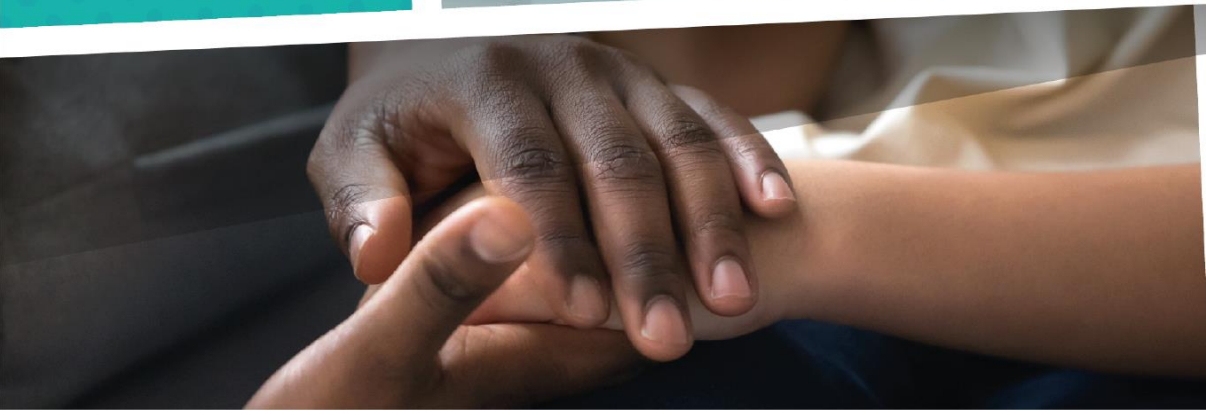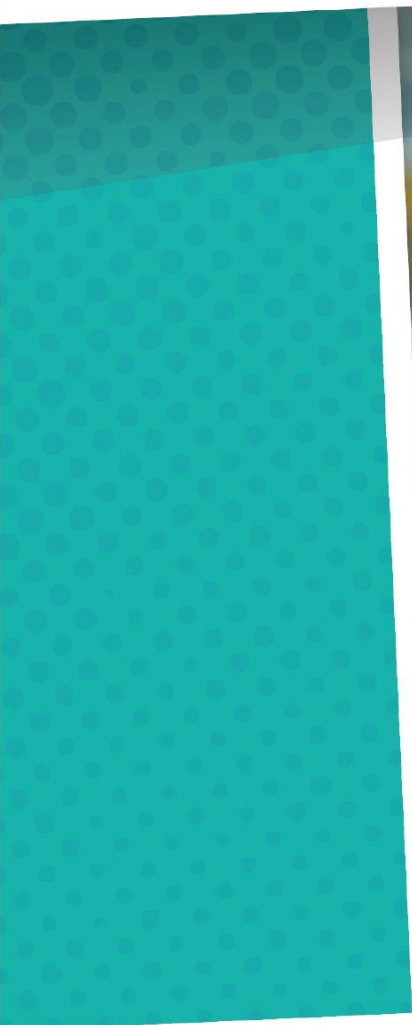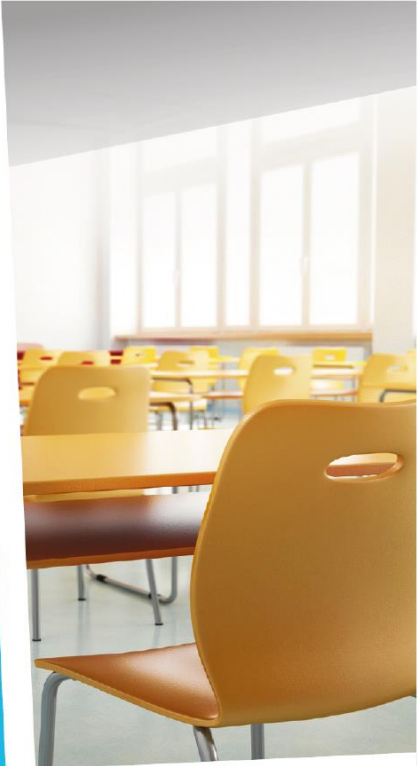Emotionally Based School Avoidance:

Information and Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings

Somerset Educational Psychology Service

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This guidance has been produced by the Somerset Educational Psychology Service and is created on the current evidence base of factors which are associated with positive outcomes.

The Somerset Educational Psychology service has also produced information for parents, children and young people [here](#).

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If you wish to discuss the contents of this document, please get in touch by contacting us at educationalpsychology@somerset.gov.uk.

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Introduction

Somerset Educational Psychology Service (EPS) prides itself on supporting the inclusion of children and young people (CYP) within schools in the county. School staff within Somerset have frequently indicated the prevalence of emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) - including the challenges experienced with supporting these vulnerable CYP and safely getting them back into school. It has also been reported that since COVID-19 and lockdown(s) (where the majority of children did not attend school for a period of time), CYP experiencing EBSA appears to have increased and schools would like additional support. This booklet / guide is (part of) our contribution to your request and we hope you find this information helpful in supporting you, your colleagues and your CYP experiencing EBSA. We have also created additional resources for parents / carers, as well as CYP, in order to directly support them with EBSA too, these are available on our EBSA [webpage here](#).

This guide is for **all** school staff from headteachers and members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), to teachers, teaching assistants, support staff and more. The whole school approaches section is particularly relevant and useful to members of SLT.

> We appreciate and value every CYP is different, with strategies and support needing to be personalised to each individual's needs. However, throughout this EBSA booklet there are these little boxes with snippets of key information, ideas and strategies to encourage effective whole school practice when supporting pupils' emotions, anxiety and/or EBSA.

What is 'Emotionally based school avoidance' (EBSA)?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), also known as Anxiety-based school avoidance (ABSA), is a term used to describe 'children and young people' (CYP) who experience persistent challenges in attending school due to negative feelings (such as anxiety). EBSA is when difficulties attending school have escalated to a point where the CYP has continued to struggle to attend school over a period of time and is associated with emotional and physical distress (Ladwig & Khan, 2007). School refusal behaviours are more than a CYP's dislike or disregard for school (Lingenfelter & Hartung, 2015). Researchers reported 'school avoidance' is not a medical diagnosis but often encompasses symptoms and behaviours associated with particular diagnoses and difficulties, such as social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety, specific phobias, major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and more (Kawsar & Marwaha, 2019; Walter et al., 2010). Persistent non-attendance at school appears to be an increasing and serious difficultly within modern society (Wilkins, 2008), especially since COVID-19 and CYP's extended period not attending school (which is covered in more detail later on).

Other terms which are sometimes referred to are 'Persistent School Non-attendance' (PSNA), 'School Attendance Barriers' and 'Not Fine in School'. These terms are usually considered as less 'within-child'. The 'within-child' model is often described as a 'deficit model' where the CYP is seen as the problem, rather than the environment and people surrounding them. With the 'within-child deficit model', individuals look to find a way of treating the child to fit in with their environment, as opposed to seeing the problem within the environment and addressing changes that need to be made within society/school. It is important to have this in mind when working with CYP with EBSA and consider how you can alter their environments in order to support the CYP with their emotions.

"When people become anxious most commonly they will be thinking that 'something bad' is about to happen. At this time thoughts tend to become focused on the potential threat and how to escape from it, and it can be hard to think about anything else" (Creswell & Willetts, 2010, p.8.).

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We are using the term 'avoidance' rather than 'refusal' within this EBSA guide. 'Avoid' means "keep away from or stop yourself from doing something" whereas 'Refuse' means you are unable to give or accept something offered or requested (Waite, 2012). We have used this term as CYP are frequently looking to avoid something by not attending school (e.g. anxiety), rather than refusing to attend due to being defiant or unwilling. The language we all use with CYP and families is so important and can have both positive and negative connotations. It can be really helpful if your school uses common language within this area.

CYP who avoid school due to 'emotional difficulties' is different to 'truancy'; "Truancy refers to young people who avoid attending school without their carer's knowledge, whereas 'school refusal' is when a child or young person starts to miss school frequently because of vague illnesses or symptoms" (CAMHS, 2018). CYP who engage in school avoidance are more likely to have long-term emotional and mental health difficulties (such as anxiety and depression), lower academic achievement, social difficulties, lower wellbeing and are more likely to drop out of school altogether (Kawsar & Marwaha, 2019; Sobba, 2019; Taylor, 2012; Walter et al., 2010; Wimmer, 2010). EBSA is frequently a complex challenge experienced by CYP, their families and school staff (Kawsar & Marwaha, 2019), with all of these groups often requiring support to assist the CYP. We will be looking at 'anxiety' as well as 'risk and resilience' factors in more detail on subsequent pages to further assist your understanding.

