



Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSN) Guide for Professionals

Solihull Educational Psychology Service



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INTRODUCTION



Collaborative working to promote Attendance and Psychological Wellbeing

Working in partnership, SMBC Education Services (Inclusion Service, Specialist Inclusion Support Service, Educational Psychology Service) are supporting schools to develop their understanding and ability to support children and young people who find it difficult to consistently attend and positively engage in school.

The process outlined in this guidance follows a graduated approach of support, intervention and services; it is designed to complement and work alongside existing good practice that is happening across schools in Solihull and incorporate support from other SMBC services.

Focusing on promoting school Attendance and Psychological Well-Being

School attendance is not only important for academic achievement, but to support the holistic development of young people as citizens within their community (Pellegrini, 2007). CYP not engaging in education are 'at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life' (DfE, 2016, p.5). Disengagement with education can result in reduced access to support programmes and professional input. Long-term outcomes and difficulties associated with school non-attendance include; reduced future aspirations, poor emotional regulation, mental health difficulties, limited academic progress and reduced employment opportunities (Gregory and Purcell, 2014, Hughes et al, 2010, Lyon and Cotler, 2007, McShane et al, 2001). Detrimental effects are evident in individuals' learning and achievement, with many disengaging from education all together (Carroll, 2010). Those who do not return to education are more likely to have underdeveloped social skills, family

conflict and poor mental health (Maynard et al, 2015). One might suggest that a bidirectional relationship between these factors is likely.

This guidance has been produced by Solar and Solihull Educational Psychology Service (SEPS) and is based on the current evidence base of the factors which are associated with positive outcomes. These include:

- Early intervention
- Systemic working: working with families, school staff and the young person
- Formulating and intervening according to individual case presentation
- Emphasis on the need for a rapid return to the educational setting alongside intervention, support and adaptations with the school and home environment (Baker and Bishop, 2015).

Alongside this guidance for educational settings, information booklets for families and children and young people will be produced and a series of workshops will be offered to families.

The guidance and information booklets can be found on Solihull's Local Offer website, Solar's webpage and the Solihull Educational Psychology Service website.

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Definitions

The discourse and terminology surrounding school Non-attendance has continually been evolving in response to emerging literature and research findings. Previous terms include 'school phobia', 'school refusal', 'school withdrawal' and 'truancy' (Kearney, 2008, Pellegrini, 2007). More recent definitions used within practice include 'emotionally based school avoidance' as coined by West Sussex Educational Psychology (2018). See definitions below:

Truancy: 'generally refers to unexcused, illegal, surreptitious absences, non-anxiety-based absenteeism, absenteeism linked to lack of parental knowledge about the behaviour, absenteeism linked to delinquency or academic problems, or absenteeism linked to social conditions such as homelessness or poverty' (Kearney, 2008, p.452).

School phobia: 'generally refers to fear-based absenteeism, but youths are rarely phobic of school and so this term has been deemphasized in recent research literature (Hanna, Fischer, & Fluent, 2006; Suveg, Aschenbrand, and Kendall, 2005)' (Kearney, 2008, p.453).

School withdrawal: where parents deliberately keep a child home from school for economic purposes, to conceal maltreatment, to prevent abduction from an estranged spouse, to protect a child from perceived school-based threat, to assist a parent with psychopathology, or for other reasons (Kearney, Lemos and Silverman, 2004)' (Kearney, 2008, p.452)

School refusal: 'generally refers to anxiety-based absenteeism, often from separation, generalized, or social anxiety' (Kearney, 2008, p.452). School refusal is a psychosocial phenomenon defined by a prolonged absence from school, with parents'/carers' knowledge, and the prospect of going to school causing severe distress (Maynard et al, 2015, Berg, 1997). Kearney and Silverman (1993) proposed school refusal occurs when children experience lowered anxiety through avoidance of the school setting, which results in negative reinforcement.

Emotionally based school avoidance: a 'broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school' (West Sussex Guidance, 2018, p.3).

There is a group of children and young people whose reluctance to attend school becomes so entrenched due to emotional factors that they often experience lengthy absences from school. This is known as Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSN) – however, it is important to note that EBSN isn't a medical condition in itself.

What is Emotionally Based School Non-attendance?

The term 'non-attendance' is used rather than 'refusal' or 'avoidance', as children in this situation often want to go to school and aren't refusing or avoiding, they simply feel as though they can't attend. The children concerned won't have control of the feelings and the easiest way to avoid them is to avoid school. Some children are even in school but not attending lessons, therefore not engaging in the full aspect of school life.

Onset of emotionally based school non-attendance may be sudden or gradual and is most common during adolescence. It is equally common in males and females (Ingles et al, 2015, Kearney, 2008). The frequency of emotionally based school non-attendance is difficult to measure accurately; although research indicates prevalence rates amongst children and adolescents is approximately between 1-2%. Thambirajah et al. (2008) stated that identifying and supporting young people at risk of emotionally based school non-attendance may be challenging due to children's difficulties in communicating their distress, and difficulties that families and school staff have in understanding a child's emotional experience of school. For some young people, it may be obvious in their presentation of extended non-attendance and distress, for others they may not be so easily identifiable. These young people may have inconsistent attendance, missing odd days or particular lessons, for others they may be only able to attend with high levels of support or modified timetables. Less recognised than that are those that may attend but are not engaged in school activities.

It is also important to note that some young people with emotionally based school Non-attendance may appear to recover relatively quickly from the initial upset of the morning, which may lead some to dismiss the possibility of emotionally based school Non-attendance. However, as Thambirajah et al. (2008) highlights, it is important to hold in mind models of anxiety, as it is not unusual for the anxiety to quickly dissipate once the perceived threat is removed.

Maynard et al (2015) indicated that nearly 50% of clinic-referred youth characterised by school Non-attendance have an anxiety disorder. Crump et al (2013) found children with mental health difficulties had the highest rates of absenteeism. Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) was not specifically linked with increased school absence. However, research findings from Norway (Munkhaugen et al, 2017) suggest higher prevalence amongst CYP with ASC. There appears to be a lack of literature which investigates the link between ASC and school Non-attendance in the UK.

Why does it happen?

Within the literature, a wide range of factors have been associated with school non-attendance including transitions; for example, emotionally based school non-attendance has been known to increase around the time that CYP move from primary to secondary school (Pellegrini, 2007; Thambirajah et al, 2008; Goodman and Scott, 2012; Nutall and Woods, 2013).

Kearney; the leading researcher in the field, has highlighted the importance of understanding the underlying reason for CYP's school non-attendance. Kearney identified four potential functions of EBSN: avoiding school related stressors, avoiding social situations and/or activities, attention needing and reinforcing activities (see Table 1 for further description). These four functions can be separated into two categories: negatively reinforcing and positively reinforcing.

Table 1: Four functions of school non-attendance (Kearney, 2008)

	Function	Description
Negatively reinforcing	Avoiding school related stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This describes a CYP's Non-attendance with school-related activities due to negative mood, feelings or attitudes or general anxiety linked with these activities.• School-related activities may describe activities such as classroom transitions, entry into school and the journey to school etc.• Some CYP may struggle to engage with school-based activities 'to avoid uncomfortable feelings brought ..., such as feelings of anxiety or low mood' (WSCC, 2018, p.4).
	Avoiding social situations and/or activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This describes the CYPs difficulty in engaging with peers and/or adults within school, or a difficulty with evaluative situations such as exams, speaking/reading aloud in class, class sports, presenting and eating around others at lunchtimes etc.• These situations may involve social pressures, academic demands and other elements of the school environment e.g. lunch and break times, assemblies.• Some CYP may therefore avoid these types of situations as they may be anxiety inducing.
Positively reinforcing	Attention needing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This describes CYP struggling to engage in school activities because they prefer to remain at home or with a significant adult (e.g. parent, carer).• In these cases, the CYP may not view the school as negative, and the function of Non-attendance with school may be

		associated with separation anxiety and the desire to remain with a significant adult.
	Reinforcing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This describes CYP who wish to remain outside of the school setting as they perceive activities outside of school to be more positive e.g. playing videogames at home, spending time with family/friends at home etc.

