Original Contributors 2018
Andrea Morgan  Senior Educational Psychologist
Dr Jerricah Holder  Educational Psychologist
Ruweida Tikly  Educational Psychologist
Imogen Hagarty  Assistant Psychologist
Laurent Holmes  Assistant Psychologist
Lydia Sole  Assistant Educational Psychologist
Andrew Parker  Manager, Pupil Entitlement Investigations
Helen Cottell  Associate Advisor, Autism and Social Communication Team

Update 2022
Dr Audrey Hunt  Educational Psychologist
Andrea Morgan  Principal Educational Psychologist
Jessica Bubb  Associate Advisor, Autism and Social Communication Team
Jane Crawford  Advisory Teacher, Autism and Social Communication Team
## Contents

What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance? ................................................................. 6
Prevalence ............................................................................................................................ 7
What children and young people have said about their experience of EBSA .................... 8
Anxiety and EBSA ............................................................................................................. 9
Risk and Resilience factors of EBSA ............................................................................. 10
Identification, information gathering and planning ....................................................... 13
Information gathering and analysis .................................................................................. 15
Working with the child ....................................................................................................... 17
Working with parents ....................................................................................................... 20
Working with school staff ............................................................................................... 22
Interpreting the information and planning ..................................................................... 23
Action Planning ................................................................................................................ 25
Interventions and strategies ............................................................................................ 27
Review ............................................................................................................................. 29

**EBSA and the Covid context** ...................................................................................... 30
Whole school approach to emotional wellbeing ............................................................ 31
Whole school good practice and EBSA ......................................................................... 32
Relationships and belonging ......................................................................................... 33
Transition ........................................................................................................................ 34
EBSA and Autism ............................................................................................................ 38
EBSA, school attendance and the law ........................................................................... 42
EBSA and Requests for Education Health Care Needs Assessments ......................... 43
Further local support & resources ................................................................................ 45
Further resources .......................................................................................................... 52
References ....................................................................................................................... 54
Introduction

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is 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.

It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of EBSA. The UK literature reports that between approximately 1 and 2% of the school population, with slightly higher prevalence amongst secondary school students, are absent from school due to emotional reasons (Elliot, 1999; Guilliford & Miller, 2015). It is reported to be equally common in males and females with little evidence of a link to socioeconomic status (King & Bernstein, 2001).

The impact of EBSA on young people is far reaching. Outcomes for young people who display EBSA include poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities (Garry 1996, Pellegrini 2007 and Taylor 2012). EBSA is also associated with poor adult mental health, difficulties can often quickly spiral requiring inpatient treatment (Blagg 1987 and Walter et al 2010).

A previous West Sussex County Council Guidance on Emotionally Based School Refusal was produced in 2004. A multi-agency group requested that this guidance was reviewed and updated to reflect recent research and the services and support currently available. The guidance was updated in 2018 and most recently in 2021. This guidance has been produced by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and is based on the current evidence base of the factors which are associated with positive outcomes. These include:

- intervening early
- working with parents and school staff as well as the young person
- working in a flexible manner paying attention to the individual case and function served by non-attendance
- emphasising the need for rapid return to school alongside good support and adaptations within the school environment (Baker & Bishop 2015)

Alongside this guidance the West Sussex EPS has:

- Produced information booklets for parents, children and young people and one for children and young people with Autism and Social Communication Difficulties
- Run an initial training for West Sussex Schools and Professionals to supplement this guidance with a practical ‘toolkit’ enabling them to work effectively with children and young people and their families.
- Run follow up training that explores EBSA in relation to motivation and the cycle of change
- Created a good practice return to school planning tool was produced to elicit young people’s views and plan for a positive return to school.

Details can be found on West Sussex Services for Schools website. http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/3282

Bespoke training for school settings or services can be delivered as part of our chargeable offer. Please email eps@westsussex.gov.uk for queries.
What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?

Definition

Emotionally Based School Avoidance is 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. A clear distinction is made between those that are absent from school due to truanting and those that are absent from school due to the specific emotional distress that they experience around attending school (Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes, 2008).

Although the literature in this area often cites the phrase School Refuser, this terminology could be considered misleading as the term ‘refuser’ implies that the young person has control over the school non-attendance. This is problematic as this terminology locates the ‘problem’ within the young person and detracts from environmental factors that could be considered instrumental in supporting a young person back to school:

"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”


Cause

There is no single cause for EBSA and there are likely to be various contributing factors for why a young person may be finding it difficult to attend school. It is well recognised in the research literature that EBSA is often underpinned by several complex and interlinked factors, including the young person, the family and the school environment (Thambirajah et al, 2008).

However Kearney and Silberman’s (1990) review of the literature indicates that there tends to be four main reasons for school avoidance:

1. To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood.
2. To avoid situations that might be stressful, such as academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment.
3. To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others, such as parents or other family members.
4. To pursue tangible reinforces outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time.

According to this model, the avoidance of uncomfortable feelings or situations described in the first two points could be viewed as negatively reinforcing the EBSA, whereas in the second two points, the EBSA could be seen as being positively reinforced by factors outside of school (Kearney & Spear, 2012).
Prevalence

The UK literature reports that between approximately 1 and 2% of the school population, with slightly higher prevalence amongst secondary school students, are absent from school due to emotional reasons (Elliot, 1999; Guilliford & Miller, 2015). It is reported to be equally common in males and females with little evidence of a link to socioeconomic status (King & Bernstein, 2001).

Difficulties children have in articulating their distress and the difficulties that parents and school staff have in understanding the young person’s emotional experience of school are often key barriers in identifying and supporting young people at risk of EBSA (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

For some young people, the distress may be obvious in their presentation and chronic non-attendance. However for others, these difficulties may not be so easily identifiable. These young people may demonstrate sporadic attendance, missing the odd day here and there or particular lessons, or may only be able to attend school when provided with a high level of support and a modified timetable.

The onset of EBSA may be sudden or gradual. The literature suggests that there tend to be peaks in EBSA corresponding to transition between school phases (King & Bernstein, 2001).

It is also important to highlight that some young people with EBSA may appear to recover relatively quickly from the initial upsets of the morning and this can lead school staff and others to question the legitimacy of the EBSA; however 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 (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

Figure 1.

Picture of a 14-year-old her feelings are like a whirlwind where she is not in control, that the school is not a safe place, she worries something bad might happen, she sees school as having lots of people in it, but she is on the outside and that people are making fun of her. She has also indicated that she feels she is not doing well with her work and she loves being at home.
What children and young people have said about their experience of EBSA

Research has been undertaken into the views of children and young people; some examples from studies can be found below. Key themes that emerge from these studies are it is important that the child feels listened to, there are people at school that care about them, and they are empowered and involved in planning what support is needed. Young people will need to perceive they have some control over what is happening to them, and to believe their actions are likely to lead to generally positive outcomes, otherwise known as a sense of ‘self-efficacy’. It is thus essential to involve the young person and their family in understanding what is going on and in planning ways forward.

In order for the young person and their family to recognise the support being put in by school, it is important school staff are engaging in a meaningful way with the young person and their families, hearing their stories and viewpoints, acknowledging their feelings and ensuring they are central to any planning.

(Baker & Bishop (2015); Billington (2018); Dannow et al. (2018); Gregory & Purcell (2014); Shilvock (2010))
Anxiety and EBSA

Anxiety has also been identified as a key feature of EBSA. Although a certain level of anxiety is considered a normal and natural part of growing up, some young people may experience heightened levels of anxiety which impact on their functioning and school experiences. When the anxiety is linked to school avoidance, the young person may experience anxious and fearful thoughts around attending school and their ability to cope with school. 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). These behaviours, and the avoidance of school, may then contribute to the maintenance of EBSA over time. Heyne and Rollings (2002) suggest that it is crucial to consider the child’s perceptions of their ability to cope, including perceived social and academic competence, as negative thoughts about one’s ability to cope can lead to further feelings of worry and if left unaddressed, may undermine attempts to improve attendance. Young people who are anxious tend to overestimate the perceived threat and underestimate their ability to cope. The response of the adults around the child can also inadvertently contribute to the maintenance of EBSA. It is important for the adults around the young person to show both understanding of the child’s worries and confidence in their ability to cope, over time with support.

![Anxiety and EBSA Diagram]

Figure 2. Diagram showing the initial anxiety causing the non-attendance and the secondary maintenance factors.
Risk and Resilience factors of EBSA

EBSA is a heterogeneous concept (Maynard et al, 2015). This means that it cannot be treated as a single condition. Different children will be hesitant to attend school for different reasons. It is usually a unique combination of various factors and their interaction rather than a single cause that leads to EBSA.

**Risk:** Just as with general mental health there have been factors identified that place children at greater risk of EBSA. It is usually a combination of predisposing factors interacting with a change in circumstances which leads to the pattern of behaviour described as EBSA. The predisposing factors may be present in the nature of the school, the child’s family or the child themselves.

The exact nature of the predisposing vulnerability and the precipitating events will vary according to an individual child’s unique set of characteristics, circumstances and experiences, but it is still possible to identify factors associated with that vulnerability and the potential triggers leading to EBSA. Being alert to these factors in relation to an absence from school can act as an early warning system enabling preventative action to be taken.

### Factors associated with vulnerability of EBSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Factors</th>
<th>Family Factors</th>
<th>Child factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying (the most common school factor)</td>
<td>Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic</td>
<td>Temperamental style-reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in specific subject</td>
<td>Parent physical and mental health problems</td>
<td>Fear of failure and poor self confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to secondary school, key stage or change of school</td>
<td>Overprotective parenting style</td>
<td>Physical illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of the school day</td>
<td>Dysfunctional family interactions</td>
<td>Age (5-6, 11-12 &amp; 13-14 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic demands/high levels of pressure and performance-orientated classrooms</td>
<td>Being the youngest child in the family</td>
<td>Learning Difficulties, developmental problems or Autism Spectrum Condition if unidentified or unsupported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport or journey to school</td>
<td>Loss and Bereavement</td>
<td>Separation Anxiety from parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>High levels of family stress</td>
<td>Traumatic events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer or staff relationship difficulties</td>
<td>Family history of EBSA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young carer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Resilience:** When working with individuals it is really important to also identify and build areas of strength or resilience of the child, family and school which may help to ‘protect’ the child and promote school attendance.