Building strong and trusting adult relationships with all CYP is an effective and supportive approach. This is especially the case for CYP with EBSA. Positive staff-child relationships are key.

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Summary
EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance)

Also known as:
Anxiety Based School Avoidance (ABSA)
Persistent School Non-Attendance (PSNA)
School Avoidance
School Refusal

Looks like:
Persistent challenges in attending school over a period of time due to negative feelings
Avoidance **not** truancy

Social, Emotional and Mental Health factors:
Emotional and physical distress
Anxiety disorders
Phobias
Depression
Separation anxiety
COVID-19 anxiety

Are there any young people you work with that this information applies to?

What language does your school use with regard to EBSA? How can you support the use of a common language?

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Anxiety and EBSA

When emotions overwhelm us, they often manifest themselves as anxious thoughts and feelings. As a result, anxiety is often a defining feature of EBSA.
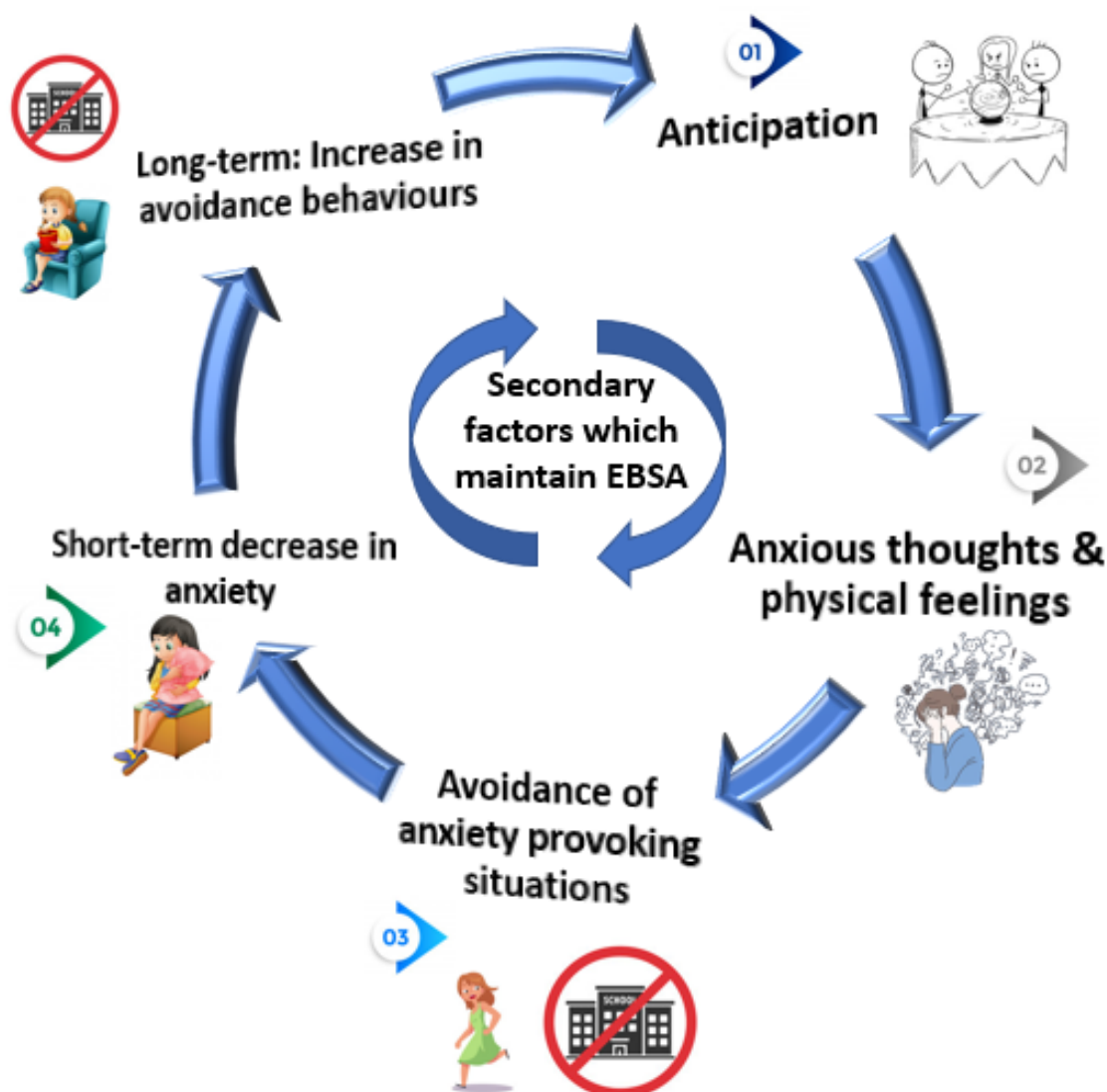
Secondary factors which maintain EBSA can include:
- Worries about isolation from friends and social events (e.g. friends have forgotten about them, won't fit in anymore, etc.).
- Concerns related to academic demands (e.g. missing work / falling behind, etc.).
- Less pressure and demands at home.
- Enjoyable / pleasurable activities at home.
- Additional time with parents / carers.

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The Anxiety Model explained

1) Anticipation: There is a trigger for an emotional response/anxiety, which is often an anticipation/contemplation of a threat (e.g. "The work at school will be too difficult for me"). Anxiety usually involves future-orientated thinking, involving talking to one's self and focusing on anticipated future events (Borkovec, 2002). This also includes anticipation of feeling anxious.

2) Anxious thoughts and physical feelings: When people have 'anxiety' they usually have both mental and physical symptoms. Anxiety can be related to a number of different areas such as:
- Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
- Social anxiety
- Specific phobias
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and more

Anxious thoughts consist of unhelpful thinking where our mind fixates on a potential threat or uncertainty, and may take the form of scary thoughts, images and/or memories as well as an impending sense of doom. Unhelpful thinking patterns may include:
- Threat scanning (when your mind searches the environment for what you fear; consciously or subconsciously)
- Catastrophising (when your mind jumps to worst case scenarios)
- Hypothetical worries (which include 'what if' thoughts and are typically about things you don't have much control over)
- Emotional reasoning (when your mind tells you your emotions reflect reality)
- Fortune telling (when your mind interprets predictions as facts)

(The Wellness Society, n.d.).

Bodily feelings can consist of:
- Increased heartbeat/blood pressure.
- Feeling hot/reddening of the face
- Enhanced sensory processing (e.g. noises seeming louder, jumpy, etc.)
- Physically shaking
- Unexplained illnesses and pain (e.g. stomach-ache, headache, tightening of the chest, etc.)
- Sleeping difficulties
- Confusion/head feeling fuzzy, and more

Having anxiety/feeling anxious is completely normal and everyone has experienced it. Anxiety is an automatic survival mechanism and individuals need to learn (often with support) how to appropriately respond and cope with anxiety (The Wellness Society, n.d.).

3) Avoidance: There are a number of signs and symptoms of anxiety and we will be discussing some of the early indicators later on within this booklet. The most common behavioural symptom (the things we do when we are anxious) is avoidance, especially in older children (e.g. avoidance of work tasks, certain lessons, social interactions, school, etc.). The key aspect of anxiety is worrying about a potential threat and individuals will do whatever they can to reduce these anxious thoughts/feelings. This is sometimes achieved through avoiding the feared situation altogether. By using avoidance techniques, this will instantly decrease an individual's anxiety, as they have managed to avoid a distressing situation.

4) Short-term decrease in anxiety and long-term increase in avoidance behaviours: Although avoiding an anxiety provoking situation produces immediate relief from the anxiety, it is only a short-term solution. This means that whilst it may seem like avoiding is the best thing to do at the time, the anxiety often returns the next time you face the situation and avoiding it will only psychologically reinforce the message that there is danger. The problem with avoidance is you never get to find out whether your fear about the situation and what would happen is actually true. For example, individuals can become over-sensitive and this leads to an increased anticipation of the threat - the more the CYP avoids school, the scarier it becomes. Overtime, the anxiety cycle can evolve and the CYP might be avoiding school but can no longer remember what it was that made them anxious in the first place.

Secondary factors which maintain EBSA: Avoidance behaviours relieve anxiety but there are also some secondary factors which can help maintain and reinforce it. For example:
- Avoiding school lessens the CYP's anxiety (reinforcing factor).
- They may also feel less pressured at home (reinforcing factor).
- Engage in enjoyable and pleasurable activities whilst at home (reinforcing factor).
- Perhaps spend additional time with parents/carers (reinforcing factor).
- Overtime they may worry more about interacting with their friends/peers and fitting in as well as worry about missing learning opportunities and falling behind (reinforcing factors to stay home).
- As you can see, school avoidance is a vicious cycle where avoiding school can lead to reinforcing the behaviour 'it's effective to avoid' and thus this behaviour is maintained and the CYP becomes a long-term school avoider.

