

Coronavirus, school closure, changes and loss...

‘I can’t cope!’

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance:
Supporting Children and Young People to return
to school



June 2020

Child and Educational Psychology Service

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Introduction

There are different reasons why children and young people (CYP) might struggle to cope in school and not attend. Many CYP may be experiencing underlying emotional based needs, such as fear, anxiety, unhappiness and despair, resulting in them not feeling able to attend school, and prolonged absences. Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSN) is a term used to describe this group of CYP. These CYP may be reluctant to leave home and can present high levels of distress in response to parents' attempts to get them to go to school.

EBSN is complex and multifaceted, requiring a holistic approach to assessment and intervention. EBSN: Good practice guidance emphasises early identification and intervention to support the needs of CYP who may struggle to attend school, developing a SMART support plan, with timely review processes (CW&C, 2018).

Baker and Bishop (2015¹) also report important factors associated with positive outcomes:

- early identification / intervention
- working in effective partnership with parents and school staff as well as the child / young person
- working in a flexible manner paying attention to the individual needs and function served by non-attendance
- emphasising the need for rapid return to school alongside good support and adaptations to the school environment.

This document provides information about supporting CYP who experience EBSN and who may struggle to return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst a prompt return to school after an absence is usually recommended, it is acknowledged that avoiding crowded and public places is a normal behavioural response following a period of quarantine / isolation during a pandemic (Brooks et al. 2020²). We recognise many CYP will need small steps, pacing at a rate they can manage, with additional support for felt safety.

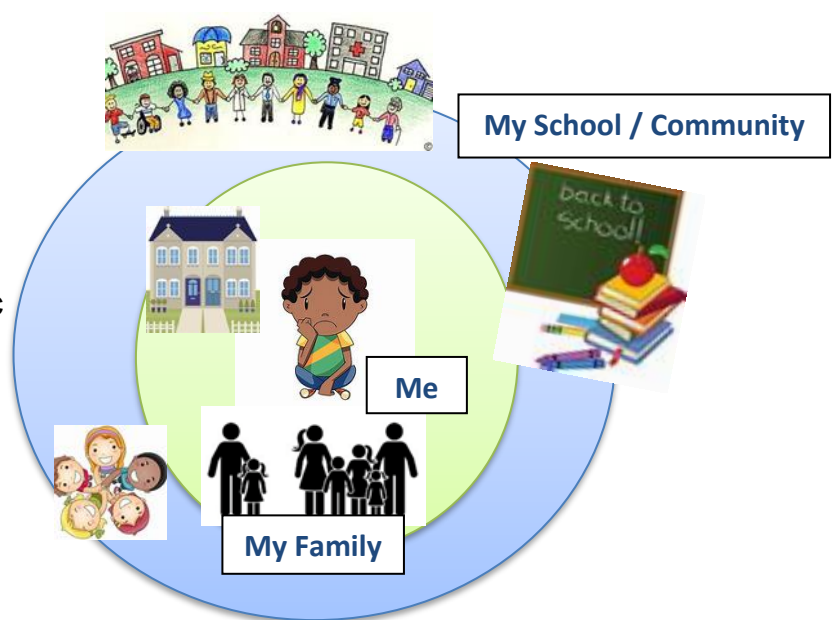
This document is designed to supplement the following resources:

- Returning to School after the Corona Virus Lockdown: Guidance from the Child and Educational Psychology Service (May 2020)
- I Can't Cope...Emotionally Based School Non- Attendance: good practice guidance for schools (June 2018) and associated training to schools.

¹ Baker, M. and Bishop, F. (2015). Out of school: a phenomenological exploration of non-attendance. *Educational Psychology in Practice*. 31:4, p354-368.

² Brooks et al. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*. 395: 10227, p912 -920.

EBSN and the COVID-19 Pandemic



EBSN typically occurs due to a combination of factors which are unique to the individual child / young person, their family and school context, and which interact with a particular trigger. Triggers commonly include: transitions between key stages / schools; loss or bereavement within the family; bullying or other traumatic event.