This may include:

- Developing ambition, aspiration and motivation
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, value in themselves
- Developing feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging
- Having positive experiences where they can succeed
- Holding positive relationships with peers or staff
- Feeling listened to and understood
- Understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Willingness to work in partnership between school, family and external professionals
- Developing parenting skills and understanding
- Flexibility of approaches within school, person centred listening to the voice of the child

**Case study: Identifying risk and resilience factors**

Alison has not attended school for three months. When the school nurse visited Alison, she locked herself in the bathroom and refused to answer any questions. The last time that she left the house was one month ago and her parents are becoming increasingly concerned about how isolated she is becoming.

On reflection, Alison’s parents thought that her problems began when she made the transition to secondary school. Alison had always been one of the most academically able in her class in primary school, but now she found herself in the top classes where there were many more bright students to compete against. Alison’s friends from primary school had gone to another secondary school in the area. Being a shy individual, Alison had not developed close friendships with any of her peers and she tended to tag along with a group of girls from her year instead. However, she was beginning to form a close friendship with one of these girls. Alison often complained of stomach aches and would ask to stay home from school or come home early. Soon before she had stopped coming to school altogether, Alison had discovered that some of the other girls in the group were making fun of her behind her back and leaving her out of social events.

The previous year, Alison’s mum had received chemotherapy after a cancer scare. Although she had now been given the all-clear, she had noticed that Alison had become much more protective of her. She constantly checked where her mum was and became distressed if she was late coming home from appointments. She frequently woke up in the middle of the night after having nightmares about her mother getting into serious difficulty or becoming ill again and dying.

Now Alison stays at home all day. She does not do any work apart from some household chores for her mother. She enjoys playing with her younger brother when he returns from school and sometimes will help him with his homework. Recently, Alison’s mum arranged for Alison’s friend from secondary school to visit the house. This meeting went well, with Alison smiling and laughing a lot, nearly behaving like her old self.
The literature suggests that these contributory factors of ‘risk and resilience’ can also be divided, and understood, in terms of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. Literature indicates that Emotionally Based School Avoidance is most likely to occur when the risks are greater than resilience, when stress and anxiety exceed support, and when the ‘pull’ factors that promote school avoidance overwhelm the ‘push’ factors that encourage school attendance. We can understand these as factors which ‘push and pull’ them away from school and ‘push and pull’ them towards staying at home.

**Example of push and pull factors for Alison’s case study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Push and pull factors away from school:</th>
<th>Push and pull towards home:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Change in family dynamics</td>
<td>• Reduce anxiety around separating from mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mum diagnosed with cancer</td>
<td>• Reduce anxieties around attending school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulties sleeping, nightmares about mum dying</td>
<td>• Not having to complete homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Separation anxiety from parent</td>
<td>• Enjoys playing with younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prolonged period of absence from school</td>
<td>• Does some chores for her mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Isolated, not leaving the house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficult transition to secondary school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic demands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social difficulties, possible bullying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Identify push and pull factors encouraging them to stay at home and reduce them through support**

**Push and pull factors encouraging them to attend school**

We also know that we need to build on positive and protective strengths to make them feel that they can manage school and so they are motivated to attend.

For Alison this may include:

- Academically bright
- Beginning to form a friendship
- Good relationships with family
- Helpful with family

**Identify which strengths they have and promote them; encourage them to develop new strengths and protective factors**
Identification, information gathering and planning

School plays a key role in the identification of children and young people who are currently experiencing, or at risk of EBSA. It is important for schools to develop effective whole school systems to support young people, be vigilant to early indicators and employ a thorough assess, plan, do and review cycle placing the young person at the heart of the interventions.

Potential indicators

It is very important to be proactive with EBSA. The longer the problems remain unaddressed the poorer the outcome, as the difficulties and behaviours become entrenched. Schools need to be vigilant in monitoring attendance of young people noticing any patterns in non-attendance or changes to behaviours.

A Profile of Risk of EBSA can be found in Appendix 1 Profile of Risk of EBSA. This can help practitioners identify areas of risk. The PRE schedule looks at 5 key risk areas for EBSA. The checklist is for use alongside the usual attendance monitoring systems in school, e.g., SIMS and consideration of patterns of attendance, to screen for possible EBSA in relation to non-attendance.

Possible indicators of EBSA include:

- Difficulty attending school with periods of prolonged absence
- Child reluctant to leave home and stays away from school with the knowledge of the parent/carer
- For younger children reluctance to leave parents or get out of the car
- Regular absence without indication of anti-social behaviours
- Frequent absences for minor illnesses
- Patterns in absences, for example, particular days and/or subjects, after weekends and holidays
- Reluctance to attend school trips
- The young person expresses a desire to attend classes but is unable to do so
Anxiety on separation and inappropriate dependence on family members e.g., worry expressed about the safety of those at home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of under-achievement of learning potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social isolation and avoidance of classmates or peer group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging behaviours, particularly in relation to specific situations at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe emotional upset with excessive fearfulness, outbursts of temper and complaints of feeling ill on school days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression and sense of isolation resulting in, low self-esteem and lack of confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion or extreme absent mindedness shown in school due to lack of concentration resulting in, lower attainments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical changes i.e., sweating, sickness, aching limbs, headaches, panic attacks, abdominal pain, rapid weight loss or gain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 assess, plan, do and review cycle placing the young person at the heart of the planning and interventions.
**Information gathering and analysis**

Once a difficulty has been identified there should be a prompt investigation into the reasons for the difficulties. In order for any intervention or support plan to be successful it is essential to gain an understanding of the various aspects causing and maintaining the EBSA behaviours.

Thambirajah et al. (2008) state that the main aims of this analysis is to:

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

It is often tempting to try to locate a simple reason and simple solution for the behaviour.

However as identified earlier it is often an interaction of a number of factors and trying to find simple causation often encourages blaming and individuals can then become anxious and defensive. Parents may feel blamed for the absences, feel that their parenting skills are being criticised and they may be fearful that they will get into trouble or even prosecuted for non-attendance. Children may feel guilty or scared that they will be forced to attend school.

If only the school would put in place more support....

The parents need to be tougher with him......

We need to refer him to CAMHS
Each person may have a different perspective on EBSA and have a different story to tell. It is essential that different people’s views are respected and differences in views are acknowledged. When there is a difference of views it is often more helpful to focus on how the behaviour is occurring rather than why.

Due to the complex nature of EBSA no fixed ‘assessment process’ can be followed. However, in all cases it is essential the views of the young person, the family and key school personnel are gathered and listened to.
Working with the child

Any child currently avoiding school will become anxious when asked to discuss returning. They currently manage feelings of anxiety by employing the avoidant behaviour of not going to school, so any talk about going back to school is going to raise their anxiety as you are proposing to take away their way of coping with their fears. A good place to start any assessment with a young person is to acknowledge it may be difficult but you would like to know what they think and feel. It is important that the adult does not dismiss anxieties or worries the child has, empathise with the young person but do not collude or promote the EBSA.

The approaches taken will depend on the child’s age, level of understanding and language. Even if they are able, often children find it difficult to verbalise what they are thinking and feeling and they may prefer to draw what they are feeling or have visual prompts.

**Some example activities or questions could include:**

Think about your thoughts and feelings about school and what these would look like if they could be drawn?

It also helps to externalise the anxiety:

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

Ask them to draw how their body feels when they are worried.

Use an anxiety thermometer or a scale to ask the child what aspects of school they find difficult. Some areas to consider include:

- The physical environment e.g., toilets, corridors, assembly hall.
- Times of the day or social interactions e.g., arriving at school, play and breaktimes, lining up to go into school or classroom, lunchtimes, going home, changing for PE
- Particular lessons or activities within lessons e.g., writing, working as part of a group, reading aloud, verbally answering a question

A life graph or path can help them tell you their ‘story so far’ and what they would want in the future.

![My Life Graph](image)

![Anxiety Thermometer](image)

We have also produced information booklets for children and young people which can support conversations.

[https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483](https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483)
The Educational Psychology Service has developed a range of tools to help schools and professionals access pupil’s views regarding school.

**EBSA cards ~ West Sussex Educational Psychology Service**

These cards can be used to flexibly explore the young person’s perception of themselves in relation to school and identify school, child and family factors, functions of EBSA and strength and resilience factors which informs a support plan for the young person. The Risk and Resilience cards have recently been updated and include a digital version of the cards on PowerPoint. The EBSA cards and accompanying guidance can be accessed via West Sussex EBSA training.

**Landscape of Fear ~Kate Ripley**

Mapping the Landscape of Fear is a useful tool that can be used by school staff and others to explore sources of anxiety around school attendance. It examines young person’s beliefs about the physical environment, the social environment and the learning environment in school. West Sussex Educational Psychology Service has developed a visual version of this assessment.

**Ideal Classroom ~Williams and Hanke & Lego classroom ~ Faye Morgan Rose**

This tool uses Personal Construct Psychology using either Lego or drawing it elicits the child’s views about school.

**Attendance Risk Monitoring (ARM) Schedule Pupil Interview ~West Sussex Educational Psychology Service**

For more verbal young people this questionnaire helps identify possible underlying functions of the non-attendance. The ARM can be accessed via EBSA training.

**Person Centered Planning**

This range of approaches and tools based upon a shared set of values that can be used to plan with a person– not for them. These tools can be used to help the person or organization think about what is important in their lives and also think about what would make a good future.
Return to school planning tool: a good practice guide to elicit children and young people’s views and plan for a positive return to school

This planning tool has been designed by West Sussex Educational Psychology Service to help schools and relevant professionals gain a greater insight into young people’s experiences of their time at home (not attending school), as well as their thoughts and feelings around preparing for a return to school. It also aims to encourage young people to experience more control over their re-integration, which we know helps young people feel safe. The questionnaire is intended to provide information to guide you as a school in designing a re-integration plan, in which support is targeted and tailored to the child/young person’s own experiences, views and preferences. The planning tool is designed for children and young people who you identify as possibly having difficulty in returning to school following emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). They may hold concerns about friendships, have a fear of being behind in their schoolwork, or have decreased motivation to attend school as they have enjoyed their time at home. The aim is for the questionnaire to increase feelings of self-efficacy in the young person and emphasise positive thinking, strength-building, active coping, and resilience. It facilitates person-centred planning and solution-focused thinking for the young person and their network. You can find the tool here: https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/17995

The Return to School Planning Tool consists of:

- Instructions for parents/practitioners to support the young person to complete the questionnaire.
- ‘My Return to School’ questionnaire – version A (younger pupils).
- ‘My Return to School’ questionnaire – version B (older pupils).
- The ‘My Return to School Support Plan’ - to be completed with the young person based on the information within the questionnaire.