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Summary
Anxiety and EBSA

Steps within the anxiety cycle:
Anticipation
Anxious thoughts & physical feelings
Avoidance
Short-term decrease in anxiety & long-term increase in avoidance behaviours
Secondary factors which maintain EBSA

Anxiety can feel like:
Increased heartbeat/blood pressure
Feeling hot/reddening
Enhanced sensory processing
Physically shaking
Unexplained illnesses and pain
Sleeping difficulties
Confusion/head feeling fuzzy

Can you use the model of anxiety to help identify how your young person is feeling?

What are the secondary factors which could be maintaining EBSA?

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Risk and resilience factors

Identification of students at risk of EBSA

There are often complex and interacting causes linked to school avoidance behaviour. Some young people are at higher risk and early identification means that students can be supported prior to experiencing EBSA, preventing avoidance from escalating or becoming ingrained.

Each CYP's situation will be unique and will need an individual and personalised plan. Avoid the temptation to 'jump' to assumed causes too soon in the information gathering process. With many CYP there are early warning signs that EBSA may become an issue, possible early signs for all school staff to be aware of include:

Changes in behaviour - Are they?
- Becoming withdrawn
- Spending increasing amount of time alone in their bedroom
- Avoiding trips outside of the home
- Reducing social 'contact' with family and friends
- Engaging in self-harming behaviours

Signs of Anxiety - Are they?
- Experiencing physical symptoms of anxiety
- Becoming anxious on separation from parent/carer

Changes in attitude towards school - Are they?
- Persistently reluctant to engage in school related activities
- Talking negatively about school
- Sharing worries about particular aspects of school
- Becoming distressed when school is talked about
- Refusing to get ready for school
- Worried about falling behind and/or catching up with schoolwork

Other early signs linked to EBSA relate to attendance issues - Have they?
- Demonstrated a reluctance to leave the house in the mornings
- Been late for school
- Missed lessons or truanting
- Been absent for parts of the day
- Been absent for whole days

There are a number of common factors and causes in relation to risk of school avoidance, listed within the tool in **Appendix E (Identification of students at risk of EBSA).**

It is essential to consider whether the child has unidentified special educational needs (SEN), medical needs or a disability. If they are not already involved, school staff should consult with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo).

If a student is identified as at significant risk, it is important to take action through further information gathering and assessment, planning, support and reviewing the impact of intervention / support (See 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' [APDR] later in this document).

If CYP aren't able to make it into school, think of ways they can be included. This could include preparing achievable work for them to complete at home or having an AV1 robot take their place in the classroom (letting them see, hear and contribute to lessons while they are out of school). However, these should only be temporary measures with a plan to getting the CYP back into school as soon as possible.

Ensure the CYP has key adults around school they can access when they are experiencing anxieties or other negative feelings. Empowering the CYP to use 'time outs' is a useful strategy to support this.

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Resilience and Protective Factors

Factors which could 'protect' a CYP from risk of EBSA should be identified so they can be built upon within the support plan. These include: individual strengths, areas of resilience within themselves, their family or school context, and identifying previous successes. Research suggests this can also include the protective factors within the table below (adapted from; Staffordshire EPS EBSA Guidance for School Settings, 2020).

System	Individual	Family	School
Protective Factors	• Strengths and interests • Aspirations and ambitions • Motivation (for change) • Increasing confidence and self-efficacy • Developing understanding of own needs and feelings • Positive relationships with peers in school • Experiencing success in school	• Positive relationships in family or community • Willingness to work with school and support agencies • Positive parenting skills. • Developing understanding of CYP needs and feelings • Responding to CYP needs and feelings	• Positive relationships with a member(s) of staff • Willingness to work with family and support agencies • Flexible approach • Developing understanding of CYP needs and feelings • Responding to CYP needs and feelings

Further ideas on how to promote resilience in CYP

YoungMinds (2020) have developed academic resilience information and a resilience framework for use in schools. This framework summarises evidence-based practices that promote resilience.

Links:
➢ Academic Resilience (youngminds.org.uk)
➢ Resilience Framework interactive tool (youngminds.org.uk)
➢ Emotional resilience / wellbeing toolkit by West Sussex County Council, available via link: KAN-Emotional-resilience-toolkit.pdf (hbtg.org.uk)

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Can you identify the risk factors at your school for the young person you are working with?

Can you identify the protective factors?

Have you got ideas for building resilience?

Ensure CYP who are experiencing EBSA understand they will **not** have to catch up on work they have missed through their absences, and they will be supported by school staff in receiving additional support where they need it. Ensure work tasks are achievable and differentiated correctly so the CYP can experience success within their learning.

Ensure the CYP has time and opportunities to re-establish relationships with their peers/friends. Having trusted friends around is a protective factor. Pairing the CYP with a suitable buddy may also be a useful strategy.

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'Push and Pull' factors and increasing 'Push' (towards school factors)

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

It can be helpful to be aware of the differences between '**push** and **pull'** factors when attempting to identify those at risk of EBSA.

- **Push factors** – these push the young person towards attending school.
- **Pull factors** – these pull the young person away from attending school (often towards home).

They are likely to be present across all of the influences in a young person's life and so it can be really useful to identify and analyse them.

Increasing push factors:

- Developing positive relationships with peers and staff
- Develop feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging
- Having positive experiences where they can succeed
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy and value in themselves
- Develop ambition and motivation (values)
- Developing social and emotional support and wellbeing in school

'Push and Pull' factors

School	Home
Push factors - are what keeps the young person coming into school	**Pull factors -** are what keeps the young person away from school (protective factors which pull them towards home)
Pull factors - are what keeps the young person away from school (protective factors which pull them away from school)	**Push factors -** (are what keeps the young person staying at home)

COVID-19 – returning to school

Risk factors associated with EBSA have previously been discussed, however these vulnerability factors can be maintained by periods of absence from school (e.g. COVID-19 lockdowns). Hence, extended periods for CYP away from school may have intensified their difficulties, as well as the possibility of them having further anxieties/difficulties in relation to school and/or the world around them (e.g. catching the virus).

COVID-19, global uncertainty and extended periods for CYP away from school have likely contributed to some CYP's anxiety, as well as EBSA. Many CYP (as well as adults) are anxious about numerous going on in the world related to COVID-19. These include:

- Fear and anxiety for their own safety, as well as the safety of their family, friends, and key adults
- Worries about germs
- Concerns about others not following guidelines/rules
- Personal difficulties
- Challenges at home (e.g. worries about money or facing adverse childhood experiences [ACES])
- Transitioning back to a busy school environment
- Social interactions
- Formal learning
- Losing someone close; and far more - the list could go on

It is completely normal for CYP to be experiencing a range of emotions during this global pandemic (including anxiety). For some, this has contributed to or heightened EBSA. It is important to support CYP back into school during these testing times. Accepting CYP's feelings and assisting them in accepting their own emotions and normalising them is a vital first step. Helping CYP acknowledge, name and tune into their body will aid their wellbeing – some CYP will need adult support with this, especially CYP who are experiencing EBSA.

Useful links to support returning to school

School guidance for coping with coronavirus and disruption to learning | Mental Health Foundation

Coronavirus: transitioning back to school | NSPCC Learning

Coping with anxiety about going back to school (youngminds.org.uk)

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Gaining and responding to child's voice

Within the literature, CYP's views appear far less represented and examined than other areas within school refusal research. However, gaining CYP's views and ensuring they're at the centre of the plan is essential in facilitating achievable change for EBSA.

YoungMinds (2020) surveyed CYP to gain their views and the following is 'What young people want parents to know about school'. Although the CYP's views were aimed at parents, many of them are relevant to school staff too and should be taken into account:

Information taken from YoungMinds (2020):

"I need you to trust me, and to not assume you know what school is like."

"It feels like we have to be the same as our peers."

"We need space to breathe and unwind after school."

"You can support me better if you really get to know me and what I need."

"We're under high pressure and stress over our grades."

"I need you to be on my side and listen to me as well as my teachers."

"I'd like it if you made time to chat to me and ask me how my day was when I get home."

"It's okay for us to do stuff that isn't schoolwork – other interests are important."

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How can you successfully gain your young person's voice?

What resources can you use to support this discussion?

