

# Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)

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# Today's session

1

Outline EBSA – what it is how to identify, intervene and support CYP who are at risk of EBSA

2

Identify resources that you can use.

3

Share a program of support

4

Look at our EBSA project.



# Headlines

## Number of children in A&E with serious mental health issues jumps 50 per cent since start of pandemic

Families reveal the heartbreaking consequences of delays in finding help since lockdown

## NHS boosts mental health services in schools as pandemic leaves children struggling

The expanded roll-out comes amid concerns about children's mental health in lockdown



The pandemic has had an impact on children's mental health (Photo: Iann Nasir/Getty)

Dr Ranj Singh: 'I've seen first hand what lockdowns have done to our children's mental health'

### Children face 'agonising' waits for mental health care

By Nick Triggle  
Health correspondent

4 hours ago

Coronavirus pandemic



Children struggling with mental health problems during the pandemic are facing "agonisingly" long waits for treatment, a BBC investigation has found.

## School refusal almost triples since COVID-19 lockdowns, say parents and expert



▲ Pupils at a school in Stalybridge this month. Education leaders have called for upwards of £5.8bn over the next three years for schools catchup. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/Getty Images

Forty per cent of girls aged 16 to 17 are unhappy with their mental health, more than double the rate for boys, according to a landmark report that calls for the "greatest investment possible" in catchup for schools as part of a "new deal" for children.

# What is EBSA?

- EBSA is used to describe CYP who find it difficult to attend school due to anxiety.
- Other terms include: School phobia, School refusal, Extended school non-attendance, Anxiety-based school non-attendance.
- “EBSA” is preferred: ‘can’t over won’t’
- Not truancy, do the parents know?
- However, research suggests that rates of EBSA range from 1% to 5% of the school population







Time with  
parent/carer



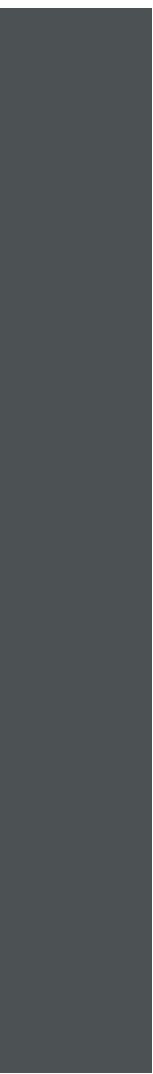
Concern  
about  
wellbeing of  
parent/carer



Need for  
contact and  
attention



School  
avoidance  
behaviours







## Covid 19 and EBSA

The pandemic has heightened anxiety that some CYP feel about school. Absence from school has resulted in difficulties with attending school again.

Factors such as being away from friends; fearing they are behind in schoolwork, decreased motivation, and increased anxiety regarding catching COVID-19 may all influence children's ability to attend school.



A long, brightly lit school hallway with rows of lockers on the right and windows on the left. A person is visible in the distance at the end of the hallway. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white circle on the left side of the image.

## How to identify those who may develop EBSA

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- Risk factors – some young people are more at risk of EBSA.
- Within Child; Home factors; School factors



## Child-specific Factors

- Temperament style.
- Fear of failure and poor self-confidence.
- Physical illness.
- Learning difficulties.
- Separation anxiety.
- Traumatic events.
- Previous exclusions.





## Risk Factors At Home

- Separation and divorce.
- Siblings being at home,
- Limited social interactions
- Parent physical and mental health problems Young carers.
- Absence of a parent.
- Overprotective parenting style.
- Being the youngest child in the family.
- Loss and bereavement; high levels of family stress.





