

Practical strategies to support children with Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)

Taster session for the CWSW conference

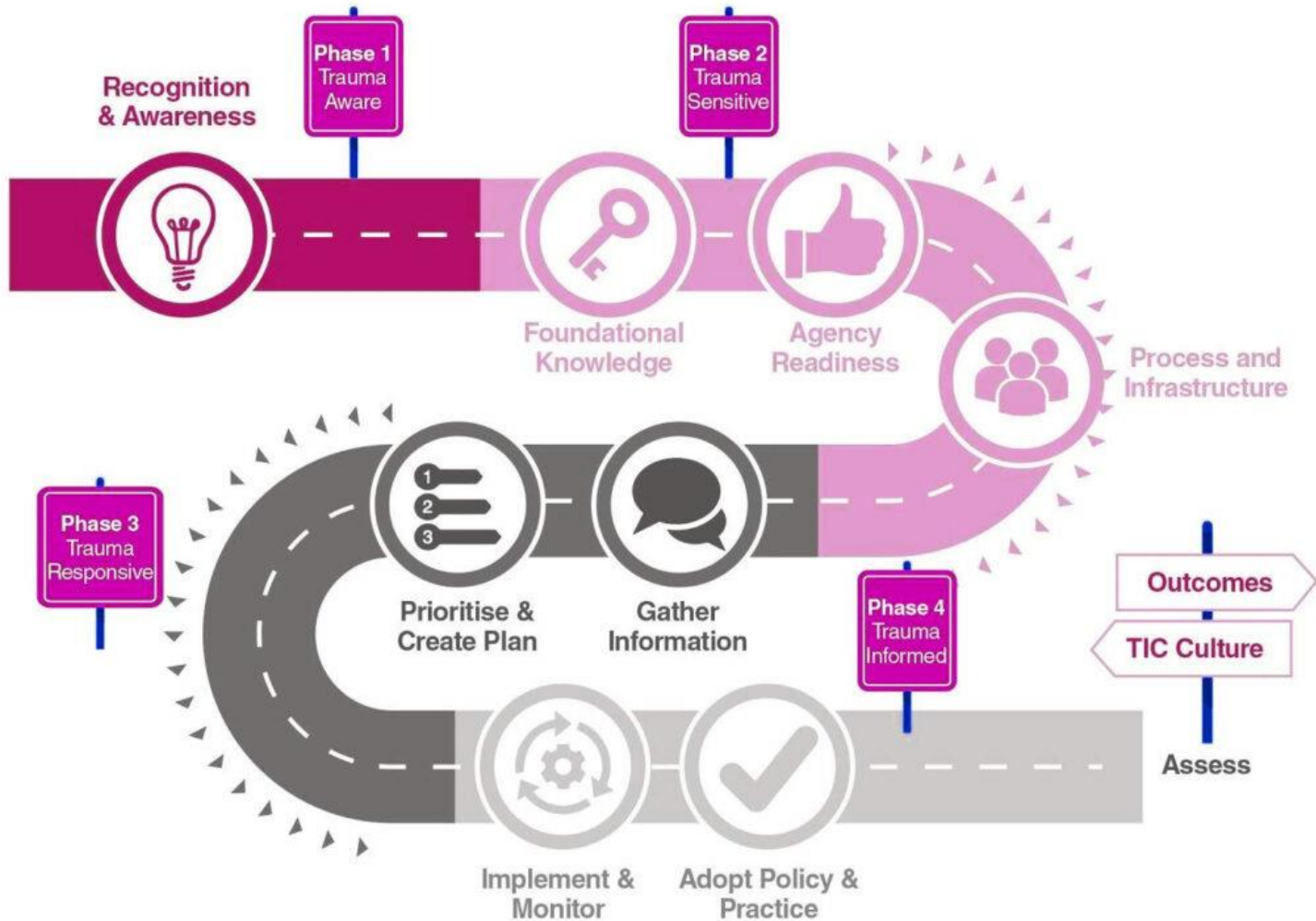
Becky Mulhall (Educational Psychologist)

Catherine Goodwin (Head of Pastoral Development at West Lea school)

Stacy-Ann Williams (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

THIS TASTER TRAINING SESSION ON EBSNA AIMS TO HELP YOU...

- A. **Identify** some signs of EBSNA in pupils.
- B. **Understand** the complex reasons for EBSNA in pupils.
- C. **Learn** some strategies to help support pupils who have EBSNA



What, why and where?

WHAT IS EBSNA?

EBSNA is complex to define, but it's considered as *“a group of children who struggle to attend school for emotional reasons.”*

Broad agreement that the incidence of EBSNA has increased as part of a more general concern about reduced school attendance since the Covid 19 Pandemic (DfE 2023).

Terminology matters!

~~School refusal~~

Emotionally based school avoidance
(EBSA)

Emotionally based school non attendance
(EBSNA) (Anna Freud, 2023).

Persistent non-attendance



What, why and where?

WHY LEARN ABOUT EBSNA?

