

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

**Shropshire Integrated Process for accessing support for
Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)**

and

The Offer of Support

May 2026



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APPLYING PSYCHOLOGY
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Early Intervention (more than 10 days lost*)

* *Discussing absence in terms of 'days missed' rather than attendance percentages can often be more meaningful and accessible for families.*

Attendance data should be monitored closely, with prompt responses when patterns of absence begin to emerge. Early action enables the provision of targeted support, such as pastoral interventions, mentoring, or referrals to specialist services, tailored to the needs of the pupil.

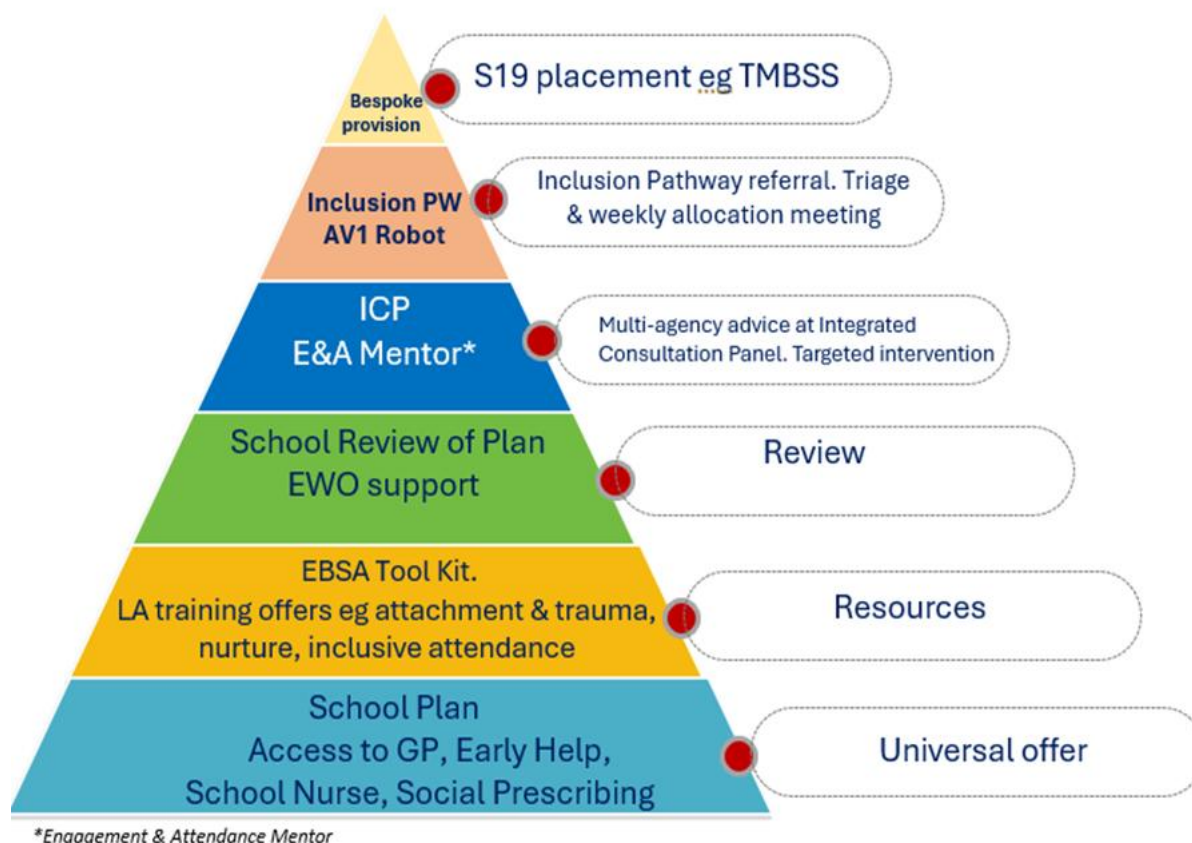
Collaboration

Our approach places strong emphasis on collaboration. Where appropriate, this includes multi-agency working alongside active engagement with parents and carers, as well as external professionals. Together, these partnerships support the development of comprehensive plans that address the underlying causes of absence.

Personalised Strategies (more than 15 days lost)

Support should be personalised to reflect each pupil's individual needs, ensuring that their voice is central to the process and that the views of parents and carers are fully considered.

It is essential that all practitioners and partners work within a graduated multi-agency support pathway, using an **Assess, Plan, Do, Review** (APDR) approach and placing children and young people at the heart of decision-making. This process aligns with Department for Education guidance, is illustrated in the accompanying diagram, and represents the expected practice across Shropshire.



Therefore, at the universal level, schools are expected to have a clearly articulated and consistently implemented plan to promote attendance, engagement and wellbeing for all pupils. This includes a proactive whole-school approach, underpinned by inclusive practice and early identification of need. Where concerns begin to emerge, schools are expected to facilitate early access to universal and community-based support, including GP services, Early Help, the School Nursing Service and Social Prescribing, to prevent difficulties from becoming entrenched.

Where a pupil's needs require additional consideration, schools are expected to actively draw on available resources and professional learning. This includes use of the EBSA Toolkit (Offer of Support detailed later within the document), alongside engagement with the Local Authority's training offer, particularly in relation to EBSA training, attachment, trauma-informed practice nurture and inclusive attendance. At this level, schools retain responsibility for planning, implementing and reviewing support within an APDR framework.

If concerns persist despite enhanced universal support, schools are expected to formally review the plan and seek guidance/involvement from the Education Access Service. Where further multi-agency consideration is required, schools may submit a referral for multi-agency advice via the Integrated Consultation Panel (ICP). Through this process, targeted interventions can be collaboratively agreed, drawing on the expertise of relevant professionals to support improved engagement and attendance.

For pupils whose needs indicate a higher level of complexity, schools may make a referral into Shropshire's Inclusion Pathway. This pathway provides structured access to Local Authority advice and intervention, including the potential allocation or use of AV1 robots, ensuring that provision remains proportionate, needs-led and focused on inclusion and reintegration wherever possible.