The COVID-19 pandemic / lockdown is a traumatic event - a 'collective loss of the world we know'³. Families have experienced disruption to many aspects of their lives, living with uncertainty and anxiety, significant change and loss, bereavement, increased levels of family stress / distress, including financially. It is recognised that CYP may be especially impacted by mental distress from the virus⁴, not least with the closure of schools. COVID-19 is likely to be a significant factor associated with increased vulnerability of EBSN.

Every child / young person will have had a different experience during the lockdown. For CYP who struggle to cope in school, being at home over the past few months may likely have brought some relief and sanctuary. For other CYP, the lockdown may have been a very different experience, bringing additional worries / anxiety, sadness and distress, not only for themselves but also their families.

In most schools, there will have been CYP who experienced difficulties coping in school prior to COVID-19. It is anticipated that extended school closures and the potential emotional consequences of the pandemic may exacerbate, or even trigger, a child / young person's anxieties when returning to school. Moreover, school is likely to look and feel very different. Parents may also have legitimate concerns about their child returning to school. It is essential that these CYP are **identified early** and their transition back to school is carefully **planned for at the earliest opportunity**. It will be important to consider what can be done now, as well as what their educational support plan will look like when they return.

Note. vulnerability factors can be identified using the Identification Tool in the EBSN: Good practice guidance for schools (2018).

³ Kessler, D. (2020). *Grief expert - David Kessler and Brené on Grief and Finding Meaning*. Podcast: Unlocking Us with Brené Brown.

⁴ United Nations (2020). *UN Leads call to protect most vulnerable from mental health crisis during and after COVID*. Accessed on 28.05.20 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063882>

Identify Children and Young People who will need an extended transition and personalised support to return to school

Transition is a challenging time, especially with the added complexity of the pandemic. We need to be kind to ourselves and be flexible in our expectations, not just of ourselves but of our CYP too. By carefully managing transitions back to school we can help promote and teach resilience in the face of adversity.

A whole school approach to identify and monitor risk of EBSN, focusing upon prevention and early intervention is essential. Identify CYP who may be vulnerable to EBSN / struggle with the return to school (consider rag rating vulnerability / need). This may be informed by information such as:

- experience of additional traumatic events during COVID-19 eg. loss and bereavement, heightened mental health difficulties, stress / distress within the family...
- CYP at key transition points - due to start high school; moving between key stages.
- CYP who may be considered 'vulnerable' eg. special educational needs and disabilities, emotional / mental health needs, peer difficulties or experience of bullying, known needs within the family (a TAF / CIN plan may be in place)
- CYP with attendance concerns prior to COVID-19. If possible, categorise absence data e.g. demographically (by gender, age, ethnicity, year group), by degree of absenteeism and by vulnerable groups. An understanding of which groups are most at risk for not attending can help identify where to assign preventative resources.

It is recognised that staff have been in regular contact with many vulnerable CYP / families and will have up to date information regarding their wellbeing and feelings about returning to school.

What can be done now?

Maintain communication, build connection and positive relationships with CYP and their families. This can be achieved through a variety of creative ways: video calls for face to face interaction; telephone calls; writing letters or emails; sending messages, activity packs and 'thinking of you' / 'wish you were here' postcards. Plan joint / parallel activities: virtual games (eg. Battleships); draw and talk activity or mindful colouring; construction or crafts - consider their interests. Set each other weekly goals / challenges - these could be linked to wellbeing (see: 5 Ways to Wellbeing; Action for Happiness monthly calendars).

Facilitate peer / class connections: weekly shared lunches with one or two close friends ('*What's up Wednesdays*'); small group games / family quizzes, 'Show and Tell' or 'Joke Round'. Actions which promote peer / class connections will help to increase a sense of school belonging.

Class / Form Teachers may lead on planning communication and connection activities. Additional Key Adults who supported the child / young person before lockdown should also have a role in maintaining positive communication / connection.

Example weekly plan may include: Teacher Skype call with pupil / parents; joint virtual activity with Key Worker and pupil; shared virtual lunch with pupil, chosen peer/s and Key Worker / Teacher. Regular positive messages / letters / postcards / video clips – rotate from Teachers, Key Worker, Head of Year and Head Teacher - to communicate the child/young person is kept in mind.