Children missing from education

Blogs >

New statistics show a huge increase in the number of children completely missing education

29 February 2024

My priorities ▾

Knowledge & resource hub ▾

About us ▾

Media centre

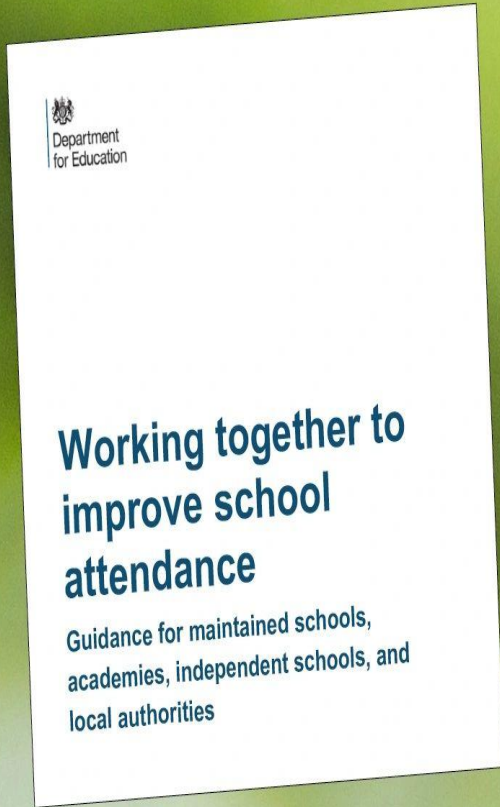


Almost 120,000 children of compulsory school age were recorded as missing education at some point in 2022/23 which is up by almost 25% from the year before, according to new statistics published today.

The figures from the Department of Education also showed a surge in the number of children home educated in the same year.

The data shows that the number of children missing education in 2022/23 increased by 23% relative to the previous year: in 2021/22, the Department estimated that 94,900 children were reported as a child missing education at some point in the year.

Children's Commissioner 2024



[Working Together to Improve Attendance](#)

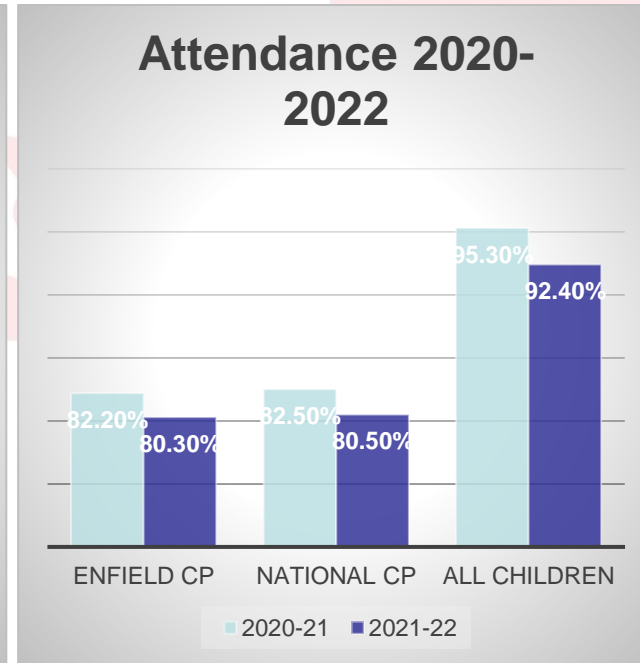
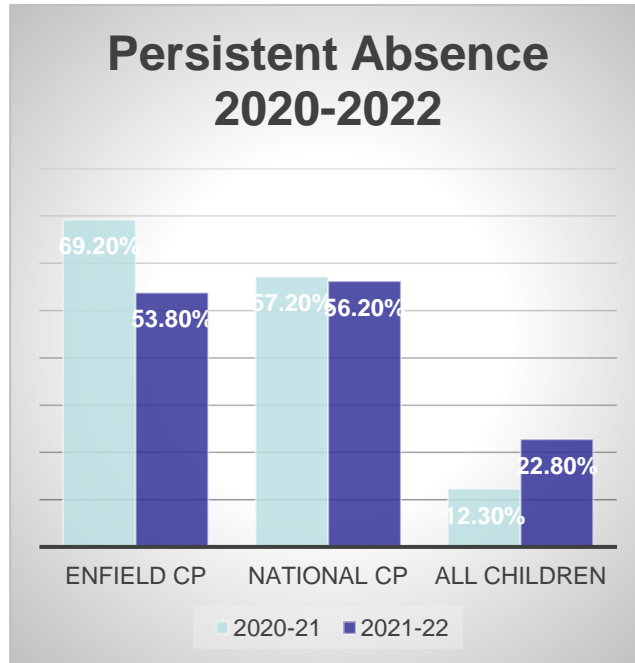
The Department of Education (DfE) also emphasised that ‘Improving attendance is everyone’s business’.

The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families.

The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn’

(DfE, 2022)

Educational Outcomes of Children with a Social Worker - Attendance



Key Facts

Children with a social worker are

- 3 times more likely to be persistently absent from school,
- 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers.
- 10 times more likely to attend state-funded alternative provision settings than all other pupils.
- 4 times more likely to be suspended.
- 50% of CIN have SEND – SEMH being a primary type of SEN
- 36% of CIN have Mental Health Issues
- 61% of CIN are FSM/ 78% of CP are FSM

Serious Case Reviews

Focus on: Children missing education

Statutory guidance exists to make clear the expectations and responsibilities of parents, schools and the local authority to manage those who may go missing from education. However, in some cases analysed, a child going missing from education was not treated in the same light as a child missing from home would be. There was a subsequent failure to be professionally curious and take protective actions.

One child went missing from education when just 10 years old. She was seen walking to school but did not arrive. The school reported the episode to the police and she was found. It was known that she had a much older 'boyfriend', an adult male, but despite her young age, a decision was made to take minimal action and log the incident for information only:

This event was perceived as an isolated incident and primary education indicated this was an initial event, having previously had no problems with her. There is no multi-agency evidence to suggest that any further risk assessment or interventions were considered at the time, in line with either safeguarding or missing children guidance. Whilst she was seen by the police officer there is no evidence she received a formal safe-and-well check on recovery. Current guidance is not clear whether this would be offered when children go missing from education, as happens when they go missing from home or care, which could be an inconsistency in practice.

