include:
 - i. Learning about anxiety and worrying, how it affects our thinking, feeling and behaviour

- ii. Learning to understand how avoidance of the feared situation can make things worse ultimately
- iii. Learning anxiety management techniques such as relaxation training and deep breathing
- iv. Learning about the social skills needed in the situations they find anxiety provoking
- v. Opportunities to practice coping skills in real-life social and evaluative situations, starting small and building up to most challenging
- vi. Pre-teaching of key work missed, buddying, peer mentoring
- vii. Role play opportunities to cover scripts and tips about what they might say in social situations, e.g., when peers ask about their absence from school.
- viii. Set up peer support in the classroom, e.g., Circle of Friends / Friends for Life Programme, which may help establish social reinforcement for attending

3. To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g., change in family dynamic, concerned about the well-being of a parent etc.)

- a. Intervention would usually include work with caregivers supporting them to develop skills and techniques to:
 - i. Manage the school avoidance behaviours such as tantrums or physical / somatic complaints
 - ii. Establish evening and morning routines
 - iii. Use problem-solving techniques
 - iv. Establish positive and individual time to spend with the child/young person outside of school hours
 - v. Focus on positive behaviours
 - vi. Limit the attention the child / young person receives when they do not attend school
 - vii. Establish rewards for when they attend school and where appropriate consequences if they do not.

4. To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (e.g., watch television, go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends/peers etc.)

- a. Interventions would usually include:
 - i. A programme of intrinsically motivated activities, which are greater than that which pulled the child / young person out of school or towards home. Consider including activities relating to contemporary culture (e.g., sports, arts) and opportunities to assume particular roles in school. Consider disincentives for non-attendance e.g., limit computer access / phone credit / time out of the house with friends etc.
 - ii. Limit the attention the child/young person receives during non-attendance

- iii. If possible, take away the more stimulating activity
- iv. Support their travel to and from school
- v. Teach them how to refuse offers from peers
- vi. Make school as stimulating as possible, find out the child / young person's interests and if possible apply this to the work completed in school.

❖ Transitions

Another variable that may arise out of the functional analysis of school avoidance behaviour includes *difficulties with transitions*. There are numerous transitions that each child / young person makes throughout their educational experience. Many of these occur on a daily basis, which can be challenging, especially for a child / young person experiencing EBSA.

Listed below are some of the transitions which should be considered by staff, to explore if there are any needs within this area for the child / young person:

- ❖ Leaving the home in the morning (including leaving possessions, pets, family members etc.)
- ❖ Accessing transport / making the journey to school
- ❖ Leaving parents / carers at the drive / gate / car etc.
- ❖ Entering the school premises / playground / building
- ❖ Entering the school corridors
- ❖ Entering the classrooms
- ❖ Moving from the classroom to another space
- ❖ Transitioning from learning contexts to social contexts e.g., lessons to break/lunch times; individual work to small group work to whole class work etc.
- ❖ Transitioning from areas of strength to areas of perceived weakness e.g., lessons where the child / young person does well to those where they feel challenged or find difficult

If any transitional needs are identified then the appropriate support should be provided, discussing with the child / young person 'what could make this better / easier for them'. A few approaches are outlined below:

- ❖ Social Stories
- ❖ Transitional Objects to support children / young people when they are apart from key and trusted adults e.g., provide the child / young person with an object to look after for you so they know you will return to them at some point
- ❖ Meet and Greet – to support children / young people to transition into the setting / classroom / break from learning
- ❖ 'All About Me' sessions to establish a positive rapport with new staff members
- ❖ Provide the child / young person with key factual information about areas of concern e.g., new subjects / concepts, to minimise how much they are required to anticipate what is going to happen.

Research shows that the prevalence of prolonged absences is greater around times of *transition from one educational setting into another*. This is true for all phase changes at home to infant school, junior school entry, secondary school transition, and leaving school to go to college or work

- ❖ Many children find the transition to secondary school particularly difficult as several changes are occurring at once (developmental, environmental, and organisational). The emotional impact of moving from a relatively protective environment, where often one key adult was responsible for ensuring your welfare, into a larger often unfamiliar organisation where the child / young person is faced with learning how to navigate around the school, organise their books and workload as well as make new social relationships, can be very daunting, particularly for children / young people already feeling vulnerable.
- ❖ Rice, Frederickson and Seymour (2011) reported that children who were concerned about the secondary transfer tended to view aspects of school negatively, displayed greater anxiety, felt pessimistic about the change, experienced low moods and already had social relationship issues.
- ❖ The majority of children adapt well to transition, but for those who don't, key factors need to be identified to reduce the risk of school avoidance behaviours

Early Identification of difficulties with transition between phases / settings:

Heyne (2002) suggests that how children perceive their ability to cope in school, with both the social and academic aspects, is crucial to their success. Children who have negative thoughts tend to become anxious and preoccupied with the perceived difficulties that lay ahead. Asking children and their parents for their views about transferring to secondary school may enable staff to identify children early on that may be prone to school refusal. Having a checklist to ask Year 6 teachers prior to the move may also help to assess children

at risk. In the table below the first column sets out to ask relevant questions, the second seeks to elicit more information whilst the third attempts to see how resilient the child has been to upsets/challenges.