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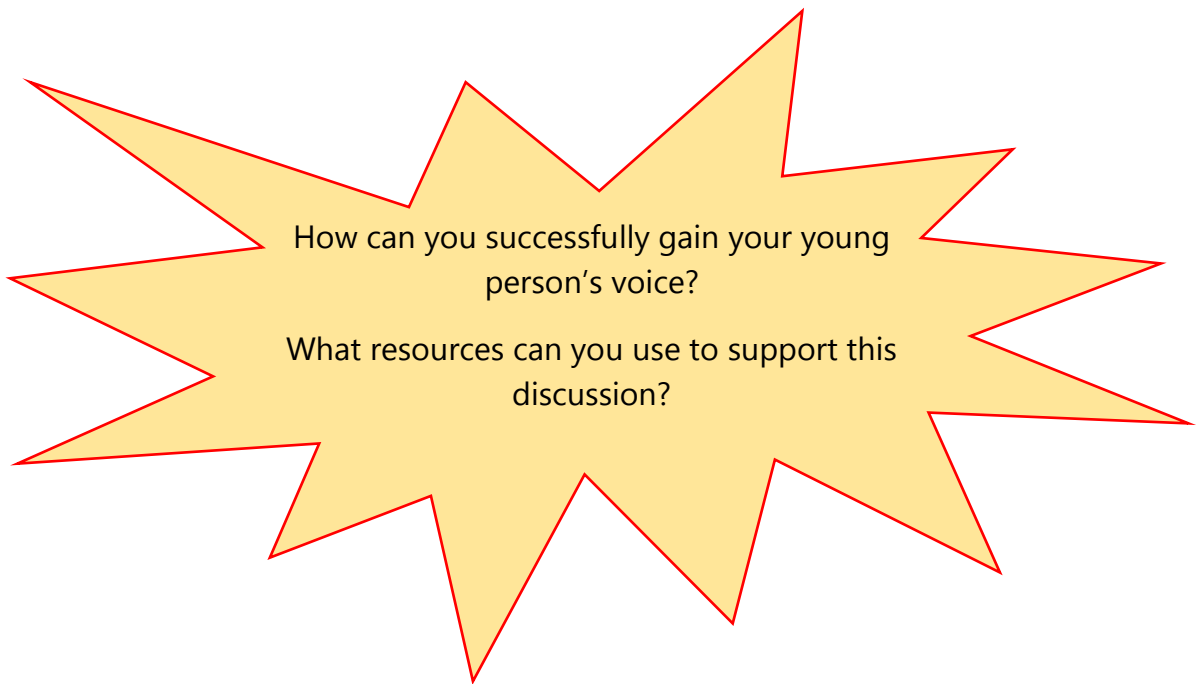
'Assess Plan Do Review' (APDR)

Where significant risks of EBSA are identified, it's really important to gather further information from the young person, parent and school staff involved with the young person and put into place strategies to support the young person as soon as possible.

Swift action can prevent EBSA from becoming entrenched and result in much better outcomes.

School should follow a thorough, child centred assess, plan, do and review cycle:

Assess

Assess – Gather and then analyse information on various factors impacting on the situation – child, school, home.

Plan

Plan – **Small, realistic** steps, building on PUSH factors (towards school).

Do

Do - Implement support plan with resources / intervention, ensuring good communication across school and with home.

Review

Review – Monitoring progress, adjusting plan, identifying next steps.

Working collaboratively with home

Research has suggested there has been a tendency to assume 'home factors', such as lack of parent control or parenting issues, are solely responsible.

However, often parents have done a great deal of work to get their CYP into school or even to the gate. Parents are often highly stressed and anxious about their CYP's school avoidance and place high importance on the issue. It is important to avoid blame and treat each case individually, there is likely to be a complex interaction of factors – avoid the temptation to jump to assuming simple cause(s) for the EBSA.

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Assess

Due to the complex nature of EBSA no fixed 'assessment process' can be followed. However, in all cases it is essential that the views of the young person, the family and key school staff are gathered and listened to. When there is a difference of views it is often more helpful to focus on **how** the behaviour is occurring rather than **why.**

Ideas for assessment work with the CYP
- Ideal school / ideal safe school – Dudley Educational Psychology Services
- Tool for understanding CYP worries about school 'Are you feeling sad or worried about school?' (West Sussex Educational Psychology Service, 2019): School_Refusal_FS4.pdf (schooltv.me)
- School refusal child questionnaires: med-9780195308297-interactive-pdf-003.pdf (oxfordclinicalpsych.com) (also parent version, link in next section)
- Life Path - Use of a life path can help them tell you their 'story so far' and what they would want in the future. **(See Appendix B.1)**
- Person Centred Planning – For brief guide see path.pdf (kirklees.gov.uk)
- Card Sorts – A really lovely, simple task to do with a child: see Staffordshire risk and protective factors and other sort cards p51 Emotionally-Based-School-Avoidance-Guidance-SCC-EPS-Sept-2020-PDF.pdf (staffordshire.gov.uk)
- School Refusal Assessment Scale (child and parent versions) see med-9780195308297-interactive-pdf-004.pdf (oxfordclinicalpsych.com)
- Multi-element support plan, further information available from the EPS
- For further ideas and links see **Appendix A - Information Gathering Tools – CYP Voice**

Ideas for information gathering with the family
Principles and information to consider when working with families:
- Parents may find it difficult to talk about the concerns they have and the difficulties they experience in trying to get their child into school.
- Sometimes parents may have had similar experiences to their child and may experience their own anxiety, making it especially difficult.
- It is important for school to build a collaborative partnership with parents / carers; working together in the best interests of the child.
- Gather background information, establish the current situation and the parent's / carer's views.
- Questions should be sensitive and the person asking should **employ active listening skills**, examples of questions / framework for discussion can be found in **Appendix B - Working with families.**
- Try to make regular contact with parents with an agreed named contact key person where possible.

- Working with parents / carers will be essential to successful outcomes. While the focus is on the child it is also important to remember that parents may need their own support - referrals to outside agency support might be helpful for the parent / carer.
- Use of School refusal parent questionnaire may be useful,
  Link: med-9780195308297-interactive-pdf-004.pdf (oxfordclinicalpsych.com)

More about working in partnership with parents / carers
Link: workinginpartnershipwithparentsandcarers-miniguide.pdf (nasen.org.uk)

Ideas for in school information gathering

- It is important to gather information from members of staff who work most closely with the child or young person.
- Each member of staff may have valuable information to help identify triggers (e.g. for anxiety) and strategies the young person responds positively to.
- Gain the views of staff who have positive relationships with the CYP and staff where there have been difficulties.

Key information to gather from staff includes:
- The young person's strengths?
- What is going well?
- Any difficulties they have noticed?
- Peer relationships?
- Relationships with adults?
- Response to academic tasks?
- If they have witnessed emotional distress, what did this look like and what caused it?
- What support or differentiation is put in place and how the young person responds to this?
- Any ideas for further support?

An example of a 'round robin' form can be found in **Appendix C - Information Gathering from School.**

Analyse

- Once enough information is gathered, pull this together / integrate it and identify any potential gaps.
- Then analyse the information, a relevant framework / tool for this analysis is in **Appendix D - Integrating and Analysing information**
- An overview of the whole picture and various factors involved are obtained and potential hypotheses are formed. These should then inform the (return to school) support plan.

Plan

- After the information gathering and analysis process has occurred a return to school or support plan should be made. See **Appendix F - Support Plan Template** (for possible template).
- All plans need to be co-produced with parents, the child and any other appropriate agencies. It is important that all parties are aware of the plan and sign up to it.
- Each plan will look different according to the actions indicated by the assessment. Personalised plans are crucial because what works for one child may not work for another.
- The plans should always be **realistic, small steps and achievable** with the aim of reintegrating the young person.
- The **return should be gradual and graded** and recognition by all that a 'quick fix' is not always possible.
- A part-time timetable may be necessary to support this process but should always be temporary and not a long-term option as all children are entitled to a full-time education.

Do

- Put the plan into action, if early progress is made, continue to stick to the plan.
- Remember 'small steps'.
- If needed, a review can be brought forward so the plan can be altered and any progress celebrated.

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Review (adapted from: Sheffield EPS guidance, 2020)

- The action plan and support plan should be regularly reviewed with input from the CYP, parents and key staff and other professionals. Dates for the review should be set during the action planning stage. The review is an opportunity to monitor and celebrate progress made (towards the outcomes), consider any new information or changes to the situation and plan next steps.
- Celebrate success no matter how small and look to making those gradual changes if the issue seems stuck.
- With complex cases, support is available from other agencies, such as the Educational Psychology Service and others, which can be found in the resources section below.
- Reviewing some of your approaches at all levels will help you to revise and develop your support. Looking with the CYP at their anxiety levels assessed through scaling or another assessment method (ideas below) could be useful to measure progress or for pointers for necessary adaptions of a plan or intervention.
- Plans may need maintaining or adapting to incorporate new outcomes or actions. The review is also an opportunity to identify if there needs to be further consultation with, or referrals to, other agencies.
- When the situation is positive and the young person is attending the times or activities agreed, it is important to follow the gradual steps outlined in the action plan. It may be tempting to skip a stage or increase expectations of attendance, however, this could put too much pressure on the situation and risk a breakdown of trust.