[Serious Case Review \(SCR\) analysis 2020 for the education sector: Adolescents – SCIE](#)

[Recently published case reviews | NSPCC Learning](#)

What, why and where?

WHERE CAN WE APPLY THIS TRAINING?

With individual pupils, developing awareness with school staff, with educational services, and during discussions with parents.

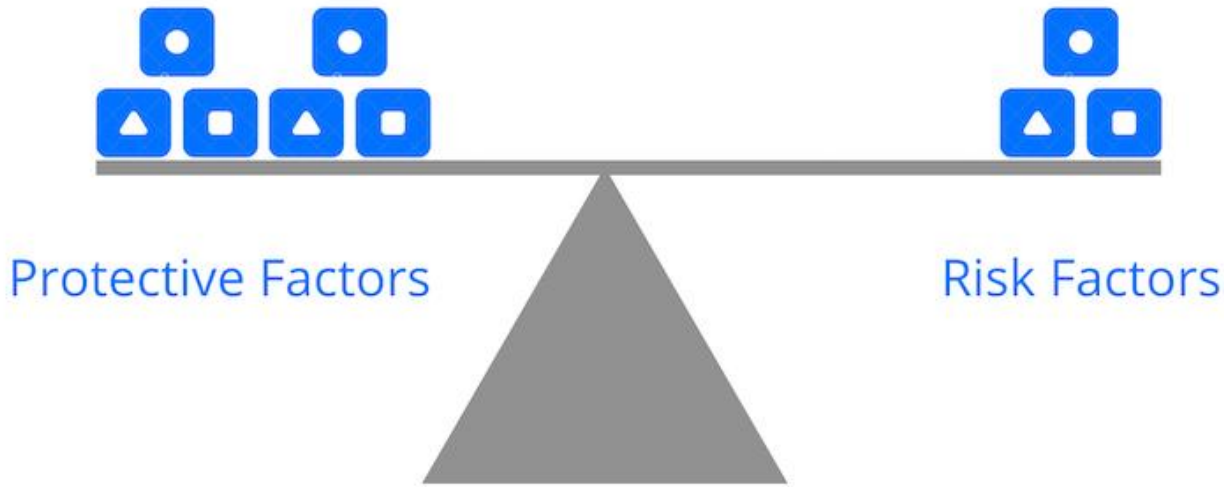
Mentimeter

Login in to Mentimeter using the following code: **8558 9245**



- <https://www.menti.com/alftge48z8mm>

Risk and resilience factors for EBSNA



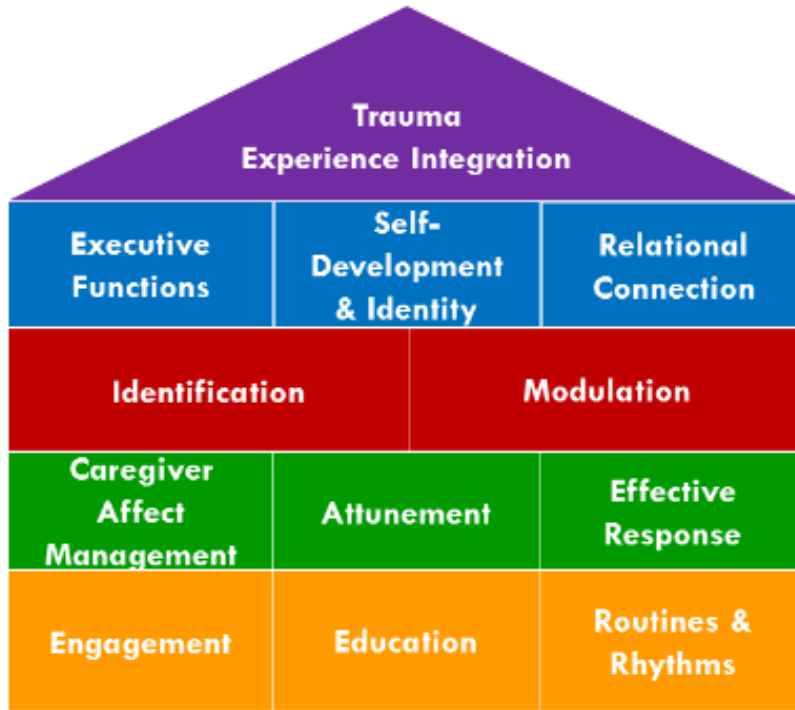
Work Wise Wellness

Factors Linked to an Increased Risk of EBSNA adapted from West Sussex County Council (2022) and Anna Freud Centre (2023):

Factors within the child	Factors within the family or home	Factors at school
Anxiety, depression or other mental health concerns and difficulties with managing and regulating emotions	High levels of family stress caused by financial stress	Bullying
Medical needs	High levels of family stress caused by conflict, or domestic violence	Demanding and pressurised academic environment
Uncertainty about future aspirations beyond school	Changes to the home environment (including divorce, separation, or recent parent/carer illness)	Difficulties forming and maintaining relationships with staff
Trauma and multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs ¹)	Being a young carer	Difficulties forming and maintaining friendships, feeling socially isolated
Low levels of self-confidence or self-esteem	Loss or bereavement	Difficulties in particular subjects
Separation anxiety or attachment issues with a parent/carer	Family history of EBSNA	Exams
Having unidentified or unmet special educational need or disability (e.g. undiagnosed autism)	Parent with ongoing mental health needs	Issues within the school day such as transitions between lessons, break times
Difficulties accessing learning at the same rate as peers.	Parent with ongoing physical health needs	Change of educational setting

¹Large scale studies of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) show that adults who report experiencing a greater number of traumatic events in childhood have poorer outcome in adulthood in a range of physical and mental health outcomes (Felitti et al 1997; Hughes et al 2017).

