

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)



Haringey Educational Psychology Service



Aims of the training

What is EBSA?

Contributing/risk factors

Recognising stress and anxiety in children and young people

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC),
Neurodiversity & EBSA

What can schools do to support children and young people?

How to work with parents

Activities to further explore anxiety and EBSA with children and young people

Sharing our EPS EBSA guidance and systemic offer to schools



What is EBSA?

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school

(See Haringey EPS EBSA guidance)

There is a difference between those who are absent from school due to truanting and those absent due to emotional factors

Within EBSA, pupils can still attend school

Change in terminology from 'school refuser'

Complex interaction between home, school and pupil factors

1-5% of the population meet the definition of having EBSA



Contributing/ Risk Factors

Some children worry more than others:

1/3 from genes

2/3 from environment e.g., experiences, how adults react; observing others; and having limited opportunities to face fears and develop skills



Contributing/risk factors

Perceived stress

Anxiety

Predisposing risk factors

Triggers

Maintenance factors

(Jerricah Holder, 2022)



Early recognition

Changes in school performance

A lack of curiosity, interest or enjoyment in life and usual activities (changes in mood, appearance or engagement)

Reported anxiety and/or finding it difficult to transition to school e.g., Sunday evenings, mornings (including lateness)

Significant increase in time spent alone

Inability to cope with daily problems, activities or changes to usual routines

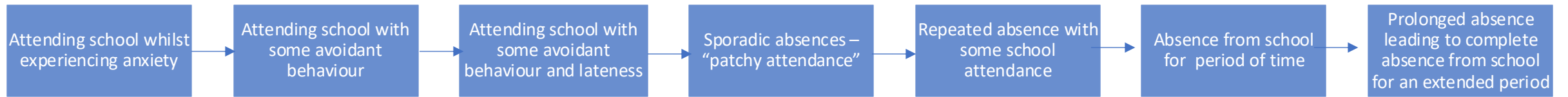
Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits

Excessive complaints of physical ailments e.g., stomach pain, headache or other illness

Changes in outbursts of anger and defiance (anxiety can present as anger)

