

EBSA- Emotional based school avoidance

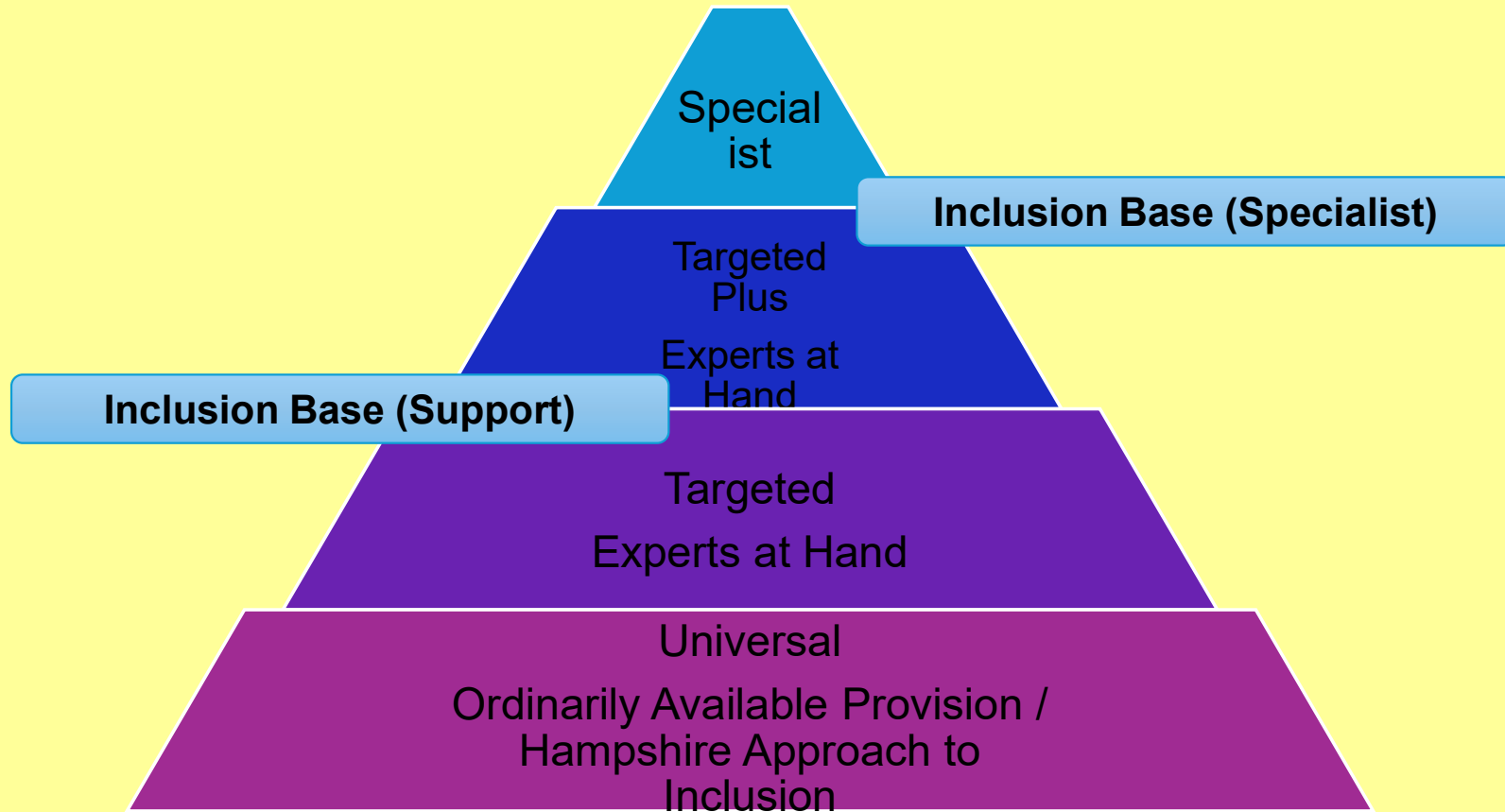
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Welcome – The session will start shortly

- Please put the name, phase and district of your setting in the chat bar
- If you would like to receive a copy of the presentation, then please also add your email address to the chat bar
- If you have questions during the session, please add these to the chat

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Experts at Hand – Key Component of the Graduated Approach



SEND Local Offer | Hampshire CTSH

Hampshire's Local Area Partnership Strategy

Our vision



Our approach

We will achieve our vision through strong multi agency and parental partnerships, having a shared understanding of challenges and working together on solutions.

We will measure progress by...

1. Bringing together Health, Education and Social Care data.
2. Tracking and reducing the gap between outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their peers.
3. Annually canvassing parents about their confidence in the system.
4. Annually canvassing professionals about system improvements.
5. Listening to children and young people about what matters to them and acting on their views.

Our action plan



Our success criteria

We will know we have succeeded when....

1. The views of children, young people and their families informs all our work.
2. Children, young people and their families can access the information and services they need when they need it.
3. Data is routinely shared, and we all work towards the same goals.
4. Children and young people with SEND are happy and have positive social relationships.
5. Young people with SEND increasingly live independently and gain meaningful employment.
6. There is a culture of support to families and carers.
7. Children and young people with SEND and their families can access services and support that meet their needs at the earliest point, without barriers.
8. The mental and physical health of children and young people with SEND compares positively with their peers.
9. Children and young people with SEND are engaged in their education within an inclusive environment.
10. Everyone in the system, works together to improve educational engagement.
11. A robust, resilient and skilled education workforce can meet SEND needs.
12. Children and young people with SEND and their parents are appropriately prepared for adult life from a young age.
13. There is sufficient provision to meet the needs of all Children and young people with SEND in Hampshire.

Welcome to Hampshire's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer

You can find information about the help and services available for children and young people (aged 0 to 25 years) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families in Hampshire. Explore the information topics below.

Hampshire Local Offer

I'm looking for...



Education and Childcare

Information about the types of education settings available, how they support children with SEN, and what to consider when deciding what might work best for your child.



Support for Carers, Including Breaks From Caring

Support for families with SEND, including breaks from caring



Accessing NHS Services for Children with SEND

Health services, equipment and specific therapies for children and young people with SEND



Preparation for Adulthood

Further education and employment options and building independence into adulthood



Hampshire Happy Talkers

Language and communication help and resources to support communication development for children aged 0-5



Leisure and Play - Hampshire Gateway

Organisations and activities that support the Hampshire Gateway Card scheme



Hampshire Local Area Partnership

Information about the Hampshire Local Area Partnership, strategy, action plan, agreed approaches and best practice examples



Feedback, Co-production and Annual Reports

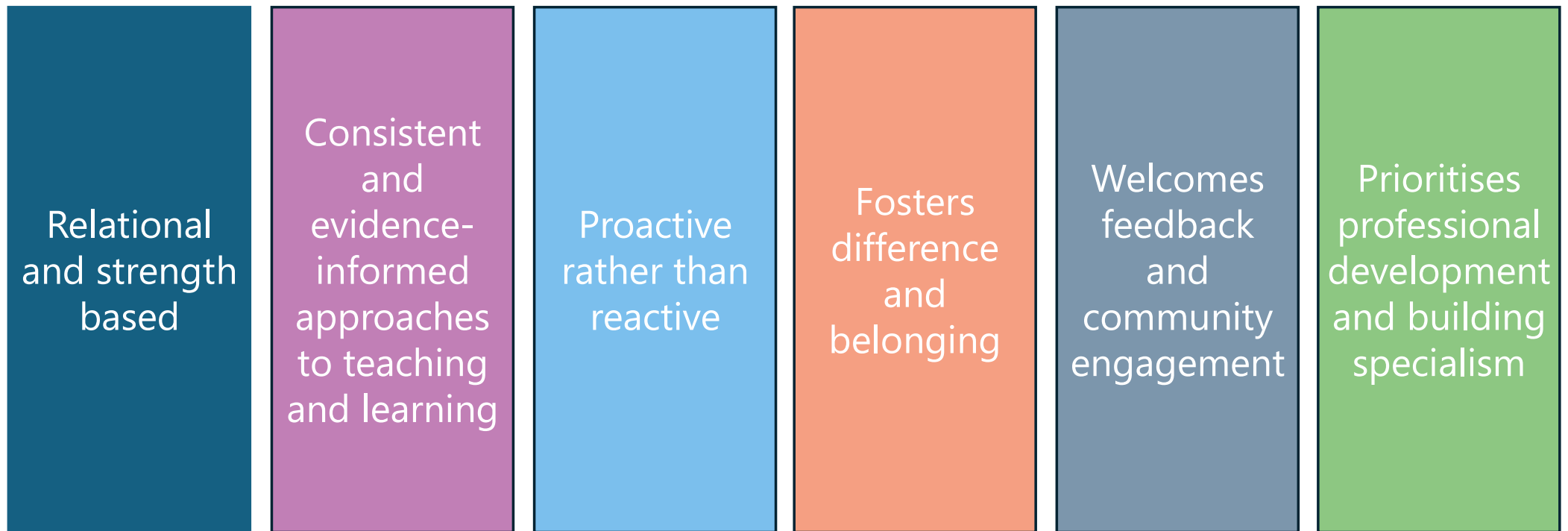
Transparent feedback, co-production and the Local Offer annual report



The Neurodiversity and Wellbeing Multidisciplinary Service

Support for parents and professionals by improving understanding of neurodivergence and providing advice and resources to help them feel informed and empowered.