School factors



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

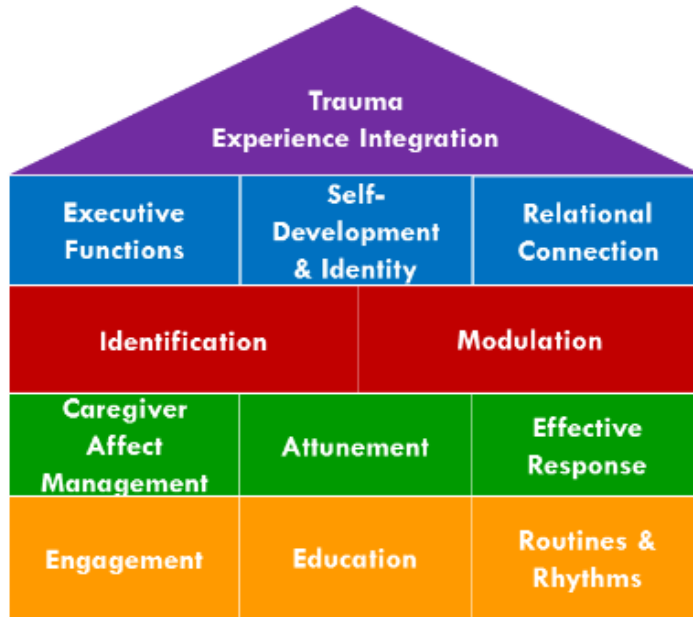
Family factors

- Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic
- Parent physical and 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/EBSNA
- Young carer

Attachment

Caregiver Affect Management	Attunement	Effective Response
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Child factors



- Learning difficulties, developmental and/or neurodevelopmental differences (e.g. ASC)
- Temperamental style – reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects
- Fear of failure and poor self-confidence
- Separation Anxiety from parent
- Traumatic events and ACES
- Age (5-6, 11-12 & 13-14 years)
- Physical illness

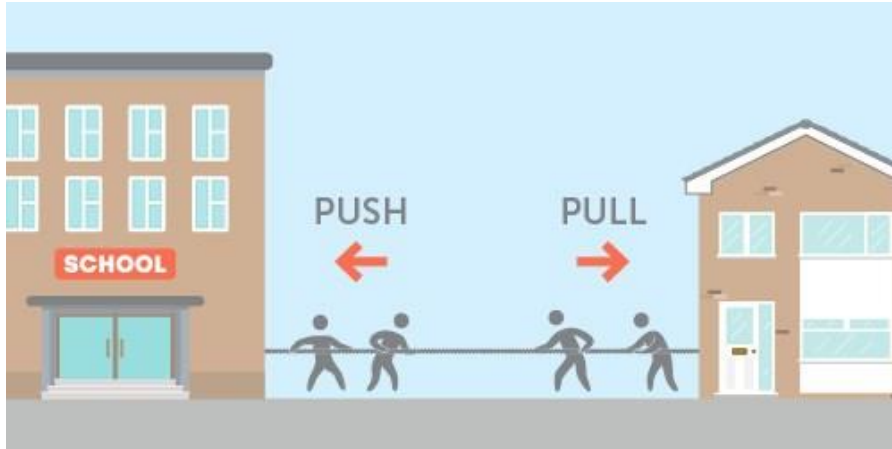
Trends

Case study analysis of the needs of students attending the ASU has highlighted the following trends:

- Impact of Covid
- Unsuccessful transition to secondary school
- Lack of earlier intervention to improve attendance including referral to EWO
- Students struggling with academic demands of Key Stage 4
- Students who have experienced bullying
- Students awaiting an ASD Diagnosis
- Mental health issues including self-harm and suicidal ideation
- Increasing number of students requiring specialist support after discharge from inpatient adolescent units

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 literature indicates that Emotionally Based School Avoidance 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.'

School as Aversive

Push (towards attending school)

Opportunity to engage in learning, extra curricular activities and see peers

Pull (away from school, school factors)

To escape difficult social situations

Home as a place of comfort and safety

Pull (away from school, home factors)

Worry about parent's wellbeing or separating from parent



Push (towards staying at home)

To spend more time out of school as it is 'more fun or stimulating'