Risk factors of emotionally based school non-attendance

Emotionally based school non-attendance cannot be defined and treated as a single condition as individual children will be reluctant to attend school for a variety of reasons and factors which are unique to them.

Just as with general mental health, there have been factors identified in the research that place children at greater risk of emotional based school Non-attendance and it is typically a combination of factors that lead to patterns of behaviour that are described as emotionally based school Non-attendance.

Environmental / contextual risk factors

As a school, it is important to consider how environmental and contextual factors may be promoting and/or maintaining non-school attendance. These include; school ethos and environment; curriculum, teaching and learning; parent/carers attitudes, and family and community (see Table 2 below for examples).

Table 2: Environmental and contextual risk factors for school Non-attendance

Risk factor	Description
School ethos and environment	<p>A young person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience bullying (found to be the most common school factor) Have a lack of involvement in extra curricula activities perceive behaviour management policies/approaches to be punitive and harsh feel unsafe within the school environment lack a sense of belonging within the school setting have poor relationships with teaching staff not feel valued fall through the net due to poor attendance processes within the setting
Curriculum, teaching and learning	<p>A young person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> struggle to access the curriculum due to lack of appropriate differentiation and/or unrecognised needs perceive lessons as boring not feel supported with academic or other additional needs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perceive learning tasks to be unachievable • lack opportunities to experience success in their learning
Parent / carer attitudes	Parents/carers may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have little involvement or interest in their child's academic lives • adopt a disciplinary approach to school Non-attendance • have poor relationships, difficult interactions and/or conflict with school professionals • have experienced difficulties within their own education
Family / community	A young person may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have experienced high levels of conflict within the home • have parents/carers who have difficulty caring for them due to lack of capacity • live with parents/carers who have mental health difficulties • live in unsafe or problematic neighbourhoods

Kearney, (2008)

To support the identification of risk factors The Profile of Risk Schedule has been included in Appendix 1. The Profile of Risk schedule consists of five key areas, each of which contains a number of items you are asked to consider in terms of their possible importance in influencing emotionally based attendance difficulties.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be a key feature of school non-attendance. It can be described as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. When people think of anxiety, often it is as a psychological discomfort, but there can also be a physical presentation which may include; shortness of breath, palpitations, hot flushes, nausea, needing the toilet more, headaches and blushing.

A significant difference between worry and anxiety is that worry is considered to be more controllable than anxiety which is generally considered to be out of one's control.

Fear, anxiety and worry are such a normal part of the human experience that we rarely stop to think about them for example, when we hear a sudden noise, we feel startled; If we face a major decision most of us will fret about it. With these temporary anxieties we usually just keep going and don't generally stop to analyse what is happening.

In fact, lower levels of anxiety (or higher levels that are temporary) are useful to us. They cause our bodies to release a quick burst of the chemical adrenalin that produces extra energy, more muscle power and speeds our brain up. That can help us in things like school tests or escaping from physical danger.

When anxiety interferes with everyday life, especially socialising or going to school or missing a lessons, people give it various names like 'anxiety disorder', 'social phobia', 'agoraphobia', 'school phobia' or 'anxiety based school Non-attendance'.

Sometimes anxious feelings can lead to a child struggling to get into school or missing a significant amount of school and that is when it becomes EBSN.

When the anxiety is linked to school non-attendance, the young person may experience anxious and fearful thoughts around attending school and their ability to cope with school. These feelings may also be accompanied by physiological symptoms of anxiety such as nausea, vomiting, shaking, sweating etc., and may start the night before, or even a few days before school.

In order to avoid these overwhelming emotions and the fear associated with school attendance the young person may withdraw from the situation, refusing to get ready for school or to leave the house or enter the school. The young person may also turn to hostile behaviours as a means to avoid the threatening situation and to try and control what feels like a very 'out-of-control' situation (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, feelings of anxiety in a young person can be increased by things offered to demonstrate support for them.

For example:

- Parents/carers' own anxiety about their young person's situation

- Other people around them minimising or dismissing the feelings relating to the anxiety
- Reassurance that inadvertently demonstrates that there really is something to be afraid of

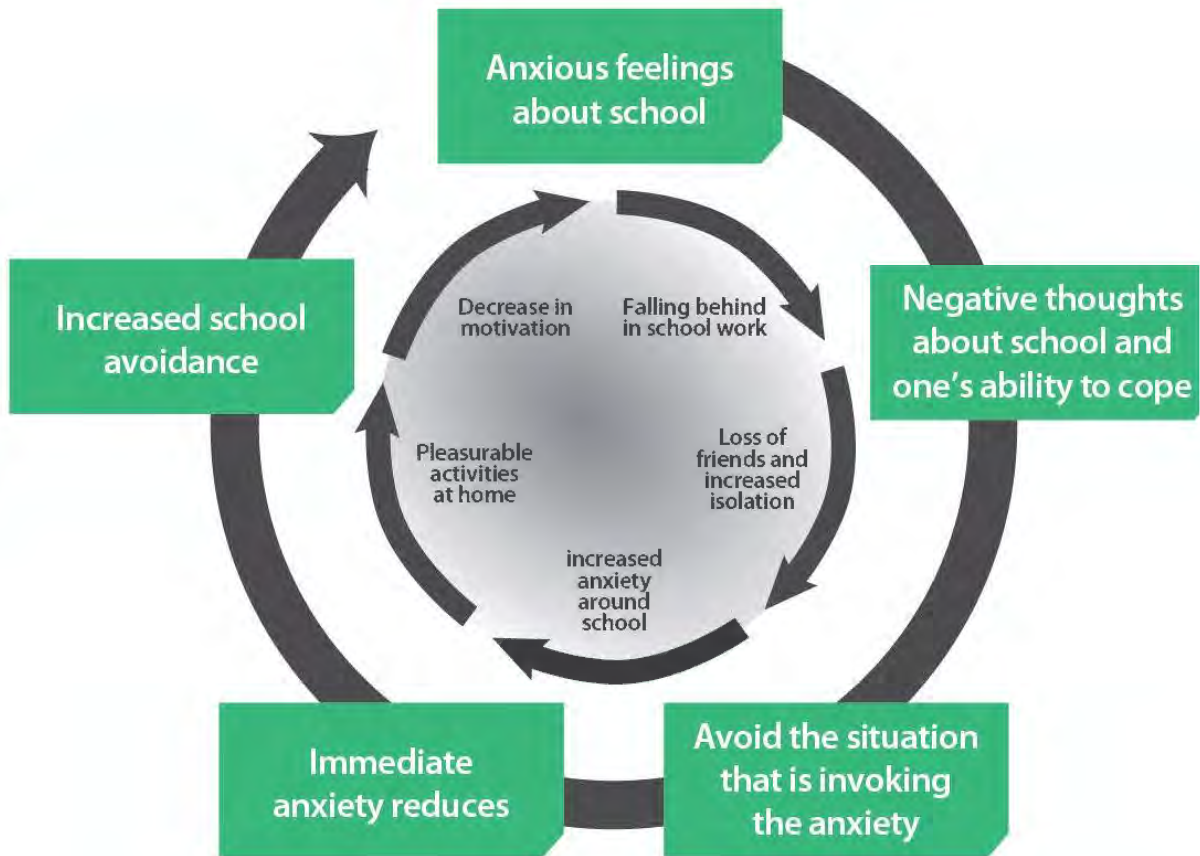


Figure 1. Diagram showing the initial anxiety causing the Non-attendance and the secondary maintenance factors (Taken from West Sussex EBSA guidance, 2018)

What is most important from this diagram is that the sense of relief that comes from avoiding the situation acts as a powerful re-enforcer for the avoidance of anxiety. The relief 'rewards' the avoidance behaviour while at the same time undermining the young person's belief in their ability to handle the situation. This can lead to a further vicious circle with anxiety increasing over time.

Autism and Anxiety

It is well documented that anxiety and poor stress management are common in children with autism and that anxiety may worsen during adolescence, as young people face increasingly complex social interactions and often become more aware of their differences and interpersonal difficulties. The Autism Education Trust (AET) reports that many children and young people on the autism spectrum experience high levels of anxiety due to their difficulties in interpreting the world they live in. As yet, there is little research into the prevalence of those with Autism who avoid school, but evidence and experience suggests that due to the anxieties that the children with Autism experience they are at increased risk of exhibiting EBSN.