Consider masking in particular pupils

EBSA as a spectrum

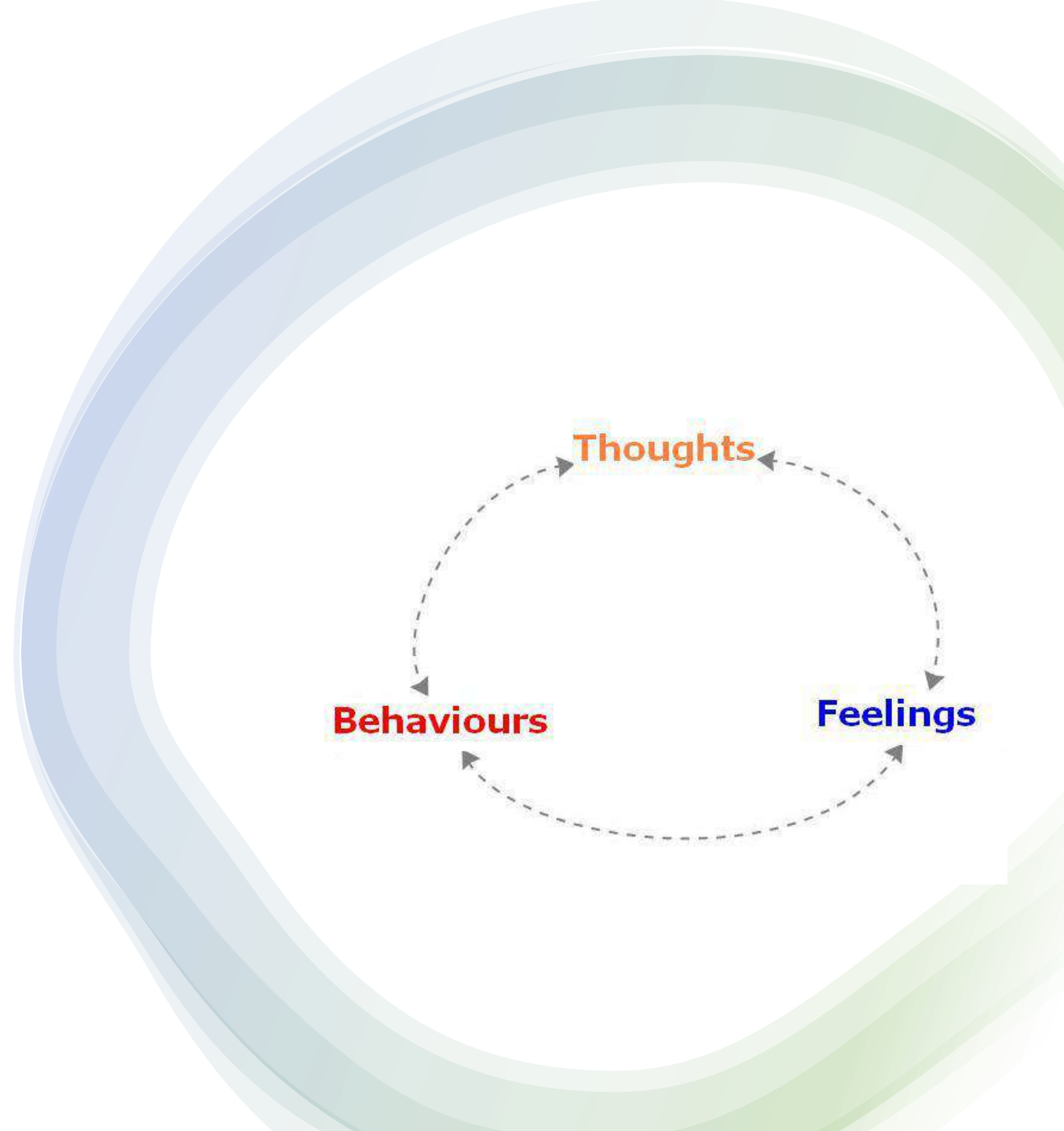


Important to intervene early to prevent escalation

Diagram adapted from Informed by Kearney, C & Albano, A. (2018) When Children Refuse School, Oxford University Press

Understanding anxiety and emotions

- The importance of the link between thoughts and feelings and behaviour
- The snowball effect
- Thought traps
- Anger can mask anxiety





Maintenance Cycles

We are role models to children

How we act influences them

Research shows that anxiety is exacerbated if adults either:

Encourage a child to avoid a situation they are worried about or

Are too pushy, controlling and/or overprotective

Some reassurance is ok, but it can stop children from being able to manage situations on their own



Impact of Covid

Covid led to a message from society of 'danger' which resulted in heightened anxiety

Increased time at home reinforced the maintenance cycle

Increased mental health difficulties and larger numbers of EBSA for prolonged periods