EBSNA

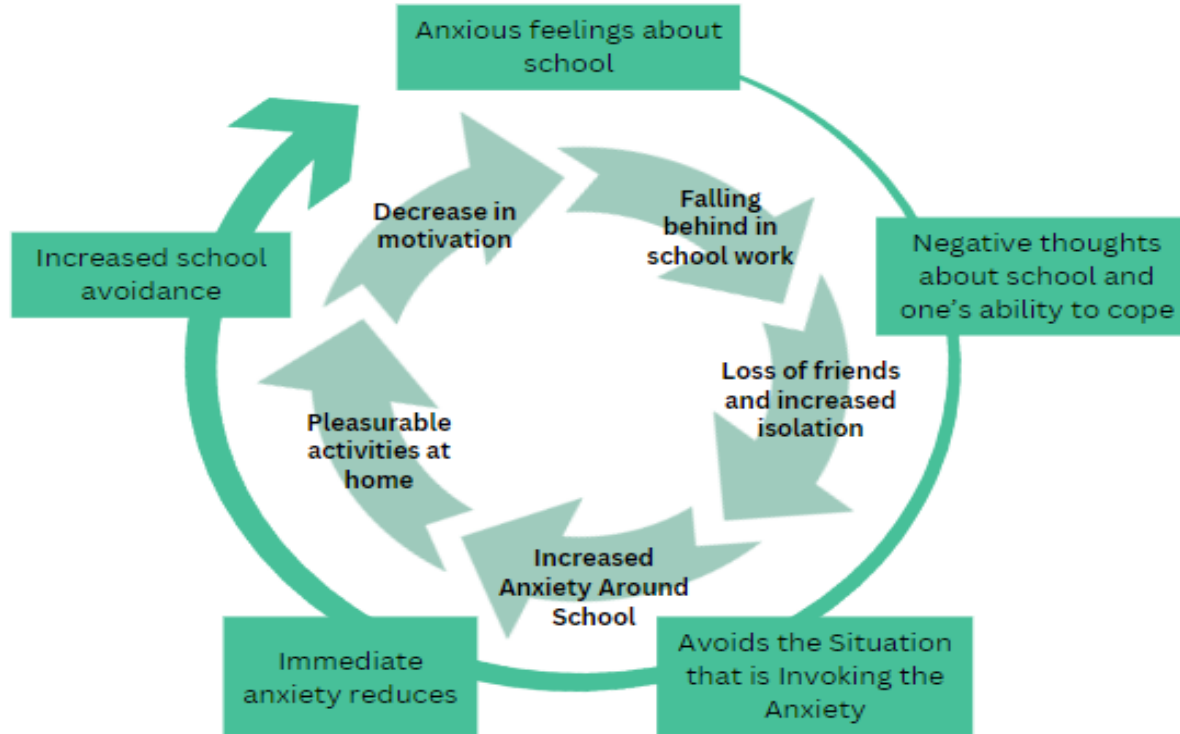
Think of an EBSNA case

Complete the push and pull factors

 School	Home 
Push Away - What Pushes the Child Away from School?	Pull Towards - What Pulls the Child Towards Home?
Pull Towards - Is there anything that they enjoyed in school or made it a pleasure?	Push Away - Are there activities that parents have tried that engages the child outside of the home?

The cycle of school avoidance

West Sussex County Council 2022



Is avoidance an effective way of responding to anxiety?

In the short term, yes!

In the long term...

→ It makes our anxiety worse

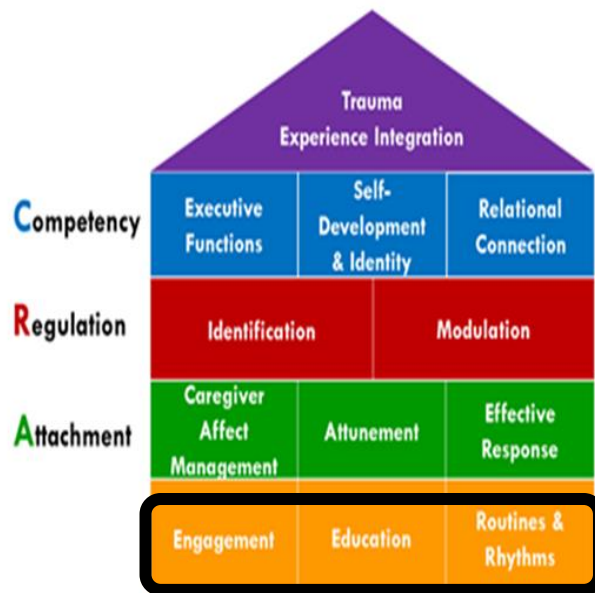
→ Our lives get smaller and smaller

A Graduated Response to EBSNA

The Graduated Approach (APDR)



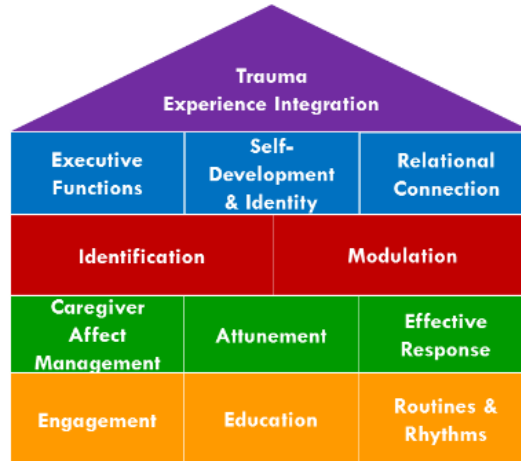
ARC Framework



Graphic by Jeremy Karpen, 2017, Adapted from: ARC, Bloustein & Kinniburgh, 2010; Kinniburgh & Bloustein, 2005

Assess

- 1) Explore the child's views.
- 2) Work closely with parents/carers and school to gain children's views.



Resources for children and Young People

www.westsussex.local-offer.org

Are you feeling sad or worried about school?

Children think lots of different thoughts about school, some are happy thoughts and some are sad thoughts.
Circle any of these that are true for you.

[Emotionally Based School Avoidance](#)
[West Sussex Services for Schools](#)

[EBSA-School-Guidance-March-2021 \(2\).pdf](#)

Appendix 8: Landscape of fear

The Landscape of Fear is a tool designed by Kate Ripley²², which explores the CYP's sources of anxiety in the physical, social and learning environments of school. The CYP is presented with a black and white map of the school grounds and is asked to colour the areas where they feel: 'relaxed' (green), that they are functioning reasonably well (yellow) or most worried / anxious (red).