The AET website cites [three key areas](#) of difference which create high levels of stress and anxiety, and this can have a profound impact on an individual's performance and behaviour.

Sensory processing and Integration

Differences in perceiving sensory information. Hypo (low sensitivity), hyper (high sensitivity), touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste, vestibular inner ear (balance), proprioceptive (body awareness).

Flexible Thinking, Information Processing and Understanding

Differences in perception, planning, understanding concepts, generalising, predicting, managing transitions, passions for interests and ability to absorb auditory or spoken information.

Social Understanding and Communication

Differences in understanding social behaviour and the feelings of others, which informs the development of friendships and relationships. Differences in understanding and expressing communication and language, with skills ranging from individuals who are highly articulate, to others who may be non-verbal. Good language skills may mask a deep level of misunderstanding.

Schools are complex social environments that children with autism can find exhausting; they are spending cognitive energy managing this social experience and can become overloaded.

Given the increased risk of a child with Autism experiencing high levels of anxiety that may lead to school avoidance, it is essential that there is early attention and intervention given to developing child's social skills, emotional literacy, resilience and their ability to self-regulate.

In Solihull, schools are encouraged to view Autism as a difference not a deficit – and use an empowering and inclusive approach which enables work with pupils as partners. The SISS Autism team offers a whole school audit of good practice based on the AET Autism Standards and provide an oversight of areas for development of successful inclusion of Autistic pupils.

SISS Autism and where appropriate, the CEP Service also offers individual consultations for pupils of concern where there is a diagnosis of Autism; pupils are on the pathway to a diagnosis; or there is concern that the child may have Autism. In the context of EBSN SISS Autism could be critical in providing insight and guidance for this group of children to ensure a quick return to school.

The Solihull response to EBSN

Solihull MBC is promoting a graduated approach to supporting CYP with EBSN which involves three stages:

1. **Universal:** Whole school, evidence-based approaches should be utilised to promote wellness enhancing, resilient environments and reduce the likelihood of EBSN concerns emerging. Whole-school training can be accessed to support staff members understanding of what such approaches look like in practice and how they can be successfully implemented.
2. **Targeted:** If staff members identify concerns about a CYP in relation to EBSN, targeted, evidence-based interventions should be implemented following a plan, do, review cycle. Interventions should be tailored to each individual CYP based upon information gathered about the CYP and the reasons known for school Non-attendance. Advice should be sought from SISS, SEPS or other professionals schools use, if required.
3. **Specialist:** CYP who are identified as requiring external involvement from psychological services (e.g. Solar) as evidenced through the Plan, Do, Review process. This can be accessed via a referral to Solar or the school Educational Psychologist.

TARGETED SUPPORT

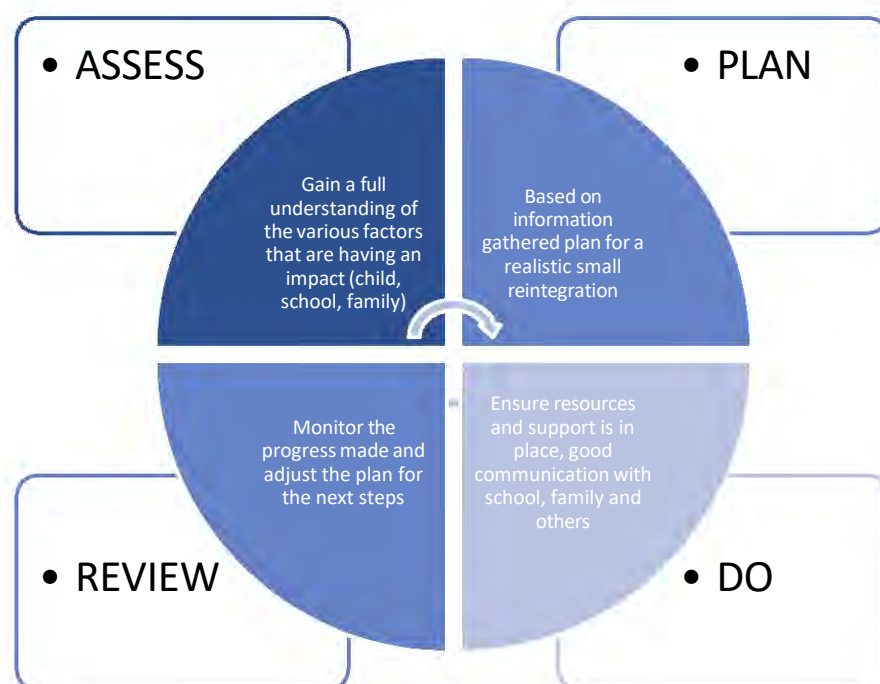
Assessment and Intervention

As a staff team, it is important that there is a shared understanding and awareness of EBSN indicators, so that CYP at risk of EBSN can be identified as early as possible so that effective support can be put in place. It may be that young people present with few or many different indicators of EBSN. Please see Table 3 below which outlines some possible early indicators of EBSN (those you may notice before the CYP's patterns of behaviour become entrenched) and indicators of EBSN (those you may notice once the CYP's patterns of behaviour are more established). In order to recognise the possible indicators of EBSN it is important that staff members remain curious about CYP's behaviour, try to refrain from making assumptions and share information with colleagues to establish a holistic picture.

Table 3: Indicators of EBSN

Early indicators of EBSN	Indicators of EBSN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporadic attendance and/or lateness • Parent reporting that CYP does not want to come to school • Physical signs of stress believed to be linked to stress (e.g. stomach ache, sickness, headache) or complaining of feeling ill. • Behavioural changes or fluctuations e.g. interactions with others, reduced motivation and engagement in learning tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periods of prolonged absence • Persistent lateness • Parent/carer is unable to support CYP to attend school • Identifiable patterns within non-school attendance e.g. specific days, subjects, staff members • Providing minor reasons for school absences • CYP experiences anxiety in relation to home factors e.g. parental separation, divorce, conflict, loss, bereavement • CYP displays greater reliance upon family members e.g. separation anxiety, increased proximity • Concerns around academic progress due to non-school attendance / missed education • CYP displays increased anxiety in relation to their learning and/or poor self-concept as a learner • Low self-esteem and/or lack of confidence • Struggling in relation to peer relationships and/or social situations • Physical signs of stress believed to be linked to stress (e.g. stomach ache, sickness, headache) or complaining of feeling ill. • Displays of emotional dysregulation and/or distress

Where risks of EBSN are identified, it is important to gather further information from the young person, families and school staff involved with the young person and put in place strategies to support them **as soon as possible**. Fast action can prevent EBSN from becoming entrenched and result in much better outcomes. Schools should follow thorough assess, plan, do and review cycles with the young person at the centre of the planning and interventions.



Information Gathering

Once there has been a difficulty identified there should be a prompt information gathering process to explore reasons for the difficulties. The main aims of this are to gather information regarding the various child, family and school factors that may be contributing to the emotionally based school avoidance experienced by the child.

Working with the Child/Young Person

Once it has been identified that a CYP is displaying indicators of EBSN, it is important that staff begin to gather further information regarding the child's thoughts, feelings and wishes so that any support or intervention can be tailored and personalised accordingly. Remember that any child 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 will raise their anxiety as you are proposing taking away their coping mechanism. Always a good place to start is to acknowledge it will be difficult, but

you would like to know how they think and feel. It is important that the adult working with them does not dismiss anxieties or worries.

There are numerous ways in which staff members may choose to do this, tailoring the approach to the CYP's individual strengths and needs, however Appendix 2 provides some ideas to support staff in gathering the CYP's voice.

Working with Families and gaining views

It is important that time is taken to build collaborative partnerships working together with families in the best interests of the young person. Families may find it difficult to talk about the concerns they have and the difficulties they experience in getting their child to school. During the initial meeting it is important to gather background information, establish the current situation and the family's views. There should be regular contact with families throughout the assess, plan, do and review cycles and schools should identify a key person to communicate with parents.

Working with school staff and gaining views

It is essential that representatives from schools seek information from members of staff who work most closely with the child or young person. We all respond differently according to the environment, situations or task and with different people. Each member of staff may have valuable information to help identify triggers for anxiety and strategies the young person responds positively to. In particular it is important to seek out the views of any members of staff the young person speaks positively about and any member of staff where relationships may be more difficult.