Here is an example from the questionnaire:

When thinking about school, which of these statements are true for you? 
(Please put a tick in the box under the picture if it is true)
Working with parents

As mentioned previously 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. It is important that school take time to build a collaborative partnership working together in the best interest of the child. Sometimes parents may have had similar experiences to their child and may experience their own anxiety making it especially difficult for them.

During the initial meeting it is important to gather background information, establish the current situation and the parent's views. Questions should be sensitive and the person asking should employ active listening skills, examples of questions can be found on page 16. It is advised that regular contact is made with parents; school staff should identify who will be the key person to communicate with parents and agree how they will do this.

Working with parents is essential to successful outcomes. While the focus is on the child it is also important to remember that parents may need their own support and consideration should be made to referrals to services such as Early Help or Special Educational Needs Information, Advice and Support Service, details can be found in the Further local support & resources section.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas to cover</th>
<th>Example questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental and educational history</td>
<td>What was they like as a young child? Can you tell me about their early experiences at school? The primary school, at the start of secondary school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths, interests and aspirations</td>
<td>What is they good at? What do they like doing? Do they have any hopes for the future? Do they know what they want their life to be like when they are an adult?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any potential changes or losses within the family or child’s life</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your family? Who is in it, who is like whom? Who are they closest to? Have there been any changes within the family recently? (You could ask them to draw a family tree/genogram).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Do they talk about any other children? What do they say? Do they talk about any adults within school? What does s/he/they say? Who do they get on with and don’t get on with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic progress</td>
<td>School should be aware if the young person has identified SEN needs and should ask about these needs and the support in place. If there is no identified SEN school should ask if they have any concerns, or if the child has spoken about difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child’s view what are their specific fears/worries</td>
<td>Have they spoken to you about what they find difficult about school? What do they say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child’s views, what is going well in school</td>
<td>Have they mentioned anything that is going well in school? (e.g., teachers, lessons, friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety</td>
<td>When they are worried what does it look like? What do they say they are feeling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical day – when they go to school and when they don’t go to school</td>
<td>Please describe a typical day when they go to school from the moment they get up until they go to bed...... and when they don’t go to school? What do they do when they do not go to school? What do other family members do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on various members of the family</td>
<td>How does their non-attendance impact on you? And on other family members? Who is better at dealing with the situation? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental views on the reasons for the EBSA</td>
<td>Why do you think they have difficulty attending school? (ask each parent separately) If (other parent/ sibling/grandparent) were here what would they say? Are there any differences of views about the reasons and what should be done within the family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptions to the problem</td>
<td>Have there been times when they managed to get into school? What was different about those times?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous attempts to address the problem</td>
<td>What has been the most helpful thing that someone else has done in dealing with the problem so far? What has helped in the past when things have been difficult? What strategies have been most helpful so far in managing their anxiety?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working with school staff

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.

Key information to gather 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 thus 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 2 Information gathering from school.

It is also essential to consider whether the child has unidentified special educational needs, 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).

School staff - looking after your own self-care

Working with distressed young people and anxious parents and carers and colleagues can be anxiety provoking and draining for us. Please look after your own self-care and consider the following:

- Make use of the staff support available to you in your school.
- Remember that you do not have to fix everything – starting a conversation or taking a first step is a really good start.
- Take care of yourself, ensure a good work life balance. Notice if you are getting ‘caught up’ in other people’s problems.
- Have a good routine- sleep, exercise and diet is an important part of managing our mental wellbeing.
- In order to take care of the young people you work with you must take care of yourself. Look for self-care ideas and resources readily available online.

Further information can be found about staff wellbeing can be found at:


A recorded webinar on staff wellbeing https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/18770
Interpreting the information and planning

Following the gathering of information from the child, family, school and any other professional it is essential that this information is gathered together and ‘sense’ is made of it. That an overview of the whole picture and various factors involved are obtained and potential hypothesis are formed. These should then inform the return to school support plan.

The form below is designed to help you integrate the information gathered from the young person, school and family. It is not designed to be a questionnaire but a tool to be completed after the information gathering to help you collate, integrate and analyse the information gathered form a variety of sources. A blank copy can be found in Appendix 3 Information gathering and integration.

At the Formulation and Integration Stage schools can access telephone consultation support from the Educational Psychology Service to assist in the identification of function of the EBSA behaviour and inform the subsequent action planning and intervention.

### Description of Behaviour

~What is the current rate of attendance?
~Are there any patterns to non-attendance? Particular days or lessons?
~History of behaviour; when did it first occur, have there been similar difficulties?
~Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety – what does it look like? What does the child say about any specific fears and difficulties?

### Risk factors school, child and family

~Developmental and educational history (health, medical, sensory or social factors)
~Any changes in family dynamic? (Separation, loss, birth of a sibling, health issues of other family members)
~Any other needs within the family?
### Strengths and protective factors

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

### Formulation & integration of various factors

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

What is the function of the behaviour – is it:

- To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress (e.g., fear of the toilets; the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes, tests/ exams)
- To escape difficult social situations (e.g., feeling left out at playtime; reading out loud in class or other public speaking/group task; working as part of a group)
- To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g., change in family dynamic, concerned about the wellbeing of parent).

To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends).

Are there any maintaining factors?
Action Planning

After the information gathering and analysis process has occurred a return to school or support plan should be made.

All plans need to be co-produced with parents, the child and any other appropriate agencies. All parties need to be signed up.

Each plan will be different according to the actions indicated by the assessment, what worked with one child will not necessarily work with another.

The plans should always be realistic and achievable with the aim of reintegrating the young person. An overly ambitious plan is likely to fail. 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 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.

All parties should be aware that there may be difficulties implementing the plan and these should be anticipated and solutions found. An optimistic approach should be taken, if the child fails to attend school on one day, start again the next day. Parents and school should anticipate that there is likely to be more difficulty after a school holiday, period of illness or after the weekend.

At the start of the plan the child is likely to show more distress and all should be aware of this. School staff and parents need to work together to agree a firm and consistent approach. Any concerns about the process should not be shared with the child a ‘united front’ is recommended. Any concerns should be communicated away from the child.

Schools should take an individual and flexible approach to the young person’s needs. All school staff that will come into contact with the young person should be aware of the return to school plan and any adaptations to normal routines or expectations that are in place to support the child.

Once actions on a support plan are agreed with a young person, e.g., returning to school in very finely graded steps, stick to what has been agreed for that week, even if things seem to be going really well, as pushing things further than agreed can heighten anxiety, reduce trust and backfire overall.

The format of the support plan should be flexible. If appropriate a young person’s version should be created. Examples of a support plan can be found in Appendix 4 Example support plans.
Literature has identified key elements of support that should be in place in order for re-integration action plan to be successful.

**Key elements of any plan**

Direct telephone contact between parent/carers and key workers in school. Agree expectations regarding frequency of contact and set realistic response times.

A return to school at the earliest opportunity.

Early home visits if appropriate to discuss the young person’s reluctance to attend school.

All parties to agree to actions and keep to them until the next review period.

A personalised programme for each young person. (e.g., flexible timetable, arrangements for transport, buddying, and provision of a safe haven).

Ensuring the young person has access to an identified member of staff who can be approached if anxiety becomes temporarily overwhelming in school (i.e., a key worker).

Ensuring all staff (including supply staff) are informed about the young person’s difficulties, particularly during changes of classes/key stages.

Identifying a safe place or base in school that the young person can go to if needed.

Identifying a member of staff for the young person to ‘check in’ with throughout the day.

Considering whether or not a family assessment such as an Early Help Plan would be helpful to identify whole family support.
Interventions and strategies

Kearney and Silverman (1990) suggest that choice of intervention should be governed by a careful functional analysis of school avoidance behaviour. They describe four types of variables which can maintain school avoidance behaviour, however several of these may be involved and their effects will be interactive. Interventions should be bespoke to the individual and based upon the information which was gathered in the assessment and integration stage. See Appendix 7 – Functions of EBSA and Intervention Grid for an intervention grid that corresponds with each of the four functions.

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)

Interventions should include learning about anxiety and worrying, how it affects our thinking, feeling and behaviour and how avoidance of the feared situation makes things worse. The child should be taught anxiety management techniques such as relaxation training and deep breathing. The child should be taught how to notice their worrying thoughts and then how to challenge them, if appropriate. Adults should show understanding of the worry as well as confidence in the young person being able to cope over time (with small steps and the support needed). Links to resources to support schools in this can be found in the Resource Section.

There should be a gradual re-exposure to school setting using avoidance hierarchy created with the young person from least feared school situations to most feared. School should consider the provision of safe spaces that pupils can go to, such as pastoral zone, and library, these may be less stigmatising for some pupils than learning support area for some pupils.

**Anxiety / avoidance hierarchy**

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

What **coping technique** they will use (e.g., relaxation, thinking, distraction)

What **support** will be in place (e.g., key worker available, time out card, access to secure/ quiet base)

Some situations may need to be broken down into even smaller steps
To create an anxiety/avoidance hierarchy, the young person can be asked to name situations (or shown cards representing possible fears) and asked to rank them in terms of how they feel about that situation or object from least worried about to most worried about. When thinking about next steps it is important to start with the item that causes the least amount of anxiety, helping them think about how they will cope with this situation and what support they will need. When they have overcome this fear and consolidated this a number of times then they can begin to work his or her way up the hierarchy.

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)

As with the first function intervention should include learning about anxiety and worrying, how it affects our thinking, feeling and behaviour. How avoidance of the feared situation makes things worse. The child should be taught anxiety management techniques such as relaxation training and deep breathing. In addition the child should be taught social skills and given opportunities to practice coping skills in real-life social and evaluative situations, starting small and building up to most challenging. There could be pre teaching of key work missed, buddying, peer mentoring and role playing what they are going to say when peers ask about their absence from school. It may be useful to normalize any worries the child has about embarrassing situations and reassure them that although excruciating, it will pass.

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

Intervention would usually include work with care-givers supporting them to develop skills and techniques to:
- Manage the school avoidance behaviours such as tantrums or physical/ somatic complaints
- Establish morning routines
- Use problem solving techniques
- Establish positive and individual time to spend with the child outside school hours
- Focus on positive behaviours
- Limit the attention the child receives when they do not attend school
- Establish rewards for when they attend school and where appropriate consequences if they do not.