Have a clear understanding of the CYP's likes, interests and strengths and play to these.

When the CYP is back in school, don't question them or make them feel uncomfortable. Offer support and understanding to them. You may need to also discuss this with their peers. Gaining the CYP's view and wishes in advance and adhering to them is generally good practice.

Transitions

There are numerous transitions each CYP makes throughout their educational experience. Many of these occur on a daily basis, which can be challenging, especially for a CYP experiencing EBSA. Many of our CYP with social communication difficulties find transitions anxiety provoking and challenging.

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

If any transitional needs are identified then the appropriate support should be provided, gaining the child's view around 'what could make this better/easier'.

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

Whole school approaches

Schools can take a preventative role around EBSA through adopting whole school practices that promote wellbeing and positive mental health in CYP. These need to be embedded and promoted through school ethos and leadership practices.

Additionally, schools play a vital role in the identification of children and young people who are currently experiencing, or at risk of EBSA. The head teacher and Senior Leadership Team should ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of early intervention and of the strengths based approaches needed to gain a full understanding of the reasons for the pupil's absence or behaviour and the range of interventions that can be used to support them.

In order to support CYP at risk of EBSA, schools need to be aware and responsive to **early indicators** (discussed above). For those CYP at risk of or experiencing EBSA schools can identify and support them by employing a thorough assess, plan, do and review cycle placing the young person at the heart of the interventions and involving outside agencies where required.

Person centred strategies and interventions, developed through the Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle can support a successful integration. Interventions may be needed at the level of the child, the family, peer and school and wider context. Educational settings should aim to create policies that adopt whole school evidence-based approaches to promote wellbeing to reduce the likelihood of EBSA occurring. **See Appendix G** – For Whole School Wellbeing / EBSA prevention Audit.

How do schools promote emotional wellbeing?

The Somerset Wellbeing Framework is a model for developing a whole school approach to wellbeing and mental health.

The Somerset Wellbeing Framework is our local model for helping to build wellbeing into the ethos, culture, routine, life and core business of a school. It's a process that moves beyond learning and teaching to pervade all aspects of school life and has been found to be effective in bringing about and sustaining emotional resilience and mental health benefits for the whole of a school population.

The Somerset Wellbeing Framework uses the eight principles model developed by Public Health England to achieve a holistic approach to wellbeing. The principles underpin an effective whole-school approach and provide the scaffolding needed to cover every aspect of school life.

From: Somerset children & young people : Health & Wellbeing : Wellbeing Framework Intro 8p (cypsomersethealth.org)

What do these 8 Key Principles look like in practice?

Click on each principle below to find out more:

- **Leadership and Management** that supports and champions efforts to promote emotional health and wellbeing that is known and felt throughout the school
- An **Ethos and Environment** that promotes respect and values diversity
- **Curriculum and Learning** that promotes resilience and supports social and emotional learning
- **Pupil Participation** that recognises children and young people's role as the 'agents of change'
- **Staff Wellbeing & Development** that helps teachers to maintain their own mental health alongside the skills and confidence to support pupils
- **Involving Parents & Carers** so that wellbeing is fundamental to home and school
- **Identifying Need,** raising concerns and knowing effective routes and mechanisms for support
- Appropriate referral to **Targeted Support**

Link for more information: Somerset children & young people : Health & Wellbeing : Wellbeing Framework (cypsomersethealth.org)

Link to Public Health Guidance: Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing (publishing.service.gov.uk)

School ethos and environment

NICE guidance recommends:

Primary education providers:
- create an ethos and conditions that support positive behaviours for learning and for successful relationships
- provide an emotionally secure and safe environment that prevents any form of bullying or violence

Secondary education providers:
- Foster an ethos that promotes mutual respect, learning and successful relationships among young people and staff. Create a culture of inclusiveness and communication that ensures all young people's concerns can be addressed (including the concerns of those who may be at particular risk of poor mental health)
- provide a safe environment which nurtures and encourages young people's sense of self-worth and self-efficacy, reduces the threat of bullying and violence and promotes positive behaviours

Link: NICE Guidance Social and emotional wellbeing in primary and secondary education: (nice.org.uk)

Create a supportive classroom environment. Where possible, make tasks cooperative rather than competitive. Reduce pressure, expectations and stress for the CYP.

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Summary
Whole school wellbeing approaches

Educational settings should aim to create policies that adopt whole school evidence-based approaches to promote wellbeing to reduce the likelihood of EBSA occurring

The involvement and support of the school leadership team is needed for preventative measures

There are a wealth of resources available in this area, The Somerset Wellbeing Framework is a great place to start

What does my school do to promote wellbeing for CYP, families and staff?

Relationship based approaches

Why relationships are so important

Education settings give children a sense of connectedness and help to support children's emotional wellbeing by providing opportunities for children to build secure relationships with adults outside of home. Positive teacher-student relationships have been shown to be central to the wellbeing of both CYP and teachers (Roffey, 2010).

For children described as vulnerable, relationships help children to adapt and recover from past experiences, making the child feel secure, and in turn ready to learn (Bomber & Hughes, 2013). Positive teacher-child relationships are important to children's social, emotional and behavioural development and can act as important protective factors.

The Anna Freud Centre have a range of high quality, psychologically informed resources and materials to support schools in being or becoming 'mentally healthy' through the Anna Freud Mentally Healthy Schools and Schools in Mind projects:

Link Home : Mentally Healthy Schools
> 'Schools in Mind is a **free** network for school staff and allied professionals which shares practical, academic and clinical expertise regarding the wellbeing and mental health issues that affect schools.'

Link Mental Health Resource for Schools & Colleges | Anna Freud Centre

Emotion Coaching can support children and young people and those who care for them, with easy to use strategies for understanding and expressing emotions. Training for Somerset Education staff on **Mindful Emotion Coaching and Adverse Childhood Experience:** Somerset Emotion Coaching Project 2015 - 2021 (ehcap.co.uk)

Derby Compassion in the classroom – whole school wellbeing approach, link has some helpful information and resources that Somerset schools can also access: Compassion in the Classroom | Compassion in the Classroom (cmtschools.org)

What does my school do to support healthy, connected relationships?

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Top tips for schools

What schools can do to support CYP with EBSA as well as their families

- **We recommend the Assess, Plan, Do, Review process** (see relevant section for further guidance).

- **Situation** – It is vital to gain as much background information as you can as well as further explore the current situation and what it is like at home. This might involve looking at previous reports, talking to key adults and/or talking with the family/CYP. Ensure questions towards the family/CYP are appropriate and sensitively put. Regular contact should be made with the family by a key member of staff (ensure this staff member has the time, skills and support to successfully carry out this role). Also ensure all key adults within school are aware of the situation and the CYP's needs so that they can offer support on the CYP's return. You may also want to contact other professionals involved with the CYP (with the family's/CYP's consent) so all are aware – they are likely to be able to offer the school/family additional support.

- **Listen to parents/carers' concerns** – Listening to parents is an important first step. They may find it challenging to discuss their concerns and the difficulties they experience trying to get their CYP into school. Truly listen to what they have to say, be understanding and empathetic to them and their child, acknowledging that you/the school are there to support them, not blame or accuse them. A collaborative working partnership is in the best interest of the CYP and successful outcomes.

- **Where appropriate, reach out and contact the CYP** – use the guidance above. However, ensure the CYP is comfortable with doing this and isn't unduly pressured into it.

- **Normalise anxiety** - Another important step is to normalise anxiety. School staff should state that it is often normal for CYP to be anxious about certain aspects of school and that school can be a stressful and demanding place. Make the CYP feel normal and part of the school community, not isolated and different. It is important to manage parent's anxiety too and work with them, not against.

- **Hold a meeting** – a meeting should be held between school and the family (and CYP if appropriate) as soon as possible. Key individuals and advocates for the CYP from school should be there. Ask how the CYP is feeling and if any particular parts of school makes it more difficult for them and what changes could be put in place. Also discuss what the CYP's strengths and likes are in order to consider a positive way forward.

- **Record of meetings** – ensure appropriate minutes/written-correspondence is taken during all meetings so matters discussed, strategies, actions, etc., are noted so they can be followed up, carried out and referred to at future meetings.