Formulating an understanding of the behaviour

Following the gathering of information from the child, family, school and other professionals involved it is important that 'sense' is made of it. In other words, an overview of the whole picture and various factors are obtained and potential formulations or hypotheses regarding the behaviour are formed. These should then inform the intervention and return to school support plan.

In order to understand the cause of EBSN, professionals must consider the CYP's underlying needs and how these may be contributing towards their presenting behaviour. It can be helpful to consider what the function of the behaviour is and what it may be communicating. Try to separate behaviours from feelings and underlying needs.



Adopting a systemic perspective

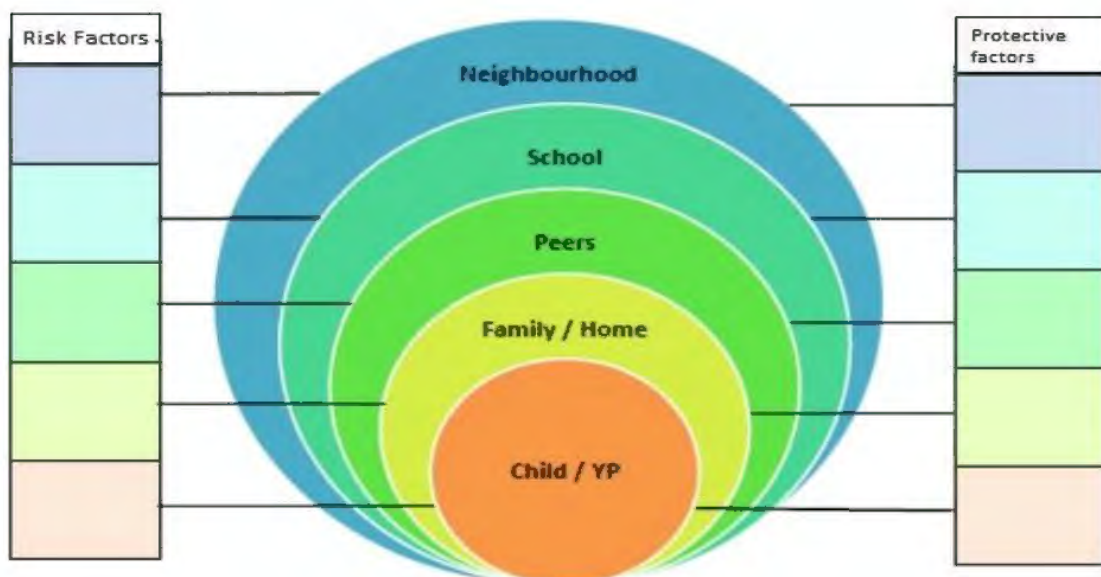
Behaviour does not emerge within a social vacuum; therefore, it is important to consider how systemic factors may be influencing the CYP. A range of underlying, intertwined, casual factors may be promoting and/or maintaining EBSN behaviour across the CYP's systems (e.g. family/home, peers, school, and neighbourhood). This figure below depicts how a CYP can be conceptualised as sitting within a wider range of systems; influencing factors within these systems can affect one another and also the CYP.

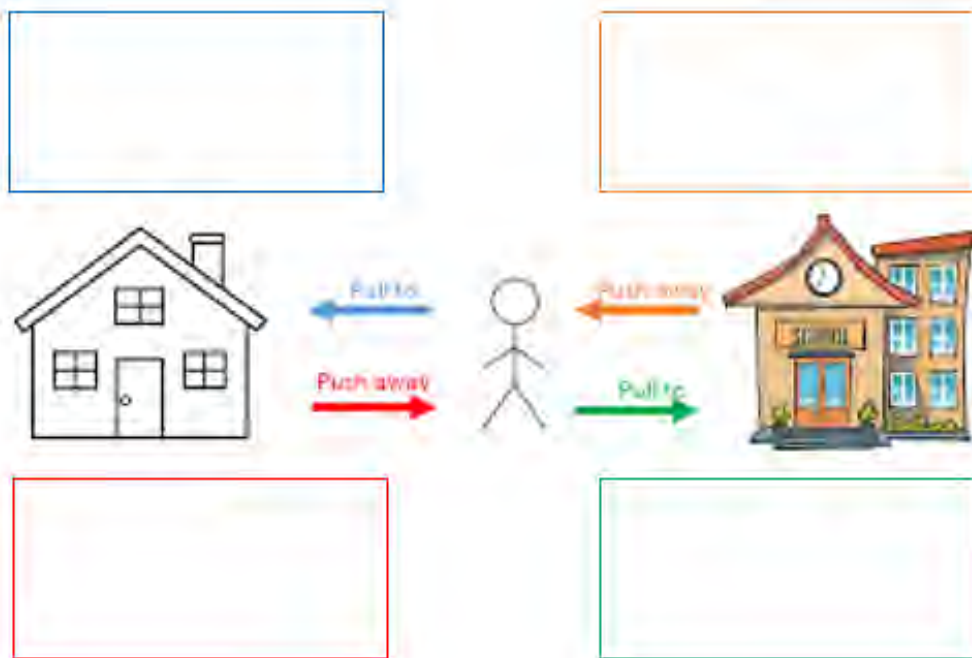
Risk and protective Factors

The diverse range of influencers that may exist across CYP's systems are often referred to in the literature as 'risk' and 'protective' factors:

- Risk factors: influencing factors that reduce the likelihood of CYP to engage in school
- Protective factors: influencing factors that promote CYP to engage in school

Risk and protective factors are likely to be present across systems. The balance between these factors is likely to fluctuate. The diagrams below can help you to formulate the risk and protective factors present for individual children.





As well as utilising the diagrams above in formulations, there is a form provided in Appendix 4 that may help collate, integrate and analyse the information gathered from a variety of sources.

Intervention planning and delivery

After the information gathering and analysis process has occurred an 'action plan' should be co-produced with parents, the CYP and any other professionals involved with outcomes that focus on a return to school.

The outcomes on the action plan should be individual to that child and therefore each plan will be different. The outcomes should be realistic and achievable with the aim of reintegrating the CYP. The return should be gradual and graded. A part-time timetable may be necessary as part of this process, but this should always be temporary and not seen as a long-term option as all children are entitled to a full time education.

An optimistic approach should be taken, if the CYP fails to attend or carry out the actions as described in the action plan one day, start again the next day. It should be anticipated that there is likely to be more difficulties following a weekend, illness or school holiday.

At the start of the plan the CYP is likely to show more distress, and everyone involved should be aware of this and work together to agree firm, consistent approaches. A unified approach is recommended between all involved and any concerns should be communicated away from the young person.

The format of an action plan is flexible but an example of one can be found in Appendix 5.

Key elements of a plan

The literature in this area has identified key elements of support that should be in place in order to increase the likelihood of successful reintegration. These are:

- A return to school at the earliest opportunity.
- Early home visits if appropriate to discuss the CYP reluctance to attend school.
- All parties to agree actions and keep them until the next review date.
- A personalised programme for each CYP.
- Ensuring the CYP's needs are clearly communicated with all staff in the setting.
- Identification of a key member of staff who can be approached by the CYP if anxiety becomes temporarily overwhelming in school.
- A safe space in school that the CYP can go if needed.
- Consideration of what support the family requires.

External agency support as part of the graduated response

External advice and guidance should be sought if professionals are unsure or under confident planning or implementing interventions, and in instances where:

- The CYP has significant, on-going mental health needs or a history of such

- The CYP is on a waiting list for therapeutic support with an external agency
- The CYP is unable to come into school
- The CYP does not have a trusting relationship with an adult in school

Services that are able to support schools with the initial assess, plan, do and review cycles are:

- SISS SEMH team
- SISS ASD team (for those young people with an ASC diagnosis)
- SISS CLD team
- Inclusion team
- SEPS
- Any other professional currently involved in supporting the young person and/or their family.

Interventions

As part of the schools graduated approach following the plan, do, review process, it is important that evidence-based interventions are offered to CYP to support them to reduce the barriers to non-school attendance.

