

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Quick read version for schools and professionals in Sutton

What is EBSA?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a term used to describe children and young people (CYP) who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors. EBSA can be a difficulty for pupils of all ages, at all schools, and at any stage of education. Whilst some children and young people stop attending school overnight, for most, the pattern of non-attendance and avoidance gradually occurs over time.

Why does EBSA happen?

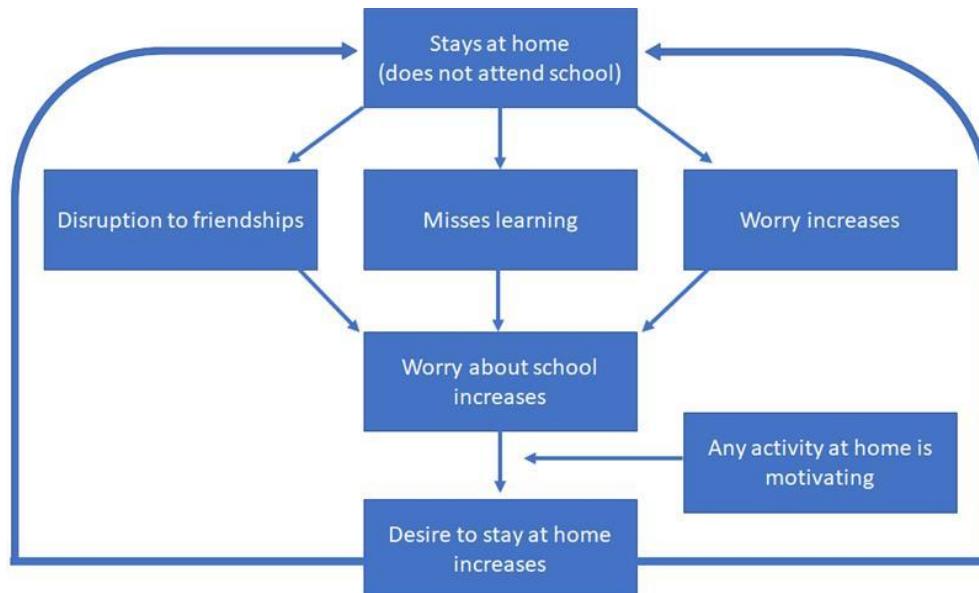
Research indicates that there are four main reasons CYP avoid school due to emotional reasons:

1. To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood.
2. To avoid situations that might be stressful, such as academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment.
3. To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others, such as parents or other family members.
4. To pursue tangible reinforces outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time.



What makes it worse/keeps it going?

As the diagram below shows, the longer a pupil is out of education, the more their worry increases, and their desire to stay at home increases. We know that young people can feel worried, anxious or unmotivated about school for lots of different reasons. For some there will be situations in school that are making them worry, whereas for others something outside of school may trigger them to feel more worried and motivate them to stay at home



Although there is little research evidence available, anecdotally it is understood that children and young people with social communication difficulties, or a diagnosis of Autism, are more prone to experiencing difficulties with attending school and anxiety surrounding school attendance.

What to do?

