

# EBSA

(Emotional Based School Avoidance)

Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum  
October 2024

# What is EBSA?

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- A term used to describe a cyp who has severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors that can result in prolonged absences from school.
- Can present differently across individuals, but can manifest according to:
  - Low or intermittent attendance;
  - High sensitivity and/or reactivity;
  - Low mood and anxiety (e.g., fear of talking to teachers, fears around academic performance);
  - Social isolation;
  - Signs of emotional distress that interferes with ability to function at school, such as difficulties forming relationships with teachers and peers resulting from disorganised attachment;
  - Developmental differences that fundamentally shape perception and action in ways that cause significant challenges in emotional self-regulation and social functioning (e.g., Autism, ADHD).



# What isn't EBSA?

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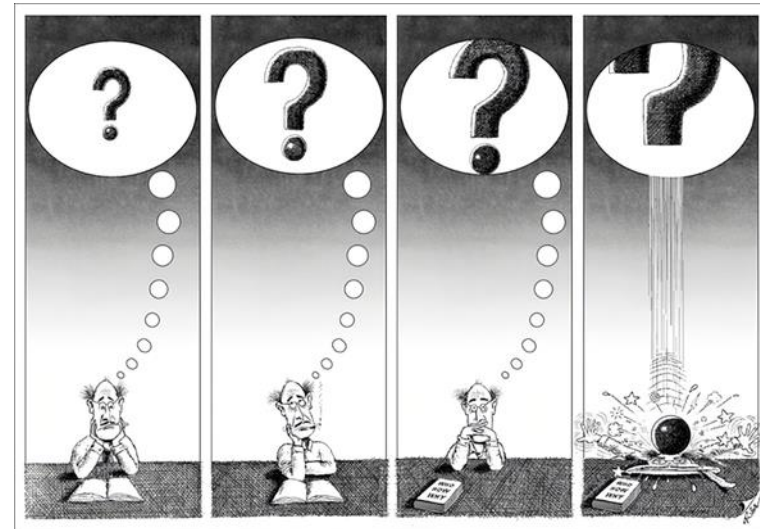
- Not all absenteeism is EBSA.
- Are they refusing to attend or unable to attend?
- Crucial to have clear and accurate understanding of EBSA to enable accurate identification of cyp experiencing EBSA.
- Clear difference between cyp absent from school as result of EBSA as opposed to:
  - parentally condoned absence (where a caregiver deliberately keeps or supports keeping cyp away from school for various reasons), or
  - truancy, which is linked to non-anxiety-based absenteeism.
- For situations such as this there are other routes of support and challenge that schools should take.



# Why does EBSA occur?

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- Can occur suddenly or develop gradually over time.
- Behaviours range from occasional reluctance to attend school to complete avoidance resulting in non-attendance.
- Should not be thought of as deliberate act of defiance.
- Complex multi-faceted issue with no single cause across environmental factors (both at home and school) as well as individual cyp factors.
- Factors are unlikely to be static and fixed. What led to initial school avoidance may not be what leads to persistent avoidance and non-attendance. What appears to be the cause of issue may in fact be the consequence.
- Number of key overarching **risk factors** that can influence EBSA. Often interaction between these factors (across school, family and child/young person) that results in EBSA behaviours.



# Why does EBSA occur?

- While **risk factors** identified that place cyp at greater risk of EBSA, key to also consider, identify and build areas of strength or resilience available for child, family and school.
- These **resilience factors** help protect cyp from maintaining EBSA behaviours, and promote successful school inclusion.
- Contributing factors of risk and resilience can also be separated into **push and pull** factors. EBSA most likely to occur when risks overwhelm resilience, and when pull factors (that encourage school avoidance) take over push factors (that encourage school attendance).



Push Factor	Pull Factor
What is pushing the child AWAY from school? For example, a child/young person may be struggling with transition, difficulties adjusting to a new environment, difficult relationships with staff, difficulties accessing the learning, no friends.	What is pulling the child TOWARDS home? They may also wish to be at home to look after a parent with a long-term health condition.