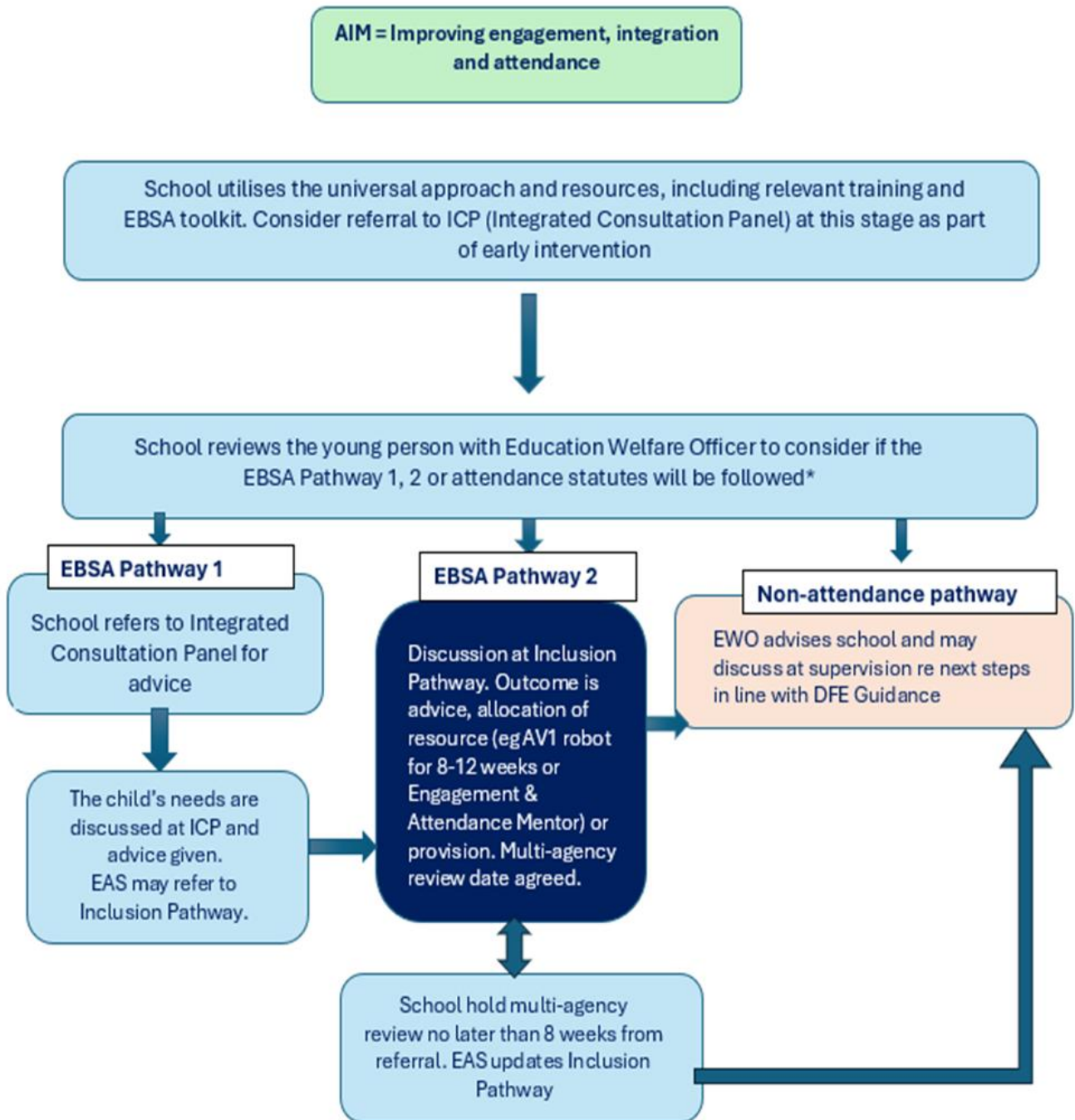
At the most bespoke level of response, where pupils are unable to access suitable education despite comprehensive graduated support, the Local Authority may arrange alternative or specialist provision under Section 19, such as provision through the Tuition, Medical and Behaviour Support Service (TMBSS). This level of response reflects significant and exceptional need and is determined through Local Authority processes, with continued emphasis on safeguarding, suitability of education and longer-term outcomes for the child or young person.

Shropshire's Graduated Pathway to Improving Engagement, Integration and Attendance

The following flowchart outlines Shropshire Local Authority's graduated approach to supporting children and young people where there are concerns about engagement, integration or attendance. It is intended to support schools in understanding how early action, review and partnership working fit together over time, beginning with strong universal practice and moving towards more targeted or specialist support where this is needed. The flowchart highlights opportunities for advice, consultation and collaboration with education, welfare and inclusion services, helping schools to make informed decisions

at each stage. Throughout the process, early intervention, regular review and shared responsibility are emphasized as well as the need for the child or young person’s wellbeing, inclusion and access to appropriate education to remain central.

The detail for each of Shropshire’s process steps is contained in this flowchart



**Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can be included in the pathway shown in this flowchart, but it is essential to consult with parent/carer and hold a discussion with the child’s EHCP Case Worker beforehand.*

If the school has no Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, then they should contact the Lead Education Officer for Attendance to discuss. See information below to support this process.

Links and further information to support the Integrated Process:

- Information to support the **universal offer** can be found here [Early help | Shropshire Council](#) and [Social prescribing | Shropshire Council](#). The Offer of Support below also provides ideas of actions that can be taken at a universal level to support attendance.
- **Resources and support** can be found here [Emotionally Based School Avoidance | Shropshire Learning Gateway](#), [Training | Shropshire Council](#) and [The SEND local offer | Shropshire Council](#)
- Shropshire's Integrated Consultation Panels (**ICP**) bring together multi-disciplinary teams to support with advice in local communities and early intervention. More information can be found here [Integration practitioner teams and consultation panels | Shropshire Council](#)
- Shropshire's **Inclusion Pathway** supports the education of Shropshire's children and young people for them to be positively engaged, feel they belong and be included in suitable education. This means that a pathway for inclusion is needed to enable the right support at the right place at the right time, especially when significant challenges arise. It is at these times that partnership working with early intervention is essential to help children and young people achieve their full potential, aspirations and goals. The link to Shropshire's Inclusion Pathway can be found here [Inclusion Pathway | Shropshire Council](#).
- Information about the Local Authority's role to support children under **Section 19** is also available in the Shropshire Inclusion Pathway document, including the functions of TMBSS.