4. To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (watch tv, go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends).

Intervention would usually include:
- Increasing “rewards” for attendance and disincentives for nonattendance i.e. laptop time, access to internet, phone credit, time with friends in town etc.
- Limit the attention a child receives during non-attendance
- If possible take away the more stimulating activity
- Support their travel to and from school
- Teach them how to refuse offers from peers
- Make school as stimulating as possible, find out the child or young person’s interests and if possible apply this to the work completed in school.
Review

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

The review should identify and celebrate any progress made, review whether further information has come to light to help inform clear next steps. These next steps can include:

- consolidating and maintaining the current support plan,
- setting new outcomes and or actions for the young person, school and parents.
- Identifying that further consultation with other agencies needs to occur which may, if necessary, lead to a referral to other services.

Assess
Gain a full understanding of the various aspects at play (child, school and family)

Plan
Based on information gathered plan for a realistic small reintegration

Review
Monitor the progress made and adjust the plan for next steps

Do
Ensure resources and support is in place, good communication with school, family and others
EBSA and the Covid context

Since March 2020 we have been living in a global pandemic. How have children’s experiences been impacted by COVID, lockdowns and returning to school? How have these experiences impacted on their confidence to attend school? These are some factors that may have increased anxiety and risk factors for EBSA, but by no means an exhaustive list:

- **Covid 19 and EBSA**
  - Maintenance factors: Child (and parent) have a positive experience of not attending school – potential increase in EHE
  - Health anxieties: Keeping themselves and their family safe
  - Higher vulnerability: History of EBSA, Bereavement, Transition years, Adverse experiences in lockdown, ASD, CLA
  - Social demands: Missed friendships, lost social skills, new social rules
  - Sensory demands: Life has slowed down, those with sensory difficulties may find school environment overwhelming
  - Academic demands: Unequal access to learning during lockdown
  - Separation: Parental and child anxiety
  - Uncertainty of new expectations: What will be the new school rules, timetable, teachers

Periods of transition and change can be challenging for any child, particularly if they have pre-existing mental health needs, and COVID including lockdowns and the return to school represented a huge new demand and a significant change. Children are likely to have had different feelings and experiences. There may be broadly three categories of children and young people:

- Children who were already experiencing EBSA or who have experienced EBSA in the past
- Children who are experiencing new anxieties about the COVID context
- Children who have managed with universal support

However, we need to maintain vigilance for all children as they might show a delayed anxiety response to returning to school, or further events might happen which reduce their resilience to maintain their attendance.
Whole school approach to emotional wellbeing

In order to enable children and young people to flourish and to prevent issues such as EBBSA it is vital that schools have a broader whole school approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health. The eight principles of a whole school approach are key areas where schools can take action to embed a whole school approach to promoting emotional health and wellbeing. These actions are informed by evidence and practitioner’s feedback about what works. They build on what many schools and colleges are doing already but if applied consistently and comprehensively will help protect and promote student emotional health and wellbeing.

Why is a whole school approach important?
The DFE recognises that in order to help their pupils succeed schools have to play a role on supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy. OFSTED have highlighted how students themselves say they want to learn more about how to keep themselves emotionally healthy. Moreover, schools have a duty to promote the wellbeing of students. The National institute for Health and care Excellence (NICE) advises that primary and secondary schools should be supported to adopt a comprehensive whole school approach to promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Such an approach moves beyond learning and teaching to pervade all aspects of the life of a school and has been found effective in bringing about and sustaining health benefits.

How will we know that a whole school approach is working well?

- Staff in my school are healthy and happy
- My school feels safe and welcoming
- The voice of every learner is heard and valued
- We recognise and support our most vulnerable learners
- Parents and carers positively engage with my school
- Students, staff and parents seek help when needed

Pooky Knightsmith
Whole school good practice and EBSA

Any successful work with an individual needs to be embedded in whole school systems. General good practice for promoting emotional well-being and positive mental health also applies to EBSA. The figure below outlines the culture, structures, resources and practice within a school that can promote wellbeing of staff and young people, with particular reference to EBSA. A whole school audit can be found in Appendix 5.
Relationships and belonging

The relationships in a child or young person’s life are very important to their wellbeing and development. In a school setting, this means that their relationships with school staff and with each other should be nurtured and supported. Schools should ensure that children and young people feel they belong to and are a valued part of a school community. Students should feel that their relationships with the adults in the school are positive, consistent, and based on trust and mutual respect. Schools should also help children and young people develop healthy relationships with their peers – through good quality relationship education, an effective whole-school bullying policy and through peer support programmes. Generally, for a child to flourish and achieve in school they need to feel that they belong and are a valued part of the school community. The following aspects of belonging to a school can make a difference:

- Positive and consistent relationships with staff – where children and young people believe that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as a person
- Peer relationships – children and young people feel accepted and included by other pupils and the school has low levels of bullying and conflict
- School engagement – children and young people feel committed and actively participate in their learning
- Respectful and nurturing environment – the school generates a sense of community and creates a respectful, tolerant, safe environment backed up by authentic concern for pupils and families
- Feeling listened to – children and young people feel they can voice their worries and that their voice matters about what happens in the school

Creating an environment in which children and young people feel they belong, feel valued and cared for is a whole-school responsibility driven by senior staff. It includes, for example, leadership and policies, but also involves members of staff using their relationships to build that sense of belonging through every interaction. Positive relationships in the school that are built on trust, kindness, safety, and security are an important tool for change.

The relationships that children and young people have with their peers are very significant to their development. One way that schools can support the development of healthy peer relationships is through the teaching of good quality relationships education – through RSHE, Health and Wellbeing etc.

Many children and young people find it easier to talk to their peers first. As a result, there has been an increased drive to develop peer-led initiatives. These might include peer tutoring, peer coaching, peer listening, peer mentoring, peer counselling, befriending, and buddyng.

Some helpful frameworks, resources, and websites to develop your whole school and relational approaches include:

- Anna Freud Centre [https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/](https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/)
- Mentally Healthy Schools [https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/](https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/)
- Allsorts – LGBTQ+ community [https://www.allsortsyouth.org.uk/](https://www.allsortsyouth.org.uk/)
- West Sussex E4S – curriculum [https://www.e4swscalpha.co.uk/](https://www.e4swscalpha.co.uk/)
- Peer mentoring [https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/peer-support/](https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/peer-support/)
Transition

Literature has shown that peaks in the number of young people with EBSA correspond with transition in educational phases. This is not surprising as young people face significant changes.

- WERP webinar – Building Resilience [https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/18770](https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/18770)
- Emotion Coaching UK [https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/](https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/)
- A sociogram tool which is a good way of exploring belonging and peer relationships within class groups [http://users.sussex.ac.uk/~robinb/socio.html](http://users.sussex.ac.uk/~robinb/socio.html)
Successful transition involves the young person being supported to be able to make adjustments to fit in with their new environment.

**Adjustment**

- to meeting lots of new children and young people;
- to subjects being departmentalised, how these are timetabled and how different teachers teach them;
- to a different journey to school

**new environment**

- to greater pressure placed on attainment;
- to having to move around the school to different classrooms for different subjects;
- to new staff and staffing structures

- to being grouped in classes for different subjects, often streamed according to ability; and
- from being the oldest in their primary school to being the youngest in the secondary school;
- to the pastoral system and pastoral support

Most children adjust to these changes over time. However young people who experience higher levels of anxiety or who have experienced loss and separation may be vulnerable to developing or experience an exacerbation of EBSA behaviours. It is important that schools and parents provide appropriate support and any vulnerable young people are flagged up early by the feeder school and an individual approach is taken.

Good transition practice involves effective exchange of information both pastoral and academic from primary to secondary school. It is really important for feeder schools to flag up any early separation difficulties and past EBSA even if the issues were mild and attendance is now fine. We advise that secondary schools should specifically ask this information on any transition gathering forms.

Good transition also involves good communication with the young person and their parents. Key to this is giving the young people and their parent’s practical information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key information required</th>
<th>Practical supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel to school – how will they get there</td>
<td>Go through journey to school, practice this, identify any companions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key people in school</td>
<td>Give a simplified structure chart, provide photos, identify a key person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Layout of school – map, tour, quiz colour coding Provide maps, give tours, quiz, colour code subjects to building areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Structure of the day timetables, break and lunchtime systems
- Provide timetables, colour code these, break and lunchtime systems
- Identify how pupils will be supported to make new friendships, access to supported social activities

### Social time – supporting social interactions and those more vulnerable, bullying policies
- Give information about how lessons are structured, homework expectations
- Set out how young people will be supported provide one page profile

### Academic demands – how lessons are structured. Homework

### Support systems in place – pastoral SEN support

### Equipment needed
- Provide checklist for each day

Familiar school staff should discuss with young people and their parents what are they are looking forward to and what they are worried about and this should be individually addressed. An example of support for this are ‘What if cards...’
### If I don't know where my classroom is...

- I will get my plan from my student planner and see if I can work it out.
- I will try and ask someone in my class.
- I will ask my teacher.

### If someone calls me an unkind name...

- I will try and walk away and not swear or shout.
- I will tell a teacher why I feel upset.
- My teacher will deal with it and talk to that person.

### What if I have nothing to do at breaktime...

- I could go to the library.
- I could buy a snack and eat it in the dining hall.
- I could find my buddy.

### Some useful transition resources

- [https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21APpr9hgRk6OHNuc&id=246E959495C329F5%2160821&cid=246E959495C329F5](https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21APpr9hgRk6OHNuc&id=246E959495C329F5%2160821&cid=246E959495C329F5)
EBSA and Autism

It is well documented that anxiety and dysregulated stress-management are common in autistic children and that this may worsen during adolescence, as young people face increasingly complex social interactions and often become more aware of their differences to their neuro-typical peers. Around 40% of autistic children, adolescents and adults are thought to have at least one and often more anxiety disorders (van Steensel et al. 2011.) As yet, there is little research into the prevalence of those with autism and EBSA but evidence and experience suggest that due to the anxieties that autistic children and young people experience they are at increased risk of EBSA.

The factors which influence levels of anxiety in those who are autistic, as with any child, are multiple and often complex; associated with context blindness, executive functioning, limited theory of mind, difficulties processing language, focus on detail, sensory processing differences (Ozsivadjian and Knott 2016; Gaus 2011; McLeod et al 2015; Ting and Weiss 2017). Research also considers intolerance of uncertainty (IU) as a key contributing factor to anxiety in autistic individuals (Gaigg et al, 2020; Maisel et al 2016). It is important to appreciate that anxiety may not simply be a part of autism but an independently co-occurring disorder that can be addressed and treated in its own right. This is important because accurately identifying anxiety can provide an opportunity to bring about significant improvements in an individual’s quality of life and daily functioning.