Example school map:

Ask what would need to happen for them to move one point up the scale?
Ask what else would need to happen?

an L113 they may be able to see you when they are coming, just L113 say they cannot remember their worrying thoughts after the event. These CYPs can be encouraged to make a list of their thoughts in a notebook or on their phone as they happen.

When children may need concrete activities to identify their thought such as drawing emotions with cartoon thought bubbles surrounding their head. Initially fill it with all sorts of recent thoughts. Later, adjust so the CYP focuses on worrying thoughts.

HOW I FEEL (WHAT'S WORKING FOR ME / NOT WORKING?)

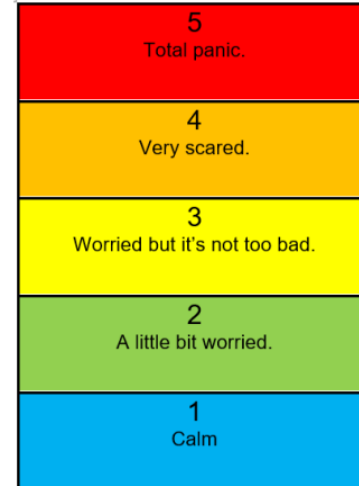
Going to school	Scared dislike worried Ok Happy
In the classroom	Scared dislike worried Ok Happy
Talking to my teacher.	Scared dislike worried Ok Happy
Talking to LSA	Scared dislike worried Ok Happy
Talking to other teachers in school	Scared dislike worried Ok Happy
Putting my hand up	Scared dislike worried Ok Happy
	Scared dislike worried Ok Happy

Scaling and laddering

Ladder template

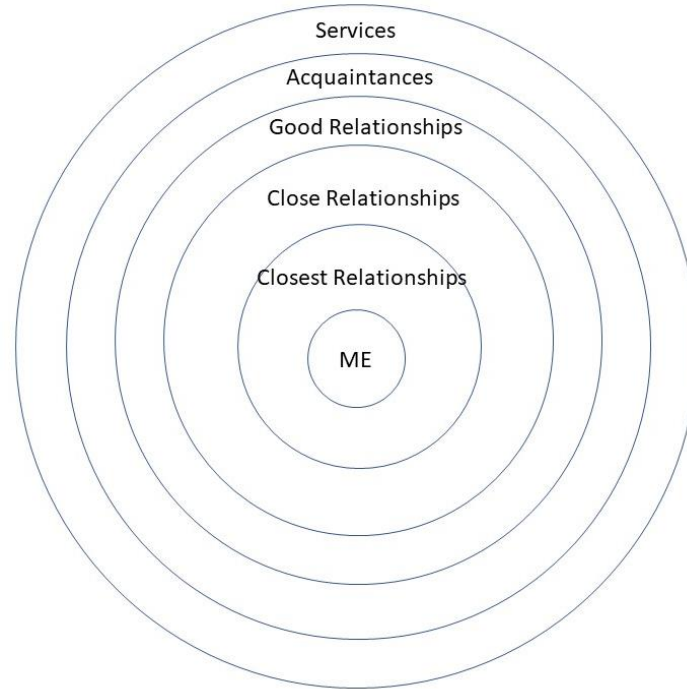
Most worried about

Not so worried about



The incredible 5-point scale resources

Identifying the child's important school relationships



Caregiver Affect Management	Attunement	Effective Response
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Strategies to improve school attendance

Voice of the Child

Section 3: Going back to school

We would like to find out a little more about your feelings around returning to school.

How do you feel about returning to school? (Please circle a number from 1 to 10)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not good! Okay... Great!

It is okay and normal to feel excited or scared about going back to school. You might even feel both of these at the same time. You can talk to the adults at home and at school about your feelings, because they will want to help you.

When you think about going back to school, what are you looking forward to?

Seeing my friends Learning Seeing my teachers Knowing what is happening Play time Time away from home


Is there anything else you are looking forward to?

WISC Educational Psychology Service 'My Return to School' 7

I worry about break time



I worry about tests



EBSA

Working in class

Classes involve different ways of working and some we will find more comfortable than others. Use the 5 point rating scale to indicate how you feel about different things that happen in classes.

1 I avoid this if I can 2 I am very anxious about this 3 I feel anxious/uncomfortable about this 4 I feel comfortable about this 5 I enjoy it

- Answering questions in class
- Listening when the teacher explains what we are going to do
- Following instructions.
- Knowing what to do to start a task
- Working on my own
- Working with a learning partner
- Working in a group
- Asking a teacher for help when I have not understood something
- Working in a quiet class.
- Working when other children are messing about

School Strategies



Key Adult



Reduced Timetable



Safe Space

Plan and do



School Considerations



Attendance Lead



SENCO



Safeguarding Lead



Parent Support

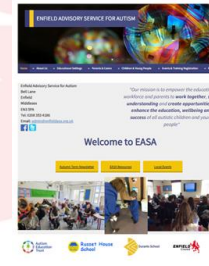
EWO, EP, CAMHS. School worker. Virtual school