Questions to ask when considering whether a school-based intervention is appropriate:

- Is the CYP in the right place emotionally and psychologically to access an intervention?
- Does the child 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 CYP 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 CYP 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 CYP's needs, or are the issues broader (e.g. across home, neighbourhood) and require external agency support?

Interventions may support CYP to understand their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and plan a way forward.

Monitoring and evaluating interventions

As with all interventions, it is crucial that we monitor the impact of the interventions that we utilise. By assessing the CYP's progress in response to the intervention, adaptations can be made accordingly, and we can identify an appropriate end point.

Data collection can take the form of quantitative and/or qualitative measures, such as:

- Quantitative data: attendance figures and progress data
- Qualitative data: such as exploring the views and experiences of CYP and families or measuring behavioural changes.

Where possible part time timetables should be regularly reviewed alongside the CYP. An example template for reviewing a reintegration plan can be found in appendix 6.

SPECIALIST SUPPORT

When there has been limited or no progress in response to targeted interventions over time, following the plan, do, review process, it is advised to seek psychological support.

When making a referral to either Solar or the Solihull Educational Psychology Service (SEPs) team, settings should include evidence of their graduated response including, collecting the views of CYP and families using EBSN tools and resources (Appendix 2), coming to a shared agreement of what the functions of EBSN are (Appendix 3), developing an intervention plan with CYP and families (may include reasonable adjustments or gradual reintegration), monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the intervention plan (Appendix 5 and 6).

Solar

To make a referral to Solar, a referral form should be completed. This can be found at:

<https://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/our-services/solar-youth-services/professional/referrals/>

FURTHER SUPPORT OPTIONS

- *Urban Heard* - Further information can be found at [Services | Urban Heard](#)
- *Travel Trainers* - [Solihull Independent Travel Training \(ITT\)](#)
- *Ordinary Magic* - [Ordinary Magic – Come Join the Fun](#)

APPENDIX 1: Profile of Risk of emotional based school avoidance

The Profile of Risk schedule consists of five key areas, each of which contains a number of items you are asked to consider in terms of their possible importance in influencing emotionally based attendance difficulties.

You should be as objective as possible when completing the schedule and base assessments on evidence.

During the process of completing the schedule, it may be useful to not factors associated with particular items, such as:

- This has been an issue in the past but doesn't appear to be now.
- This has been an issue in the past and has persisted as an important item.

Items on the scale are not rated numerically, like a typical rating scale, as one single item (e.g. death of a parent) is so important it cannot be rated in the same way other items might be rated.

If the profile suggests to you that the CYP is at risk of emotionally based school avoidance, the next step would be to obtain the views of the young person, parents and other staff.

	Level of concern				
Loss and Change	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Death of parent, relative, friend					
Death of pet					
Sudden traumatic event					
Sudden separation from parent					
Moving house, school, area					
Loss of classmate					
Parent, relative, friend illness					
Note on key items					
Family Dynamic	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Inappropriate parenting					
Birth of new child					
Parents separated					
Parents arguing/fighting					
Practical problems bringing child to school					
Problems with parental control					
Jealous of sibling at home					
Note on key items					

Social Personal	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Being bullied					
Seems to have few friends/friendship issues					
English as an additional language					
Dislikes play/break times					
Few leisure interests					
Note on key items					
Curriculum/Learning issues	High	Med	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					
Note on key items					

THE IDEAL SCHOOL TECHNIQUE

Guidelines for the Drawing the Ideal School Technique

Introduction:

The 'Drawing the Ideal School Technique' has been adapted from an approach developed by Moran (2001). Heather Moran has been a teacher and educational psychologist and now works as a clinical psychologist. The technique enables children to become actively involved in understanding themselves and expressing their views. It is based on ideas from Personal Construct Psychology which was introduced by Kelly in 1955. This approach seeks to explore children's important or core constructs about themselves, and how they view the world. Children (and adults) behave in a way which makes sense to them according to their own view of the world. We are likely to understand children (and the sort of provision which is most likely to help them) more fully if they are able to express these core constructs to us.

To summarise, this type of work attempts to:

"Understand the child's unique perspective on life through the careful use of questions and extremely sensitive note of the child's answers." (Moran 2001)

The technique itself is very simple to use once the child understands what is expected. This sheet gives guidelines for the adult completing the technique to follow and the next two pages list how to complete the technique.

Guidelines for use:

1. Equipment needed: a black pen and two sheets of plain A4 paper.
2. Allow about an hour to complete the activity, perhaps with a short break if necessary.
3. Explain to the pupil that you are going to be doing the writing today, acting as scribe, this is to take the pressure off the pupil and keep the process moving.
4. The pupil is asked to make quick drawings or sketches (rather than detailed drawings), reassure the pupil that it doesn't matter if an error is made.
5. It is important to record exactly what the pupil says using their own words.
6. If the pupil is overly anxious about drawing either model stick people drawings first or just record the pupil's verbal responses.

7. Allow time for the pupil to process the requests – repeat/reward/simplify the questions if not understood,
8. Provide reassurance that there is no right or wrong answers or responses.
9. Provide encouragement and praise for the pupil's involvement with the activity.
10. Be sensitive about sharing the drawings with others, ask the child's permission and ensure that other adults understand that the child has trusted you in revealing such views which must be respected.
11. Talk to other colleagues about planning any follow up work which might be indicated.

Part 1: Drawing the kind of school you would NOT like to go to.

1. The School

Think about the kind of school you would not like to go to. This is not a real school. Make a quick drawing of this school in the middle of this paper.

Tell me three things about this school. What kind of school is this?

2. The Classroom

Think about the sort of classroom you would not like to be in. Make a quick drawing of this classroom in the school.

Draw some of the things in this classroom.

3. The Children

Think about some of the children at the school you would not like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of these children. What are the children doing? Tell me three things about these children.

4. The Adults

Think about some of the adults at the school you would not like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of the adults. What are the adults doing? Tell me three things about these adults.

5. Me

Think about the kind of school you would not like to go to. Make a quick drawing of what you would be doing at this school. Tell me three things about the way you feel at this school.

Part 2: Drawing the kind of school you would like to go to.

6. The School

Think about the kind of school you would like to go to. This is not a real school. Make a quick drawing of this school in the middle of the middle of this paper.

Tell me three things about this school. What kind of school is this?

7. The Classroom

Think about the sort of classroom you would like to be in. Make a quick drawing of this classroom in this school.

Draw some of the things in this classroom.

8. The Children

Think about some of the children at the school you would like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of these children. What are the children doing? Tell me three things about these children

9. The Adults

Think about some of the adults at the school you would like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of these adults. What are the adults doing? Tell me three things about these adults.

10. Me

Think about the kind of school you would like to go to. Make a quick drawing of what you would be doing at this school. Tell me three things about the way you feel at this school.

Introduction

The blob tree was developed by Pip Wilson and Ian Long in the early 1980's. The tool can be used in a variety of settings to provide CYP the opportunity to identify and discuss their feelings. Lots of different blobs are presented in the same setting, allowing students to pick one they relate to, promoting a healthy discussion with teachers, parents/guardians, or support staff. There is no right or wrong interpretation of the blobs and they can be viewed in many different ways as they show a variety of feelings.