The diagram below, shows how ‘Intolerance of Uncertainty’ is central in anxiety disorders in autism.

A model of anxiety in Autism (adapted from South and Rodgers and Masiel et al., 2016 taken from Gaigg et al. 2018)

To explain the ‘Intolerance of Uncertainty’ diagram, the following may be useful; Autistic children and young people may experience sensory processing differences and challenges in understanding
their own emotions (alexithymia) this may lead to the world feeling unpredictable and an autistic child’s and young person’s capacity for tolerance may be reduced. This can then lead to high levels of anxiety; the autistic child and young person may engage in repetitive behaviours (to make the world more predictable). Additionally, alexithymia may also lead to a raised anxiety level which can impact on them being able to regulate their emotions. (Gaigg et al 2018). Further details available from the Autism and Social Communication Team and in the “Anxiety and Autism” guide co-produced between West Sussex County Council and City, University of London.

Schools will be aware that schools are complex social and sensory environments that children who are autistic can find exhausting; they spend cognitive energy managing this experience and can become overloaded. Indeed, their anxiety may become ‘overflowing’ as depicted below and place them at risk of EBSA.

Given the increased risk of an autistic child or young person experiencing high levels of anxiety, that may lead to EBSA, it is essential that there is early support intervention and management of the child’s sensory and learning environment to support the child’s social understanding, emotional wellbeing, resilience and their ability to self-regulate. Steps to address these are set out below.

**Working with the child**

Evidence and experience demonstrate that anxiety levels in autistic children and young people can be reduced by adopting good practice approaches that are individualised to the child’s specific needs including visual supports, structure, managing change and generally increasing the certainty of the school day. It is important to recognise that autistic people may show their emotions in ways that are different to their neuro-typical peers e.g. quiet and compliant behaviour can be a sign of distress. The child’s voice is key to finding out what works for each individual and tailoring support.

Further details of good practice strategies can be found in Appendix 6 – Strategies for Autistic Young People – Strategies for Autistic Young People and should include all adults working with a child being made aware of the affect their communication style can have.
Steps to Support Reducing Anxiety

Step One: Awareness and Understanding of Autism

Ensure that all adults working with the child understand autism, communicate appropriately implement general autism ‘good practice’ strategies e.g., the child uses and is engaged with a visual timetable, relevant visual supports, calm space – see Appendix 6 – Strategies for Autistic Young People for further suggestions.

Ensure too, that peers have an age-appropriate understanding of difference and neurodiversity and how to offer effective peer support to their classmates.

Step Two: Assess

Key to the effectiveness of any intervention is having a sound understanding of the child’s strengths and support needs, including those related to their autism. Consider using tools such as:

- Pupil Progression tool - Autism Education Trust (AET 2017): Progression Framework Resource | Autism Education Trust
- Autism from Diagnostic Pathway to Intervention by Kate Ripley
- One Page profile template from Helen Sanderson http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/favicon.ico

Step Three: Plan and Implement

Plan and implement individualised, strategies to utilise the strengths and support the needs identified in step two. These may include those identified for children in previous chapters of the guidance or more specific strategies such as those included in the resources section.

Step Four: Review

Review the impact of the interventions using the Pupil Progression Tool (AET) or similar. It may be that, despite the good practice and interventions, the child’s anxiety continues to increase placing them at risk of EBSA and additional interventions will need to be implemented.

Please note that the advice in previous chapters regarding Action Planning are also relevant here and should be followed.
If there are indications that the child is at risk of EBSA it will be important to build up a clear picture of exactly what elements of attending school are increasing their anxiety in order that best endeavours can be made to alleviate the anxiety. It is recommended that the tools in Autism from Diagnostic Pathway to Intervention by Kate Ripley are used. In particular, Mapping the Landscape of Fear and planning solutions.

Schools should also consider incorporating supports based on modified cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). CBT is based on the notion that our thoughts mediate our emotional and behavioural response, implying that it is not external events such as people or situations that cause our responses, but rather our thoughts about those events. NICE (2013) recommend that CBT is considered for autistic children and young people with anxiety who have the verbal and cognitive ability to engage and there is emerging and growing evidence that CBT could reduce anxiety in these children.

Schools could consider using resources such as:

- 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
- Starving the Anxiety Gremlin by Kate Collins-Donnelly

It may also be appropriate to seek specialist, outside agency support such as The Autism and Social Communication Team.

Working with Parents

Collaborative, working partnerships with parents is of paramount importance and in the best interests of all children, especially those experiencing anxiety and/or who are autistic.

Recent studies, (Reaven et al 2012; Steensel, Zeger and Bogels 2017, Ting and Weiss 2017) emphasise the importance of the relationship between parental anxiety and anxiety in children and young people. Many parents of children with autism report that they notice their own emotions have an impact on their child’s emotions and vice versa.

Parents may have received minimal advice and support regarding strategies to support their child and schools should consider training courses that may be available to parents e.g., EarlyBird Plus and AScSURE. In addition, the transactional nature of anxiety highlights the need for parents and carers to pay attention to their own mental health needs and parent support programmes which support parents to take care of themselves, in order to be in the best physical and mental health to help their child, whilst also teaching them strategies to develop their child’s emotional resilience. Further details available from the Autism and Social Communication Team.

It is worth remembering that Autistic children and young people may mask or camouflage their natural emotional and sensory reactions and behaviours as a coping strategy whilst at school. This can create a ‘shaken pop bottle’ effect whereby the child shows very different emotions and behaviour at home with parents and care-givers than at school, having contained their anxiety throughout the school day. For this reason, it is important for school to work closely and supportively with parents and the child to understand the whole picture and find solutions.

New Resources

- There is a new EBSA and Autism leaflet for parents and carers that has been produced by the Autism, Social Communication Team, SENDIAS and the Educational Psychology Service. EBSA and Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)
- Also see ASD Team WIKI https://wiki.rixwiki.org/west-sussex-mmm/home/asc-team-wiki for lots of resources and ideas.
- An Evidence Based Guide to Anxiety in Autism – the Autism Research Group Anxiety in Autism
**EBSA, school attendance and the law**

The Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on all parents to ensure that their child has an education. When this education is provided in a school setting parents must ensure their child attends regularly. If the parent is unable to ensure this they can be held accountable for an offence under S.444 Education Act 1996; failure to secure the regular school attendance of a child. The term regular has recently been defined to mean ‘as prescribed by the school’. For the majority of pupils, this means attending school full time. Any unauthorised absence is therefore irregular attendance.

As with any law, the parameters are firm and the Education Act 1996 goes further as the offence is one of strict liability. This means there are only certain permitted defences the parent can use for their child missing school. One such defence is the child was unfit to attend school due to ill health, the parent must prove this to be the case. Only a Head Teacher can authorise absence from school. They may request supporting medical evidence from the parent which shows the pupil is unfit to attend school.

This request is often made to avoid the matter moving into a legal process. Medical evidence can include appointment cards; prescriptions, reports from medical professionals etc. The weight and value of the evidence is one for the Head Teacher to consider in their decision making of whether an absence is to be authorised or not.

When unauthorised absence occurs, dependent on the length and reason for the absence, the school has the option to refer to the Local Authority via Pupil Entitlement: Investigation for consideration of intervention, which may include the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice or legal action. Pupil Entitlement discharges the Local Authorities statutory duties associated with school attendance. On receiving the referral Pupil Entitlement Investigation will gather evidence from all involved before making a decision on next steps within the legal framework. All cases are considered on a case by case basis at the point of referral and throughout the process. If there is no evidence to support a statutory defence, a case is presented to the Pupil Entitlement legal panel where a judgement is made about the most suitable form of legal intervention.

Investigations are carried out within a legal framework to establish if an offence has been committed. This can lead to a variety of actions including the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and/or Court action both in the criminal court (offences under the Education Act) or in the Family Court when seeking an Education Supervision Order.

If the decision is made to go forward with a prosecution, consideration is given as to whether this will be the fast-track pathway, a normal or an aggravated offence. The fast-track route is generally deemed appropriate when support is in place for the family from other agencies, and provides a further period of time in which the parent is expected to demonstrate a significant improvement in their child’s school attendance. Alternatively, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) may be considered appropriate.

If an ESO is deemed appropriate, an application is made to the family court for a one year supervision order. A supervising officer is identified, and their role is to befriend, advise and support the pupil and parent in meeting the expectations set out in the ESO. The supervising officer facilitates the process, coordinating appropriate support in order to significantly improve school attendance. If the parent fails to meet the expectations and directions of the order, a prosecution may follow and a referral made to Children’s Services.

For schools with young people experiencing EBSA and struggling with attendance, it is the Head Teacher’s decision whether to authorise absence or not. If a school decides to refer a student to Pupil Entitlement Investigation the expectation would be that the school will have tried an array of strategies to encourage and support the young person’s attendance such as those as outlined in this document as well as requesting any supporting information from medical professionals.
EBSA and Requests for Education Health Care Needs Assessments

Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) are for children and young people who have a special educational need or disability that cannot be met by the support that is available at their school or college setting. Most children and young people with special educational needs will have help given to them without the need for an EHC Plan at the SEN support level.

In some cases children who display EBSA behaviours may have underlying special educational needs and require support above the SEN support level. If this is the case schools or parent can request that the local authority undertake an Education Health Care needs assessment.

In order to be able to decide whether an assessment should occur the Local Authority will need to see evidence that the school or college have taken appropriate action following the assess, plan, do and review cycle and there is evidence that the child or young person has not made adequate progress or has only made progress because of a very high level of support.
When a child has been displaying EBSA behaviours, the local authority will require evidence that the school has sought and followed advice from:

- outside agencies that advise schools
- health professionals
- professionals that work with families.

Examples of the services this may include can be found in the **Further local support & resources** section of this guidance.

Before making a request for an EHCNA schools should refer to:

The West Sussex Guidance and Criteria for EHC Needs Assessments.

The West Sussex Graduated Approach Guidance Document

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 can be found here:

Children and young people with medical needs schools must have regards to the new DfE guidance (2015): ‘Supporting children at school with medical conditions:

Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England.
Further local support & resources

Information regarding local services and organisations can be found on the West Sussex Local Offer.

https://westsussex.local-offer.org/

Below are key Local Authority services who can offer support to schools families and young people who may be experiencing EBSA.