Foundation Knowledge and Priorities



Use this slide to identify training, knowledge or approaches that it is beneficial to have in place prior to implementing the outputs of this area.

Identify which of the 6 pillars of the Hampshire Approach to Inclusion this falls under.

The comprehensive Hampshire programme for all Early Career Teachers

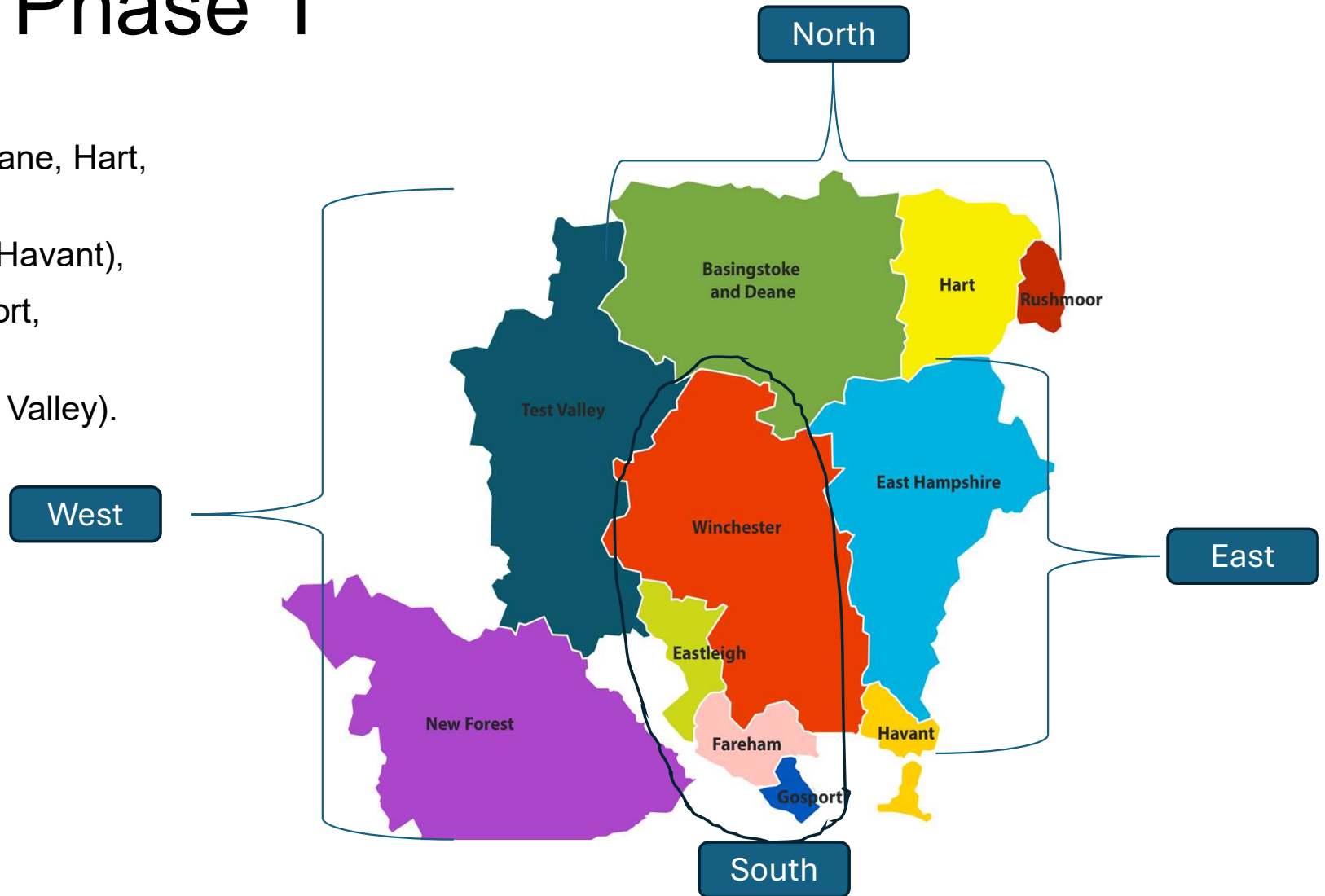
Localities Phase 1

North (Basingstoke, Deane, Hart, Rushmoor),

East (East Hampshire, Havant),

South (Fareham, Gosport, Winchester, Eastleigh)

West (New Forest, Test Valley).



EBSA Documents Hampshire on the Moodle



Education and Inclusion
Therapy Service

Education and Inclusion Therapy Service Information for Parents and Carers

For us to work with your child, either as part of a class, small group or individually, we need your consent. Please read this information before completing the form to give your consent.

Who are we?



Speech and Language
Therapists (SaLTs)

Occupational
Therapists (OTs)



What do we do?



We provide specialist support for children and young people with communication and interaction needs and sensory differences who require an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). This support can be requested by a school or college SENCo, by a class teacher in a special school, by an Education Health and Care Plan Co-ordinator, or by a young person attending college.

We are a separate service from the NHS and aim to liaise and work closely with our colleagues from other services.



Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Hampshire County Council good
practice guidance for schools and
other support agencies

July 2026

hants.gov.uk/educationalpsychology



Communication and Interaction Team

Is your child anxious about attending school?

EBSA Guidance for Parents

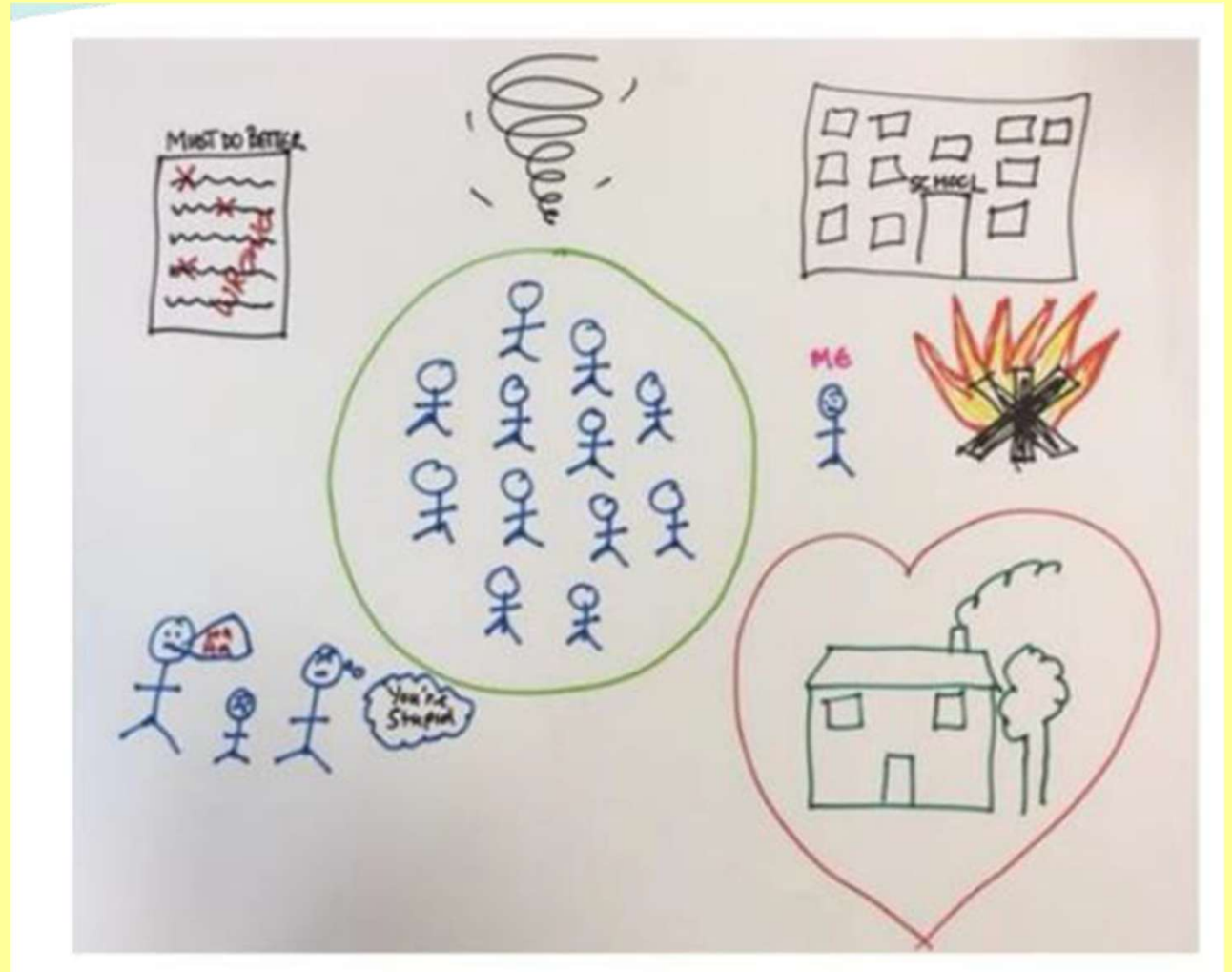


This guidance is a supplement to the main Hampshire County Council EBSA guidance

Emotional distress

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).