- **Actions and next steps** - Agree with parents/carers/CYP the strategies you will use. Arrange times to have regular check-ins to discuss how things are going and progressing. Be consistent with the strategies you use and ensure you give them enough time to embed. Try to maintain a positive relationship with the family and the things they are doing to support the CYP back into school.

- **Support (Reintegration) plan** - this plan will consist of key information on how the CYP will be successfully supported and reintegrated back into school. This will likely include things such as: the times the CYP will be in school each day; lessons the CYP feels they can attend; identified key adults who can offer 'meet/greet' / 'regular check-ins' with the CYP as well as support the pupil throughout the day (these should be adults the CYP has a trusting and key relationship with); key pupils who can positively support the CYP; identified strategies / interventions to support them (e.g. ELSA); consideration of the CYP's 'push and pull' factors; the CYP's strengths and likes; times of the day for relaxation / calming activities; the location of a 'safe space' for the CYP to go to if they feel anxious, overwhelmed or dysregulated; as well as how time in school will be gradually increased.

- **Return of CYP to school** – when the CYP is ready to return to school, ensure all key adults are aware of their individualised support plan (which should be created with the CYP). Remember, these may be very small steps at first which can build up to the CYP entering the school building (e.g. CYP walking to the school gate; walking to the door of the school; entering reception/safe space within school, etc.).

Summary
'How you can support young people and their families with EBSA?'

Gain background information

Truly listen to families and the young person, ensuring you are empathetic

Normalise anxiety

Hold regular meetings and ensure they are accurately recorded

Agree actions to be carried out (by whom, when by, impact)

Ensure you have an effective support (reintegration) plan

Support the young person when they return to school

For each of the steps within this section, what are you going to do and how are you going to do it?

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Targeted support

Some CYP will need further support (beyond universal / core standards) and this should contain targeted provision which provides "highly tailored interventions" in order to support CYP with their anxiety, emotions and attending school (SCC, 2016). Alongside universal support, schools need to provide targeted and personalised support for certain CYP, which will include (as per Core Standards; SCC, 2016):

- "Plans clearly detail outcomes for the individual child/young person alongside strategies and resources designed to support the achievement of these outcomes.
- Children/young people and their families are involved in target-setting and decision-making.
- A regular schedule for reviewing plans in collaboration with children and young people, their families, and relevant professionals."

It is vital for school staff to work with the CYP as soon as possible and to gain their views around attending school. A variety of tools could be used to achieve this; some have already been mentioned within this booklet (e.g. APDR: Ideas for assessment work with the child, etc.):

- Cards to explore CYP's views and opinions, e.g. strength cards, resilience cards, feelings/emotion cards (for example, Bear feeling cards), therapeutic treasure deck cards, etc. Cards can also be used to assist CYP in discussing school, including protective factors and difficulties.
- Person Centred Planning (PCP) tools. These tools should be used with the CYP to aid planning for a positive future as well as to identify their aspirations / goals and what is important to them. Particular tools to consider include the 'Multi-element plan', PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) and MAP (Making Action Plans).

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has an effective evidence-base for supporting individuals with emotional and behavioural difficulties, including: anxiety, depression, physical health problems, eating disorders, etc. (Hazlett-Stevens & Craske, 2002). Collins-Donnelly (2013, pp. 9-10) refers to CBT as:

"an evidence-based, skills-based, structured form of psychotherapy... which looks at the relationships between thoughts (cognition), feelings (emotions) and actions (behaviours). It is based on the premise that how we interpret experiences and situations has a profound effect on our behaviours and emotions."

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For more targeted support for CYP with EBSA, schools should consider using support based on the principles of CBT, in order to assist CYP in changing the way they think about themselves, their experiences and the world around them, which in turn should positively impact the way they feel and what they think they are able to do (Creswell & Willetts, 2010). Maynard et al. (2018) conducted a systemic review and meta-analysis (looking at 8 studies and included 435 CYP with school avoidance) to examine the effects of psychosocial treatments for CYP with school refusal (all but one of the psychosocial treatments was a CBT intervention). The results of the review "provide tentative support for CBT for the treatment of children and adolescents with school refusal, at least for the improvement of school attendance" (Maynard et al., 2018, p.61). CBT resources which schools could use include:

- 'Starving the Anxiety Gremlin' - by Kate Collins-Donnelly.
- 'Homunculi Approach to Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Flexible CBT Programme for Young People on the Autism Spectrum or with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' - by Anne Greig and Tommy MacKay.
- 'Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries (2nd Edition): A self-help guide' - by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts (also entitled, 'Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide Using CBT' (1st Edition)).

How can you use targeted and personalised interventions to effectively support your CYP?

If you require further support, who are you going to contact and why?

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Further support from services

As previously discussed, early identification of CYP at risk of EBSA as well as prompt action and support is vital in supporting CYP and preventing EBSA from escalating. One important factor for schools to consider is not to lose contact or sight of a CYP out of school. School staff may feel they need further advice and support to assist a CYP with EBSA and this can be gained from a range of Somerset support services. In addition, the local authority will also likely want to know what advice/support your school has sought from professionals who work within education, health and care as well as professionals who work with families.

Positive interactions and approaches are often far more effective compared to negative, confrontational or inflexible interactions / approaches.

Local support and services

Information regarding local services and organisations can be found on the Somerset Local Offer website: Somerset's Local Offer. Below are key Local Authority services who can offer support to schools, families and young people who may be experiencing EBSA:

- **Somerset Educational Psychology Service** – We provide a statutory EP service to Somerset County Council and North Somerset Council, a core EP service to schools and settings in Somerset through a Community Educational Psychology model, and a preventative EP service to schools and settings in North Somerset. In addition, we accept traded commissions from all schools and settings in Somerset and North Somerset.
  Educational Psychology Service | Support Services for Education

- **Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – CAMHS provide a specialist mental health service for children and young people who may be experiencing a range of mental health problems.
  Somerset: Somerset CAMHS - CAMHS - Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (somersetft.nhs.uk)
  North Somerset: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service - CAMHS | North Somerset Online Directory (n-somerset.gov.uk)

- **Somerset Education Safeguarding Service (ESS)** - The core function of the service is to support the development of safeguarding practices within education provision (0-25) across Somerset. It also holds responsibility for the monitoring of attendance-based indicators in schools and use data thresholds to trigger support and where necessary, challenge. The primary focus is to ensure schools explore and exhaust all early help mechanisms on the basis that 'Poor attendance is the symptom of another issue'.
  Education Safeguarding Service (ESS) | Support Services for Education

- **Somerset Parent and Family Support Advisors (PFSAs)** – PFSAs work closely and collaboratively with schools, families and other support services in order to improve attendance, engagement and outcomes for children. The needs of the child/young person or family form the basis of all work completed.
  Parent and Family Support Advisor (PFSA) – Professional Choices

- **Somerset Family Intervention Service (FIS)** - FIS is a specialist county-wide service developed through the joining of established Team 8 and GetSet level 3 services. They work closely together with partners and communities to provide effective support for families experiencing complex issues with a better, more focussed use of the Council's resources in meeting family needs. Family Intervention Service (somerset.gov.uk)

- **Somerset SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support)** – SENDIAS provide impartial information, advice and support to parents and carers of children who have special educational needs and/or a disability. The service aims to encourage partnership between parents, school, social care, LA, health and other agencies.
Somerset SENDIAS

- **Somerset Virtual School** – Sometimes Children Looked After (CLA) can have additional anxieties and stressors when it comes to attending school and you may feel you require additional support. The Virtual School and Learning Support Team provides specialist support and advice to help Somerset CLA enjoy their education, succeed in the schools they attend, and to enable children and young people to achieve good outcomes.
Virtual School & Learning Support Team | Support Services for Education

- **Somerset Autism and Communication Service (A&C)** – Anxiety as well as emotional and communication difficulties are often common in children with autism. Therefore, you may feel you need support from the A&C service to assist you with a CYP with autism who has EBSA. The Autism and Communication Service provides support for children and young people with autism and communication difficulties, their parents/carers, and schools, academies and free schools.
Autism and Communication Service and CAOT. | Support Services for Education

- **Health professionals (such as GPs, Paediatricians, School Nurses, etc.)** – Health professionals will likely be able to offer advice, support and/or referrals to young people who are having difficulties with anxiety and other mental health needs. Parents should contact their relevant Health professional if they believe they require this support.