Multi Agency Working



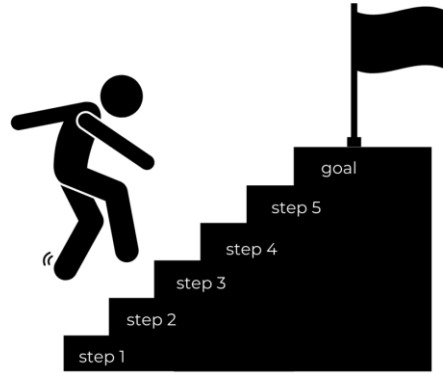
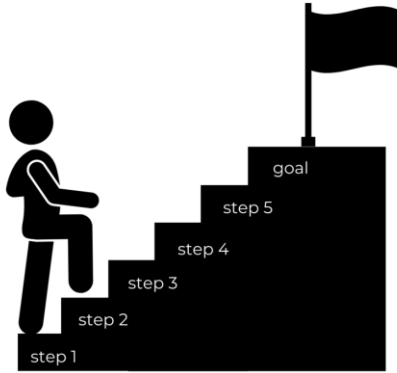
Support for Parents

Enfield Early Help Family Hub



Redefining Progress

The Importance of Small Steps



What does Engagement look like?

Stage	Engagement Levels
1	Not attending
2	Open to attending / may attend an initial visit
3	Arrival at destination but may remain in vehicle
4	Leaving vehicle at destination but unable to enter the building
5	Entry into the building
6	Entry into the classroom
7	Task initiation and completion
8	Interacting with staff and other students
9	Attending for agreed hours
10	Attending full time



Pilot of Engagement Scale

Stage	Engagement Levels	Induction			6 weeks			12 weeks		
		Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Not Met	Partially Met	Met
1	Not attending									
	Communication and Interaction: No engagement, possibly no communication about attending.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social Understanding and Relationships: No interaction with staff or peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Interests, Routines, and Processing: May be rigidly adhering to routines that exclude school attendance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Open to attending / may attend an initial visit									
	Communication and Interaction: Expresses some willingness to discuss attending.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social Understanding and Relationships: Beginning to understand the social context of the support unit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Interests, Routines, and Processing: Showing some flexibility in routines.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	Arrival at destination but may remain in vehicle									
	Communication and Interaction: Communicates willingness to be on site but not yet ready to enter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social Understanding and Relationships: Acknowledges presence of staff, though from a distance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Interests, Routines, and Processing: Increased flexibility, showing initial steps in changing routines.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Effective Transition Processes

- *Between classes, Key Stages and Schools*
- *Early Identification of students who may struggle with the process and strategies identified to support the student*

Support for the Student

- *Buddy support*
- *Safe Space Identified for breaks and lunchtimes*
- *Exit ticket to avoid busy corridors*
- *Rag rated timetable to identify lesson difficulties*
- *Student voice on identification of trusted adult*
- *Referral to school based therapeutic support*
- *Consideration if reduced timetable is appropriate*
- *Enrichment activities*

Staff Training

- *E-TIPSS training for schools and developing understanding of Trauma Informed Practice*
- *Training on ESBNA; including causes and interventions to be tried for all key staff*

School Based Interventions

Robust Absence Monitoring

- *Early Identification and intervention of students whose attendance is a concern*
- *Regular consultation with EWO*
- *Attendance Clinics*
- *Obtaining student and parent voice to unpick reasons for non-attendance, including ruling out bullying and friendship issues*
- *Referral to EWO/Attendance Officers*

Support for the Parent

- *Parent voice heard on attendance difficulties*
- *Single Point of contact established at the school*
- *Support strategies identified with parent*
- *Early Help support discussed*
- *Signposting parents to EASA parental support*

Inclusion Approach

- *Regular collaboration between pastoral teams, SENCO, Attendance Lead, DSL and SLT Pastoral Lead*
- *Considering Reasonable Adjustments that can be made*
- *Assessments undertaken to identify unmet needs*
- *Allowing time for strategies to be implemented*

Support from External Agencies

Referral to Other Agencies

- *Referrals to other agencies are considered*
- *TAF organised*
- *Consultation with school EP*
- *EASA Case Study consultation considered*
- *Referral to MHST or CAMHS*
- *Exploring support from the Nexus project*
- *Social Care referral if required*
- *EP assessment*
- *EHC Needs Assessment considered*

Outreach Support

- *Requesting outreach support from ASU team*
- *Working with outreach team to identify strategies*
- *Allowing time for strategies to be implemented*

ASU Referral

- *Once attendance falls below 30% an ASU referral can be considered after all other listed strategies have been exhausted*
- *The school should identify a clear plan of what the referral can achieve*
- *ASU referral submitted*

Does your child find it difficult to attend school for emotional reasons?

Join the Educational Psychology Service at an online two-part workshop for parents and carers. We will:

- ▶ Learn more about anxiety
- ▶ Explore what feels helpful for your child and family
- ▶ Discuss working together with schools to help young people attend
- ▶ Share your thoughts and ideas with each other & identify what help and support are available
- ▶ Connect with other parents and carers with similar concerns
- ▶ Consider how we can look after ourselves when things are hard
- ▶ Based on feedback from our previous workshops, we are also offering the opportunity to meet in person (at the Civic Centre) with other parents to enable a conversation & share experiences. The sessions will be facilitated by Educational Psychologists who will support the group to identify ideas and ways forward. Coffee and cake will be provided.

[Sign up here](#)



SESSION 1

**Tuesday 4th June
(Virtual) 1.30pm-2.30pm**

Monday 10th June (In Person) 10.00-12.00pm

SESSION 2

**Tuesday 18th June
(Virtual) 1.30pm-2.30pm**

Thursday 4th July (In Person) 10.00-12.00pm

For more information, please email eps@enfield.gov.uk

www.enfield.gov.uk



FIELD
Council



What help can we access?