See now as an opportunity: now may be an ideal opportunity for some CYP to visit the school environment whilst it is quiet and to rebuild / strengthen relationship with Key Adults, without the typical demands of the school day. The very act of practicing the journey to school may be beneficial for some CYP. Plan in advance what this will look like with the child / young person, thinking about their interests eg. gardening in the allotment; design and construction or arts and craft activity; walking the school dog; favourite snack.

See [article](#): a Gloucestershire school emphasises the wellbeing benefits of a flexible lockdown school.

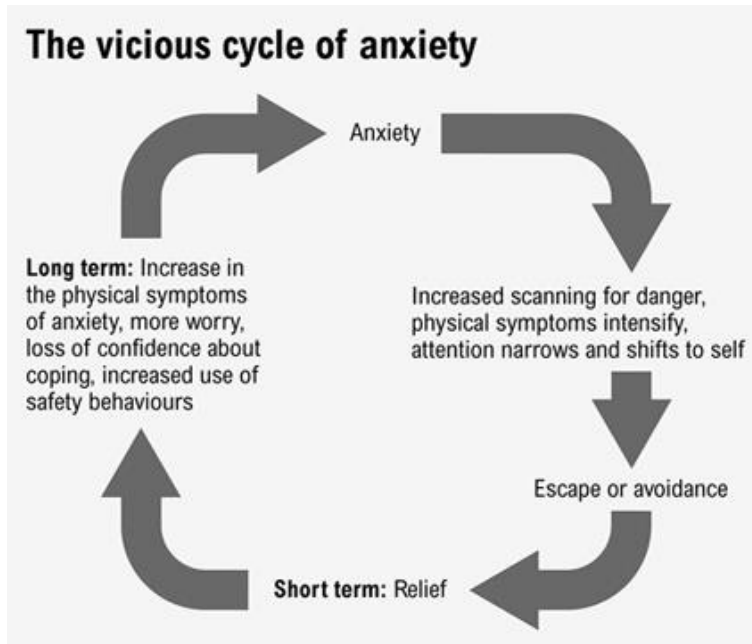
Promote wellbeing and positive coping skills: through wellbeing checks, identify ways to promote family wellbeing and enhance positive coping skills. For example, maintaining healthy routines and daily structure; scheduling activities they enjoy and regular wellbeing activities including physical activity / exercise; learning a new skill and positive goal setting; journaling. See resource: 30-3-30 activities to inform a Wellbeing Plan [learn.4mentalhealth](#).

Planning the return to school

There will be legitimate reasons why some families may not be ready for their child to return to school. During this time, Key Adults should continue to maintain communication and positive relationships with CYP / families (as outlined above); supportive and compassionate Key Adults who CYP trust are needed now more than ever.

'A sense of belonging, feeling understood and feeling listened to' were identified as essential by young people in CW&C with EBSN (2018). Having an adult they can trust and positive friendships were crucial to maintaining school attendance or supporting their re-engagement with school education.

Be aware of the powerful cycle of reinforcement in not attending school: the very thought of attending school or even leaving the house can evoke anxious feelings for some CYP. However, whilst avoidance leads to a brief respite / reduction in anxiety, complete avoidance of the uncomfortable feeling / situation can make future attempts for school re-engagement harder to achieve in the long term. See *'The vicious cycle of anxiety'* diagram below. The aim therefore is to assess the starting point for the child / young person (ie. what can they manage now?) and to plan what next small, successive steps might be possible for them to manage with support.



Assess, Plan, Do and Review: in planning for the return to school, directly gain the child / young person and parents' views and as far as practicably possible, involve them in designing what their return to school may look like. Open and honest communication, good working relationships and a team around the child approach will help to support the child's return to school. Robust assess, plan, do and review cycles are crucial.



Assess / Identify needs

Be vigilant and proactive to the early signs of EBSN. Notice changes in wellbeing / behaviours. Gain the child / young person and parents' views, including information about their wellbeing and feelings about returning to school.