Example questions:

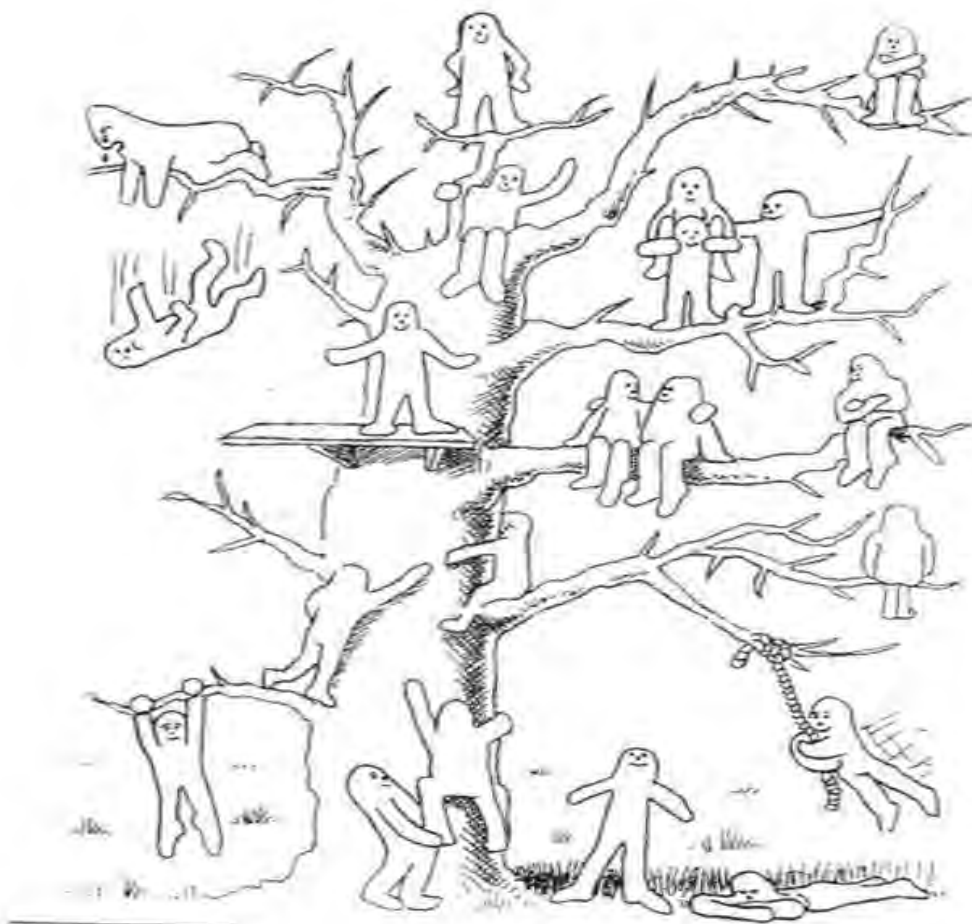
Can you point to or colour in the blob to show me how you feel when you are at home and when you are at school.

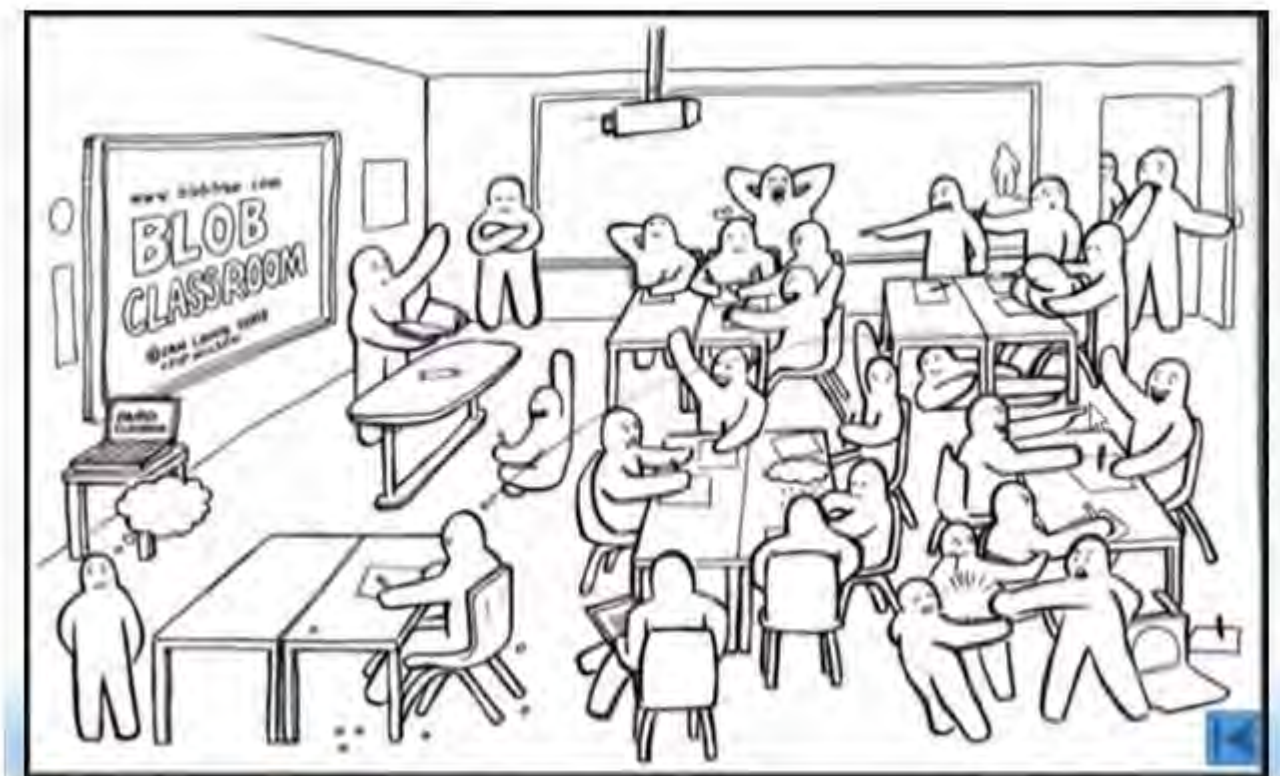
Which blob would best describe you at school now?

Which blob would your teacher pick to describe you now?

Which blob would your friend pick to describe you now?

Which blob would you pick to describe you at break and lunchtime?





MULTI-ELEMENT PLAN: PUPIL DISCUSSION

This pupil discussion uses a Functional Behavioural Analysis (FBA) approach to understanding a CYP's behaviour.

Notes for completing the Pupil discussion form

There are materials below to help you work with the child or young person to gather their views and ideas. You can summarise these ideas on the attached Pupil Discussion Form. Work through the form, using the questions as prompts. The following notes provide additional guidance:

Note 1: When you ask the child “We want to understand the reasons why you sometimes...”, it is generally best to complete the phrase using their own words which they have used to say what they need help with. For example, if they say that they need help with *their anger* or because they are always *getting into trouble*, you can say “We want to understand the reasons why you... sometimes get angry” or “...feel you are always getting into trouble”.

Note 2: It can be helpful for children to think of the problem behaviour as an external ‘thing’, rather than as an integral part of themselves. Again, try to use their own words and ask them to come up with a description of what the problem behaviour would look like if it *was* a thing. If you like, you can use the ‘Externalisation’ cards to get the conversation started.

Note 3: Here, you will be using the ‘Functions of Behaviour’ cards. Spread out the Functions Cards and ask the child to sort them out into two piles: ‘most like me’ and ‘least like me’. They then should rank each pile with the ‘most’ or the ‘least’ on the left moving to the right. You may choose to use a few cards, or all of them, depending on what you think the child will be able to cope with. Record on the Pupil Discussion Form up to 5 statements which are ‘Most Like Me’ and up to 5 which are ‘Least Like Me’.

Note 4: Repeat the ‘Most / Least Like Me’ again, this time alongside the Environment cards. You use the same procedure, asking the child to decide which aspects of the environment, shown on the cards are most / least important to them. Again, record up to 5 aspects which they identify as most and least important.

Note 5: Here you will use the ‘Responding to Difficulties’ cards. Once you have completed the Pupil Discussion form, you will have gathered the pupil’s views about the reasons behind their behaviour and some strategies which they feel would be helpful to them. These ideas will help you as you work through the formulation template.

Multi-Element Plan

Pupil discussion

How's it going at school?



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



What are you good at?



What do you like doing?

Is there anything that you are worried about at the moment?

Do you think that you need help with anything?



What do you think your teachers or the TAs think that you need help with?

Function of behaviour

We want to understand the reasons why you sometimes.... (see note 1)

Externalisation cards

If [this/your behaviour] was a thing, person or creature, what would it look like? *(see note 2)*

Function of behaviour cards

Using these cards, think about what [this/your behaviour] would say? *(see note 3)*

<div>Most like me :</div> <div>1.</div>	<div>Least like me:</div> <div>1.</div>
---	---

Environmental strategies (*behaviour environment cards*)

We want to look at what might help you in school and we wondered about your ideas. What are the most important things for us to think about? All your ideas will be considered, although they may not all be carried out. *(see note 4)*

<div>Most like me :</div> <div>1.</div>	<div>Least like me:</div> <div>1.</div>
---	---

Skill Development

Look at the scaling that you did at the start about how it is going in school. Think about how you could move up the scale a little bit.