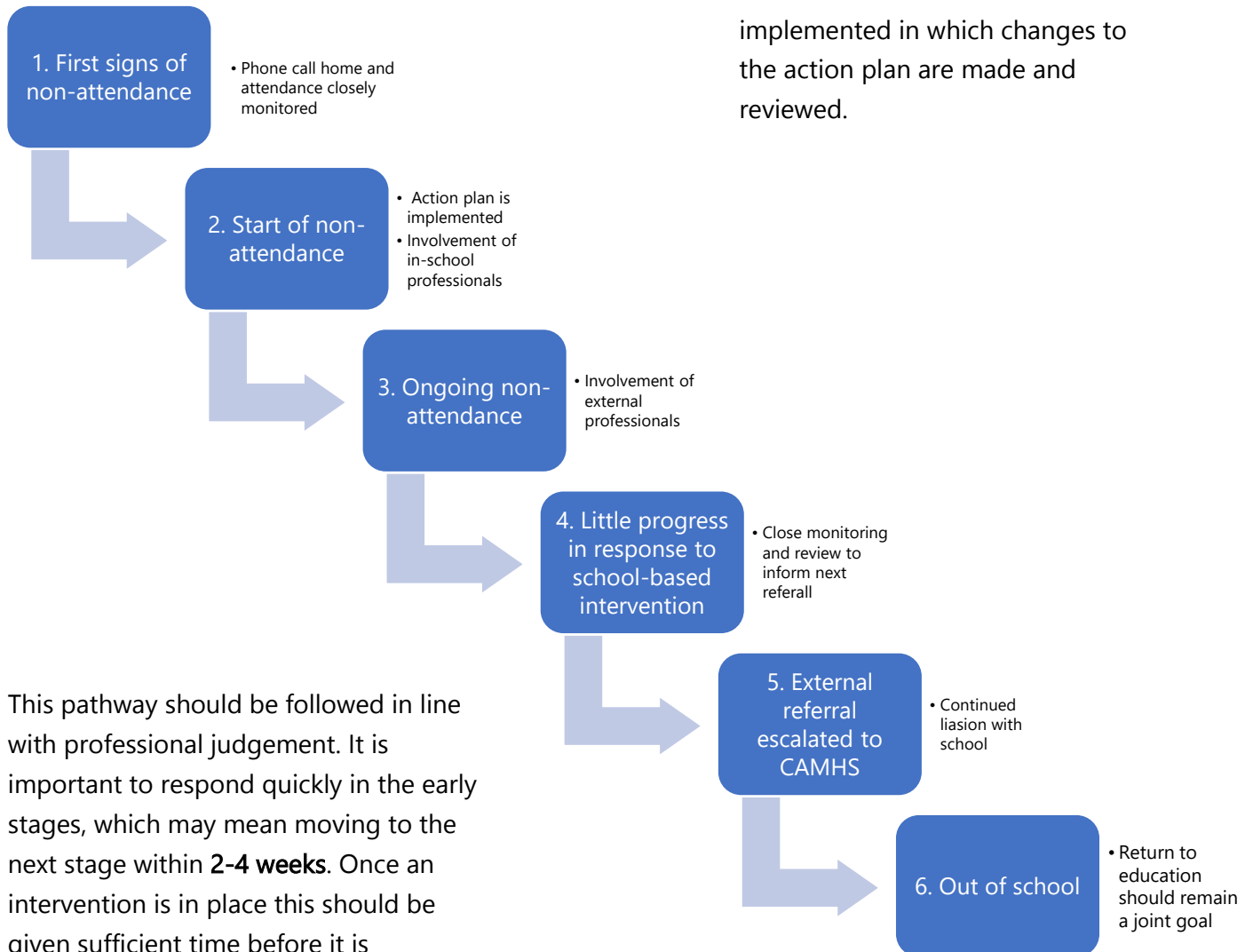
Research indicates that the quicker the reasons for the school avoidance can be identified, and a support plan put in place that takes into account the views of the CYP, parents and school staff, the better the outcomes (Baker & Bishop, 2015). It is further advised that a focus on returning the pupil to school as quickly as possible is more effective. Our comprehensive guide for school staff provides a number of recommendations about the support that can be offered for pupils and families. Some examples include:

- ☆ Training staff and monitoring attendance
- ☆ Gain the views of the student to better understand the reasons for avoidance
- ☆ Work with parents to develop their understandings of 'push and pull factors;'
- ☆ Create an action plan which is shared with all adults, the family & young person which aims to increase push factors & decrease pull factors
- ☆ An anxiety management intervention
- ☆ Involvement of external professionals to provide additional support

Overview of pathway

Preventative actions and support at the whole school level

An ongoing approach of **Plan-Do-Review** should be implemented in which changes to the action plan are made and reviewed.



This pathway should be followed in line with professional judgement. It is important to respond quickly in the early stages, which may mean moving to the next stage within **2-4 weeks**. Once an intervention is in place this should be given sufficient time before it is reviewed, most likely 8-12 weeks, although other aspects of the action plan should continue to be monitored.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance – Sutton pathway and guidance document

Contact information for other useful organisations

Organisation	Concern you may make a referral for	Email and phone number
Off the Record Sutton	Anxiety, low mood – counselling support	sutton@talkofftherecord.org 0208 680 8899
Early Help	Family functioning or parenting	
Jigsaw4U	Loss and pre/post bereavement support	clairepowell@jigsaw4u.org.uk 0208 687 1384
Sutton Carers Centre	A young person with caring responsibilities	enquiries@suttoncarerscenre.org 0208 296 5611
Kooth		
Children and Young People's Wellbeing Team Service YouTube Channel	Recorded workshops, webinars and short videos on various wellbeing topics, for parents/ young people and school staff	YouTube channel Webinar 'School-based anxiety – Emotionally Related School Avoidance'
SilverCloud	Online therapy programme proven to help with stress, anxiety, low-mood and depression, with courses specifically adapted for young people.	SilverCloud website
School Nursing	Various concerns related to social, emotional and mental health needs	Parent line: 0208 770 5409 Young person line: 0208 770 4409 schoolnursing@sutton.gov.uk