Educational Welfare Service

- Early intervention strategies – specifically supporting attendance clinics
- Advice and guidance to schools
- Advice and guidance to parent/carers around attendance
- Signposting and support in making appropriate referrals
- Reconciliation of relationships between families and schools if there has been a breakdown

Support from the EWS can be accessed through the schools allocated Education Welfare Officer or via our duty service; Call 020 8379 3745 or email ews@enfield.gov.uk

My Young Mind Enfield OFFER

- Enfield MHST, My Young Mind Enfield.
- MYME aim to promote emotional wellbeing and mental health by supporting children, young people and their families through **prevention, early intervention and identification.**
- Working with schools across Enfield to promote a Whole School Approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide 1:1 sessions for parents and young people using a guided self-help approach based on CBT principles for those with **mild to moderate presentations.**

My Young Mind Enfield OFFER

- **Parent-led interventions** for primary school aged children address behaviour that challenges and child anxiety.
- **Adolescent interventions** for secondary school aged children address anxiety and low mood.
- We also deliver psychoeducation groups and workshops to young people, parents and teachers on different wellbeing topics e.g. anxiety, low self-esteem, exam stress, emotion regulation etc.
- <https://www.nclwaitingroom.nhs.uk/myme>

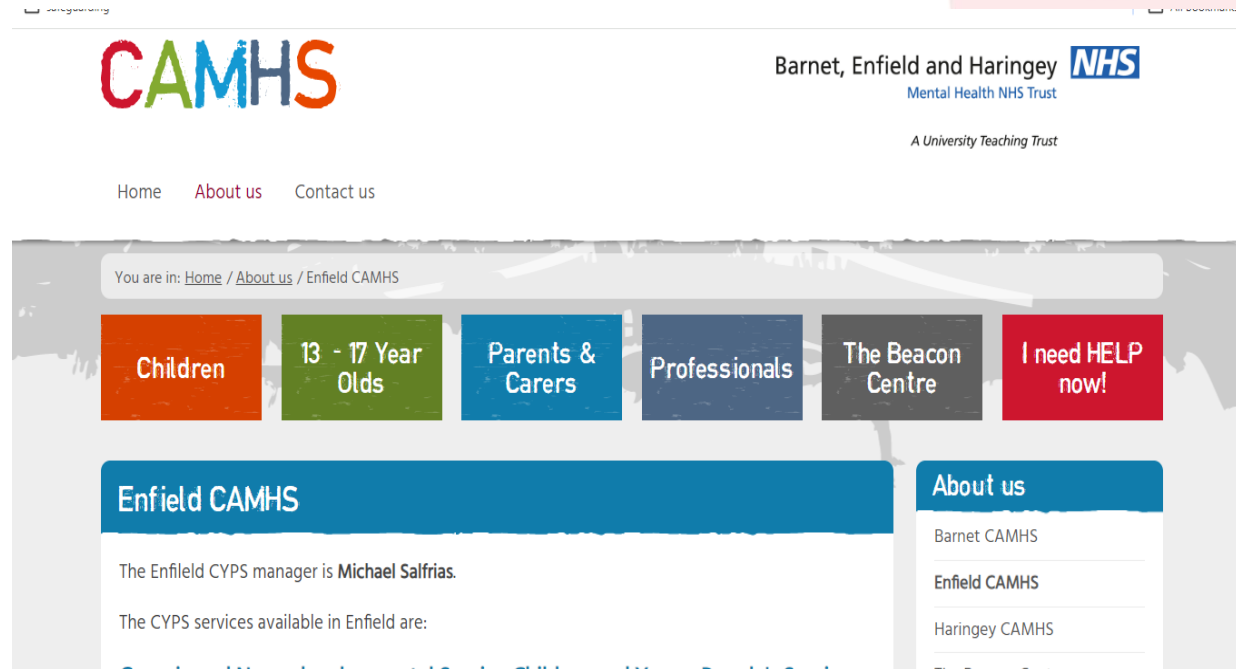
What help can we access?

Enfield Advisory Service for Autism

- We work to understand factors contributing to EBSNA for an individual child/young person by consulting with educational setting staff, parents and the child/young person, and using our expert knowledge of autism.
- We work with staff, parents and children/young people to create and work through a collaborative plan to overcome barriers and support access to education
- We provide advice on autism specific approaches and resources and model good practice for staff and parents

Visit our website: www.enfieldasa.org.uk or email our administrator: admin@enfieldasa.org.uk .

Refer to Mental Health specialists



The screenshot shows the CAMHS website header with the logo on the left and the text 'Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust' and 'A University Teaching Trust' on the right. Below the header is a navigation menu with 'Home', 'About us', and 'Contact us'. A breadcrumb trail indicates the current location: 'You are in: Home / About us / Enfield CAMHS'. A row of six colored buttons provides quick access to 'Children', '13 - 17 Year Olds', 'Parents & Carers', 'Professionals', 'The Beacon Centre', and 'I need HELP now!'. The 'About us' button is highlighted, and a dropdown menu is open, listing 'Barnet CAMHS', 'Enfield CAMHS', and 'Haringey CAMHS'. Below the 'Enfield CAMHS' button, the text reads: 'The Enfield CYPS manager is Michael Salfrías.' and 'The CYPS services available in Enfield are:'.

Evaluation

In order to receive the slides from today, please complete the evaluation form, leaving your name, school email and whether you would be interested in attending the online EBSNA training for school staff.