Picture by a 14-year-old what does it tell us?



What is EBSA?

Barriers to attendance can be really complex

- Feeling overwhelmed by schoolwork
- Feeling overwhelmed by the sensory aspects of school
- Learning needs not being met
- Finding change difficult (classes, school or friendships)
- Experiencing challenges linked to neurodiversity or family circumstances



The Bigger Picture



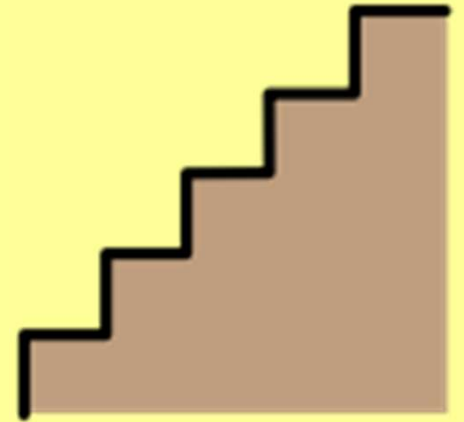
EBSA rarely has a single cause. It is usually the result of a combination of factors involving the child, family, school environment, and wider life experiences. Understanding the function of the anxiety is essential before planning support

What the beginning of EBSA can look like

“I eat my lunch in the toilet because it feels safer than the dining hall.”

“I hide in corridors, under staircases, or in small spaces when everything feels too much.”

“I worry about getting things wrong and people noticing.”





“I avoid PE because I feel self-conscious and worried about how others see me.”

“I dread French because I struggle to read and learn another language.”

“The noise is overwhelming. I just need somewhere quiet where I feel safe.”

Signs your child might be anxious

- Child maybe unusually quiet or seem low.
- Struggle to separate when you drop them off at school
- When its time for school the suddenly feel unwell
- Get upset at getting their school belongings together
- Reluctant to return after a holiday





EBSA and Anxiety – school related

For some school can feel like an unsafe place where they don't feel the fit or belong. Often it can be linked to access to basic things such as the toilet or being able to connect with a trusted adult.

- Many suffer from anxiety linked to school-fear for failing the work
- Some make a concise decision to not attend due to bullying, feeling embarrassed or an issue they have not discussed
- Negative experiences with school and teachers

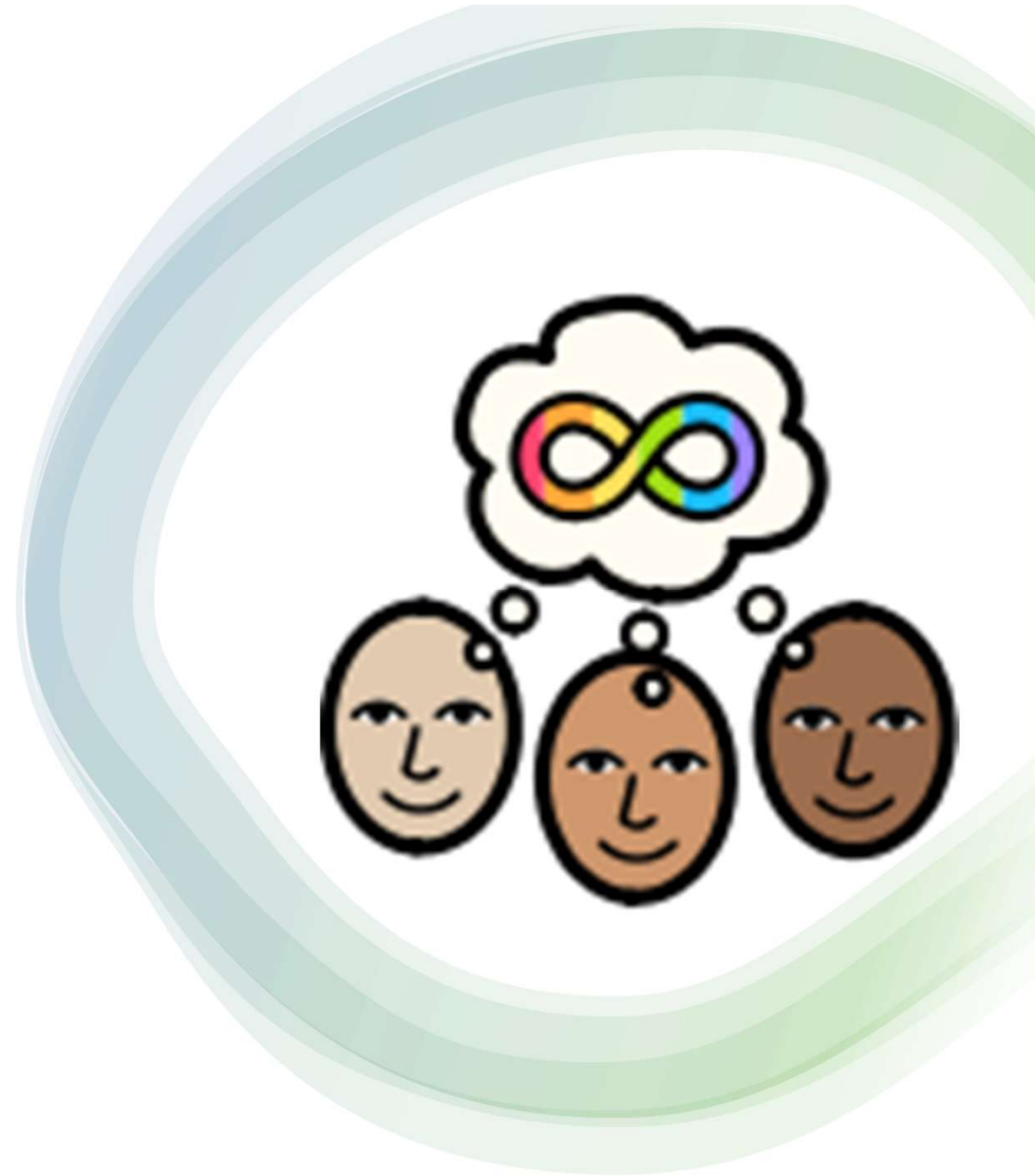
EBSA and Anxiety- Neurodiversity

Autism, ADHD, sensory processing differences, or other SEND can make school environments overwhelming.

Difficulties with social communication.

Sensory overload from noise, crowds, lighting, or busy classrooms.

Masking needs throughout the day leading to exhaustion and anxiety



EBSA and Anxiety – Emotional and mental health

Generalised anxiety.

Social anxiety.

Low self-esteem or low confidence.

Depression or low mood.

Difficulties regulating emotions



Early Identification is key

The factors that contribute to EBSA vary for each child. However, recognising risk factors and potential triggers early can act as a warning sign, allowing schools and families to put support in place before attendance difficulties become more entrenched.



Good Mental health Guide

Strategies and resources to try

A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling:
bit.ly/3Uxkbbl



Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important:
bit.ly/3QXW6Uu



A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety:
bit.ly/3EWW6dv



A video about supporting a young person with ADHD:
bit.ly/3L63H55



A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation:
bit.ly/3fo0iNN



The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation how much we can and can't cope with:
bit.ly/3dCSKQn



A workshop on getting good sleep:
bit.ly/45vAmc9



Strategies for behaviour of concern:
bit.ly/43VP6Ht



A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches:
bit.ly/3xld3D0



Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging:
bit.ly/3Bzt1KD



A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills):
bit.ly/2HyWjG



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Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects behaviour and includes symptoms of inattentiveness, impulsivity and hyperactivity. An ADHD diagnosis can include a combined presentation of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity, a predominantly inattentive presentation or a predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation.