Asking relevant questions	Eliciting more information	Exploring resilience
Are you concerned about transition?	What aspects concern you?	What has worked well in the past for the child?
Has the child experienced separation anxiety?	Who was this from?	How was this resolved?
Has the child had any prolonged absences?	What were the reasons for this?	How did they transition back after the absence?
Does the child have any social difficulties?	Are these with peers or adults? What is the nature of these?	What has been done to address these issues? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills groups • Modelling • Mentoring • Social stories

When thinking about transition children who are concerned about the change tend to worry about the following **organisational factors**:

The Physical environment	
What are the issues?	<i>Will I get lost?</i> <i>What happens if I cannot find my way around the school?</i>
What helps?	Having a map of the site
	Older students giving tours around the school
	Older students given responsibility (with an identifiable label or badge) who will give reliable directions or take the student to their lesson
	Reassuring students that they will not be told off for being late or lost
	Explicitly exploring strategies for finding places
	Having a buddy or small group system so all the group have to look after each other and ensure they arrive safely

Lunch and break times

What are the issues?	Knowing what to do and where to go during unstructured times can be very stressful for some children
What helps?	Clear explanation of the break routines
	Designated area just for year 7s
	Pairing older children at break times - some schools use year 8 students, others use older ones and create family groups
	Providing clubs for children to try - so that they are not left on their own

Building up social groups

What are the issues?	Some children may struggle to interact socially and may become withdrawn; others may be antagonistic and find themselves isolated
What helps?	Having specific social and emotional activities to explore general issues (see authors like Murray White on activities to build self-esteem; Sue Roffey on Circle solutions)
	Organising a range of social activities at break times and after school
	Having opportunities for students to mix in with other groups within the same year group and also amongst other years
	Building a strong sense of group belonging - what's special about our class? If we were an animal what would we be? What are our principles? How do we support each other?
	Having exercises where students are able to reflect on their strengths - maintaining self-worth as this can be reduced if social isolation occurs

Managing in lessons

What are the issues?	Knowing the format of lessons - how long? Homework concerns - how much? How to prioritise?
What helps?	Explicit information given at the beginning of new lessons to outline timings and expectations
	Giving tips for prioritising homework, study skills, kit to have ready

	Older students discuss how they organised themselves
Support systems <i>Establishing and maintaining friendships during transition has been found to be a main factor in promoting successful adjustment to secondary school (Weller, 2007).</i>	
What are the issues?	Knowing where to go if you need additional help with learning or emotional support
What helps?	Leaflets explaining the different pastoral support services within the school would be useful
	Offering homework or learning support clubs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion about the type of emotional support that is on offer - normalising feelings of anxiety and teaching coping strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being clear about standards of behaviour - what to do if bullying is experienced
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlining a number of people that a student can talk to if they have any concerns - peer mentors, form tutors, support staff

Review:

It is essential that any Action Plan is regularly reviewed. There should be set dates for reviewing how the plan is progressing and key personnel to attend identified. It is essential that the young people and parents are actively involved in the review.

The review should:

- ❖ Identify and celebrate any progress made
- ❖ Review whether further information has come to light
- ❖ Help inform clear next steps, including:
 - Consolidating and maintaining the current support plan
 - Setting new outcomes and/or actions for the child / young person, school and parents
 - Identifying that further consultation with other agencies needs to occur which may, if necessary, lead to a referral to other services.

Monitoring impact

There are a variety of tools that education settings can use as the basis for understanding and planning a response to children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing needs ranging from simple feedback forms to validated measures which can focus on both wellbeing and mental health.

Two examples of these tools include:

- The Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale – a holistic, positively worded scale, developed by the Stirling Educational Psychology Service, that is suitable for education professionals looking to measure emotional and psychological wellbeing in children aged 8 to 15 years old:
 - https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5d67c8b7b41d93d313e3835f/60ab67a34874dedc054c9c1a_Stirling%20Children%27s%20Wellbeing%20Scale%20with%20Example%20Report.pdf
- The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) – also a positively worded scale that can be used to measure wellbeing in young people aged 13 and over. The shorter version, which has seven questions, can be found at:
 - https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/swemwbs_7_item.pdf

Approaches to Support

Educational settings should provide all staff/parents/carers with knowledge on early signs / indicators of EBSA. Monitoring the more subtle signs and patterns which can occur in the early stages can be advantageous. This includes children and young people 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 later on. Therefore, all staff, including office-based colleagues, should be included in training and awareness raising. Having open communication with parents and carers is important to ensure any early indicators of EBSA can be identified. Patterns of EBSA of 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 communicated and addressed earlier.