Identify strengths and needs of the child / young person and family, including factors which may be contributing to the non-attendance (eg. child/ family/ school factors):

- What **strengths** / positive factors may help engagement and school attendance?
- What may **push** the child / young person away from school? (*ie. things they find difficult in school*)
- What may **pull** them towards home? (*ie. 'safe base'; anxiety leaving parent*)
- What function is not attending providing them? (*eg. to avoid negative feelings / escape specific situations; to seek / experience...*)

Additional factors can maintain non-attendance, making it more difficult for a child / young person to attend school. For example: loss of relationships (with peers / staff) and feeling disconnected from others due to isolation; falling behind in schoolwork and/or fear of falling behind; decreased motivation to attend; anxiety and negative thoughts about ability to return to school linked to above factors; changes in daily routine and shift in sleeping patterns. Inadvertently, CYP may also experience tangible rewards in staying at home (eg. activities they really enjoy, such as online gaming / You Tube, or rewarding activities with parents etc). These factors will need to be identified and addressed.

See Appendix III: Example approaches to elicit the views of the Child / Young Person.

Questions to parents may include:

- Describe a typical day when Pupil has / has not managed to go to school...
- What has helped in the past when things have been difficult?
- Explore exceptions: tell me about a time when it seemed like it wasn't going to happen, but then s/he managed to get to school? What was different about this time?

Plan and Do

Establish desired outcomes (eg. By the end of term, X will...) and steps to achieve these. Agree realistic next steps to re-engage the child / young person and support their return to school, including strategies / interventions to meet their needs. A well-planned, phased approach is recommended, with flexibility as needed. A SMART⁵ two-week action plan with review is initially suggested.

Consider the following when planning support:

- Initial home visits may be appropriate to directly discuss worries about attending school, build relationships and plan manageable next steps forward.
- Plan a first visit / return to school at the earliest opportunity – establish what the child / young person can currently manage; what is a realistic, next small step? Plan how this will be built upon gradually.

⁵ SMART = specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound

- Daily monitoring and good / direct communication links between parents and Key Adult in school regarding progress (eg. agree how and when?).
- Identify practical and emotional support required to ensure each child / young person feels prepared and safe when returning to school (eg. agreed visual timetable, strategies / plan to manage worries).
- Arrange a time and place for the child /young person to be met by welcoming staff / Key Adults in school.
- Identify Key Worker to develop a positive and trusted relationship with the child/ young person, to work directly with them, help them manage their worries and re-engage with school / educational plan
- Identify a quiet 'safe base' in school where child / young person can go to if needed
- A personalised educational plan with agreed support strategies (eg. flexible timetable, arrangements for transport, meet and greet, buddying, provision of safe learning base / quiet space etc).
- Identify Key Adult/s to 'check in' with child / young person throughout the school day, as needed.
- Specific emotional or social skills programme of intervention; teach, model and practice regulation and coping skills (eg. breathing and relaxation skills, balanced thinking, positive self-talk / affirmations, positive distraction...)
- Identify support family might need. A TAF may be necessary to co-ordinate support for multiple / complex family needs.

Create a visual SMART plan with parents and an accessible weekly visual plan / timetable with the child / young person, where possible.

Agree contingency plan for times when school might feel too overwhelming, with arrangements for Key Adult to follow up (ie. telephone call between 3.30 - 4pm to positively 'check in').

See Appendix I: 12 Steps to planning support for CYP with EBSN

See Appendix II: Strategies to consider when supporting CYP with EBSN to return to school

See Appendix IV: Example CYP Wellbeing and Support Plan.

Example: 'Jonny' - be aware that we might need to go back a few steps in order to go forward. If, prior to lockdown, a young person was attending school for one hour each day with a Key Adult in an identified 'safe space', it would not be appropriate to expect them to resume from where they left. A personalised programme of transition to prepare them for school is needed with a small step plan to build up to sessions in school. A SMART target might be: 'By the end of week two, Jonny will attend school for one to one sessions with Mr Key Worker in the Oasis room, for 30 to 45 minutes, on at least 3 occasions'. Initial steps might include:

- Head of Year and Key Worker to visit Jonny and parents at home, to check on wellbeing and elicit views. Discuss next steps to help Jonny return to school and agree plan.
- Key Worker to visit Jonny at home and take dog for a short dog walk. Further elicit views with Jonny – to inform session planning and support strategies.