Type and Nature of Worry

Coping/needs some support

Children and young people go through phases where they are restless and inattentive. These difficulties can be short term and have no long term impact on daily functioning at home and at school. These difficulties are often completely normal and do not necessarily mean the child or young person has ADHD. These difficulties can be managed with consistent parenting approaches, the love and support of parents/carers and good home school communication.

Needs help

The degree to which a young person struggles with attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity are persisting and may be having a longer term impact on daily functioning at home and at school. Referred to a school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) to receive help with their behaviour in the classroom setting.

Undergone a period of 'watchful waiting' of up to 10 weeks.

Parents of a CYP have been informed of and attended the local parent training/education programmes.

Needs specialist help

When a child or young person has a significant number of features usually associated with ADHD and their symptoms have been present since childhood and are problematic across all environments such as at home and at school. It might be worth considering an ADHD assessment. You would consider this when these difficulties with attention, activity and impulsivity are severe and enduring and are causing significant disruption to a young person. Their symptoms are significantly disrupting daily life such as school/college and socialising. The young person experiences ongoing difficulties. The young person may be failing to meet expected academic levels due to poor concentration.

Some children and young people with ADHD also have other mental health difficulties like any other child or young person might. If this is the case they may benefit from some therapeutic intervention for this. Some children and young people with ADHD might have specific learning difficulties (assessed by school and/or Educational Psychology Services and/or Paediatricians) and social communication problems which may need further consideration, as well as, an ADHD assessment.

NHS
Hampshire Child and Adolescent
Mental Health Services

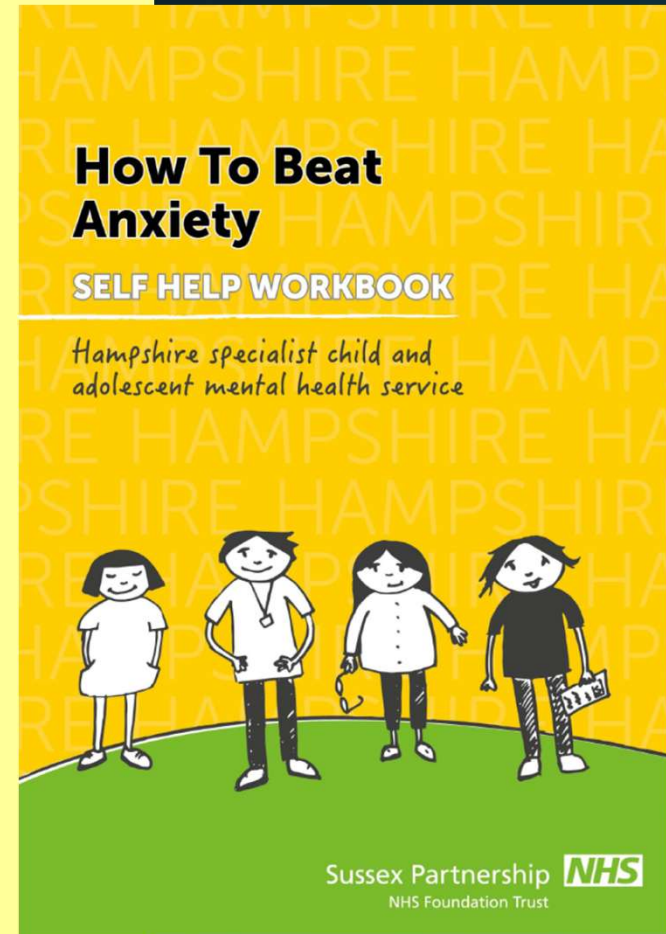
The Good Mental Health Handbook

A guide for parents and carers



Anxiety Support workbooks and links

- [5 Steps to Embed Mental Health Across Schools and Colleges | Anna Freud](#)
- www.AnxietyBC.com
- You could download a self-help booklet “How to beat anxiety” from the Hampshire CAMHS website
<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/?s=self-help>



Fight, flight or Freeze

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Emotionally Based School
Avoidance

A Guide to Anxiety for Kids



Let's talk about
anxiety

EBSA and Anxiety – Family and life events



Bereavement, trauma, or loss.

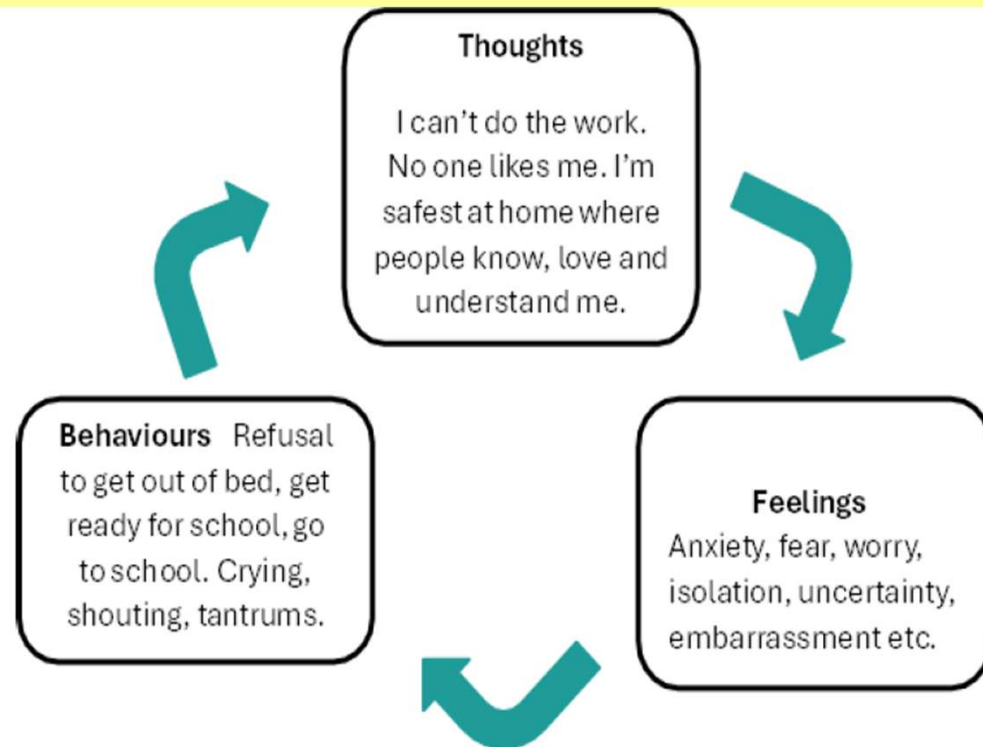
Family conflict or stress.

Illness within the family.