OFFER OF SUPPORT

The present Offer of Support complements the statutory Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024) and the DfE guidance on supporting attendance where mental health affects attendance, emphasising support-first, graduated responses and partnership with families. It provides evidence-informed, practical guidance for schools, colleges and partners to support children and young people where EBSA is a concern and promotes support-first, graduated responses delivered in partnership with families. It is designed to help settings consider which actions will strengthen support and reduce barriers to engagement, wellbeing and access to education.

EBSA-related attendance difficulties are best understood as multi-layered and influenced by interacting factors across the child, family, school and wider system. Plans are most effective when they identify unmet needs and remove barriers in the environment as well as supporting the child's skills and coping. This approach reduces the risk of over-relying on single-cause explanations and supports timely, proportionate intervention.

By embedding principles of inclusion, wellbeing, and partnership with families, the guidance supports coherent processes across settings that can be adapted to individual needs. To translate these principles into practice, an evidence-based tiered support framework is recommended, as described below. This structured model ensures that strategies are proportionate, timely and responsive, reducing escalation and promoting successful reintegration.

TIERED SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

A pyramid model of intervention (Kearney & Graczyk, 2022) offers a clear, structured way for schools and colleges to deliver universal, targeted and specialist support, ensuring that every learner's needs are met through a continuum of provision so that all children and young people receive the right level of intervention but also at the right time. This is consistent with the notion that attendance difficulties exist on a continuum and therefore require different levels of intervention. In addition, progress is expected to be non-linear; movement between tiers should be flexible and guided by the child's lived experience, distress levels and access to learning.

The pyramid model of intervention proposed has at the base, universal strategies which aim to create a positive attendance culture and promote wellbeing and belonging for all pupils. The middle tier offers targeted support for those identified as at risk of EBSA, including early intervention plans and collaborative problem-solving with young people and their families. At the top of the pyramid, specialist interventions provide intensive, bespoke support for pupils with complex or entrenched needs, often involving multi-agency collaboration and specialist assessment. This graduated approach ensures strategies are proportionate, timely and responsive, reducing escalation and promoting successful reintegration, promoting early identification, graduated response and collaborative working between young people, families, schools and external professionals.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR UNIVERSAL SUPPORT

- **Focus on wellbeing** – The young person’s wellbeing needs to be prioritised through an affirming, relational approach that accepts individual differences and builds trust, so that support is rooted in understanding the underlying needs behind attendance difficulties and creating the conditions in which they feel safe, valued and ready to re-engage with learning.
- **Inclusive support for all** – Every child and young person should have access to the support they need to thrive, regardless of their current attendance or emotional wellbeing status. Universal strategies should be embedded in the daily life of the school, ensuring no child or young person is overlooked.
- **Whole-school/college focus** – Attendance and wellbeing are collective responsibilities. All staff, not just the attendance or pastoral team, play a role in promoting regular attendance and responding to early signs of difficulty. This includes training all staff to recognise and respond to attendance barriers.
- **Prevention and early intervention** – Proactive, preventative approaches are prioritised over reactive ‘wait to fail’ responses. Early identification of risk factors and emerging patterns of absence are key in preventing escalation whilst supportive approaches are most effective when they are put in place as early as possible. Therefore, it is essential for all partners to work together in a timely manner and, if a pupil’s absence requires support from an outside agency which is not provided quickly (e.g. subject to a waiting list), schools and/or local authorities should consider other avenues of support or other temporary solutions whilst waiting.
- **Team approach** – Effective support is built on collaboration between school staff, families, external agencies as well as the children and young people themselves. Regular team meetings and multi-agency collaboration ensure a holistic response.
- **Data-informed decision making** – Schools should use attendance data (including both authorised and unauthorised absences), wellbeing indicators, and qualitative feedback to inform decisions, monitor impact, and adapt strategies.
- **Language use** – It is important for all adults involved to use language that supports safety and reconnection as well as trauma-informed, non-punitive communication and family trust.

TIER 1: UNIVERSAL/WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT THAT PROMOTE INCLUSION, WELLBEING AND BELONGING FOR ALL PUPILS

At the universal level, schools and colleges can implement strategies that foster a culture where attendance and emotional wellbeing are valued by all. This includes embedding attendance and wellbeing into policies, curriculum and daily routines; providing staff training on EBSA awareness, trauma-informed practice and relational approaches; and engaging families through regular communication and education about the importance of attendance. Universal support also involves using whole-school audits and wellbeing assessment tools to identify strengths and areas for development and ensuring all staff understand their role in promoting attendance and responding to early signs of difficulty. These proactive, preventative measures create an inclusive environment where most children and young people can thrive and attend regularly.

TIER 2: TARGETED SUPPORT FOR SOME CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - TARGETED INTERVENTIONS SUCH AS ENVIRONMENTAL ADJUSTMENTS, FLEXIBLE SUPPORT PLANS, MENTORING AND FAMILY SUPPORT TO PREVENT ESCALATION

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in partnership with the local authority and other relevant partners. Targeted support is provided for children and young people who begin to show signs of emerging or moderate attendance difficulties. At this tier, staff are trained to recognise early warning signs, such as sporadic attendance, frequent minor illnesses or increased anxiety and use structured tools to gather pupil and family perspectives (e.g., landscape of fear, solution-focused interviews). Schools might develop group or individual support plans and reasonable adjustments, such as flexible timetables or safe spaces. Interventions may include mentoring, peer support and trauma-focused group work, alongside regular, supportive communication with families. Early referral to services like Education Welfare Officers, Early Help, School Nursing or Educational Psychology is also a key feature at this stage. This work will become part of APDR cycles which will be accompanied by regular reviews taking place at a pace responsive to the child's presenting needs, with distress ratings, recovery time after school, engagement in learning and sense of safety informing step-up or step-down decisions.