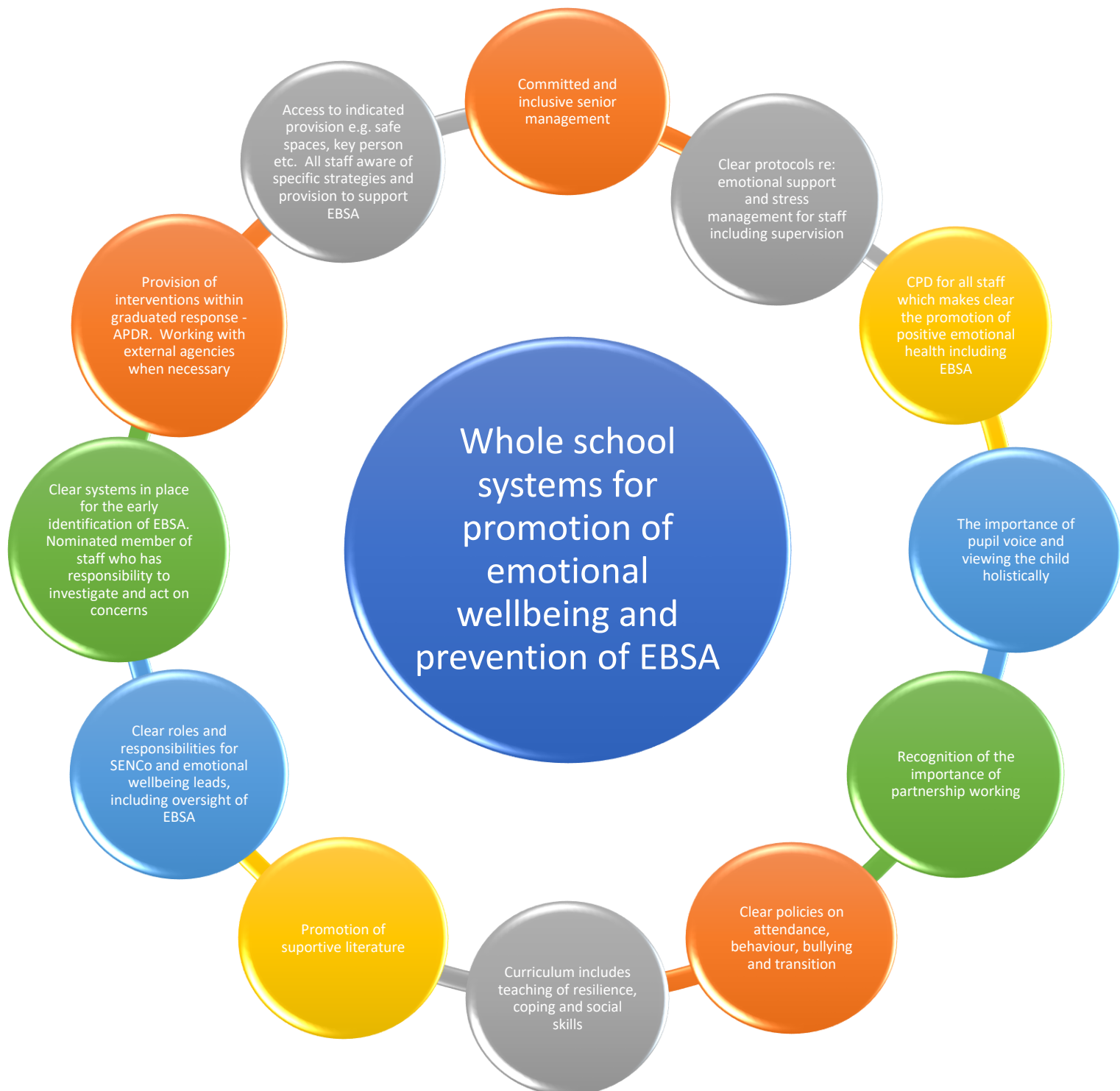
The following models offer ways to consider developing [whole school approaches](#) to support.

Public Health England (2015): 8 principles to promoting whole school approaches to emotional health and well-being



Whole School Systems

Any successful work with an individual needs to be embedded in whole school systems. General good practice for promoting emotional well-being and positive mental health also applies to EBSA. The figure below outlines the culture, structures, resources, and practice within a school that can promote wellbeing of staff and young people, with particular reference to EBSA. A whole school audit also then follows.