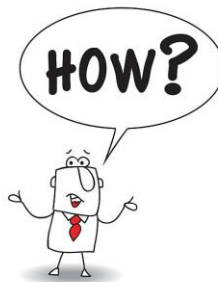
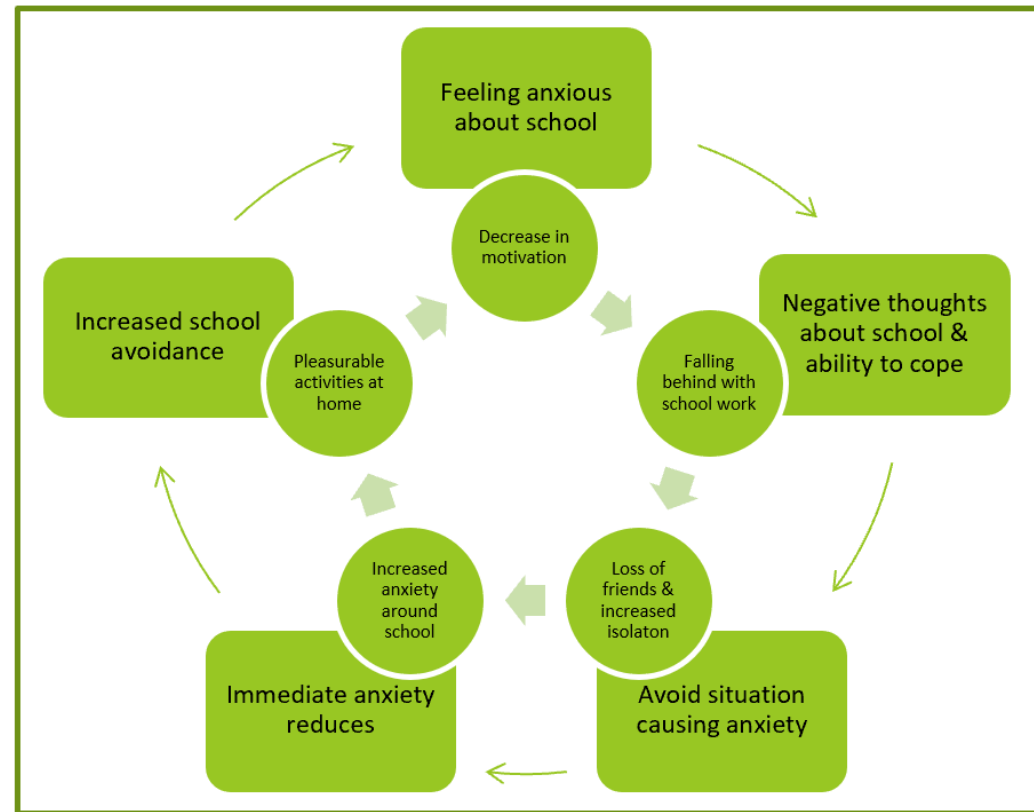
- **To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by school:** e.g., anxiety, low mood, feelings of disconnection/not belonging.
- **To avoid stressful situations:** e.g., academic demands, exams/evaluations, challenging social pressures/interactions, unstructured times, aspects of school environment such as noise, crowds, buildings, classrooms, transitions.
- **To reduce separation anxiety or gain attention from significant others:** e.g., time at home with parents/carers/family members.
- **To engage in preferred activities:** e.g., watching TV, playing computer games, spending time with friends, going shopping.



# EBSA and Anxiety

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- Anxiety = brain's alarm system being overly sensitive.
- Constantly guessing something bad might happen, even when no real danger.
- Normal to feel anxious at times, but EBSA = intense, uncomfortable and frequently uncontrollable.
- Avoidance may increase certainty of feeling better away from stress and reduce uncertainty about dealing with challenges at school.
- Increasingly difficult to return – strengthens their beliefs about experiencing unpleasant feelings, which cause much distress and limits opportunities to gradually overcome their difficulties.
- Social network weakens, academic gaps grow, fear of returning to school takes over.



# What can be put in place?

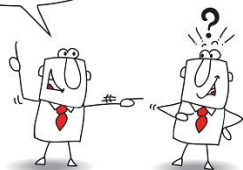
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- Health Care Plans where complex health needs (including mental health).
- Mental Health Support involvement: Healthy Minds, MHST, CAMHS.
- Autism or social communication difficulties then vital WTT is involved.
- Support consistency of approach across school, family and child/young person as often interaction between these factors that results in EBSA behaviours.
- Consider wider holistic needs of family through EHA and TAC.
- EBSA Pathway Toolkit for range of early interventions and strategies.
- Adjustments for SEND to ensure underlying needs are being met:



- **robust graduated approach** to meet individual SEND to avoid having to manage by avoiding school altogether.
- early attention and intervention to remove SEND barriers and develop cyp's skills, resilience, ability to self- regulate.
- fully utilising SEND funding to implement reasonable adjustments.

YES YOU CAN!





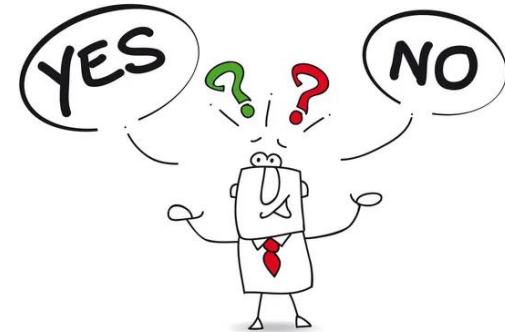
# Communication is key!



# Lincolnshire's EBSA Pathway

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- Isn't for when cyp stops attending:
  - Key to use for supporting to avoid EBSA with preventative steps and early interventions and approaches.
  - Key focus on this element of Pathway to prevent EBSA developing and becoming entrenched.
- Isn't a referral route:
  - Stages are to support inclusion, avoid EBSA developing and address EBSA if barriers start to present themselves.
  - Provides analytical framework to understand the issues and implement meaningful plan.
- Isn't a 'quick fix':
  - Personalised interventions to meet unique situational challenges are crucial. With implementation of meaningful and evolving support plan that is continually monitored and adjusted.



# Where can I find it?

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All now fully electronic and found via Lincolnshire's Local Offer.

[Lincolnshire's EBSA pathway](#)

Or [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/support-education](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/support-education)

Follow link to access the professionals page.

Contact PRT for training/advice/guidance

[PRT@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:PRT@lincolnshire.gov.uk)



# What do the acronyms mean?

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EBSA = Emotional Based School Avoidance

cyp = child or young person

ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyper-activity Disorder

MHST = Mental Health Support Team

CAMHS = Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

WTT = Working Together Team

EHA = Early Help Assessment

TAC = Team Around the Child

SEND = Special Educational Needs and Disability



# Any Questions?

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