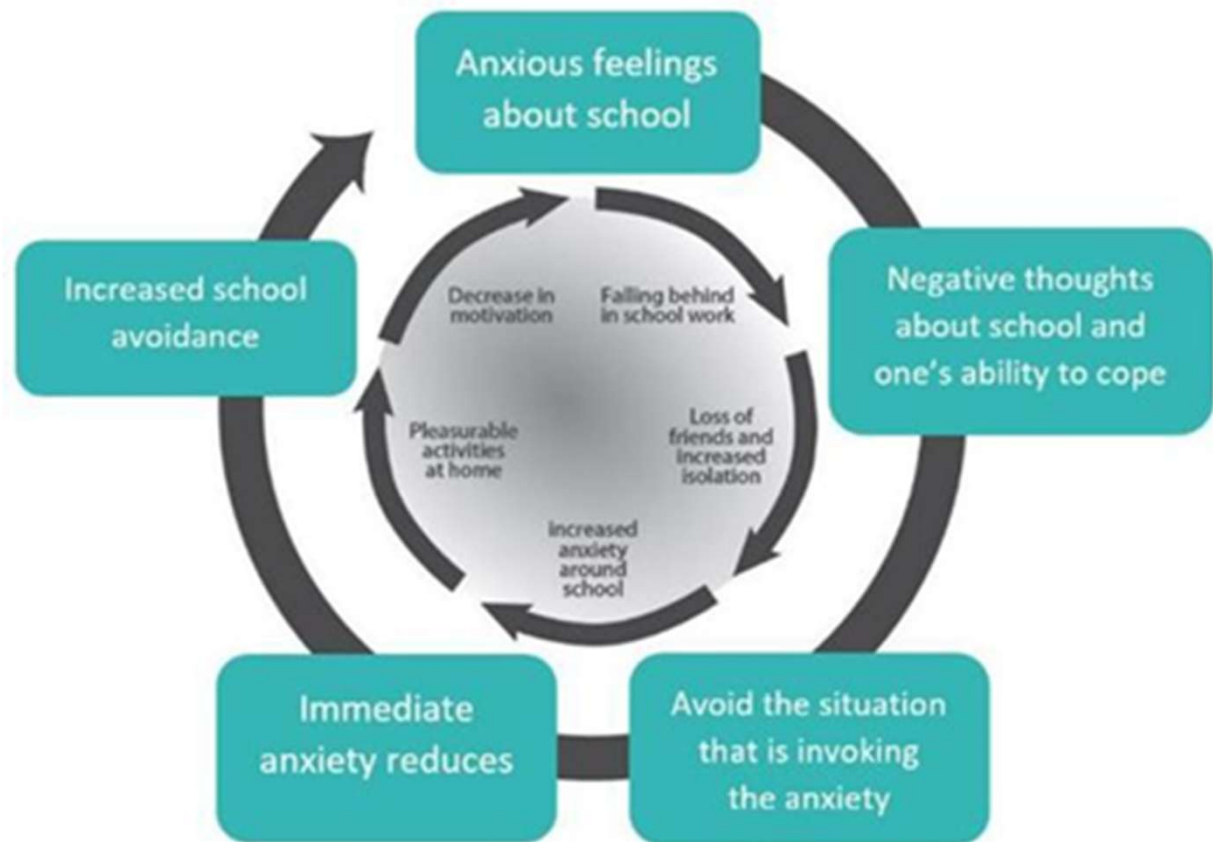
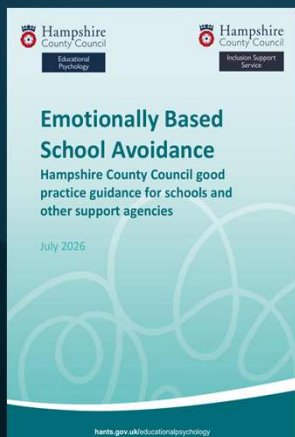
Young caring responsibilities.

Significant changes such as moving house or changing schools

Initial avoidance behaviours



EBSA and Anxiety



Page 9 Guidance from Hampshire County Council Guidance

Working together with parents

- Talk to your child – set aside uninterrupted time ! Phones off
- Look at where they feel successful and what lessons they like
- What does unstructured time-break and lunch look like?
- Trusted friends or adults
- Worries about home
- Next Steps

How can parents help?

Talking to your child

- Sit down with your child to explore why they are reluctant to attend school.
- If they can't explain easily, try
 - Drawing a number line from 1-10 and asking them where they would put each of their subjects on that scale. Explore which subjects they are finding easy/ which ones are difficult.
 - Ask them what they do at break and lunch time – where do they go/who do they spend time with?
 - How do they feel when they arrive at school and when they change lessons? (They can draw to explain if they find it hard to put into words)
 - Which friends and adults do they get on well with? Is there anyone they are not getting on well with?
 - Are they worried about anything at home?
 - Encourage them to think of positive things about school as well as discussing their worries
 - Validate how your child is feeling so that they feel heard
 - Reassure your child that you will work with the school to address their worries and concerns.



Talking to the school

- Speak to your child's form tutor/class teacher, SENCo or Head of Year
- Allow time for the school to speak to your child about their difficulties
- Agree a support plan with the school (and involve your child in this).
- Check what support the school can offer your child to manage their emotional difficulties if your child isn't already accessing this (e.g. support from a trained emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) or support from a counsellor if the school has one).



What should a support plan include?

Arrangements for:

- The start and end of the day
- Break and lunch time
- Any adjustments to your child's existing timetable
- Support in lessons
- Any interventions
- Support from friends
- A key adult and a safe space for your child to speak to if they have any concerns
- Homework expectations / opportunities for online learning if on a part-time timetable
- Any other useful information
- A date to review these arrangements



Factors associated with vulnerability of EBSA

Factors associated with vulnerability of EBSA

School factors

- Bullying (the most common school factor)
- Difficulties in specific subject
- Transition to secondary school, key stage or change of school
- Structure of the school day
- Academic demands/high levels of pressure and performance orientated classrooms
- Transport or journey to school
- Exams
- Peer or staff relationship difficulties

Family factors

- Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic
- Parent physical and/or mental health problems
- Overprotective parenting style
- Dysfunctional family interactions
- Being the youngest child in the family
- Loss and bereavement
- High levels of family stress
- Family history of EBSA
- Young carer

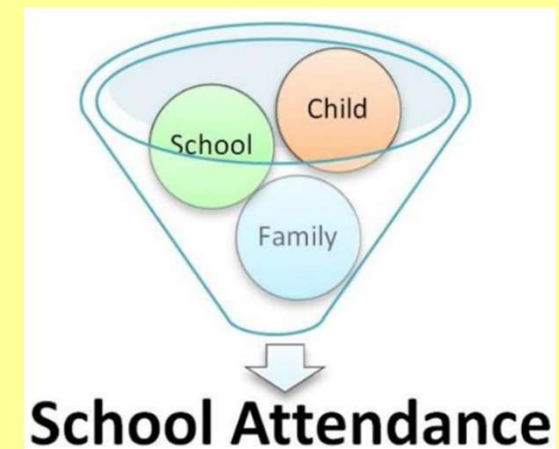
Child factors

- Temperamental style – reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects
- Fear of failure and poor self confidence
- Physical illness
- Age (5-6, 11-12 & 13-14 years)
- Learning Difficulties, developmental problems, or Autism Spectrum Condition if unidentified or unsupported
- Separation anxiety from parent
- Traumatic events

Risk factors

EBSA is different for every child.

There is rarely one single cause. Instead, school attendance difficulties usually develop through a combination of factors related to the child, their family, school environment, and life experiences.



Risk and Resilience factors

When working with individuals it is 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



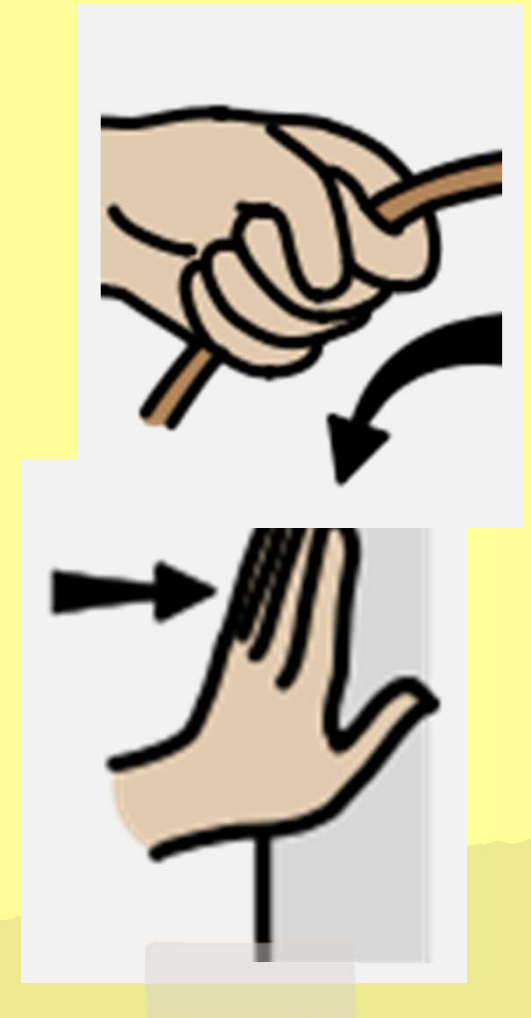
Push and Pull

Contributory factors of 'risk and resilience' can also be divided, and understood, in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors.

'Push' factors (i.e. those that push the child towards attending school)

'Pull' factors (i.e. those pull the child away from attending school)

The research indicates that EBSA is most likely to occur when the risks are greater than resilience, when stress and anxiety exceeds support, and when the 'pull' factors that promote school avoidance overwhelm the 'push' factors that encourage school attendance.



Case Study – Alison



- **Prolonged school absence and social withdrawal**
 - Alison has not attended school for three months and has become increasingly isolated, rarely leaving the house.
- **Difficult transition to secondary school**
 - Moving from primary to secondary school was a significant challenge. Alison went from being one of the highest achievers to feeling less confident among equally academic peers.
- **Friendship and peer relationship difficulties**
 - Alison struggled to establish close friendships and experienced social exclusion when peers were making fun of her and excluding her from activities.
- **Physical symptoms linked to anxiety**
 - Alison frequently complained of stomach aches and wanted to stay home or leave school early, suggesting increasing anxiety and emotional distress.
- **Family factors contributing to anxiety**
 - Her mother's cancer diagnosis and treatment led Alison to become highly protective and worried about her mother's wellbeing, showing signs of separation anxiety.