Autism and Social Communication Advisory Team

We are a small team of Advisory Teachers and Specialist Learning Support Assistants who promote the educational, social and emotional development of autistic children and young people and those with Social Communication Difficulties (SCD). Through partnership with parents, professionals within the educational setting and others involved with the child’s development; we aim to maximise high quality local, inclusive educational opportunities for all autistic children and those with SCD. No diagnosis is required for our involvement.

The focus of the ASCT’s work is to provide support, consultation and challenge to mainstream schools and academies on specific pupils with referrals from school-based staff. In addition to this the ASCT provides a range of bespoke training to schools and longer-term training including, AAA (Autism Aware Award) and CAAPSTA (Certificate in Autism Awareness with Practical Strategies for Teaching Assistants.)

The ASCT provide some direct training to parents: AScSURE (ASC Strategies, Understanding, Realisation and Emotional wellbeing), the National Autistic Society’s EarlyBird Plus course and CUES (Coping with Uncertainty in Everyday Situations)

The team support children and young people who are experiencing emotionally based school

How we support EBSA

The ASCT provide advice to schools regarding supporting children who are experiencing emotionally-based school avoidance, focusing on autistic children and those with social communication difficulties. It is recommended that the ASCT are contacted by schools at the earliest signs of anxiety around attending school.

How to access support

A request form is available via the West Sussex Local Offer or by emailing SchoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk.

Community Mental Health Liaison Service

The CHMLS provides an early intervention and prevention service for professionals who work with children and young people under the age of 18 who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

The team consists of qualified mental health practitioners, support workers and assistant psychologists and is managed by Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust.
The service delivers support through consultation, direct work including enhanced consultation and therapeutic intervention and specialist training.

**How we support EBSA**

We offer consultation to professionals from a trained mental health practitioner who can offer advice and support where there are concerns about a child of young person’s mental health. These consultations can occur through our telephone consultation line or through a consultation clinic.

In some cases an enhanced level of consultation may occur which involves a joint meeting with the child, young person and/or their family.

Some young people experiencing EBSA may benefit from direct work with the young person and their family alongside the professional using evidence based interventions such as low intensity psychological interventions. All interventions are goal based.

In addition children under 12 may benefit from a small group anxiety based intervention.

**How to access support**

Request for consultation are only accepted from people working with CYP not CYP themselves or their families/carers. Consultation can be accessed in the following ways:

- Consultation telephone line: 03003040304 – open Monday to Friday 12-5pm or request a call back via spnt.cmhltconsultationline@nhs.net
- Contacting your named CHML practitioner
- Booking into a consultation clinic
- Early Help Family Support Network forums

**Educational Psychology Service**

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) promotes the development and learning of all children through the application of psychology. Educational Psychologists work at the level of the educational organisation, with individuals and groups of children, teachers and other adults in schools, families, other local authority officers, health, social and care and other agencies. Educational Psychologists have competencies in consultation, assessment, case formulation, and intervention related to children’s learning, developmental, behavioural, emotional and mental health needs.

**How we support EBSA**

Consultation

School staff can access Educational Psychology advice via planning meetings or telephone consultation. It is suggested that after staff have gathered information they can access telephone consultation support at the **Interpreting the information and planning** stage to assist in the identification of function of the EBSA behaviour and inform the subsequent action planning and intervention.
Chargeable Services

The Educational Psychology Service can deliver training and ongoing supervision for both school and multi-agency staff on working with children and their families who display EBSA. This includes information covered within the good practice guidance and tools for working with young people and families.

How to access support

Full details on how to access the service and book on to telephone consultations can be found on the West Sussex Services for Schools Website

http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/3282

Telephone 01903 839308

Email EPS@westsussex.gov.uk

Early Help

Early Help delivers vital early help support to children and families across West Sussex, we know everyone needs help at some point in their lives. Often people find help from family, friends, and services like their GP. Some children and families experience more challenges and need more support. We work with families, helping them to tackle problems before they become more difficult to reverse. Our specialist staff work with families in their own homes and in the community, and we will work closely with partners including schools, providing support and advice.

You can find us at 12 family hubs which are open full time and provide drop-in services for information, advice and guidance, crisis support such as emergency access to food and utilities, support and information for young people aged 11-25 on a range of subjects through our 'Find it Out' offer. Help to access the free entitlement to childcare places and access to services provided by our partners such as health clinics and support groups, we also have social spaces to meet other parents.

Our 12 Family Hubs are located in the following locations: Bewbush; Bognor Regis; Broadfield; Chichester; Durrington; Haywards Heath; Horsham; Lancing; Littlehampton; Shoreham-by-sea; Worthing (two hubs).

How we support EBSA

1. Advice and signposting to schools – all schools have a dedicated Early Help worker through the Dedicated Schools Team. A range of support can be provided such as short term work within the school, support at TAF meetings, and working in partnership with the school to identify where extra support is required for a child/young person at the earliest opportunity.

2. Access to one to one targeted intervention through an Early Help Plan.

3. Drop in services for young people and families through the Early Help Family Hubs.
How to access support

You can speak to us about any concerns you have about a child or young person

01403 229900

WSChildrensServices@westsussex.gov.uk

www.westsussex.gov.uk/earlyhelp

Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team

We are a team of Advisory Teachers who provide expertise in special and additional educational needs to children, young people, families and schools in order to improve children’s educational outcomes and emotional well-being.

We are all qualified teachers and have additional qualifications, experience and knowledge in communication, interaction, cognition, learning, social, emotional and mental health needs and removing barriers to learning. We provide training opportunities for schools in all areas of our expertise, for example dyslexia, dyscalculia, Team Teach, speech and language, Down syndrome, ADHD and behaviour.

How do we support EBSA

School staff can access the Learning and Behaviour Team service advice by making a request for either a telephone or face to face consultation.

How to access support

A request form is available via the West Sussex Local Offer or by emailing SchoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk

Pupil Entitlement: Fair Access

The fair access team is the gatekeeper of commissioned places at the West Sussex Alternative Provision College. WSAPC offer home based learning, (Blended Learning) usually computer based learning program supported by visiting mentors. School remain very much in contact with the pupil through an initial planning meeting and regular half termly review meetings. Integration back to school is supported by WSAPC.

How we support EBSA

If a pupil’s non-attendance is medically based and pupil is supported by a consultant, school can apply to the Fair Access Team for Blended Learning.
How to access support

School needs to complete a fair access referral form and evidence with a consultant’s letter indicating the pupil is too sick to attend mainstream, giving a diagnosis, treatment plan and recommendations for the provision required with timescales.

fairaccess@westsussex.gov.uk

Pupil Entitlement: Pupil Investigation

The Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team’s role is primarily to discharge the Local Authorities statutory duties associated with school attendance.

We offer advice and guidance to schools and families on attendance matters and investigate referrals made by schools to consider if a child’s poor attendance should lead to legal action.

In addition, the Elective Home Education (EHE) team sits within Investigations. EHE is where a parent removes a young person from the roll of a school to take responsibility for all aspects of the child’s education themselves.

The EHE team offer basic advice on guidance to parents on how to provide a suitable education provision and will determine at a later date if that provision is effective.

How do we support EBSA

We can advise both parents and schools on the legal framework around any associated school absence.

We can offer parents considering Elective Home Education the opportunity to discuss this option to ensure they are able to make an informed decision.

How to access support

General questions around school attendance, including the use of penalties, can be answered by Pupil Entitlement Investigation (PEI).

Email: pei@westsussex.gov.uk

Tel: 0330 222 8200

For questions or advice regarding Elective Home Education;

Email: ehe@westsussex.gov.uk

Tel: 0330 222 3300

Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service - SENDIAS

The West Sussex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (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.
How we support EBSA

Impartial advice, information and support to parents/carers of pupils with SEND. Service also has YP advisers who can work directly with YP and their families as appropriate.

How to access support

Helpline: 03302228555 Mon – Fri 9-4 pm
Email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk (parents) CYP.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk (Young people)

Thought-full - Mental Health Support Teams in Schools

The Mental Health Support Teams in Schools are currently based in some Crawley and some Bognor/Felpham schools with new sites extending to some schools in Haywards Heath/Burgess Hill and some schools in Worthing. New sites will continue to develop over the next few years.

How we support EBSA

MHSTs have 3 core functions:

1. Delivering evidence based interventions in schools for mild to moderate mental health issues.
2. Supporting the senior mental health lead in each education setting to introduce or develop their whole school or college approach.
3. Giving timely advice to school and college staff, and liaising with external specialist services, to help children and young people to get the right support and stay in education.

Our practitioners can provide interventions for mild to moderate difficulties in the following areas:

- Sleep difficulties related to poor sleep routine, behavioural problems, anxiety-based night-time avoidance behaviours, or problematic thoughts or worries at night
- Poor eating patterns or diet affected by and/or affecting mood
- Low mood, depression and low self-esteem
- Anxiety difficulties including phobias (e.g., animals, vomit, agoraphobia etc.), separation anxiety, social anxiety, school avoidance & excessive worry
- Common behaviour difficulties
- Consider impact of difficulties on young person at home and school

How to access support

If you are an MHST school, please contact Mental Health Support Teams in Schools MHST@westsussex.gov.uk to make or discuss a possible referral or see our webpage for further information https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/6073
Youth Emotional Support - YES

YES offer a voluntary service for young people (11 – 18th birthday) that help them to identify, acknowledge and work through difficulties they may be facing that are having a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing.

**How do we support EBSA**

“Yes” promote emotional wellbeing in young people supporting them to develop strategies to better manage anxiety using a variety of different techniques/ tools which are tailored to young people. Alongside one to one support “Yes” provides anxiety workshops that run in school holidays. They are part of the offer to those young people referred to our service.