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) & the Covid-19 pandemic

Often a higher level of stress and anxiety

Sensory sensitivities within the school environment

Communication needs impacting emotional regulation



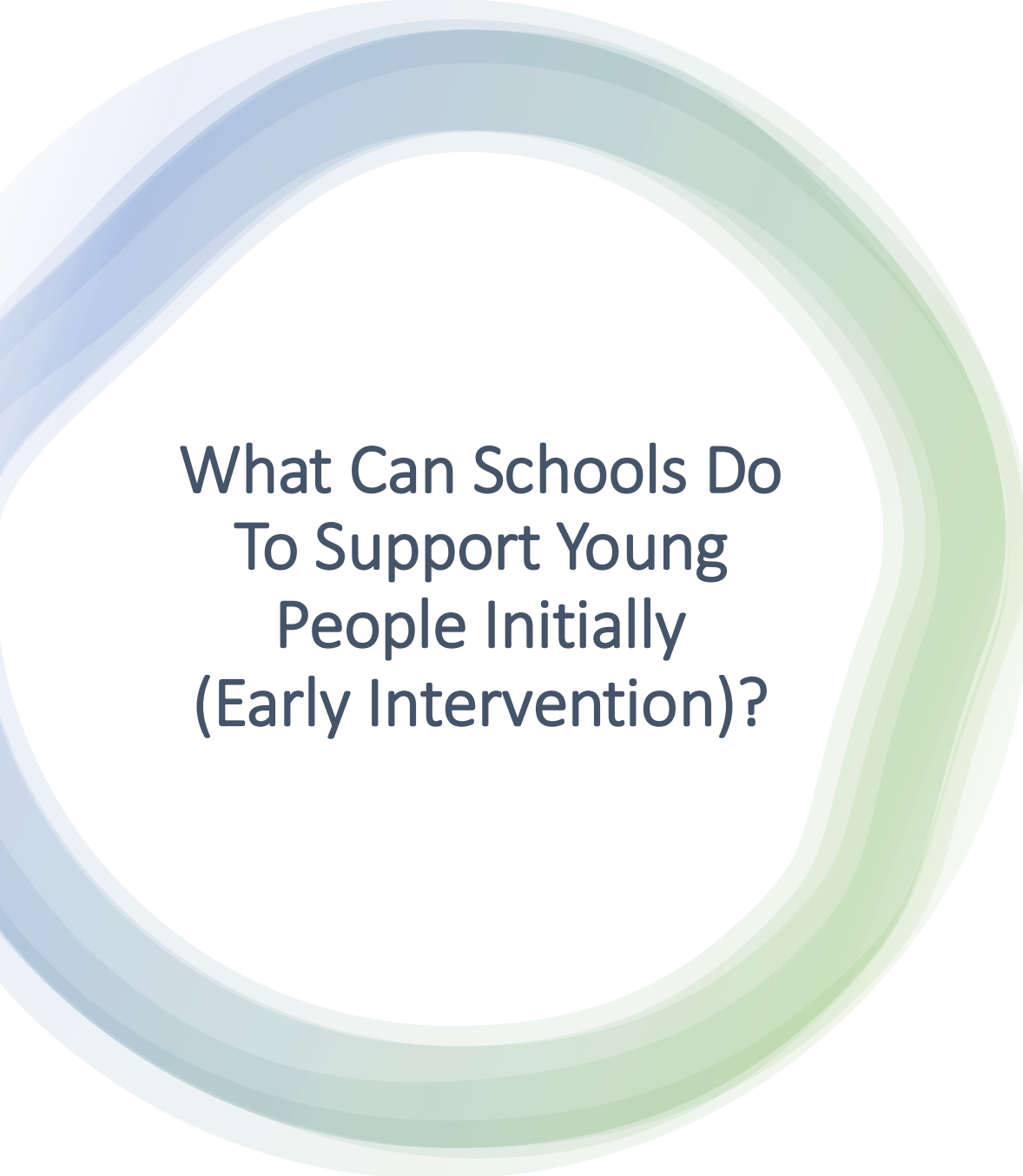
Increase in EBSA



Supporting Children and Young People with ASC

Consider

- Managing changes e.g. in routine and transitions
- Emotional literacy e.g. understanding of emotions and emotional regulation.
- Social skills and support for friendships
- Executive functioning difficulties
- Sensory processing – student stressor interview/incredible 5 point scale, [Student Stressor Interview for Proactive Planning – DocsLib](#)
- Masking
- [See Haringey EPS Guidance for supporting CYP with managing their response to their environments](#)



What Can Schools Do To Support Young People Initially (Early Intervention)?

See Haringey EPS EBSA guidance (section Info Gathering and Intervention)

Monitor attendance and take a swift response to a pupil missing specific lessons e.g., P.E including lateness

SENCO/ELSA to meet with the pupil to ascertain their views including their goals, hobbies and key adults (protective factors/strengths), agree steps of a manageable plan to increase attendance

Meet with parents- joint dialogue about sporadic attendance, agree steps of a plan, ensure the appropriateness of the plan

Assess, plan, do, review in 2-4 weeks

Good Practice (also see Haringey EPS EBSA guidance)

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

Graduated approach of support: allowing them some autonomy and flexibility in their learning environment.

Ensuring that any contributing school factors identified have been explored and addressed.

Staff to facilitate the rating of anxiety by environment and supporting coping techniques

On-going dialogue between school and parents/carers and the pupil and working together with other services.

Informing staff, including supply teachers or cover staff, about EBSA including any young person experiencing EBSA's difficulties and the agreed reintegration plan

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

Utilising a pastoral support programme to identify the effective strategies being used with the young person.

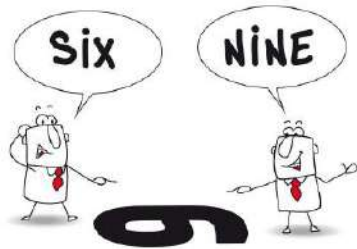
Intervene early, checking patterns of attendance and hold regular reviews.