TIER 3: INTENSIVE, MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSES FOR A FEW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

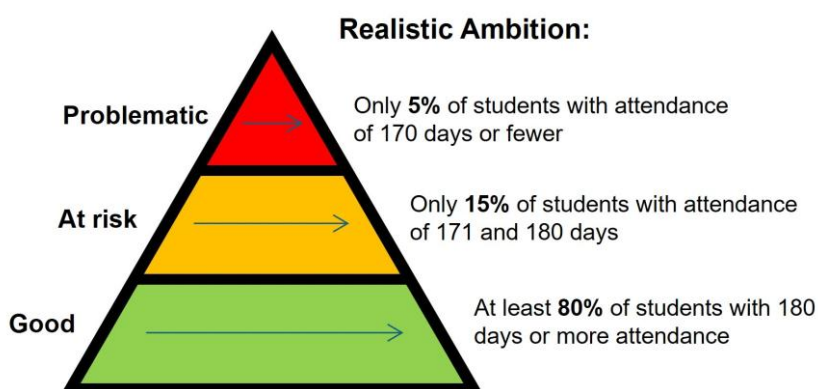
For the small number of children and young people with persistent or severe attendance problems, intensive, individualised interventions are required. This involves comprehensive assessment of barriers using systemic formulation tools (such as push/pull factor mapping), and co-production of highly personalised reintegration plans that may include graded exposure, anxiety ladders and specialist adaptations for neurodivergent pupils. Evidence-based psychological interventions, such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) or Solution-Focused Therapy are delivered, often in collaboration with external agencies. Multi-agency meetings are convened to coordinate support, review progress and consider statutory assessment (such as an EHCP), ensuring a holistic and sustained return to education.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that some children and young people require a period of recovery before re-engaging. During recovery phases, maintain belonging through safe relational connection and meaningful learning opportunities wherever learning occurs (e.g., hybrid, home-based or community-based learning where appropriate and agreed).

Prevention and early intervention at Tiers 1 and 2 are crucial, as they reduce the need for intensive Tier 3 support and create a sustainable, supportive culture for all. Schools, ideally, will regularly review their tiered approach, using data and feedback to ensure every child and young person receives the right support at the right time.

TRACKING ATTENDANCE PROGRESS

It is recognised that schools and local authorities are expected to make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of their regular data monitoring at a whole school level and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible. A realistic ambition for student attendance is for at least 80% of students to achieve “GOOD” attendance, defined as attending school for a minimum of 180 days out of the 190-day academic year, equivalent to 95% or higher. Around 15% of students may fall into the “AT RISK” category, attending between 171 and 180 days (90–95% attendance), and may benefit from targeted support to prevent further decline. Ideally, no more than 5% of students should be in the “PROBLEMATIC” category, with attendance of 170 days or fewer, indicating a rate below 90% and a need for more intensive intervention. The pyramid model provides a robust framework for monitoring attendance and delivering effective, evidence-based support rather than being used to set fixed distribution targets for schools.



The pyramid model is also useful when tracking changes in attendance patterns over time. By comparing two points in time, the proportion of pupils in each attendance category can shift. For example, from 70% with good attendance at the start to 86% later on, while the number of students with problematic attendance drops from 10% to just 2%. This approach is built on the idea that attendance teams regularly review this data, meet to discuss what is working and what is less effective and use these insights to adjust their strategies at each tier. Furthermore, this ongoing process will help schools and colleges make informed decisions and improve attendance for all students.



SCHOOL/COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

UNIVERSAL PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE INCLUSION, WELLBEING AND BELONGING FOR ALL PUPILS

Actions	Descriptions
Promote a culture of collective responsibility	Embed attendance responsibility across all staff, not just the attendance team. Train all staff to understand their role in promoting attendance and responding to absence. West Sussex Guidance Working together to improve school attendance -gov.uk
Implement tiered interventions for attendance.	Use a three-tiered model: Tier 1 for universal strategies (e.g., promoting attendance culture), Tier 2 for targeted support (e.g., mentoring, pupil success plans) and Tier 3 for intensive interventions (e.g., individual support plans, anxiety management). Oxfordshire Guidance Intervention Framework
Use internal benchmarking - Focus on your own school's data rather than comparing with others.	Create targeted lists of pupils based on days missed and patterns of absence. Use EBSA risk profiles to identify early indicators. Create an attendance team and an attendance strategy Supporting attendance EEF
Understand and address barriers to attendance specific to your school	Use pupil voice tools (e.g., landscape of fear, ideal classroom) and family input to understand barriers such as Social Emotional and Mental Health and Speech and Language needs. Learning Gateway Gathering Information
Implement a 'Strategic Attendance Plan' for the school	Conduct self-assessments, deep-dive into attendance and wellbeing data, embed practices, and evaluate sustainability. Use whole-school audits and graduated response frameworks Rigorously monitor attendance data Checklist for attendance and tracking with parents
Embed attendance in school policies	Include universal offers, risk indicators and procedures for early intervention in attendance policies. Clarify routes of support and legal responsibilities.
Provide professional development on attendance	Train staff on statutory duties, inclusive attendance practices, EBSA awareness and trauma-informed approaches. Use CPD sessions and SENCo-led workshops. West Sussex Guidance
Engage parents frequently	Maintain regular communication with parents, share attendance data and co-create support plans. Use active listening and structured conversation tools.
Language use	Use language that supports safety and reconnection which will include the use of scripts (e.g., 'We want to understand what makes school feel safer: can we agree the next small step together?'). Avoid examples (i.e., comparisons that minimise distress or moralising attendance). Aim to use language which supports trauma-informed, non-punitive communication and family trust. Trauma-Informed Language Guidance