- Key Worker to send video of self in the Oasis room, so that Jonny can see what everything looks like.
- Jonny and his parents to practice journey to school.
- Jonny and his dad to 'meet and greet' Key Worker at 10am in school reception. Go for a shared drink / snack in the Oasis room. Plan next session together.

Review

Regularly review SMART plans in a timely manner with the child / young person, parents and Key Adults. A two-week review cycle is suggested in the initial stages of EBSN (some CYP may require one-week reviews). Short review cycles help to: avoid potential drift in progress; promptly address barriers / things that are not working so well; plan small steps / outcomes which can easily be achieved, positively reinforced and celebrated, increasing self-belief, a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

Celebrate small successes and problem-solve how to overcome obstacles (eg. What might need to be done differently? Do next steps need to be smaller/ have increased frequency?).

Plan next steps, which may include:

- Agree successive steps to extend engagement and attendance / school experiences (*Tuesdays are often beneficial for agreed changes to begin, rather than Mondays*)
- Set new targets and actions for child / young person, school and parents
- Consolidate and maintain current plan.

With increased and sustained progress in school attendance, review dates might be extended to monthly (or six weekly if appropriate to combine with TAF meetings etc).

Remember, initial progress might be slow and attendance may improve and dip again over time, especially as the child / young person, their family and the wider school system learn to adjust and process the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Setbacks are normal and temporary; positivity and perseverance are key, with fresh starts and small steps forward. Prepare all key people (including child and parents) for 'bumps in the road' so that hope is not lost in the child / young person eventually returning to full-time education.

If attendance and wellbeing concerns persist over time or worsen, despite appropriate support / intervention, consult with relevant services for support (e.g. Early Help, Child and Educational Psychology Service, Education Access Team).

Appendix I: 12 Steps to planning support for CYP with EBSN

12 steps to support EBSN	Notes / actions
1. Identify appropriate Key Adult/s to gain child / young person and parents' views <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ strengths and needs? ○ factors contributing to EBSN? 	
2. Work together with the family: enable open and honest communication – it is likely they have been struggling for some time	
3. Plan: first visits to school; how to create a predictable, consistent and safe environment; routines and expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is realistic and manageable with support? Identify quiet 'safe base' 	
4. Establish good home / school routines: create a Sunday evening plan and a positive Monday morning plan with the family	
5. Welcome the child / young person to school each day; show them how happy you are that they have made it in	
6. Enable readiness for learning / lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ reduce heightened emotional arousal / facilitate regulatory activity ○ prepare for lesson / school day 	
7. Skill development: is a programme of intervention required? How and when will this be delivered? (eg. emotional regulation skills; social skills; learning / 'catch up' intervention...)	
8. Build in regular re-sets: breaks and activities to reduce emotional arousal / facilitate emotional / sensory regulation throughout the day	
9. Signal for overwhelm: agree sign with child / young person so they can communicate when they are feeling overwhelmed	
10. Break times: plan support needed to help them to feel 'safe' / regulated - set activities, create structure and routine	
11. Celebrate small successes: how does child / young person want efforts to be acknowledged / praised?	
12. Regular reviews: agree dates (fortnightly plans / reviews initially recommended).	