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Additional Resources

Books

Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes. (2007). Understanding School Refusal – a handbook for professionals in Education, Health and Social Care. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

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Online reading

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Websites

Support Services for Education (https://supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/)

YoungMinds (https://youngminds.org.uk)

The Wellness Society (https://thewellnesssociety.org/)

Not Fine in School (https://notfineinschool.co.uk/)

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Video Links

Simple model of anxiety
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96MiMy2RXIs&t=216s

Sharing good practice around EBSA webinar
https://www.the-educational-psychologists.co.uk/for-psychologists/#EBSA

Returning to (a New Normal) - Dr Dawn Starley, Somerset Educational Psychology Service
This training aims to raise awareness of the impact of Covid-19. It includes a consideration of anxiety, trauma, resilience and self-efficacy as well as practical ideas to support pupils, with a focus on CBT approaches:

- Returning to (a New) Normal: Emotional Wellbeing in School following the Covid-19 Changes
  School emotional wellbeing training - Returning to (a new) normal following Covid-19 - YouTube

- Returning to (a New) Normal: Practical Strategies for Supporting Emotional Wellbeing following the Covid-19 Changes
  Returning to (a new) normal PART 2 - Practical Strategies - YouTube

Additional information and guidance for schools

Developing Effective Support Systems for Young People Experiencing Anxiety Based School Avoidance: An Exploratory Study and Good Practice Guidance for Schools, Babcock LDP Educational Psychology Service
guidance-on-anxiety-based-school-avoidance.pdf (dspl3.co.uk)

Anxiety Based School Avoidance, Manchester Schools Guidance Document
Anxiety Based School Avoidance | Help & Support Manchester

Emotionally Based School Avoidance Good practice guidance for schools and support agencies, West Sussex Educational Psychology Service
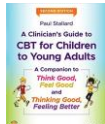Emotionally Based School Avoidance | West Sussex Services for Schools

CBT based resources
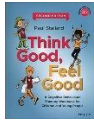
Think Good - Feel Good: A Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Workbook for Children and Young People, by Paul Stallard.

A Clinicians Guide to Think Good, Feel Good: Using CBT with Children and Young People, by Paul Stallard.

What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety, by Dawn Huebner. An interactive self-help book designed to guide 6 – 12 year olds and their parents through the cognitive-behavioural techniques most often used in the treatment of generalized anxiety.
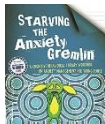
Starving the Anxiety Gremlin, by Kate Collins-Donnelly. A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People age 10+

Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries, by Cathy Creswell & Lucy Willetts. A self-help guide which teaches parents how to use cognitive behavioural techniques with their children.

Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries (2nd Edition): A self-help guide by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts.

The Homunculi Approach to Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Flexible CBT Programme for Young People on the Autism Spectrum or with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties - by Anne Greig and Tommy MacKay.

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Appendices Contents

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Appendix A

Information gathering tools – CYP voice

- Are you feeling sad or worried about school? (West Sussex EPS, 2019)

  Link: School_Refusal_FS4.pdf (schooltv.me)

- Push and Pull Factors table - in **Appendix E.1**

- School Wellbeing Risk and Resilience Card Set, by. Dr Jerricah Holder

  Link: https://www.schoolwellbeingcards.co.uk/

- Drawing the Ideal Safe School, Dr Jane Williams Senior Educational Psychologist, Dudley Educational Psychology Service:

  Ideal Safe School Complete 05.07.20 PDF.pdf - Google Drive

- Person Centred Planning Approaches, e.g. PATHs (via the EP Service)

  Information on PATHS: path.pdf (kirklees.gov.uk)

- Drawing/art approaches, e.g. Drawing and Talking

- Karen Treisman's Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Sentence Completion and Feelings Cards

- Life Path – information sheet in **Appendix B.1**

- The School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS) (Kearney & Silverman, 1993)

  med-9780195308297-interactive-pdf-004.pdf (oxfordclinicalpsych.com)

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Appendix B

Working with families

Adapted from: Anxiety Based School Avoidance: Manchester Schools Guidance Document (2020)

Area to discuss	Possible Questions
Family	• Tell me about your family. • Who is in it? (draw genogram / family tree) • Who are they closest to? • Who are they most like and why?
Development and history	• Tell me about their early development • Tell me about their early experiences at school – primary - secondary • What were they like as a young child?
Strengths Interests & aspirations	• What are they good at? • What do they enjoy? • Do they have any hopes / dreams for the future?
Change and Loss	• Have there been any changes in the family recently? • House move • School move • Bereavement of person or pet
Relationships	• Who do they get on with? • Who do they not get on with? • What do they say about any peers in school? • What do they say about any adults in school?
Additional needs *School should be aware if they CYP has identified needs and know what support is in place	• Do you have any concerns about any SEN or other difficulties? • Have they spoken about any difficulties with work or learning?

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| Child's Views	• What is going well – e.g. lessons, friends, teacher relationship • Fears / Worries -Have they spoken about what they are worried about finding difficult, what did they say?
Behaviour / Anxiety symptoms	• When they are worried what does it look like? • What do they say it feels like?
Typical day *Please describe a typical day from waking to bed and sleep pattern	• School day – what do they do, what do other family members do? • Day not at school - what do they do, what do other family members do?
Impact on others	• How does the non-attendance impact on you and other family members? • Who is better at dealing with it and why?
Parent Views	• Are there any differences in views about the reasons and what should be done in the family?
Exceptions to the problem	• Have there been times when they managed to come into school? • What was different about those times?
Previous attempts to address the problem	• What has helped in the past when things have been difficult? • What strategies have been most helpful so far (in manging their anxiety?)

Appendix B.1

Life path

Adapted from: East Sussex County Council (2018) Children's participation toolkit for social workers and early help practitioners.

What is it? Life Paths (or Life River) are a way of helping people map out the journey their life has taken so far. This can be helpful in highlighting any recurring patterns and important events. They can also be used as a reflective tool and to help begin difficult conversations.

What do I need? A piece of paper, pens, or pencils. Possibly pictures to cut out and stick.

What do I do? At the simplest level you can just draw a winding line on a page, write the person's date of birth at the beginning and their current age at the end. If you are feeling more creative you can draw a snake or river. Then encourage them to start to indicate on the path the important things that have happened to them showing ages and perhaps noting down feelings and experiences. The child can use symbols, drawings, colours or even cut-out pictures/photos instead of words to convey events, relationships and feelings. Remember to leave enough time to fully explore this.

Simple example:
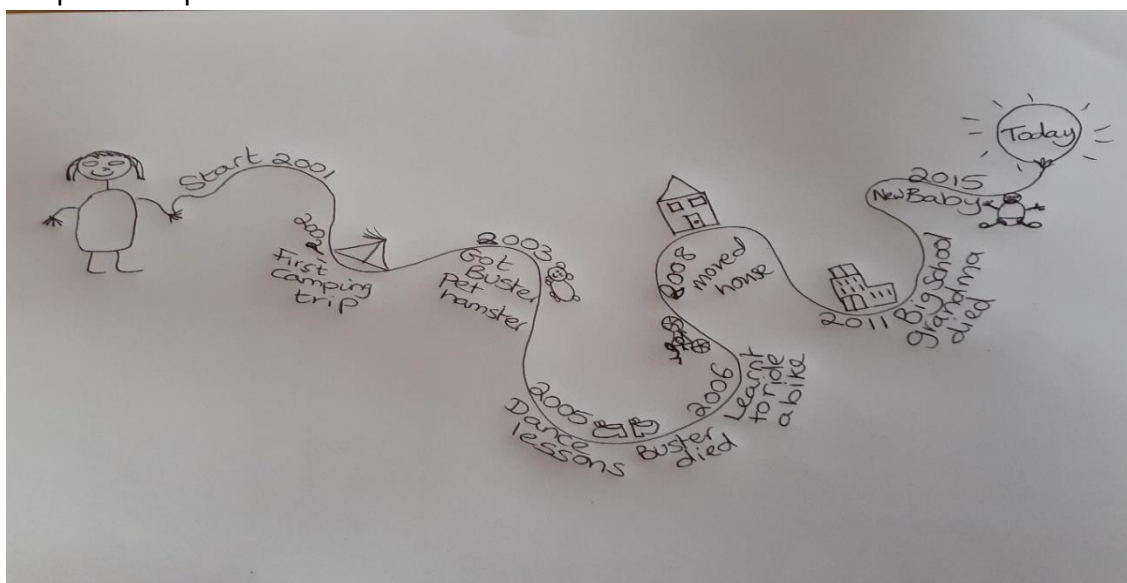
Appendix C

Information gathering from school

Taken from: Anxiety Based School Avoidance: Manchester Schools Guidance Document (2020).

_____ *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 _____ please complete the questionnaire below.*
Your name _____ Lesson/activity _____
Please describe _____
What are _____'s strengths?
What is going well for _____?
What does _____ find difficult?
How does _____ get on with their peers?
How does _____ get on with you and other adults?