What would you **like** to learn or get better at?

What do you think it would be **helpful** to learn?

What do you think you **need** to learn?

What or who do you think could help you to learn these skills?

How do you think we could help you to remember to use these skills?

Praise / Reward strategies

What do you think that adults should do when you do well or when you have a good day at school?

How would you like them to show that they have noticed?

Who would you like them to tell?



Responding to difficulties

When you start to feel anxious or worried or uncomfortable, what can adults do to help you? What can they help you to do? Do adults ever do things which can make you feel more anxious than less anxious? (see note 5)



Winds me up

--

Helps me

--

If you feel that you can't actually cope with what is happening, what helps? Is there anything which really doesn't help?

--

--

If you really lose it, what is the best way that people can help you through that and make sure that everybody stays safe?

--

--

Afterwards, what's the best way of helping you to return to lessons?

How long does it take before you are ready to talk about what happened?

--

--

Externalisation cards (Pale Green)



An
Animal



A Monster



A Shape



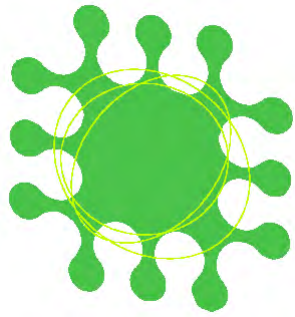
An Alien



A Super-Hero

A Cartoon Character





A Thing



A Person

Functions of Behaviour Statements (Lemon)

I don't like it
when the teacher
is unfair



I get bored



I don't want
people to see
me cry



I find it difficult
to concentrate



I want other kids
to like me



I like to feel
powerful



I like to be in
control



I don't want to
do that



I don't like being
shouted at



I like to wind up
my friends /
teachers



I hate being told
what to do

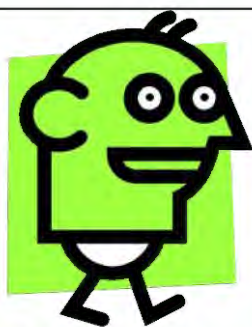


I don't like it
when it's noisy



<p>I don't like looking stupid</p> 	<p>I like it when adults listen to me</p> 	<p>I hate.... (writing etc)</p> 	<p>I like to be sent home or out of lessons</p> 
<p>I like people to notice me</p> 	<p>I get wound up</p> 	<p>I like to be in charge of my friends</p> 	<p>I find it hard to accept praise and rewards in public</p> 
<p>I don't get help when I ask for it</p> 	<p>I don't like to be treated like a small child</p> 	<p>I am bullied and nobody knows</p> 	<p>I am embarrassed</p> 

I don't like
changes in
routine



My head is
too full

I don't like to
seem different



I want adults to
like me



I like talking to
adults



I like to have
things / space of
my own



I get angry



I wish I had
more friends



I don't know what
I'm supposed to
do



I dislike
changes in staff






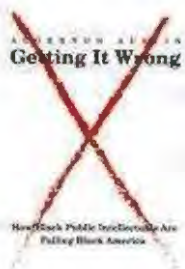






I'm hungry














I worry about
things at home



<p>I worry about my school work</p> 	<p>When I have a problem, I get a funny feeling in my stomach</p> 	<p>I feel scared when I have a test</p> 	<p>I have trouble going to school in the mornings because I feel nervous or afraid</p> 
<p>I feel afraid that I will make a fool of myself in front of people</p> 	<p>I worry that I will make a mistake</p> 	<p>I have to keep checking that I have done things right</p> 	<p>Functions of Behaviour Statements</p>
<p>I feel afraid if I have to do something in front of my class</p> 	<p>I worry about my parents/family/friends/pets</p> 	<p>I feel afraid of what might happen in the future</p> 	

Environment Cards (Pale Blue)

<p>Where you sit (at the back, next to the window)</p> 	<p>Who you sit with</p> 	<p>How noisy it is</p> 	<p>Having a 'time out' card</p> 	<p>Not having to read out loud</p> 
<p>Help with making friends</p> 	<p>Working with different adults</p> 	<p>The way people talk to you</p> 	<p>More help in some lessons (which?)</p> 	<p>Having a quiet place to go</p> 
<p>Not being given too much to do in one go</p> 	<p>Instructions being repeated for you</p> 	<p>More handson learning</p> 	<p>Not so much writing</p> 	<p>Having a break (when? why?)</p> 

<p>Having a snack (when? why?)</p> 	<p>Running around outside</p> 	<p>Having a key worker</p> 	<p>Environment Cards</p>	
<p>Responding to difficulties (Pink)</p>				
<p>Distract me by</p> 	<p>Give me an excuse to leave the room</p> 	<p>Ask me to use my Time Out Card</p> 	<p>Remind me of my strengths</p> 	
<p>Touch me gently on my shoulder</p> 	<p>Remind me of the rules</p> 	<p>Remind me that I have a choice</p> 	<p>Remind me of consequences</p> 	

Speak to me very



firmly

Give me



'The Look'

Let me talk to an
adult that I
trust



Tell me to
'breathe'



Remove the
audience



Lead me from the



room

Use traffic



lights

Just smile at me



Make me laugh



Give me a hug



Remind me to



smile

Remind me of the
phone call home



<p>Ask 'would you like some space?'</p> 	<p>Help me with my work</p> 	<p>Praise me</p> 	<p>Remind me about my rewards</p> 
<p>Give me time to come round</p> 	<p>Get my key worker to help me out</p> 	<p>Talk things over</p> 	<p>Let me go to a safe place</p> 
<p>Help me break down the task into small steps</p> 	<p>Praise me when you see me do something you know I find hard to do</p> 	<p>Go through my routines/ school day and tell me about any changes</p> 	<p>Responding to Difficulties</p>

Rag activities:

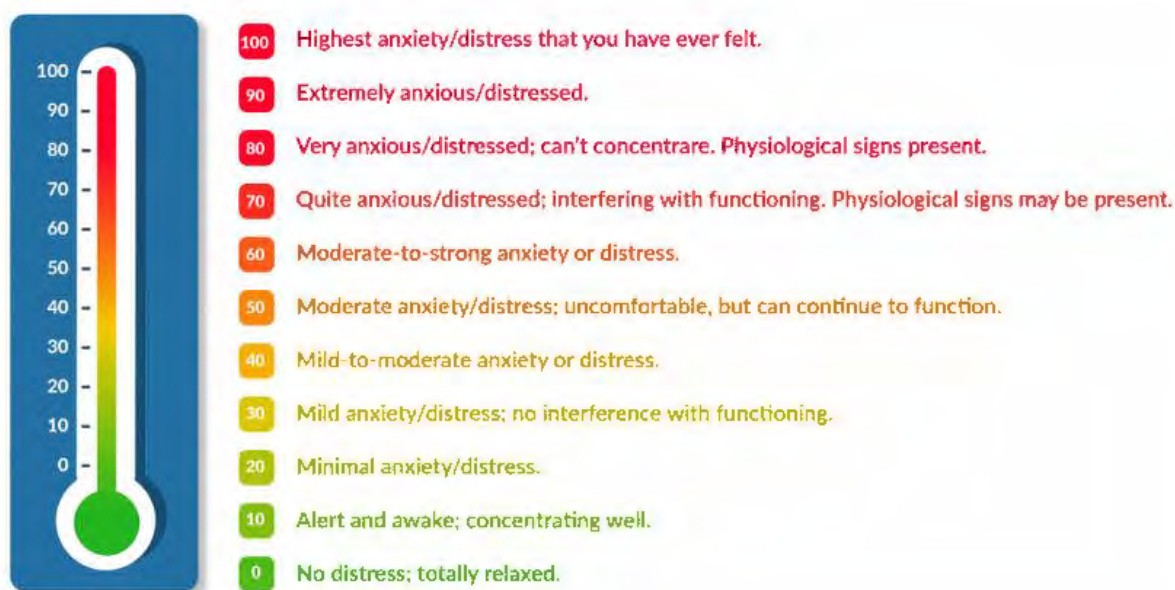
To gain a better idea of how a CYP thinks and feels about their school environment it may be helpful to use a copy of their timetable and/or diagram of the school layout. You can then ask the CYP to 'RAG' (red, amber, green) their timetable and/or diagram of school layout according to a self-made rating scale.