Appendix II: Strategies for supporting CYP with EBSN to return to school

- Daily routines are likely to have changed since lockdown. Re-establishing routines, structure and consistency will help prepare for CYP's return to school (eg. bedtime routines; build structure into each day using visual planners – schedule tasks / learning, physical activity, breaks, jobs/ chores and free time). Encourage CYP to create their own daily plans. Visual schedules / planners are often helpful.
- Support CYP and parents to prepare, plan and organise, to help routines run smoothly. For example, laying out uniform, packing school bag and snacks / packed lunch the night before; setting alarm with sufficient time in the mornings; writing an action plan on their planner. Personalised visual schedules / checklists / prompts can be helpful. Some CYP may benefit from a 'dry run' to school the day before attending.
- Create / update One Page Profile with child / young person to ensure that information and support strategies remain relevant. This is a useful activity which can be started prior to a child's return to school, as appropriate.
- Preparation for what will be different in school: social distancing rules, staggered lunchtimes/ pick up/ drop off, use of hand sanitisers etc.
- Focus on what will be the same for the child to reduce anxiety: same staff, classroom, furniture, equipment etc.
- Build positive and enjoyable / rewarding activities into each session / day, which the child / young person can look forward to, especially when they have worked hard to manage their worry / anxiety.
- Arrange for a morning 'meet and greet' to prepare them for the day ahead.
- An end of day 'check out' / debrief can help reflection on what has gone well, address any worries / issues before home time, and prepare for the next day.
- Plan additional 'check in' with Key Adult at agreed times / location during the day, as needed.
- Identify Key Adult support from adults who are empathic, with good active listening skills.
- Key Adults to use PACE (Hughes) in communication and interactions with children / young people to help build positive, trusted relationship, and help to regulate their emotions: playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, empathy.
- Plan small successive steps using gradual exposure techniques. One of the main factors that keeps anxiety going is avoidance of the feared situation. One way adults can help a young person to challenge this avoidance is to put together a step by step plan that gradually exposures them to the thing that they fear. This should not be to push them into an anxiety provoking situation, but to build on the success of the last step and help them to grow in confidence each time.
- Additional preparations may include briefing peers (where appropriate and agreed with the child and parent) and selecting suitable buddies. Scripts might also be helpful to the young person should students ask questions about their attendance.
- Ask how the child / young person would like to receive praise / have their efforts rewarded. Provide lots of positive encouragement and specific praise / reward for their *efforts* as well as achievements (efforts-based praise) eg. '*Tommy, I saw you tried really*

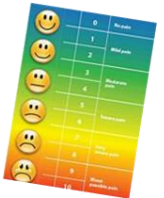
hard today and showed courage when we walked out of the student support centre to the library. I knew you could do it. Well done for being the boss of Worry!

- Liaise with parents to agree the best time to start preparing the child / young person for change (some will prefer lots of preparation, for others this may provoke more anxiety)
- For CYP who may struggle to separate from their parents, consider using a transitional object (which brings comfort) and concrete 'keeping in mind' strategies to communicate that parents will be thinking about them at school and look forward to hearing about their day when they see them next eg. keyring with picture and positive message child can keep close to them; 'positive notes in lunch box'; teddy filled with hugs to keep in a safe place; parent's scarf with their scent; photograph with special message.
- CYP may find the return to school results in a significant increase or decrease to the sensory information/experiences that they have not had over the past months. Prepare for this in advance, with access to an identified safe base/ low stimulus environment.
- Plan alternative options with the child / young person for specific situations they may find too overwhelming eg. assemblies, PE.
- Remember situations that the child / young person may have coped with previously could become more challenging for them during times of anxiety and change.
- Provision for less structured times of the day: leaving and arriving at lessons early so corridors are quieter, early lunch breaks, quieter area to eat food with friends, lunchtime clubs.
- Use of visual schedules / task boards to outline steps within an activity.
- Set research projects which appeal to CYP's interests, are meaningful / relevant to them.
- Remember Perry's 3 R's: Regulate. Relate. Reason. Help the child / young person to feel calm and to be able to regulate / self-regulate. Build in regular breaks and activities for emotional / sensory regulation, as needed.
- CYP may attempt to exert more control in school as a natural response to feeling anxious and out of control. Provide limited choices and flexibility where possible, for example about how they record their learning or when they complete their reading eg. 'you can read your book now or after snack time'.
- Staff who teach and support the child / young person should be aware of early signs of dysregulation and know agreed strategies to support them, to help them to feel calm.
- Where appropriate, support the young person to plan ahead and identify situations that might be tricky for them. Practice skills the young person plans to use: breathing exercises, self-talk/ verbal scripts to calm their anxiety.
- Targeted support and intervention programmes for: emotional regulation and coping skills; building self-esteem, confidence and resiliency; social communication skills etc.
- Regularly review procedures with key staff in school as a standing item on staff briefing/ inclusion meetings.
- Research different career / work options and post 16 pathways of interest with the YP; order college prospectuses; make links to the relevance of subjects required for different career paths. Create a visual timeline of 'me now' and 'my best possible future self' and help them to set their own goals and achievable steps towards these.