- **Signs of significant emotional distress**
 - Alison experiences nightmares about her mother's health, constantly checks on her whereabouts, and becomes distressed when her mother is late home.
- **Strengths and protective factors**
 - Despite her difficulties, Alison helps with household chores, plays positively with her younger brother, and supports him with homework.
- **Positive response to trusted social contact**
 - A visit from a friend was successful, with Alison appearing relaxed, happy, and more like her previous self, highlighting the importance of positive peer relationships.
- **Possible push factors**
 - Academic pressure, loss of primary friendships, bullying/social exclusion, and anxiety about her mother's health.
- **Possible pull factors**
 - Feeling safe at home, spending time with family, helping her brother, and avoiding the emotional demands of school.



Push and Pull factors



Once identified, an individual's **push and pull factors** can be linked to targeted support strategies. The table shows home and school push and pull factors at the centre, with corresponding support strategies displayed in the outer green circle.

School

Push (towards attending school)

- Academically able
- Beginning to form a friendship

Pull (away from school, school factors)

- Prolonged period of absence from school
- Isolated, not leaving the house
- Difficult transition to secondary school
- Academic demands
- Social difficulties, possible bullying
- Separation anxiety

Home

Pull (away from school, home factors)

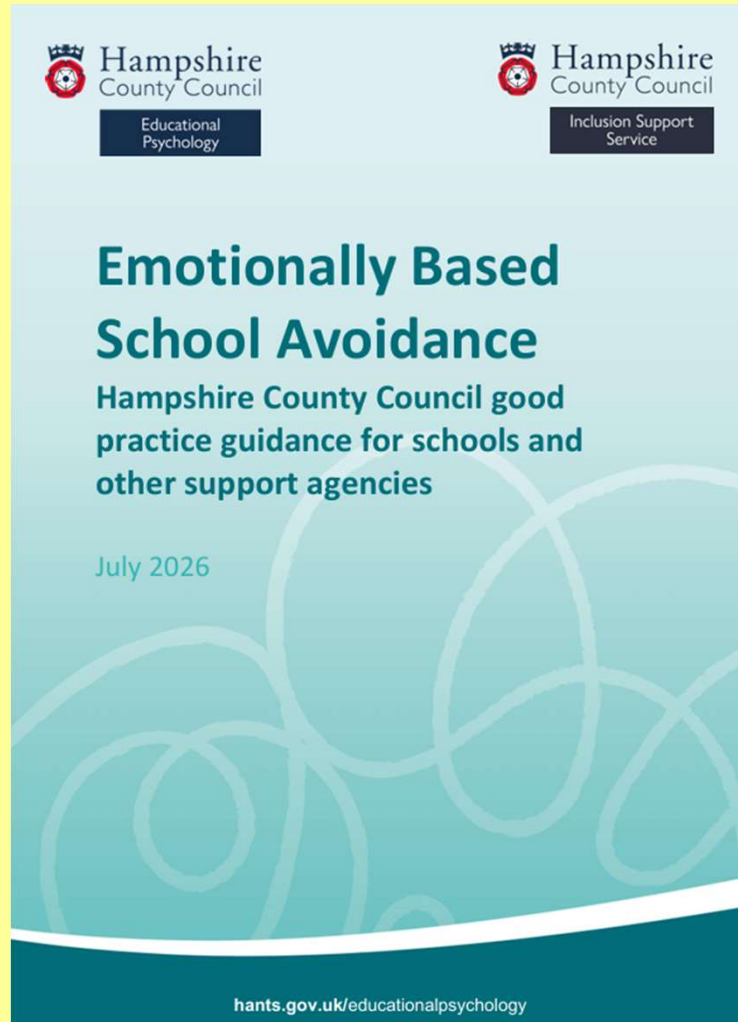
- Change in family dynamics
- Mum diagnosed with cancer
- Difficulties sleeping, nightmares about mum dying
- Separation anxiety from parent

Push (towards staying at home)

- Reduce anxiety around separating from mum
- Reduce anxieties around attending school
- Not having to complete schoolwork



Push pull
factors in
Hampshire
document and
on the Moodle



Factors pulling CYP
away from home



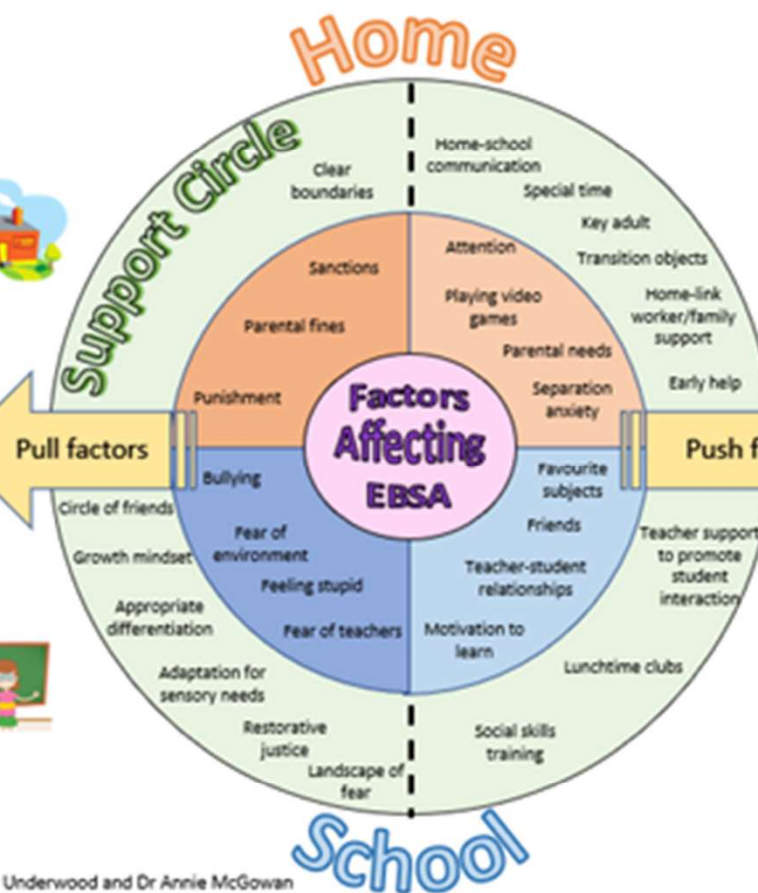
Factors pushing CYP
to home



Factors pulling CYP
away from school



Factors pushing CYP to
school



Understanding, information gathering and planning



Build Inclusive Practice



Strengthen Protective Factors



Identify Risk Factors



Respond to Early Indicators



We need to break the cycle

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

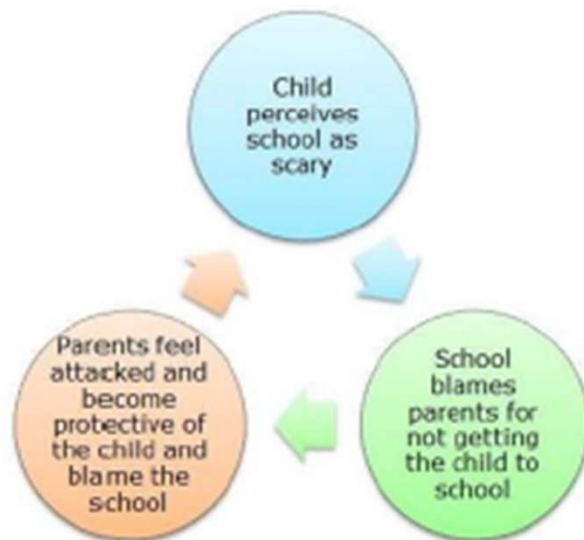
- Changes in behaviour
- Arriving just in time
- Changes to appearance
- Negative talk about school or themselves

Appendix one EBSA document Page 62

	Level of concern				
Loss and change	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Death or caregiver, relative, friend					
Death of pet					
Sudden traumatic event					
Sudden separation from a parent/carer					
Moving house, school, area					
Loss of a classmate					
Caregiver/relative/friend illness					
Note on key items					
Family / home factors	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Family dynamic					
Parenting concerns					
Birth of new child					
Parents separated					
Parents arguing/fighting					
Practical problems bringing the child to school					

Cycle of blame - Each person may have a different perspective on EBSA and have a different story to tell.

Cycle of blame





Devise a support plan

- This could include:
- Arriving later or earlier to a safe space with a trusted adult.
- Time to map out the day and process what is happening in the day.
- Looking at the curriculum and each lesson to map out what support maybe required or any potential barriers
- Time to process emotions and look at any sensory difficulties within the school environment.
-

5

Things to discuss when devising a support plan

What support might your child need on arrival at school? e.g. 