Collaboratively agree upon a key; for example:

- Green = I am happy here or I enjoy this subject
- Amber = I feel ok here or I find this subject alright
- Red = I feel uncomfortable here or I do not enjoy this subject

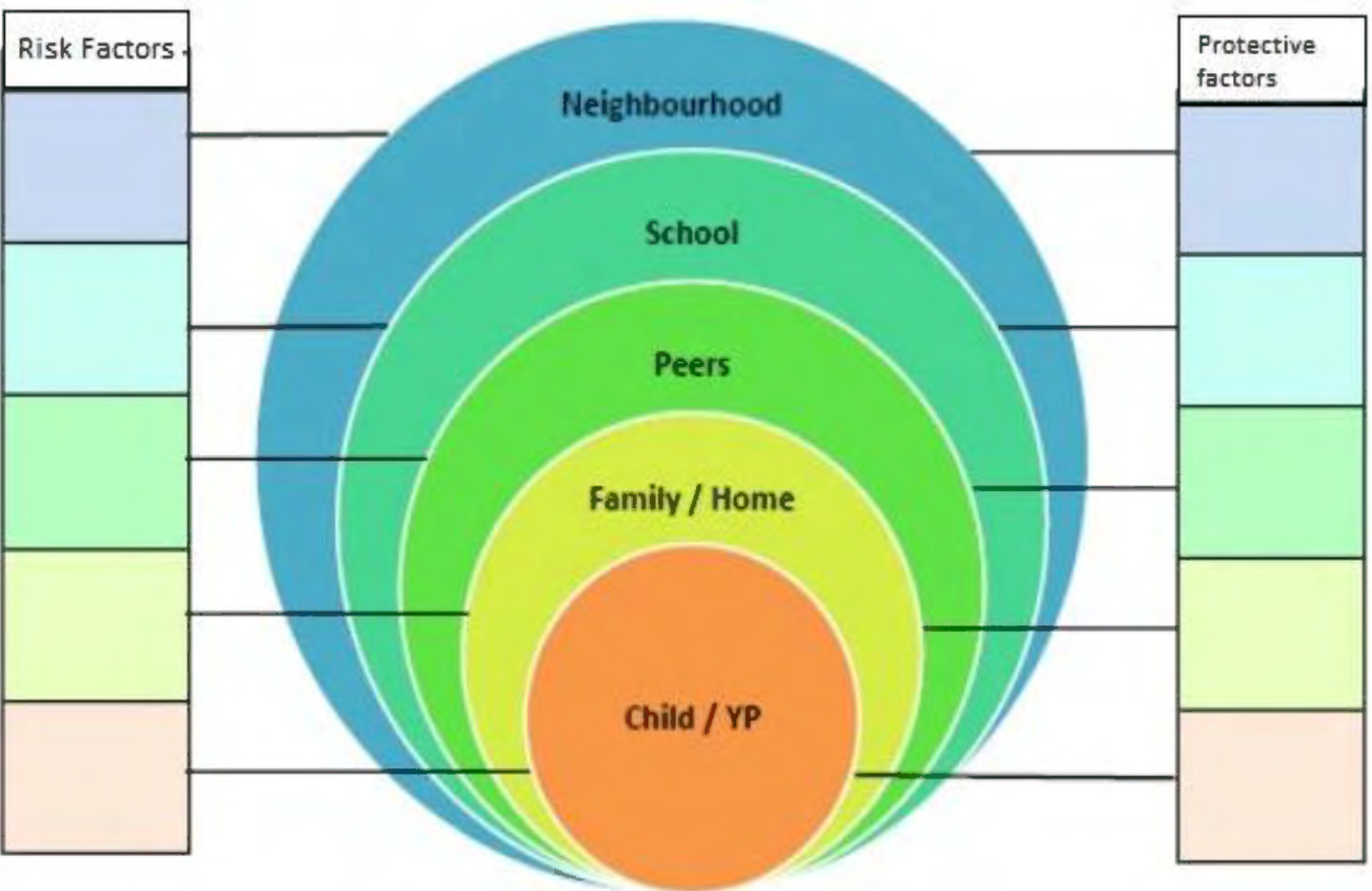
Subjective units of distress / scaling:

Scaling can also be used to further understand what lessons, times of the day (break time, lunch time, assemblies, lesson transitions) or areas in school (café, playground, classroom) the CYP finds least or most difficult. You may wish to provide the CYP with examples, such as those mentioned above, and ask them to verbally or non-verbally indicate their level of distress on the scale provided.



These activities can provide useful conversation starters, further exploration around what may be causing a CYP difficulty and/or anxiety within the school setting can be further explored through follow-up questions. Try using open questions rather than closed.

APPENDIX 3: SYSTEMIC RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS TEMPLATE





Pull to

Push away



Push away

Pull to



APPENDIX 4: FORMULATION TEMPLATE

Name		School	
Year Group		Key school staff	
Other agencies involved			
Description of behaviour			
<p><i>What is the current rate of attendance?</i> <i>Are there any patterns to Non-attendance e.g. particular lessons or days?</i> <i>When did the behaviour first occur?</i> <i>What does the behaviour look like? What does the child/young person say about specific fears and difficulties?</i></p>			
Risk factors school, child and family			
<p><i>Using the risk factor analysis (Appendix 1) record relevance risk factors</i></p>			
Strengths and protective factors			
<p><i>What strengths does the CYP person have?</i> <i>What are the CYP's aspirations or ambitions?</i> <i>What positive relationships do they have at home and school?</i> <i>What positive experiences have they had at school?</i> <i>What was different about the times when the young person was able to get to school?</i> <i>What has been helpful in the past?</i></p>			

Formulation and integration of various factors

What is people's understanding of why the young person is demonstrating these behaviours?

Are there any differences of views?

Function of behaviour

These are based on Kearney's (2008) four factors. Is the behaviour:

- *To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress?*
- *To escape difficult social situations*
- *To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g. change in family dynamic, concerned about the wellbeing of a parent).*
- *To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (e.g. play computer games, hang out with friends).*

Are there any maintaining factors?

Name	Year Group	Date:	
Contributors:			
Shared desired outcomes	Agreed Action (Intervention/Strategy)	Pre-intervention evaluation	Post-intervention evaluation
<p>What do we hope to see as a result?</p> <p>What is a realistic expectation given our starting point?</p> <p>How can we write this as a SMART target?</p>	<p>What?</p> <p>Who?</p> <p>How often?</p> <p>For how long?</p>	<p>What does it look like now?</p>	<p>What does it look like now?</p> <p>Have we achieved our shared desired outcome?</p> <p>If not, have we made steps forward towards our shared desired outcome?</p>

Name			Year Group		
Contributors:					
Date and time	Situation	What anxiety level did you expect in this situation? 0-100	What anxiety level at the start 0-100	What anxiety level at the end 0-100	Comments e.g. What went well? Was it easier/harder than expected? Do they feel confident to try again?

APPENDIX 7: EBSN PROCESS

Family and/or school identify a CYP at risk of EBSN

INFORMATION GATHERING (P 14 EBSN Guidance)

- ⇒ Attendance information (including individual lessons and late marks)
- ⇒ CYP Views (P.29 EBSN Guidance)
- ⇒ Family Views (P.15 EBSN Guidance)
- ⇒ Staff Views
- ⇒ EBSN Risk factor identification (P.25 EBSN Guidance)

Contact
Education
Inclusion Team
and keep them
updated.

FORMULATION AND ACTION PLANNING (P.17 EBSN Guidance)

INTERVENTION:

- ⇒ Decide appropriate evaluation measures.
- ⇒ Baseline measures
- ⇒ Evidence-based interventions

REVIEW

- ⇒ TAC (Family, school staff, other professionals involved)

Progress made but CYP still
requires on-going support

Progress made, attendance and
engagement improved. No
further action

Limited/no
progress

Refer to external
services (if child has
ASD diagnosis also
refer to SISS AIM
team).⁵³

If there are
any
concerns
regarding a
mental
health
need a
referral to
Solar
should be
made.

This can be
at any
point in the
process.

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