Recognise attendance	Use recognition systems that focus on effort and persistence. Celebrate small successes and progress. Lancashire Guidance Positive Behaviour Support
Adopt a Whole-School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing	Embed mental health into policies, curriculum, staff training and school culture. Use frameworks like Anna Freud's '5 Steps' and whole-school audits. 5 Steps to Embed Mental Health Across Schools and Colleges Anna Freud Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
Create emotionally safe and inclusive environments	Provide quiet spaces, reduce classroom stressors, promote positive relationships, and offer flexible routines. Use sensory audits and pupil feedback tools. Lancashire Tool Kit
Promote positive relationships and belonging	Use relational approaches like PACE (Play, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy). Foster connection through peer mentoring, school councils and inclusive activities. Adopt a trauma-informed practice approach Trauma Informed Schools UK Promote a sense of belonging and safety Inclusion – Belonging in School – a school-level resource for developing inclusive policies
Embed social and emotional learning into the curriculum	Teach emotional regulation, problem-solving and conflict resolution across subjects. Use emotional literacy frameworks and resilience-building activities .
Support staff wellbeing and professional development	Offer training on mental health needs, supervision, and wellbeing support. Use online modules and CPD sessions. Provide and promote staff training Children's mental health training course
Use wellbeing assessment tools	Apply tools like Stirling Wellbeing Scale, WEMWBS, SDQ, Boxall Profile, SPENCE Anxiety Scale and sensory audits to monitor pupil wellbeing. Lancashire Tool Kit
Pupil Voice and holistic understanding	Include pupils in shaping policies and interventions. Use person-centred planning tools like ideal classroom, landscape of fear, and life graphs. West Sussex Guidance
Monitor attendance and early indicators	Track patterns such as sporadic attendance, frequent illness, or behavioural changes. Use SIMS, EBSA risk profiles and structured monitoring tools. West Sussex Guidance
Appropriate use of temporary part-time timetable	Temporary part-time timetables to be used only in very exceptional circumstances, for a limited period and accompanied by a written plan, review dates and clear criteria to step up/step down. These are not to be used as open-ended arrangements or the aim of managing behavior in line with DfE guidance. Working Together
Use an early identification tool that could identify need before EBSA	Identify risk factors that place children and young people at greater risk of EBSA behaviours. The exact nature of these will vary according to an individual child or young person's unique set of characteristics, circumstances and experiences. EBSA Guidance
Make referrals and use Multi-Agency Collaboration	Establish clear referral pathways to CAMHS, Autism Advisory Teams, SENDIASS, EWOs and Educational Psychology. Use multi-agency meetings for coordinated planning.

Support for transitions	Provide proactive support for transitions with maps, buddy systems, school tours and personalised plans. Use ‘What if’ cards and visual timetables. West Sussex Transition Guidance
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SCHOOL/COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES AND OFFER OF SUPPORT TO CYP AND FAMILIES

Support for children and young people experiencing EBSA should be offered at the earliest possible opportunity, ideally as soon as a change in attendance patterns, presentation, or behaviour is observed, such as reluctance to attend specific lessons, increased anxiety, or avoidance behaviours. All actions taken by the school should remain firmly centred on the child’s individual experience, with attention to their emotional wellbeing, strengths and emerging needs. Ongoing monitoring should focus on identifying meaningful progress, however small and understanding the factors that have contributed to that progress. This reflective process enables staff to adjust, refine and personalise interventions so that support remains responsive, attuned and effective. In doing so, schools can steadily enhance the child’s sense of safety, connection and engagement with learning.

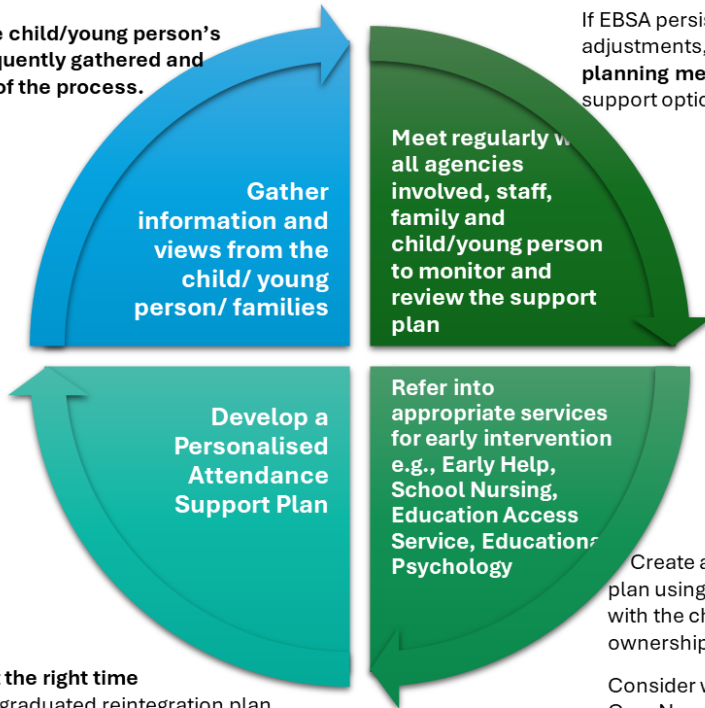
It is further recognised that early intervention is the most effective strategy for preventing EBSA from becoming entrenched and improving long-term outcomes. This initial response should include a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and, where the child is looked after, to the Education Advisor for Children Looked After (EASO). Schools should initiate a graduated, multi-agency cycle of support using APDRs, **placing the child or young person at the centre of the process.**

EBSA SUPPORT CYCLE

The EBSA support cycle uses an **APDR** approach to create a flexible, graduated reintegration plan that is co-produced with the child or young person. It prioritises the child’s voice, implements reasonable adjustments, and involves regular multi-agency monitoring to adapt support as needed. If difficulties persist, schools work with wider services and consider further assessments to ensure the right help is in place. Where needs are complex, long-term and substantially affecting access to education, consider requesting an EHC needs assessment in line with the SEND Code of Practice (0–25).