Accessing services, as appropriate, to provide support to the family and to help address any contributing factors

Having access to a variety of school based interventions to support the pupil, which may include: buddying, mentoring or a Circle of Friends approach

Supporting the pupil or young person with managing anxious or difficult feelings e.g. sessions with pastoral staff, ELSA (schools can buy this in from the EPS).

Gaining the Perspectives Of Parents/Carers



- EBSA is often a combination of several factors.
- Focus on identifying one factor can result in assigning blame
- Work together to reflect on different contributory factors and consider different perspectives can be a more helpful way forward.
- Use of Appendix 2 and 3 of Haringey EPS EBSA guidance can be used to support a collaborative approach.



Ideas to support information gathering



- Complete the push /pull factors diagram with parents. See Appendix 2 of Haringey EPS EBSA guidance.
- Ask questions about things that have helped in the past / times when the child has felt less anxious? See 'Joint reflection on 'push and pull factors' on Haringey EPS EBSA guidance for support.
- Reflect on the function of the avoidant behaviour/EBSA? See 'Contributory Factors' section of the Haringey EPS EBSA guidance.
- Assess/plan/do/review – with regular meetings with parents

Importance Of Gaining Child/Young Person's Views

- Most successful intervention will start from the child/young person's own perspectives
- An available, sensitively attuned key adult is likely to be key to establishing safety and security

When you think about school are you?



Activities and tools to gain child/ young person's views

Risk / Resilience Cards

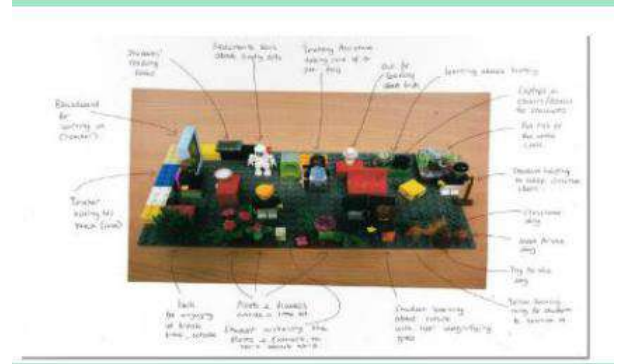


The student stressor interview

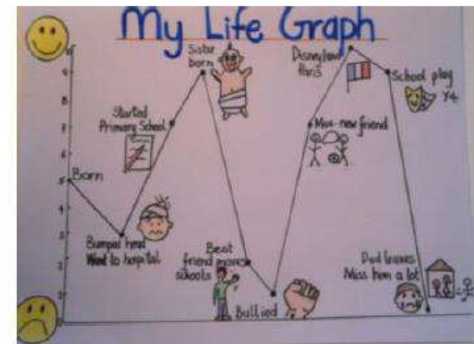
Drawing/talking/writing about a good day and bad day at school

Scaling anxiety about different aspects of the school environment on a thermometer

Ideal School Technique



Life graph



AV1 Robot

(see <https://vimeo.com/914359722>)

- Historically has been used to support children who were not able to physically attend school
- Currently being trialled with some EBSA students in Haringey schools
- Aims to support engagement in learning for children attending school but struggling to attend lessons
- Research supports the use of these in improving engagement in learning of EBSA students. For more information see Dr Fletcher article [Using AV1 robots to support pupils with physical and emotional health needs \(tandfonline.com\)](#) and Podcast [Thinking Time | Podcast on Spotify](#)



Systemic Core Training: Supporting EBSA - Early Intervention

Aim: To develop understanding of young people experiencing EBSA, build capacity of staff to support and intervene through early intervention plans

Session 1

Staff training session for pastoral, medical welfare officer and SEN members of staff focusing on identifying young people potentially at risk of EBSA in school including resources to support this and how to intervene based on the findings and support the development of early intervention support plans (whole school and individual), models of parent/school meeting.

Session 2

Staff support to review implementation of individual early intervention EBSA support plans and to support with practical next steps.

Session 3

Review previous sessions with staff, and discuss the children identified as at risk / anxious, facilitated by EPs to support progress and identify successes.

Any Questions?

Evaluation form

<https://forms.office.com/e/D9VFUkyRhP>