Appendix III: Example approaches to elicit views of the Child or Young Person

There are many ways to gain the child or young person's views of school, appropriate to their age and level of understanding / language. For example: picture or card sorting, scaling and laddering activities, Widget / Chat Mat symbols, worry / anxiety thermometers, use of traffic lights / rag rating, externalisation techniques, a graph / map of my day.

Creative activities such as art, music and poetry, can also be a powerful way of helping children and young people to express how they are feeling.



Example questions might include:

- Tell me / draw a picture to show ...your [worries] about going back to school
- What would make school a really good place to come to in the morning?
- If we could change one thing about school, what would it be?
- What's the worst thing about not being at school?
- Who are you most looking forward to seeing when you are back at school?
- What has helped in the past when things have been difficult? What has been helpful in managing worry?

Example activities might include:

Card sorting: provide a range of pictures / statements about school which they sort according to what is important and helpful. For example:

- Cards to illustrate: different aspects of the classroom or school environment. Sort into piles according to: What's ...most important? ...a bit important? ...not so important?
- Cards to illustrate: support strategies. Sort according to: what's ...most helpful? ...a bit helpful? ...not so helpful?

Scaling: useful to take a quick measure of how a child / young person might be thinking or feeling. A valuable tool to measure baseline views as well as how things may have changed following a period of intervention. Example questions might include:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being 'I really enjoy school', where would you rate school right now? Explain why.
- How about last term / year?
- What do you like most / least about school?
- What would need to happen for you to rate X at one point higher? What would one point higher look/ feel like?
- What stops you from rating it as one point lower than this?



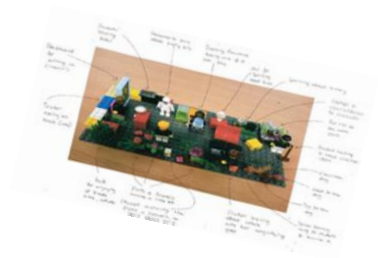
Visual map of the school: ask young person to highlight 'safe zones' and 'hot spots / stress zones' on a visual map of the school using colour to rag rate areas where they might feel 'worry' as well as 'calm' etc. (eg. classrooms, assembly hall, toilets, canteen, corridors, support centre, library, yard).

Laddering activity: provide a range of statements / situations which reflect a young person's daily school experiences (eg. teaching and learning, social aspects, physical environment, travelling to school, uniform etc). Ask them to sort these according to those they feel 'most worried about' and 'least / not so worried about'. Ask the young person to order the statements from the top to the bottom of the ladder if they can (from most worried about, to least worried about). This can be a useful starting point for planning support and identifying small goals to help the young person to manage their feelings within specific situations, and to build school attendance / engagement. Addressing situations the young person is least worried about should be worked on first.





Additional tools / resources to elicit views and inform intervention:

- Drawing or building 'my ideal classroom' (Faye Morgan Rose, 2014). Activity to elicit the child / young person's views about their ideal classroom. theidealclassroom.co.uk/
- The Incredible 5 Point Scale: 2nd edition (Burton & Curtis, 2012) Visual emotional literacy tool to assist identification and communication of feelings. Also see 'anxiety curve' www.5pointscale.com/
- The Attendance Toolkit (Catherine Roberts, 2015). Practical activities / resources for eliciting children's views and addressing absence. Recommended age 6 to 13.
- Next Step cards (CWP) - Goal based outcomes tool to promote the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Ideal for older children / young people. www.nextstepcards.co.uk/



Appendix IV: *Example Pupil Wellbeing and Support Plan*

<i>My Wellbeing and Support Plan</i>		Plan no.
Name	Date	
What is working well in school? <i>(likes / strengths)</i> 	What is not working so well in school? <i>(dislikes / worries...)</i> 	
Key Adult/s I can speak to in school are:	What else helps me to manage at school? <i>(eg. breaks, 'safe space', my 'Cool Bag' activities etc.)</i>	
A 'safe space' I can go to in school is:	Other places I feel safe and supported are:	
When I start to feel upset / worry, I notice these things about myself: When this happens, to help me feel better, I can: Adults can also help me by:		


My weekly timetable *(Identify short term changes to times / days / locations, as appropriate)*

Until _____, my return to school plan includes the following changes to my school day / timetable:

-
-
-
-

Create a personalised timetable with pupil, including daily times, sessions, breaks and locations - attach to Wellbeing and Support Plan.