Is _____ engaged and motivated with their learning. Are they making progress? If not, why not?
Have you observed any emotional difficulties at school, what have these been, when did/do they occur?
What support to you provide for _____. How do they respond to this?
What is your understanding of _____'s attendance issues?
What do you think would help _____ in school?

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Appendix D

Integrating and analysing information

The following is a framework of questions, aiming to support you to integrate and analyse the information you have gathered in your assessment. (Adapted from: Anxiety Based School Avoidance: Manchester Schools Guidance Document, 2020).

What does the behaviour look like?	
Current attendance rate: Any patterns to non-attendance (days or lessons): When did the behaviour first occur?: Has there been a history of similar issues?: Child's voice on specific fears / difficulties:	
Functional Behaviour Analysis **What is the apparent function of the behaviour? Is it?**	
1. 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). 2. To escape difficult social situations (e.g. feeling left out at playtime; reading out loud in class or other public speaking / group task; working as part of a group). 3. To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g. change in family dynamic, concerned about the wellbeing of parent).	

4. To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (watch tv, go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends).	
Family information	
Developmental & Educational history (health / medical, sensory, social factors): Any changes within family (loss, separation, birth, health issues, issues relating to COVID-19): Any other needs within the family?	
Strengths and protective factors	
List strengths: Aspirations: Positive relationships at home and school: Positive experiences at school: Exceptions – what was different about the times it was better / easier / they got into school: What has been helpful previously?:	
Formulation and integration of information	
What is people's understanding of why the CYP is experiencing EBSA? Demonstrating school avoidance behaviours? Any differences in views? What strengths can be built upon? What risk factors have been identifies as most significant (school, child, community and family)?	

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Appendix E

Identification of students at risk of EBSA

As discussed, there are complex and interacting causes linked to school avoidance behaviour. Some young people are at higher risk and early identification means that students can be supported prior to experiencing EBSA, preventing avoidance from escalating or becoming ingrained.

Each CYP's situation will be unique and will need an individual and personalised plan. Avoid the temptation to jump to assumed causes too soon in the information gathering process.

There are a number of common factors and causes in relation to risk of school avoidance, listed on the tool below.

To use this tool: consider each of the listed factors in terms of likely influence on EBSA and identify whether the CYP is experiencing 'high' 'medium' or 'low' 'not known' or 'not an issue' for each. High numbers of responses in the high and medium columns indicate a higher risk of EBSA. It may be helpful to complete this with information from a parent or with a college that knows the CYP well. Where factors are not known, it may be important to gather further information.

From West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2019) with alterations:

	Level of concern				
Loss and Change	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Death of family member or friend					
Death of pet					
Traumatic event (recent or historical)					
Separation from a parent					
Moving house, school, area					
Loss of a friend or peer					

Illness of family member					

Comments

Family	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Concerns with parenting					
Birth of a new sibling					
Parental separation					
Parental arguing/fighting					
Domestic Abuse					
Practical problems bringing the child to school					
Sibling conflict / jealousy					

Comments

Learning	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Literacy needs					
Issues in PE / Games					
Issues in breakfast / after school clubs					
Identified learning needs					
Problems / issues with specific subjects					

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Difficulties with specific teacher / staff member					
Exam or test anxiety					
Difficulty with pace of lessons					
Comments					

Social Personal	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Experience of bullying (current, recent or historical)					
Issues with friendships					
Socially isolated					
English as a second language					
Dislikes play/ break times					
Few leisure interests					
Comments					

Psychological Wellbeing	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Often seems tired					
Issues with self-concept					
Appears depressed					
Appears anxious/ tearful / tense					

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Keeps feelings to themselves					
Appears shy/ quiet passive					
Appears to struggle to perceive positives					
Comments					

Other issues / concerns	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Further comments					

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Appendix E.1

'Push and Pull' factors

Worked example of 'push and pull' factors

Adapted from: West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2019) & Staffordshire EPS EBSA Guidance for School Settings (2020).

School	Home
Push factors (towards attending school): • Friendships at school • Academically able and achieving • Enjoys certain subjects/learning • Good self-esteem & self-worth • Key and trusted adult relationship(s)	**Pull factors (away from attending school):** • Separation anxiety • Change in family dynamics • Family member unwell • Bereavement & loss • Difficulties sleeping
Pull factors (away from attending school): • Prolonged absence from school • Difficult relationship with peers and/or school adults • Concerns regarding schoolwork & difficulties with learning • Anxieties related to certain subjects • Difficulties with learning • Exam pressures • Worried about getting into trouble & consequences • Overwhelming sensory processing needs	**Push factors (towards staying at home):** • Avoidance of challenging interactions • Reduced anxiety when at home • Avoidance of schoolwork

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Template for analysing 'push and pull' factors

School	Home
Push factors (towards attending school):	**Pull factors (away from attending school):**
Pull factors (away from attending school):	**Push factors (towards staying at home):**

The Solihull Community Educational Psychology Service suggests another template which can be used to explore 'push and pull' factors (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, 2019):
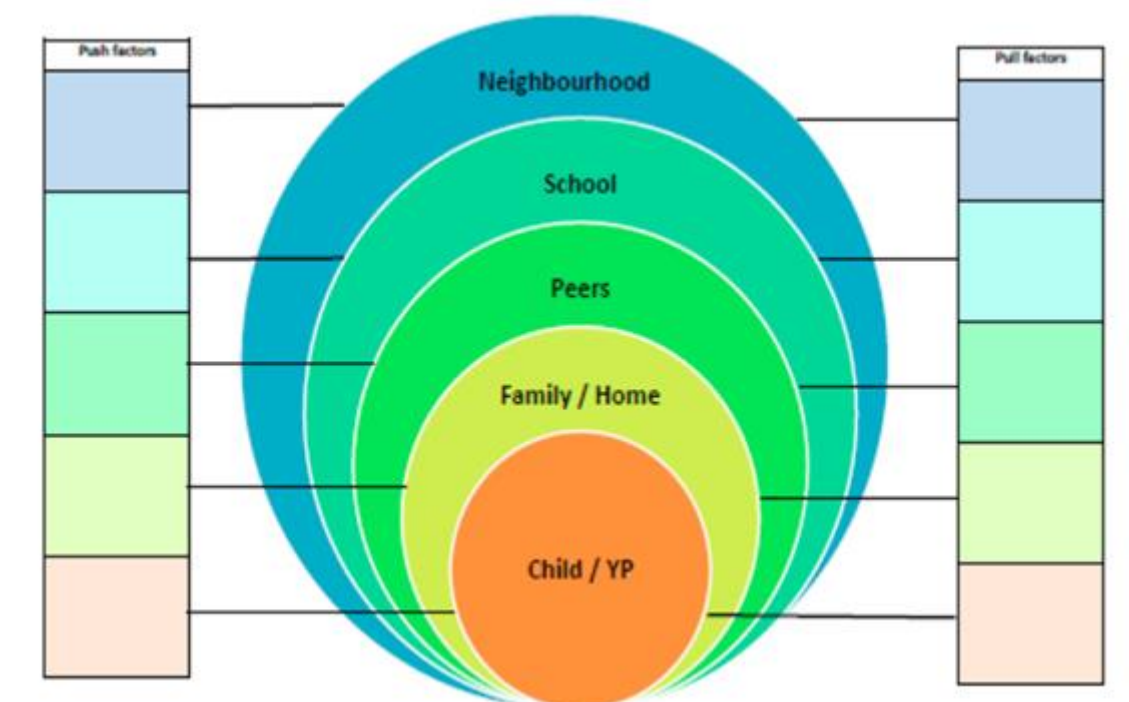
Appendix F

Support plan template

From West Sussex EPS (2019).

Support Plan	
Name:	Date:

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):

Until _____ my return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance:
(Identify any changes to days or time they come in)

Changes to my timetable include:
(Identify any changes needed and what should happen/ where they should go instead)

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Any other changes include:
Identify any other changes to routines, (break, lunch times, changes between lessons etc.) classroom expectations (not expected to read aloud, work in pairs etc.) 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:

Places 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 signature

Other people who have access to the plan are:

Appendix G

Whole school audit

From West Sussex EPS (2019).

Whole school systems for promotion of emotional wellbeing and prevention of EBSA			
	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			

Whole school systems for promotion of emotional wellbeing and prevention of EBSA

	Whole School Provision Currently Available	In Need of Development	Comments/Next Steps (Including by Whom and When)
Promotion of supportive literature regarding emotional wellbeing 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 over-seeing arrangements for EBSA students.			
Clear systems in place for the early identification of school avoidance.			
Nominated member of 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 & 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 the school, key person.			
All staff are aware of specific strategies and programmes in place to support those experiencing EBSA.			