- a quieter start by arriving a few minutes before/after everyone else
- meet a friend or an adult at a particular place
- an opportunity to do a job on arrival at school, or engage in a preferred activity
- a chance to talk through the upcoming day including preparing for any changes/discussing any worries

Does your child need any further support in these areas? 

- accessing the curriculum
- discussing and managing emotions
- social relationships
- maintaining their focus and concentration
- transitions between lessons
- unstructured times (break, lunch time)
- assembly and/or tutor time
- organisation
- sensory difficulties (e.g. difficulties with wearing school uniform, sensitivity to noise)
- tests and exams
- homework

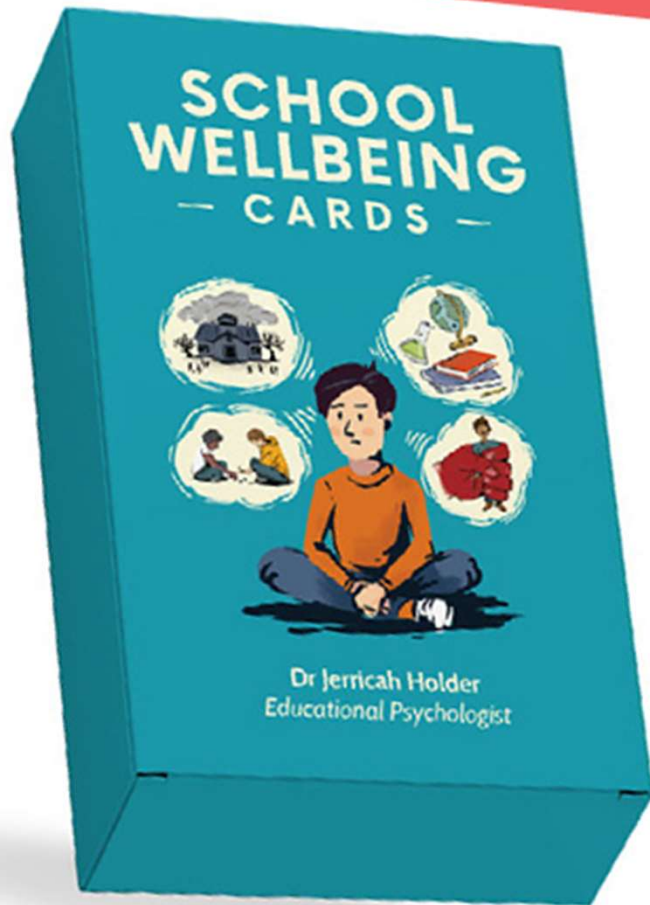
What support is available for parents and carers? 

Ask the school to identify a link member of staff to liaise with regarding your child's attendance

- Agree a date for the next review meeting and the frequency of the meetings
- Agree the protocol for contacting the school if there are difficulties getting your child into school i.e. should you phone/email? What will happen if your child is late to school?

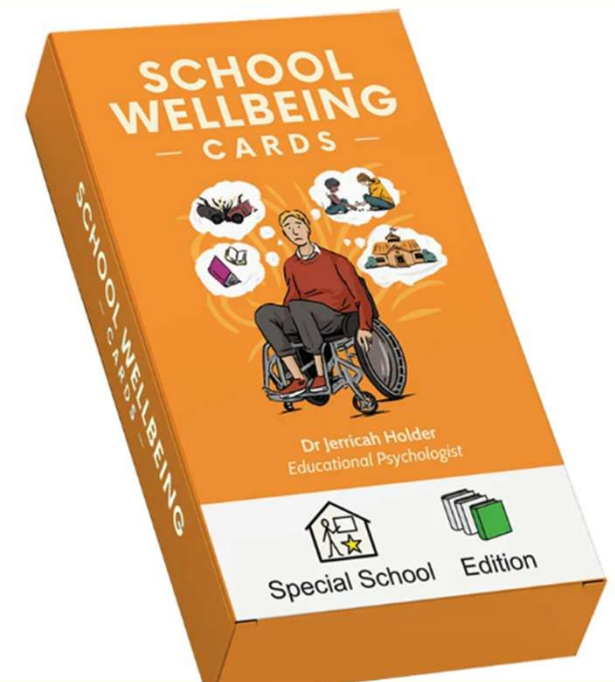
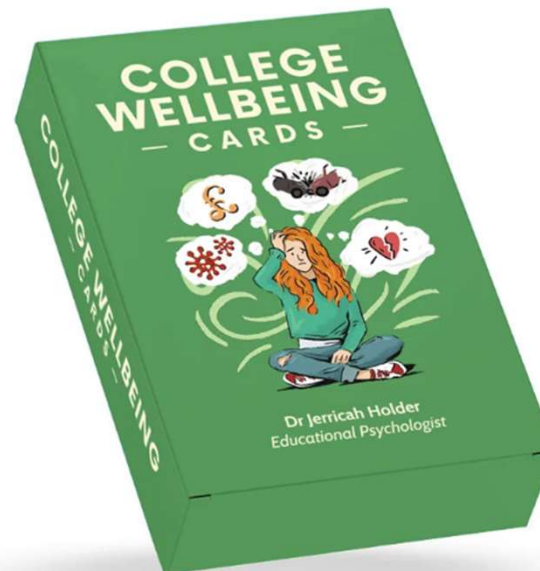
Be prepared for thing not to go smoothly to start with once the support plan is in place and for your child to show continued or even increased signs of distress. It's important for all adults to show a united, consistent approach, so talk to the school if you have concerns. If your child fails to attend school one day, be optimistic and try again the following day. Be aware too that returning to school after the weekend or the holidays may be particularly difficult.

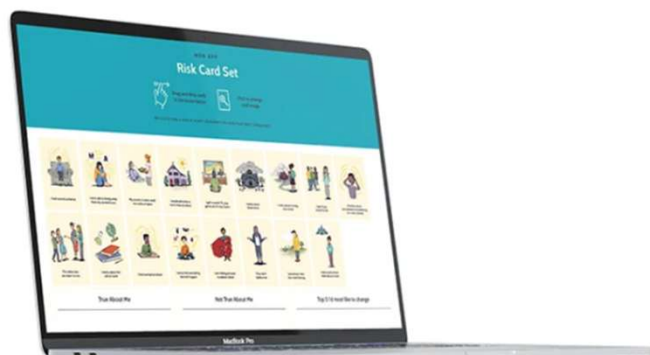
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School Wellbeing Cards

- Explore what is going well in school.
- Identify worries, barriers, and unmet needs.
- Understand the child's perspective.
- Develop targeted support plans and interventions.





School Wellbeing Web App

The School Wellbeing Cards Web App is a digital version of the cards, designed to help children and young people safely share their experiences of school, including barriers to wellbeing and attendance, as well as strengths and protective factors.

Accessible across devices and suitable for use in school, at home, or remotely, the app supports child-centred conversations in a flexible and engaging way. Responses can be securely saved, downloaded, and shared to support a more joined-up understanding between families, schools, and professionals.

Mapping the Landscape of your school – Kate Ripley

Mapping the Landscape of School is a useful tool that can be used by school staff and others to explore sources of anxiety around school attendance. It examines a young person's beliefs about the physical environment, the social environment and the learning environment in school (see Appendix 2, and for supplementary visuals see Appendices 8-14).