Whole School Audit – examples

Example 1:

	Currently available	Needs development?	Next steps
Whole School Level			
Systems in place for the early identification of school avoidance behaviours			
Clear and consistent bullying and behaviour policies			
Is there a nominated senior member of staff responsible for the coordination and support of students in this group			
Clear and appropriate attendance policy that takes into account the nature of school avoidance			
Excellent transition arrangements for vulnerable, 'shy' students or those with risk factors of school avoidance. Support should include work with parents, staff and development of peer and adult relationships			
Social, emotional skills embedded in the curriculum			
Staff have a holistic view of students and are accepting and inclusive towards those experiencing challenges.			
Training and CPD for staff			
Whole school awareness of key ideas surrounding mental health / anxiety / School avoidance			
More in-depth training for adults working closely with this group of students			
For specific staff, use of evidence-based training models that involve a continual process of learning, application, and reflection as well as attendance at events			
Professional supervision (individual or group) for specific adults supporting students in this group			

Clear protocols regarding emotional support and stress management for staff, e.g., following a disclosure or difficult situation.			
Staff given time and space to share good practice and share concerns with each other			
Supporting parents and carers			
A recognition that partnership working with parents is essential and needs to be prioritised.			
Ways of supporting parents to understand and manage their child's anxiety			
Identification of a key worker for the parent who can be main point of regular contact			
Flexibility for staff to do home visits when needed			
Use of programmes specifically designed to support parents in understanding their child's anxiety.			
Written materials and resources offered to parents that focus on specifically on supporting their child			
Identification and planning			
The initiation of a problem-solving/action plan meeting rapidly following identification of student displaying ABSA			
Student views are obtained as a priority			
Parental views are heard and valued			
Thorough assessment to analyse behaviour and develop an understanding of what is causing anxieties.			
Personalised plan developed that is comprehensive and considers factors outlined in Appendix B of this resource.			
Clear review processes with key people involved in the support plan.			
All of the student's teachers made aware of pupil's circumstances and relevant aspects of the plan.			

Features of support			
Flexibility of support, e.g., modification of environment, timetable, and curriculum where necessary			
Investigation of any issues (e.g., bullying) happens quickly and effectively.			
Student is allocated a Key Worker(s) and they can 'check in' when needed.			
Allocation of a 'safe' space which is appropriate and staffed.			
Appropriate liaison and referral to external agencies, e.g., CAMHS, EPS, BST, Social Care and Education Welfare Service.			
Good partnership working arrangements with local alternative provision, ensuring coordination and joint planning, ensuring all within-school measures have been tried.			
Supporting social, emotional, and mental health			
Use of social relationship interventions – e.g., Circle of Friends, buddy systems, structured provision to develop friendships.			
Access to available services that offer counselling or therapeutic support.			
Staff that can develop and deliver structured programmes of therapeutic support based on certain approaches, e.g., cognitive-behavioural approaches/ mindfulness.			
Regular links with external agencies who can train and provide guidance and supervision regarding therapeutic support offered.			
A wide range of resources and tools that can be used alongside curriculum content to support students understand and manage their anxieties.			

Adapted from Babcock LDP – Devon

Example 2:

	Whole school provision currently available	In need of development?	Comments/Next Steps (including by whom and when)
School Culture and Ethos			
Committed and inclusive senior management team – values all students and allows them to feel a sense of belonging			
All staff working within school are valued. Clear protocols regarding emotional support and stress management for staff, including supervision			
Continuous professional development for all staff which makes clear the promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing is everybody’s responsibility (including EBSA)			
The importance of pupil voice and viewing the child holistically are approaches which are embedded within the culture of the school			
Recognition of the importance of communication and partnership working with parents and external agencies			
School systems, policy, and practice			
Clear policies on attendance, behaviour, bullying, equality, and transition which sets out the responsibilities for all and the support in place			
Curriculum includes the teaching of resilience, coping and social skills			
Curriculum appropriately differentiated according to individual need			
Promotion of supportive literature regarding emotional well-being and mental health for young people and parents			
Clear roles and responsibilities for SENCo and emotional wellbeing leads			

A member of senior staff is responsible for overseeing arrangements for EBSA students			
Clear systems in place for the early identification of school avoidance			
Nominated members of staff who has a responsibility to investigate and act on concerns			
Staff are aware as to whom they should convey any concerns regarding EBSA			
Provision of interventions within a graduated response – assess, plan, do and review			
Staff are aware of the role of other agencies and local arrangements with regard to assessing and supporting students experiencing EBSA			
Access to indicated provision e.g., safe places within school; key person			
All staff are aware of specific strategies and programmes in place to support students experiencing EBSA			

Adapted from West Sussex EPS

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