Ensure the Child/Young Person's Voice is Central Use age-appropriate methods (e.g. drawings, anxiety thermometers, card sorts, solution-focused questions) to frequently gather and incorporate the child's views.

Make sure the child/young person's views are frequently gathered and they are part of the process.



Hold regular meetings with all involved, monitor progress, celebrate successes, and adapt the plan as needed.

Use tools such as the Target Monitoring Evaluation (TME).

If EBSA persists despite reasonable adjustments, convene a **multi-agency planning meeting** to explore additional support options.

Meet regularly with all agencies involved, staff, family and child/young person to monitor and review the support plan

Gather information and views from the child/young person/families

Develop a Personalised Attendance Support Plan

Refer into appropriate services for early intervention e.g., Early Help, School Nursing, Education Access Service, Educational Psychology

Create a graduated, flexible reconnection plan using APDR cycle. Co-produce the plan with the child or young person to promote ownership, trust and engagement.

Consider whether an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) is appropriate.

Right support, at the right time

Create a flexible, graduated reintegration plan using the **Assess-Plan-Do-Review** framework. Co-produce plans with the child/young person to promote ownership, trust, and engagement and include reasonable adjustments such as reduced timetable, safe spaces, key adult check-ins, or modified expectations.

Ensure oversight from the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and Education Advisor for Children Looked After (EASO) where applicable.

TARGETED INTERVENTIONS SUCH AS ENVIRONMENTAL ADJUSTMENTS, FLEXIBLE SUPPORT PLANS, MENTORING AND FAMILY SUPPORT TO PREVENT ESCALATION

Actions	Descriptions
Use the APDR cycle accompanied by regular reviews	Implement the APDR cycle to structure EBSA support. Include gathering holistic data from the child, family and school staff, co-creating realistic reintegration plans, implementing tailored interventions and reviewing progress regularly. Reviews should take account of distress, engagement and recovery time as well as attendance. West Sussex Guidance
Co-produce a personalised return-to-school action plan/ reconnection plan	Develop a personalised support plan involving the pupil, family and school staff. Use SMART goals and break reintegration into small, achievable steps. West Sussex Guidance Appendix 4

Use anxiety/exposure ladders / graded exposure strategies	Use anxiety hierarchies to rank feared school situations and gradually reintroduce them with support. Start with low-pressure activities and environments.
Identify and nurture protective factors	Identify strengths, positive relationships, and past successes. Use resilience frameworks such as the Resilience Matrix to build protective factors.
Maintain regular, supportive communication with families	Assign a key contact for families, use active listening and maintain regular communication. Use structured conversation tools and ensure parents are part of the planning and review process.
Co-create interventions with pupils and families	Involve pupils and families in designing interventions. Use person-centered planning tools and ensure their views shape the support plan.
Provide a named key adult in school	Provide a consistent, trusted adult in school (named person) who the pupil can approach when feeling overwhelmed. It is important that this is not seen as a 'one-off' provision but will involve regular checking-ins (e.g., 5-10 minutes, frequency as agreed).
Offer a safe space in school	Designate a safe space in school where the pupil can regulate emotions (e.g., nurture room) accompanied by tools such as passes and movement breaks. Use tools like Landscape of Fear to identify safe and stressful areas. EBSA Shropshire Learning Gateway
Deliver evidence-based psychological interventions	Use evidence-based psychological approaches such as CBT (No Worries delivered by Shropshire EPS), Solution-Focused Therapy and Personal Construct Psychology. (EPS Brochure 25/26) CAMHS
Use tools to explore pupil perspectives	Use tools like anxiety thermometers, card sorts, ideal classroom activities and life graphs to explore pupil perspectives. EBSA Shropshire Learning Gateway
Gather holistic information from staff, family and pupil	Gather structured information from staff, family, and pupil using round robins, interviews and risk profiles. EBSA Shropshire Learning Gateway Gathering Information
Use systemic formulation tools	Apply systemic formulation tools such as push/pull factor mapping, risk and resilience analysis and functional behaviour assessments. EBSA Shropshire Learning Gateway Understanding Push Pull Factors
Refer to external agencies when needed	Refer to Educational Psychology , CAMHS , Autism Advisory Teams (e.g., Kids), SENDIASS and Education Access Service for additional support.

Develop family support groups or peer networks	Facilitate peer support and parent workshops to build community and shared understanding.
Monitor and evaluate interventions	Use Target Monitoring Evaluation forms, SMART goals and regular review meetings to assess impact. Track daily or weekly distress ratings, recovery time after school, engagement in learning and sense of safety alongside attendance percentages.
Support reintegration with temporary part-time timetables and adaptations	Support reintegration with temporary part-time timetables, curriculum adjustments and reduced homework. Ensure plans are gradual and co-produced. Plans should be clearly time-limited, co-produced and regularly reviewed so that temporary arrangements do not drift into longer-term reduced provision without review.
Prepare pupils for peer questions and social reintegration	Prepare pupils for peer interactions using social stories, role-play and scripts.
Support pupils with neurodivergent differences by using tailored strategies	Strategies such as visual timetables and checklists promote predictability and safety. Ensure that learning environments take account of sensory needs and that routines are consistent. Pupils may benefit from starting or leaving classes when it is quieter. Support emotional regulation through providing safe spaces and catering for sensory diets. Reduce cognitive overload through strategies such as 'chunking' and movement breaks. Further guidance can be found here: Neurodiversity Practitioners .
Create a pupil support plan	Create a pupil support plan including safe spaces, key adults, coping strategies and timetable adaptations.
Facilitate learning to enhance competence and alleviate academic anxiety	Identify learning needs underpinned by SEN and/ or knowledge gaps which have emerged in the context of lower attendance as well as the interventions, adaptations and resources needed to support young people's academic progress.
Support transitions	Support transitions with extra visits, visual timetables, social stories and personalised plans.
Support emotional literacy and regulation	Teach emotional literacy using frameworks and activities that build self-awareness, empathy and coping skills.
Use creative methods to externalise and express emotions	Use creative methods like journaling, drawing, drama and mindfulness to help pupils express emotions.
Celebrate strengths and interests	Celebrate pupil strengths and interests by incorporating them into learning and feedback.