Person Centred planning

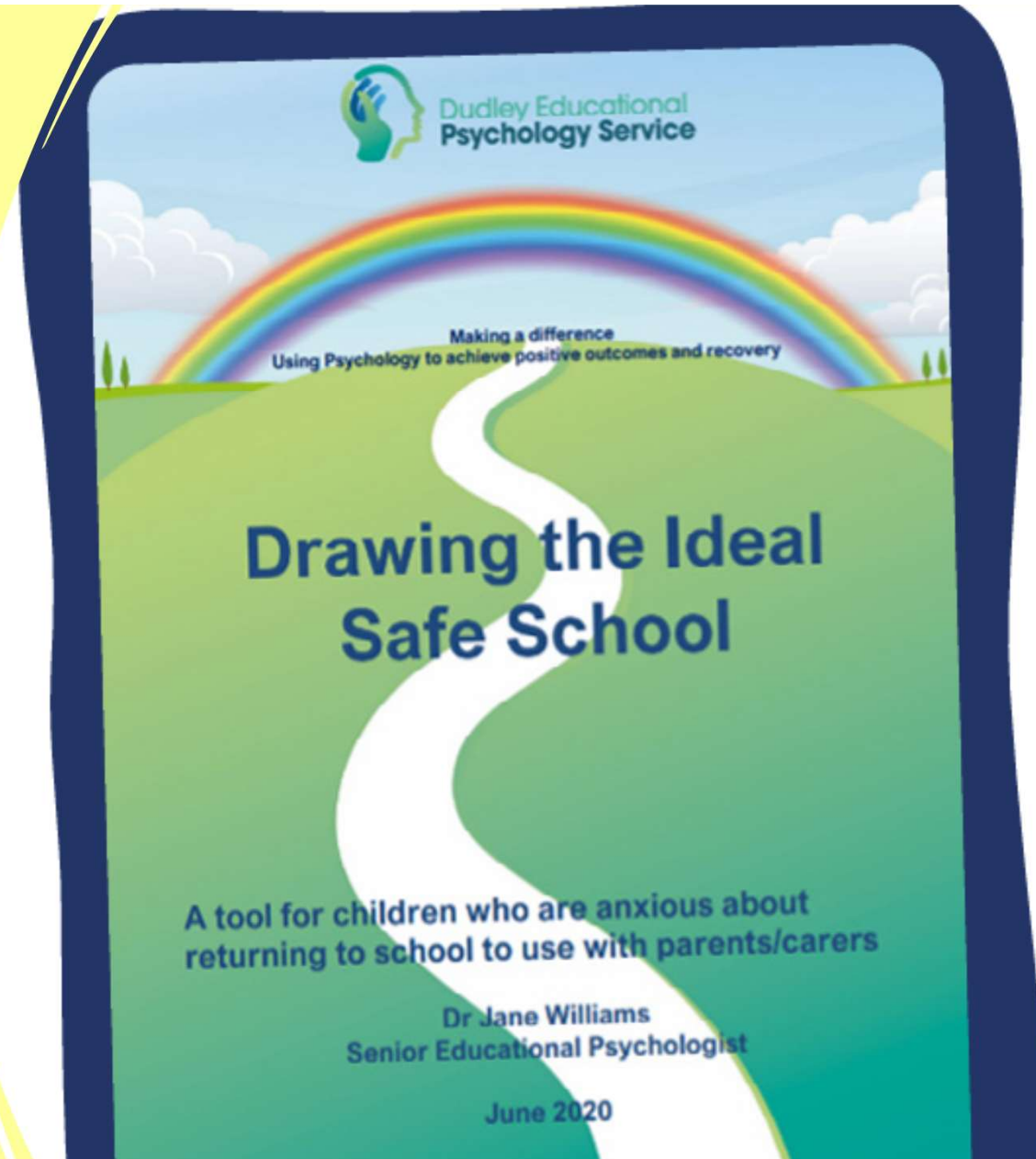
Person Centred Planning



This range of approaches and tools is 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 organisation think about what is important in their lives and also think about what would make a good future. The process taken by this tool can be a significant support for motivation.

Drawing the ideal safe school

Drawing the Ideal Safe School helps children and young people share their views of school in a creative, non-structured way. The activity can highlight likes, dislikes, concerns, and priorities, providing valuable insights to inform future planning and support



Resources and further support

Resources and further sources of help

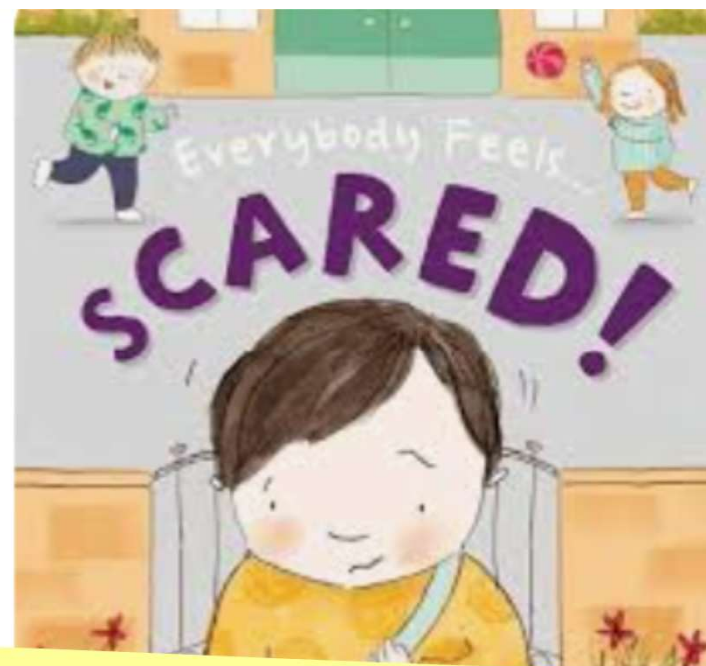
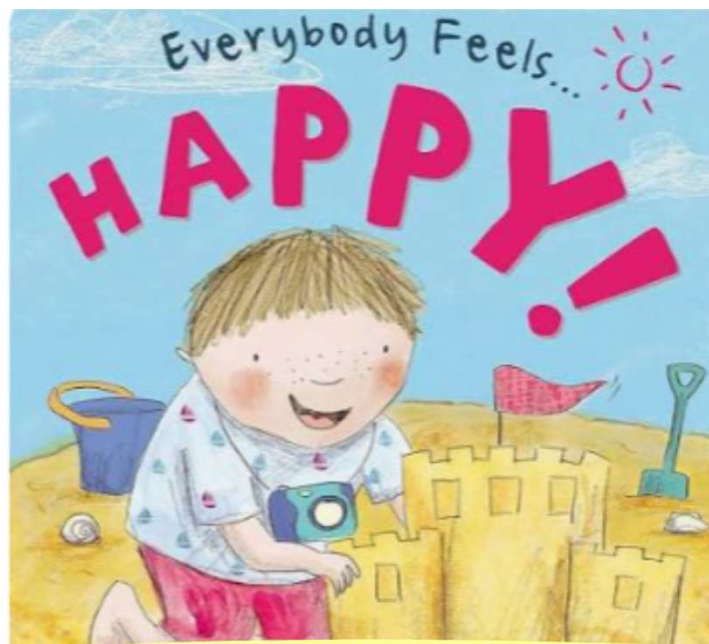
Books for adults

- *Overcoming School Refusal: A Practical guide for counsellors, caseworkers and parents.* Joanne Garfi, 2018.
- *The Anxious Child: a booklet for parents and carers wanting to know more about anxiety in children and young people.*
- www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/anxious-child
- *Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques* by Cathy Cresswell and Lucy Willetts
- Promoting emotional resilience toolkit KAN-Emotional-resilience-toolkit.pdf (hbtg.org.uk) (for professionals and parents to share with children and young people) [CAMHS Early Intervention Activity Pack: for the school staff to support learners.](#)



Books for Older children and Young People

- *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
- *Anxiety self-help guide – Mood Juice MOODJUICE - Anxiety - Self-help Guide* (mcgill.ca)
- *Think Good, Feel Good: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook for Children and Young People* by Paul Stallard
- *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life for Teens* by Joseph V. Ciarrochi, Louise Hayes and Ann Bailey
- *Stuff That Sucks: Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can* by Ben Sedley



Books for younger children

- *How to catch a star* by Oliver Jeffries
- *Everybody Feels.... (happy etc)* by Butterfield and Sterling.
- *Mopsy is (angry, sad, scared)* by Jane Asher and Gerald Scarfe.
- *Have you filled your bucket today?* by Carol McCloud and David Messing
- *Mighty Moe* by Lacey Woloshyn [Mighty Moe1.pdf \(dq5pwp1q8ru0.cloudfront.net\)](https://d1q5pwp1q8ru0.cloudfront.net/MightyMoe1.pdf)
- *A Volcano in my tummy* – Eliane Whitehouse & Warwick Pudney (suitable for ages 6 – 13years)

Family Support

Not fine in school www.notfineinschool.org.uk – a parent-led organisation offering support to families with children who are having difficulty attending school. 10

Square Peg www.teamsquarepeg.org – a social enterprise set up in 2019 to effect change for children who struggle to attend school and their families.

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. [MindEd Hub](#)

0-19 Children and Families Public Health Nursing (Hampshire) provided by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

www.hampshirehealthyfamilies.org.uk

A request for support can be made through school or by following the QR codes below, and an assessment completed. If appropriate, a care plan can be offered.

Young Person self referral to the
Community Public Health Nursing
Service



Digital referral for the 5-19
Hampshire Community Public
Health Nursing Service



DFE Guidance

- DfE Guidance

[Emotionally Based School Avoidance](#)



Department
for Education

**Summary of
responsibilities
where a mental
health issue is
affecting attendance**

**Working together to
improve school
attendance**