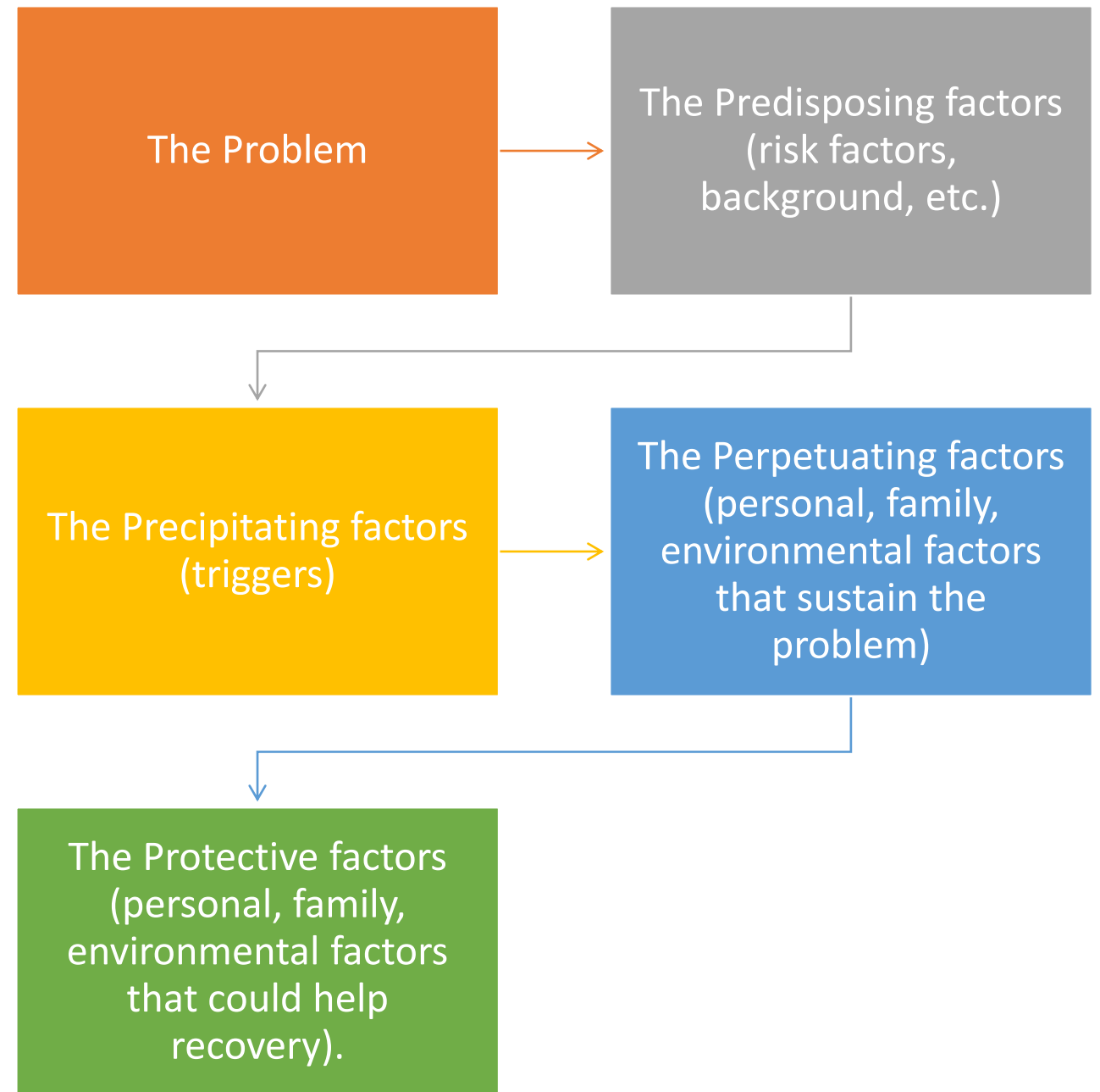
## Risk Factors At School

- Bullying
- The school environment.
- Difficulties in a specific subject.
- Transition
- Teachers
- Academic demands/ exams
- Transport
- Peer relationships

# What might EBSA look like?

- Talking negatively about school
- Crying
- Pleading
- Becoming anxious on separation from caregiver
- Physical symptoms of anxiety often on a Sunday night or a Monday morning, which may improve when the CYP stays home from school.
- Sharing worries about particular aspects of school
- Refusing to get ready for school or to leave the house.
- Difficulties sleeping
- Becoming distressed when school is talked about.
- Engaging in self-harming behaviours
- Becoming withdrawn, spending increasing amounts of time in their bedroom, avoiding trips outside of the home.