My weekly goals - to increase engagement, attendance or specific skills, as appropriate.
(max. of two SMART goals recommended at any one time – see example below).

My SMART goals 	What I will need to do (to meet my goal) 	Who will help me and when? 	How did I get on?  
1.			
2.			
Weekly review (agree date)		Date:	
What has gone well this week? What am I most proud of?		What have other people noticed has gone well this week? (elicit from Key Adults / peers etc)	
Note any worries / challenges from this week:		How could we address these?	
What can I work on next week? (discuss options for successive, small step changes – to start on Tuesday; alternatively, a consolidation week may be required)			
New goals / changes to learning plan to be agreed on _____ (first day of week, ready to begin on second day in school)			

Signed

Pupil:

Key Worker:

School Lead/ SENCo:

Date:

Copies: Parents, School (Class Teacher / Head of Year / Key Worker), File

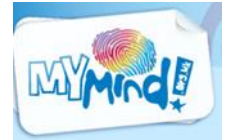
Example goals / actions to address punctuality.

I will follow my night-time and morning schedules to help me be ready for school on time.

I will arrive at school by ____ on at least 4/5 mornings each week (or X% success rate)

Actions: I will be in bed by ____ / set my alarm at ____ the night before, giving me enough time to follow my schedule. Listen to relaxation App if I can't sleep. My mum will also help me each morning by...

Appendix V: Useful resources and information



Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing

- 5 Ways to Wellbeing (New Economics Foundation, 2008). See different ideas from 1min to 60mins: www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/
- Action for Happiness – 10 keys to happiness resource; free downloadable monthly calendars with daily actions www.actionforhappiness.org/
- My Mind (CAMHs, CWP) – useful self-help resources for children/young people, parents and staff eg. sleep, stress, low mood, /mood/anxiety, loss www.mymind.org.uk/
- School based staff: Looking after Your Mental Health and Wellbeing and that of the Children and Young People you Support (CW&C, April 2020)
- CWP Mental Health and Wellbeing Resource Pack for Coronavirus (CWP, April 2020)

Young Minds - information and resources for young people, parents and professionals. Support for young people's mental health, Looking After Yourself, blogs youngminds.org.uk/

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families - resources and guides to support the mental health and wellbeing of children/ young people, parents and staff eg. helping children and young people to manage anxiety; managing the transition back to school etc. 'On my mind' – aims to empower young people.
www.annafreud.org/

Specific strategies for CYP with Autism / social communication needs

National Autistic Society – supporting children and young people with Autism when starting or changing school, including social stories, visual supports and reasonable adjustments:
www.autism.org.uk/about/transition/starting-or-switching.aspx

Autism Education Trust. (undated). *School stress and anxiety – how it can lead to school refusal and impact on family life*. Accessed from: www.autism.org.uk/about/in-education/exclusion/school-refusal-strategies.aspx

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance Training

- EBSN: Good practice guidance - for Wellbeing / Attendance Leads, SENCos, Pastoral Staff
- EBSN: for frontline staff who work directly with Children and Young People
Contact the Child & Educational Psychology Service or Education Access Team for details.

Book via eCWIP: ecwip.education/

Contact your link Child and Educational Psychologist for further information, as needed.

This document was informed and inspired by:

Cheshire West and Chester Council (2018). *Emotionally Based School Non-attendance: Good practice guidance for schools*. Cheshire West and Chester Council: Educational and Child Psychology Service and Education Access Team.

Birmingham County Council (2020). *Supporting Children and Young People with Transition to School during the Extended School Closures*. Birmingham County Council: Educational Psychology Service.

Knightsmith, P. (2020). *Break the Cycle of Emotionally Based School Avoidance*. Creative Education. Accessed 22.06.20, from: creativeeducation.co.uk.

West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2018). *Emotionally Based School Avoidance: Good practice guidance for schools and support agencies*. West Sussex County Council: West Sussex Educational Psychology Service.