INTENSIVE, MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSES FOR A FEW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present. These absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support. There should be a focus on recovery and promoting wellbeing initially and an acceptance that progress may be in very small steps and is not likely to be linear. Measurement of progress may need to shift away from a discussion about returning to school/college, instead removing immediate pressure to return and focusing on what will support their health or wellbeing. In contrast to traditional approaches which place emphasis on return to school, Jerrica Holder's Rediscovery Model (Holder, 2023) notes that in some circumstances, young people may require a period of recovery in which they are not expected to attend a setting. Holder outlines the need for recovery, followed by time to reconnect in safe relationships and rediscover their curiosity, prior to re-engagement in learning, when they are ready.

During this time, a Reconnection Plan (see Appendix) can be used to facilitate the child's holistic assessment, co-production and tailored support to reduce barriers and strengthen engagement. This starts by gathering a detailed picture of their attendance pattern, key views, and underlying needs and promotes a shared understanding of contributing factors and uses this to co-produce a personalised, graduated reconnection plan that outlines when, where and how the child will re-engage with school, alongside the adjustments and supports required. The plan concludes with review dates to monitor progress and adapt support over time. Additionally, to reduce the risk of multiple parallel plans, the Reconnection Plan template should be used as the planning record within the APDR cycle (i.e., it functions as the "Plan" element), with updates captured at each review. Where other statutory or service plans exist (e.g., EWO action plan), the lead professional should align them into a single coherent action plan summary for the family.'

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APPENDIX 1

MAINSTREAM EBSA PRACTICES

There are multiple factors underpinning Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), with research highlighting a complex interplay between intrapersonal and contextual influences. While isolated actions may have limited impact in addressing barriers to attendance, effective mainstream EBSA practices can support the development of meaningful prevention and intervention strategies.

Universal approaches to EBSA aim to foster a mentally healthy, emotionally safe, and inclusive school environment for all pupils. These include embedding mental health into school policies and the curriculum, promoting positive relationships and a sense of belonging, training staff in emotional wellbeing and using tools to monitor pupil wellbeing. By promoting resilience and emotional literacy across the whole school, these strategies aim to reduce the likelihood of EBSA emerging. Early identification and intervention are key to preventing patterns of non-attendance from becoming entrenched.

In contrast, targeted approaches provide a structured and compassionate pathway back into education for pupils already showing signs of attendance difficulties. These personalised and responsive strategies involve working collaboratively with the pupil, their family, and school staff to understand underlying causes, co-create tailored support plans and implement interventions such as graded exposure, safe spaces, key adult relationships and psychological therapies. The goal is to reduce barriers to attendance and gradually increase the pupil's active engagement in school life.

WHOLE-SCHOOL (UNIVERSAL) ACTIONS

Actions	Observations and Comments
<p>Promote a culture of collective responsibility <i>(E.g., embedding attendance responsibility across all staff, not just the attendance team; training all staff to understand their role in promoting attendance and responding to absence)</i></p>	
<p>Implement tiered interventions for attendance. <i>(E.g., Tier 1 – universal strategies; Tier 2 – targeted support; Tier 3 – supporting individual cases)</i></p>	
<p>Use internal benchmarking - Focus on your own school's data rather than comparing with others. <i>(E.g., analyse attendance patterns and create targeted lists of pupils based on days missed)</i></p>	
<p>Understand and address barriers to attendance specific to your school <i>(E.g., use pupil voice and family input to understand SEMH, ASD, SALT-related barriers)</i></p>	
<p>Implement a 'Strategic Attendance Plan' for the school <i>(E.g., self-assess, deep-dive into data, embed practices and evaluate sustainability)</i></p>	
<p>Embed attendance in school policies <i>(E.g., include universal offers and risk indicators in attendance policies; define procedures for early intervention and permanent absence risk)</i></p>	
<p>Provide professional development on attendance <i>(E.g., train staff on statutory duties and inclusive attendance practices)</i></p>	

<p>Engage parents continuously (E.g., keep parents informed and involved throughout the year; share attendance data regularly and co-create support plans)</p>	
<p>Language use (e.g., use language that supports safety and reconnection. Aim to use language which supports trauma-informed, non-punitive communication and family trust)</p>	
<p>Recognise attendance rather than reward it (E.g., use recognition systems that focus on effort and behaviour; avoid material rewards, instead, acknowledge persistence and progress)</p>	
<p>Adopt a Whole-School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing (E.g., embed mental health into policies, curriculum, staff training and school culture using frameworks like Anna Freud’s “5 Steps”; use whole-school audits to identify strengths and gaps)</p>	
<p>Create emotionally safe and inclusive environments (E.g., provide quiet spaces, reduce classroom stressors, promote positive relationships, address bullying hotspots and flexible routines)</p>	
<p>Promote positive relationships and belonging (E.g., use relational approaches like PACE: Play, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy; foster connection through school councils, peer mentoring and inclusive activities)</p>	
<p>Embed social and emotional learning into the curriculum (E.g., teach emotional regulation, problem-solving, and conflict resolution across subjects)</p>	
<p>Support staff wellbeing and professional development</p>	