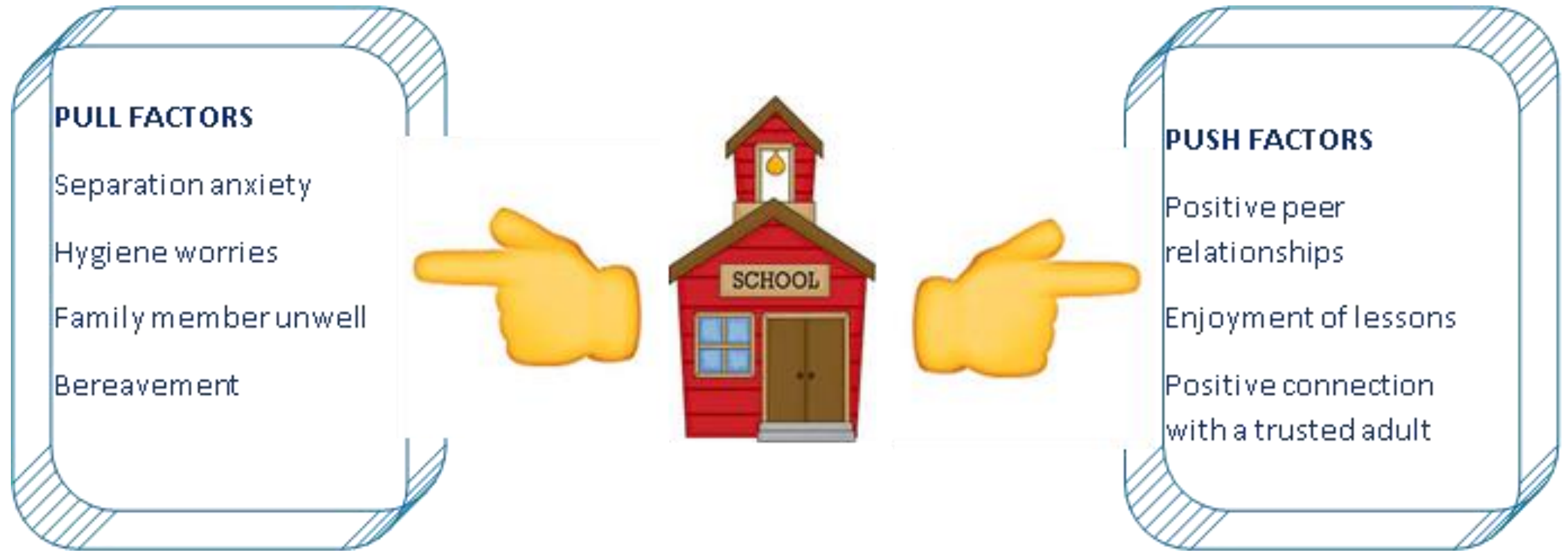
# 'Five Ps Model'






INDIVIDUAL	FAMILIAL	SCHOOL
<p>CYP'S strengths and interests</p> <p>CYP'S aspirations and ambitions</p> <p>CYP's motivation for change - increasing confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy</p>	<p>Positive relationships in the family and community</p> <p>Willingness to work in partnership with the school and support agencies.</p> <p>Positive parenting skills</p> <p>Developing an understanding of CYP needs and feelings</p>	<p>Willingness to work in partnership with family and support agencies.</p> <p>Positive relationships with peers and staff</p> <p>Experiencing success in school</p> <p>Having a flexible approach</p> <p>Developing an understanding of CYP's needs and feelings</p>

# The push and pull model



# How to overcome EBSA

- Early intervention is key: Research reiterates the importance of recognising difficulties early on
  - Relationships, relationships, relationships: positive relationships between the child, their peers, and their teachers may help them to feel emotionally safe and secure in school.
  - Working in collaboration: Any professionals supporting a family need to work together.
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# Whole school approaches

- It has been established that a whole school approach to EBSA is the most effective. Staff wellbeing prioritised-which has an effect on CYP's mental health and wellbeing.
  - Close home-school liaison.
  - A curriculum that promotes SEMH resilience and the understanding of wellbeing
  - A whole school ethos which encourages and values diversity.
  - A school where student voice influences decision-making.
  - A school where young people's wellbeing is monitored.
  - Referral and targeted support for young people identified being in need.