**How to access support**

**Information regarding referral routes and contact details**

Website: [www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk](http://www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk)

Duty line: 033302226711 Mon – Fri 9.30 – 4.00

Referrals via GP, school nurse, CAMHS and self-referral through our Find it out Centres
Further resources

Anxiety Management

- Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People by Kate Collins-Donnelly
- What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Dawn Heubner
- Dan Siegal's hand model of the brain [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0T_2NNoC68](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0T_2NNoC68)
- Young Minds [https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/mental-health-conditions/anxiety](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/mental-health-conditions/anxiety)
- Apps – Think Ninja is a mental health app designed for 10 to 18 year-olds [https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/thinkninja](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/thinkninja)
- Understanding anxiety and panic attacks Mind [https://www.mind.org.uk/media/1892482/mind_anxiety_panic_web.pdf](https://www.mind.org.uk/media/1892482/mind_anxiety_panic_web.pdf)
- The Anxious Child: A booklet for parents and carers wanting to know more about anxiety in children and young people. [https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/anxious-child](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/anxious-child)
- Helping your Child with their Fear and Worries – a self-help guide for parents by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts
- Thinking Anxiety – Learning to Face Fear – a Ted Talk by Dawn Huebner – a useful Ted Talk for parents and school staff [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jryCoo0BrRk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jryCoo0BrRk)
General Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Literature

- Managing Your Mind: The Mental Fitness Guide by Gillian Butler and Tony Hope (for older young people)
- Stuff That Sucks: Accepting what you can’t change and committing to what you can by Ben Sedley
- The Thriving Adolescent: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Positive Psychology to Help Teens Manage Emotions, Achieve Goals, and Build Connection by Louise Hayes
- Dealing with Feeling by Tina Rae. Published by Lucky Duck
- I am special by Peter Vermeulon. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- A Volcano in My Tummy by Elaine Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney
- Be Resilient and the Teenage Guide to Stress by Nicola Morgan
- Emotional Literacy assessment and intervention by Southampton Psychology Service. Published by GL Assessment Limited. (Available for both Primary and Secondary)
- The Wellbeing Toolkit by Tina Rae – Nurture Group Network

Training resources

- Online course on how to support young people with mental health difficulties [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)
  MindEd for Families has online advice and information from trusted sources and will help you to understand and identify early issues and best support your child. [https://www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html#/](https://www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html#/)
  MindEd has e-learning for professionals applicable across the health, social care, education, criminal justice and community settings. It is aimed at anyone from beginner through to specialist. [https://www.minded.org.uk/Catalogue/TileView](https://www.minded.org.uk/Catalogue/TileView)
- Understanding Anxiety; Active Listening; Building Resilience WERP recorded webinars [https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/18770](https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/18770)

Books for young children

- The Goodnight Caterpillar: A Relaxation Story for Kids by Lori Lite
- Huge bag of worries by Virginia Ironside
- The Koala that could by Rachel Bright
- Silly Billy by Anthony Browne
- Willy the Wimp by Anthoy Browne
- Owl Babies by Martin Wadell
- How to catch a star by Oliver Jeffers
- Willy and the Wobbly house by Margot Sunderland
• The boy and the bear by Lori Lite
• Starting school by Janet Ahlberg
• Back to school tortoise by Lucy M. George
• Gotcha Smile by Rita Philips Mitchell
• Halibut Jackson by David Lucas
• Giraffes can’t dance by Giles Andreae
• Little Miah Cat’s Big Panic by Jane Evans
• Mindful Kids Mindfulness activities

References

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families/Mentally Healthy Schools


Appendix 1 Profile of Risk of EBSA

The PRE Schedule consists of five key areas, each of which contain a number of items you are asked to consider in terms of their possible importance in influencing an emotionally based attendance problem. The rationale for the schedule content is based on risk factors identified in the guidance.

When completing the schedule, it is important to be as objective as possible, and to base assessments on evidence. Thus it is recommended that completion of the schedule is a joint venture, wherein checking and questioning can lead to the best judgements in terms of item importance.

During the process of completing the schedule, it may be useful to note factors associated with particular items, such as:

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

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

If the resultant profile suggests to you that the pupil is at risk of emotionally based school refusal, the next step is to obtain the views of the pupil, parents and other staff.
### Profile of Risk of EBSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loss and Change</th>
<th>Level of concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of parent, relative, friend</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of pet</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden traumatic event</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden separation from a parent</td>
<td>Not an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving house, school, area</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of a classmate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent, relative, friend illness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note on key items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Dynamic</th>
<th>Level of concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate parenting</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth of new child</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents separated</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents arguing/fighting</td>
<td>Not an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical problems bringing the child to school</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with parental control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealous of sibling at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note on key items**
### Curriculum /Learning issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Not an issue</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low levels of literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE and/ or games issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General learning difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific subject difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam or test anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties with a particular teacher/adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems keeping up in lessons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note on key items**

### Social Personal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Not an issue</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being bullied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems to have few friend/ friendship issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as a second language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes play/ break times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few leisure interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note on key items**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Wellbeing</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Not an issue</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often seems tired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appears depressed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appears anxious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps feelings to themselves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a pessimistic nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note on key items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other issues</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Not an issue</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note on key items
Overview of key risk factors actors identified
Appendix 2 Information gathering from school

_________ 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your name</th>
<th>Lesson/activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please describe ____________.

What are _________’s strengths?

What is going well for ____________?

What does _________’s find difficult?

How does _________ get on with their peers?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does __________ get on with you and other adults?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is ______ engaged and motivated with their learning. Are they making progress? If not why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you observed any emotional difficulties at school, what have these been, when did/do they occur?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What support to you provide for __________. How do they respond to this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your understanding of _________’s attendance problems?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think would help _________ in school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Information gathering and integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year group</td>
<td>Key School staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other agencies involved</td>
<td>Description of behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk factors school, child and family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths and protective factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulation &amp; integration of various factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Support Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**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)

**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:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I can do to make myself feel better when I’m at school:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that other people (staff and friends) can do to help me feel better when I’m at school:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that my family can do to support me to attend school:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places in the school I can go to where I feel safe and supported:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

Review date:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My signature</th>
<th>Key adult’s signature</th>
<th>Parent signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other people who have access to the plan are:
## Support Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**At school these things can make me feel upset**

**My school support person/(s) is/are:**

Details of checking in with my school support person (When, where)

**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)

**Any other changes include:**

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

**When I start to get upset, I notice these things about myself**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I start to get upset, others notice these things about me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I can do to make myself feel better when I’m at school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that other people (staff and friends) can do to help me feel better when I’m at school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that my family can do to support me to attend school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places in the school where I can go to where I feel safe and supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My signature</th>
<th>School support persons’ signature</th>
<th>Parent signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other people who have access to the plan are?
Appendix 5 Whole School Audit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole school systems for promotion of emotional well-being and prevention of EBSA</th>
<th>Whole School Provision Currently Available</th>
<th>In Need of Development</th>
<th>Comments/Next Steps (Including by Whom and When)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Culture and Ethos</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed and inclusive senior management team - values all students and allows them to feel a sense of belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All staff working within school are valued. Clear protocols regarding emotional support and stress management for staff including supervision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous professional development for all staff which makes clear the promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing is everybody’s responsibility (including EBSA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of pupil voice and viewing the child holistically are approaches which are embedded within the culture of the school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of the importance of communication and partnership working with parents and external agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School systems. policy and practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear policies on attendance, behaviour, bullying, equality and transition which sets out the responsibilities for all and the support in place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum includes the teaching of resilience, coping and social skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum appropriately differentiated according to individual need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole school systems for promotion of emotional well-being and prevention of EBSA</td>
<td>Whole School Provision Currently Available</td>
<td>In Need of Development</td>
<td>Comments/Next Steps (Including by Whom and When)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of supportive literature regarding emotional well-being and mental health for young people and parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear roles and responsibilities for SENCo and emotional wellbeing leads.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of senior staff is responsible for over-seeing arrangements for EBSA students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear systems in place for the early identification of school avoidance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated member of who has a responsibility to investigate and act on concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff are aware as to whom they should convey any concerns regarding EBSA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of interventions within a graduated response - assess, plan, do &amp; review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff are aware of the role of other agencies and local arrangements with regard to assessing and supporting students experiencing EBSA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to indicated provision e.g., safe places within the school, key person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All staff are aware of specific strategies and programmes in place to support those experiencing EBSA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6 – Strategies for Autistic Young People

General strategies for supporting children and young people with Social Communication Differences and Autism in the Classroom

All adults working with student should be made aware of the following:

- **Use student’s name before** delivering any instructions so that they cue into you speaking to them and recognise the instructions applies to them.
- Allow additional time for the student to process verbal information and instructions (at least **10 seconds**) and avoid repeating verbally within this time.
- If repetition of the information/instruction is necessary, **use exactly the same wording** as initially used.
- Use **explicit, concise language** when addressing the student as this is likely to enable them to process the information correctly.
- Use **short simple instructions**. Give them in order that they are to be completed. Check for understanding. Ask the student to repeat them back to you.
- **Do not** insist on **eye contact**, for many autistic students this can be uncomfortable and in extreme cases even painful. Instead consider agreeing a strategy with the student and all staff to enable them to indicate that they are listening.
- Be aware that direct answers from the student are often related to their **literal understanding** and lack of social awareness rather than due to **rudeness**.

Ideally consider developing a **pupil profile** to share with all staff, including office staff and mid-day meals supervisors to ensure awareness of the above.

Classroom strategies to consider:

- Ensure the student understands how to use their planner; **colour coding the information including the map** will be beneficial. This will lower the anxiety levels associated with SCD/ASC autism and enable the student to predict what is coming next.
- Be aware that clear explanation needs to be provided, supported visually where possible, **to explain any unplanned changes of routine** to the student in **advance**.
- **Use visuals** to remind students of expected behaviours, classroom rules and routines for example, use symbols to indicate noise levels i.e., partner voices, group voices, classroom voice, social voices. This will also encourage independence.
- Provide the student with a **symbol card to display when he or she wants help**.
- Provide an area of classroom free from busy displays and distractions. Try to keep the area around the whiteboard / IWB ‘clutter free’.
- Wherever possible provide the student with a **visual set of simple step by step instructions** that they can use as a tick list. This will also support independence.
- It is common for young people with SCD/who are autistic to be resistant to writing. There are numerous skills involved in writing from retrieving ideas/memories to fine motor skills. Therefore, consider **providing opportunities to complete learning objectives using alternative means of recording** e.g., scribe, keyboard, audial recording etc.
- Consider the use of **mind mapping software** to support students through visual learning. Various packages are available. E.g., Inspiration 9 from Inspiration Software Inc.
- Consider allowing the student to achieve the learning objective through writing about their own interest instead of the topic under consideration.
- The student will benefit from being given a clear indication of the expected outcome of a task before they start i.e., what finished will look like. **Set tasks with clear goals** e.g., “Write ‘x’ number of sentences on” rather than “Write about…”, or the use of a green dot to indicate
where the writing will start and a red dot where it will end or state the number of calculations etc.