<p><i>(E.g., train staff to identify mental health needs and respond appropriately through online training modules, CPD sessions, SENCo-led workshops; offer supervision and wellbeing support)</i></p>	
<p>Use wellbeing assessment tools <i>(E.g., Stirling Wellbeing Scale, WEMWBS, SDQ, Boxall Profile, SPENCE Anxiety Scale, sensory audits)</i></p>	
<p>Pupil Voice and holistic understanding <i>(E.g., include pupils in shaping school policies and interventions; embed person-centred planning, use tools like ideal classroom or landscape of fear)</i></p>	
<p>Monitor attendance and early indicators <i>(E.g., track patterns like sporadic attendance, frequent illness, or behavioural changes; use SIMS, EBSA risk profiles and patterns of absence analysis)</i></p>	
<p>Appropriate use of temporary part-time timetable <i>Use only in very exceptional circumstances, for a limited period and accompanied by a written plan, review dates and clear criteria to step up/step down)</i></p>	
<p>Use an early identification tool that could identify need before EBSA becomes a concern</p>	
<p>Make referrals and use Multi-Agency Collaboration <i>(E.g., establish clear referral pathways and multi-agency collaboration)</i></p>	
<p>Support for transitions <i>(E.g., support transitions proactively; address practical issues through actions such as providing maps, using buddy systems, organising school tours and creating personalised transition plans)</i></p>	

TARGETED ACTIONS FOR IDENTIFIED EBSA CASES

Actions	Observations and Comments
<p>Use the APDR cycle (E.g., gather holistic data, co-create plans, implement support and review progress)</p>	
<p>Co-produce a personalised return-to-school action plan (E.g., include pupil, family and staff; break goals into small, achievable steps; use SMART targets)</p>	
<p>Use anxiety/exposure ladders / graded exposure strategies (E.g., rank feared situations and gradually reintroduce with support; increase time in school starting with low-pressure activities or spaces)</p>	
<p>Identify and nurture protective factors (E.g., highlight strengths, positive relationships and past successes; use resilience frameworks)</p>	
<p>Maintain regular, supportive communication with families (E.g., assign a key contact, use active listening and share updates; offer reassurance; involve them in planning; use structured conversation tools)</p>	
<p>Co-create interventions with pupils and families (E.g., involve pupils and families in designing support)</p>	
<p>Provide a named key adult in school (E.g., someone the pupil can go to when feeling overwhelmed); ensure consistency and trust)</p>	
<p>Offer a safe space in school (E.g., a designated room or area where the pupil can regulate emotions or decompress; use the Landscape of Fear tool to identify areas in school where the child feels safe)</p>	

<p>Deliver evidence-based psychological interventions <i>(E.g., CBT, Solution-Focused Therapy, Personal Construct Psychology activities, ATTEND framework, Emotion Coaching)</i></p>	
<p>Use tools to explore pupil perspectives <i>(E.g., use card sorts, landscape of fear, ideal classroom, anxiety thermometers, RAG rating of timetable, life graphs, ideal classroom activities, school stress surveys)</i></p>	
<p>Gather holistic information from staff, family and pupil <i>(E.g., round robins, structured interviews, risk profiles; use structured templates to understand triggers, strengths and needs; include all staff who interact with the pupil)</i></p>	
<p>Use systemic formulation tools <i>(E.g., push/pull factors, risk and resilience mapping, integration templates, functional analysis of behaviour)</i></p>	
<p>Refer to external agencies when needed <i>(E.g., Educational Psychology, CAMHS, Autism Advisory Teams, SENDIAS, EWOs)</i></p>	
<p>Develop family support groups or peer networks <i>(E.g., parent workshops, buddy systems, mentoring; facilitate peer support among parents/carers of children with EBSA)</i></p>	
<p>Monitor and evaluate interventions <i>(e.g., use Target Monitoring Evaluation forms, SMART goals and review meetings; use qualitative and quantitative data to assess impact and adjust plans; celebrate small successes)</i></p>	
<p>Support reintegration with flexible timetables and adaptations</p>	

<i>(E.g., part-time phased return, curriculum adjustments, reduced homework)</i>	
Prepare pupils for peer questions and social reintegration <i>(E.g., rehearse scripts, use social stories, role-play scenarios)</i>	
Support pupils with neurodivergent differences by using tailored strategies <i>(E.g., visual timetables, sensory checklists, CBT adaptations, social skills groups)</i>	
Create a pupil support plan <i>(E.g., include safe spaces, key adults, coping strategies, timetable adaptations and signals for distress)</i>	
Facilitate learning to enhance competence and alleviate academic anxiety <i>(Identify learning needs and/ or knowledge gaps which have emerged in the context of lower attendance as well as the interventions, adaptations and resources needed to support young people's academic progress)</i>	
Support transitions <i>(E.g., provide extra visits, visual timetables, social stories, meet-and-greet routines and personalised transition plans)</i>	
Support emotional literacy and regulation <i>(E.g., use the Emotional Literacy Framework; teach self-awareness, empathy, relaxation skills and coping strategies)</i>	
Use creative methods to externalise and express emotions <i>(E.g., journaling, drawing, drama, worry monsters, visualisation, breathing exercises, mindfulness)</i>	
Celebrate strengths and interests <i>(E.g., incorporate pupil interests into learning; provide opportunities to be the 'expert'; use strength-based feedback)</i>	

RECONNECTION PLAN

Name	Date of birth	Year group		
Lead school professional	A named person who is part of the school's attendance team and who will maintain regular contact.			
People present				
Pattern of attendance (Progress should be tracked using a balanced set of indicators that include wellbeing, belonging, engagement and relationship quality, not attendance alone)				
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Views				
<p>Child/ young person: e.g., child's perceptions of school, mapping the Landscape of Fear, identifying sources of resilience. Parent(s)/ Carer(s)/ Education: identifying child's strengths, what is going well, difficulties, etc. If they have witnessed emotional distress what did this look like and what caused it?</p>				
Shared understanding - To be continually updated as a deeper understanding of the needs underpinning the child's EBSA and/ or circumstances change.				
<p>(Early influences, primary area of need, SEN, Push-Pull factors, function of EBSA, evidence of under-achievement of learning potential social isolation, sources of pressure, recent events that may have amplified anxiety, what motivates and helps)</p>				

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Graduated Reconnection Plan

(When, where, with whom activities with the aim of enhancing the child’s sense of belonging, autonomy and competence, adjustments and supports)

Link to the Assess-Plan-Do-Review process

Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Date				
Review Date:				