# The child's voice

- In order to overcome anxiety around school attendance it is imperative that the CYP's perspective is understood
- Trying to elicit a young person's views about sources of anxiety can be challenging and alternative ways of getting a young person to express their thoughts and feelings should be explored.
- A key adult who is trusted by the CYP will be important in helping the young person share their views, but also to encourage their participation in any action plan, the review of that plan as well as the next steps to take.



# Returning to school


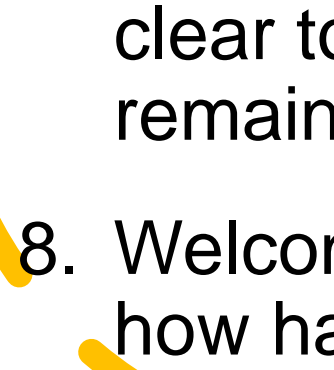
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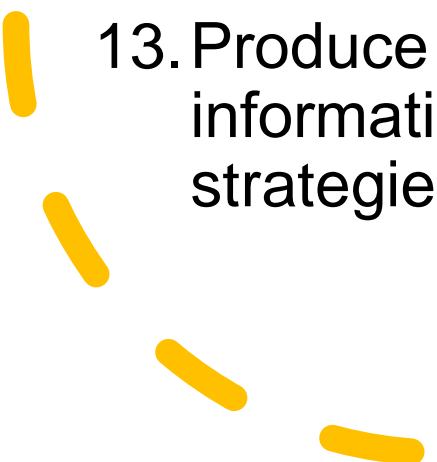
- ✓ **Early intervention and identification** - anticipate problems and prepare the CYP for change. This should be personalised and targeted to the CYP in question.
- ✓ **Consistency and predictability:** provide consistent and predictable support for both the CYP and parents/carers.
- ✓ **Trusting relationships:** Develop positive relationships with CYP and parents/carers. Understand the situation using the child's voice and ensure everyone is on the 'same page'.
- ✓ **The individual child:** Gain the child's voice and ensure they have a key person that they trust who they can talk to. Monitor and use information to mentor and problem-solve together. Personalise the return to school.



# Approaches and strategies- 13 ideas to support the young person with EBSA

1. Before children return to school, contact the child and the parents to arrange a meeting or conversation about the child's worries and needs.
2. Consider that a child's parent/s may be feeling worried and anxious too, and how the school might support parents through this e.g., acknowledge the difficult situation; give them information about safety measures in school; promote their own self-care.
3. Provide parents with a key person in school that they can contact.

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4. As much as possible, ensure a consistent and predictable approach. Support parents to establish a routine at home in the lead up to returning to school.
  5. Focus on the positives, strengths and skills of the child.
  6. “We’re in this together” ethos: let children know it is normal to feel scared about the situation, adults are feeling scared too.
  7. As much as possible, ensure predictability and routine: make clear to children what routines and expectations have remained the same in school and what the new changes are.
  8. Welcome children to school each day and make them know how happy you are that they have made it.
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9. A focus on relationship-building with staff and peers.
  10. Focus on defining what success looks like for the child; work together to create child-centred goals that are achievable in small steps and celebrate small successes.
  11. Create “If... then...” support with the child; something they can pick up and refer to when they feel worried or uncertain of what they can do to help themselves <sup>[1]</sup>.
  12. Teach the child/children calming and relaxation exercises.
  13. Produce a ‘Pupil Passport’ for children to share relevant and key information with staff so that they are aware of a child’s needs and what strategies they could draw upon.
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Useful resources

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**TORBAY COUNCIL**

## Emotionally Based School Avoidance: Guidance for Torbay Educational Settings

April 2021



Focus

[Educational Psychology & Specialist Teaching Service \(TEPATS\) | Torbay FIS Directory](#)

Google “Torbay Local Offer Educational Psychology Service”

# Appendices

Checklist of signs for parents/carers

Profile screening for vulnerable pupils at risk of long-term EBSA

Push and Pull Factors – CYP Version

Risk and Protective Factors Checklists

Risk and Protective Factors Sorting Cards

EBSA Card Sorting Activities

# Our Project – COVID recovery money

## Train

- Train all schools around EBSA

## Identify

- Identify young people at risk of EBSA

## Support

- Follow a program of support to return to school or reduce their risk