- Suggest that there be a set time in break/lunch/free periods where the individual can ask questions that they have not had time to ask during a lesson.

**Managing sensory processing differences**

- The student with sensory processing differences often struggles with regulating their responses to everyday sensory stimuli as these can feel overwhelming and even distressing. This can affect their capacity to plan and organise their actions and of regulate their attention and activity levels. They may seek and/or avoid particular sensory stimuli. Completing a sensory checklist (available from the Autism and Social Communication Team) can help to identify such sensory responses.

- Sensory activities should be timetabled into the student’s day reflecting the needs identified in the sensory checklist.

- Supporting students to manage their sensory needs should be encouraged for all students within the class to encourage acceptance and understanding that we are all affected in different ways and degrees by our sensory environment and can boost our learning and attention by managing our sensory input.

- It may also be useful to reflect on the sensory environment as a whole. A classroom checklist is available from the Autism and Social Communication Team.

**Motivating the student**

- Use **incentives based on an activity that is personally motivating** to the student/their interests e.g., I.T. based activities/games, Dr Who, Pokemon Go.

- Use **individualised reward systems** e.g., collecting a number of points or ticks that achieve a personally motivating reward. Earned points/ticks should not be removed for poor behaviour. The collection of point/ticks should not be linked to specific periods of the day.

**Self-regulation**

- The child and young person who has difficulties with self-regulation may have difficulty managing/moderating their behaviour, their emotions, their sensory reactions or the focus of their attention (cognitive self-regulation).

- It is important to observe students and use tools such the **ABC or STAR behaviour charts** to unpick where they may have difficulties in self-regulation then begin working with them to develop strategies to manage their difficulty including traffic lights, scaling and self-advocacy. Consider using resources such as ‘**The Zones of Regulation**’— see below for details.

- Many autistic people develop their own self-regulating strategies such as ‘‘stimming’’. These can be very positive and children should be able to use these strategies as needed to self-regulate. If a child’s stim or other self-soothing strategy is potentially distracting for other students, work with the child and parents to understand the behaviours, to help find substitutes that might perform the same function for the child.

**Developing social understanding**
• **A small step target approach** should be taken using checklists/resources to set the targets and assess the Student (available from the Autism and Social Communication Team).

• Link any social target to a reward system that is personally motivating to the student.

• Use ‘catch me cards’ to target specific social targets throughout the school day e.g. ‘Catch me doing as I am asked’– each time an adult witnesses the student achieving the target they initial or stamp the card so they can see their progress and it can be rewarded.

• Develop the student’s understanding of social rules and situations using **Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories**; [Social stories and comic strip conversations](#)

These will help the student to begin to understand how other people feel in different situations and provide them with strategies to use.

• Consider including the student in a **social skills group** that supports them to develop the skills required to achieve their social target e.g., Lego Therapy. The Autism and Social Communication Team can provide training for staff to implement this.

**Recommended Resources Autism**

**Books**

• Autism from Diagnostic pathway to Intervention: Checklists to support diagnosis, analysis for target setting and effective intervention strategies by Kate Ripley published by Jessica Kingsley.

• Autistic Spectrum Disorders – Practical Strategies for Teachers and Other Professionals by Northumberland County Council Communication Support Services UK. David Fulton Publishers

• Autistic Spectrum Disorders in the Secondary School (Autistic Disorder Support Kit) by Lynn Pimley published by Sage Publications Ltd

• Autism in the Secondary Classroom by Joy Beaneey and Penny Kershaw published by The National Autistic Society

• Understanding How Children and Adolescents Think and Learn by Paula Jacobsen. Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

• Education and Care for Adolescents and Adults with Autism by Kate Wall Published by Sage.

• Exams: Guidelines for parents and teachers of young people with autism published by The National Autistic Society

• Autism: Supporting your teenager by Caroline Hattersley published by The National Autistic Society

• Understanding How Asperger Children and Adolescents Think and Learn by Paula Jacobsen published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

• Sensory Strategies: Practical ways to help children and young people with autism learn and achieve by Corinna Laurie. Published by The National Autistic Society

• The Social Play Record: A Toolkit for Assessing and Developing Social Play from Infancy to Adolescence by Chris White. Jessica Kingsley Publishers

• Teaching children with Autism to Mind Read by Patricia Howlin, Simon Baron-Cohen and Julie A. Hadwin. Published by Wiley-Blackwell

• The Zones of Regulation by Leah Kuypers. Published by Think Social Publishing

• Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-Donnelly

• Starving the Anger Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anger Management for Young People (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-Donnelly

• Banish Your Self-Esteem Thief: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Building Positive Self-esteem for Young People (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-
Donnelly
- Banish Your Body Image Thief (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-Donnelly
- Martian in the Playground: Understanding the Schoolchild with Asperger’s Syndrome by Clare Sainsbury. Published by SAGE Publications Ltd
- The New Social Story Book by Carol Gray. Published by Future Horizons Incorporated.
- Comic Strip Conversations by Carol Gray. Published by Future Horizons Incorporated
- Time to Talk by Alison Schroeder. Published by LDA
- Talkabout: A Social Communication Skills Package by Alex Kelly. Published by Speechmark Publishing Limited
- Dealing with Feeling by Tina Rae. Published by Lucky Duck
- I am special by Peter Vermeulon. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- A Volcano in My Tummy by Elaine Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney. New Society Publishers
- Beating Anxiety – What Young People on the Autistic Spectrum Need to Know by Davida Hartman
- Emotional Literacy assessment and intervention by Southampton Psychology Service. Published by GL Assessment Limited. (Available for both Primary and Secondary)

Lived Experience
- A guide to living your best NT life (an illustrated guide from a neurodivergent perspective) by Harry Thompson and Missing the Mark. Available from Amazon
- The Autistic Brain- exploring the strength of a different kind of mind by Temple Grandin and Richard Panek

Subject Specific Top Tips for supporting students with Autism – available from the Autism and Social Communication Team.

Websites
- Do2learn - [www.do2learn.com/](http://www.do2learn.com/)
- Setbc - https: [www.setbc.org/students/Pages/PictureSET.aspx](http://www.setbc.org/students/Pages/PictureSET.aspx)
- Resources for Inclusion: [www.resourcesforinclusion.co.uk/](http://www.resourcesforinclusion.co.uk/)
- The Gray Center (Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories): [The Gray Center](http://www.thegraycenter.org/)
- [Autism Education Trust: https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/)
Appendix 7 – Functions of EBSA and Intervention Grid

**Function 1**

To avoid something or situations that elicit negative feelings of high levels of stress (e.g., fear of noise, toilets, busyness of people moving around, academic)

Interventions should include supporting the child to understand their experience of anxiety and how it affects their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, including how avoidance behaviours can often exacerbate worries.
- Support to learn about anxiety and strategies to manage worries such as deep breathing techniques, mindfulness, CBT and balanced thinking strategies.
- ‘Mapping the Landscape’ to review hotspots and areas requiring support, as well as areas that feel more manageable. Support to identify aspects of school associated with positive affect (e.g., favoured lessons/teachers).
- Targeted support to reduce particularly negative emotions e.g., ‘meet and greet’, peers to walk to school with.
- Provision of ‘safe spaces’ to escape to and ‘busy boxes’ to aid regulation
- Dishabituate high cortisol levels through relaxation, sensory breaks, calm starts.
- Construction of anxiety / avoidance hierarchy with the child/young person to help the child or young person to see the small manageable steps that could be achieved towards returning to school.
- Identify strengths, new skills, or achievements developed that can be harnessed.

**Function 2**

To escape difficult social situations (e.g., feeling left out at playtimes, reading out loud in class, working in a group, worrying about academic evaluations)

As with function 1, interventions should focus on learning about anxiety, as well as providing opportunities to practice in real life social contexts in order to build their confidence and coping skills.
- Anxiety management techniques and behavioural experiments to test out their anxiety around particular situations. Gradually increase the time or complexity of the situational demand to increase confidence and mastery of reduced avoidance behaviour.
- Increase understanding of social anxiety and the aspects of social interaction that they find worrying or difficult.
- Role play of situations that they find difficult to build confidence, and to gain a sense of self-efficacy.
- Access to social skills modelling and targeted intervention to ‘teach’ skills.
- Practical support for social inclusion e.g., Circle of Friends, Buddy systems, lunchtime clubs and structured group activities.
- Structured group task, such as paired work and activities in which roles are clearly defined within the classroom.
- Access to catch up tutoring and pre-teaching (online or face-to-face)

**Function 3**

To gain attention from, or to spend more time with significant others (e.g., change in family dynamics, concerned about the wellbeing of a parent/carer)
Interventions will need to include close liaison with parent/cares to support them to manage the pre-transition stage, as well as transitional objects and/or strategies to reduce anxiety brought about by the separation from family.

- Focus on the child’s sense of belonging and connection to school e.g., spend additional time welcoming back, video calls prior to transition.
- Provide a secondary attachment figure at school, someone that the child can build a relationship with and meet regularly e.g., “meet & greet”, mentoring time
- Consider allowing phone calls for a period to check-in with family members.
- Consider use of a ‘transitional object’ that supports the child to know that parent/carers are holding them in mind even though they are not physically present. Gradually increase tolerance for time away from parents/carers.
- Use of a visual timetable that indicates what will happen next and when the child will see the parent/carer again
- Consider initiating projects that can be done at home and then brought into school for completion so that the child has a sense of continuity even on days when they do not feel able to attend.

Function 4

To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (e.g., watching tv, go shopping, playing computer games)

Intervention will need to include disincentivising time at home and increasing the appeal and interest in school.

- Increase rewards and incentives for attending school and decrease rewards for non-attendance
- Limit the child’s attention received during time at home and retain routines. If possible, limit use of stimulating activities e.g., no computer games until after 3pm and increased focus on schoolwork/educational orientated tasks to be completed during the day, if possible.
- Time to prepare - getting back into sleep routines, trying on school uniform, organising school bag, etc. Trial run of getting up and ready for school.
- Increase the appeal of school e.g., tap into the child’s interest, e.g., start the return to school with a favoured subject area, and shine a light on positives e.g., seeing friends again.
- Virtual tours with video of photos, explicitly pointing out changes to the physical environment, things that may have changed.
- Develop a ‘first day plan’ with the child so they know what is expected
Information booklets for parents/carers, children and young people.

These booklets can be downloaded from http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/3282 or https://westsussex.local-offer.org/