

# Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

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## Guidance for Lambeth Schools/ Colleges

## **Introduction:**

The Draft EBSA Guidance which follows aims to build on existing good practice guidance Toolkits developed recently in a number of LA's.

Colleagues from LAAS, Educational Psychology Service, MHST, Education Welfare and SEND / Inclusion are working collaboratively with schools to develop a shared understanding of EBSA and further develop good practice in supporting children and young people who find it difficult to consistently attend and positively engage in school. The process outlined in this guidance follows a graduated approach of support, intervention and services; it is designed to complement and work alongside existing good practice that is happening across schools in Lambeth. SEND Colleagues at SENDCo Network events in December 2023 and May 2024 have participated in an audit exercise to evaluate existing practice and co-produce the current draft guidance. The next step in the 24 – 25 academic year will be to work with other LA's / councils, Lambeth schools / settings, parents / carers and young people themselves to finalise Lambeth guidance fine-tuned to the local context and needs of our diverse population.

## **What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?**

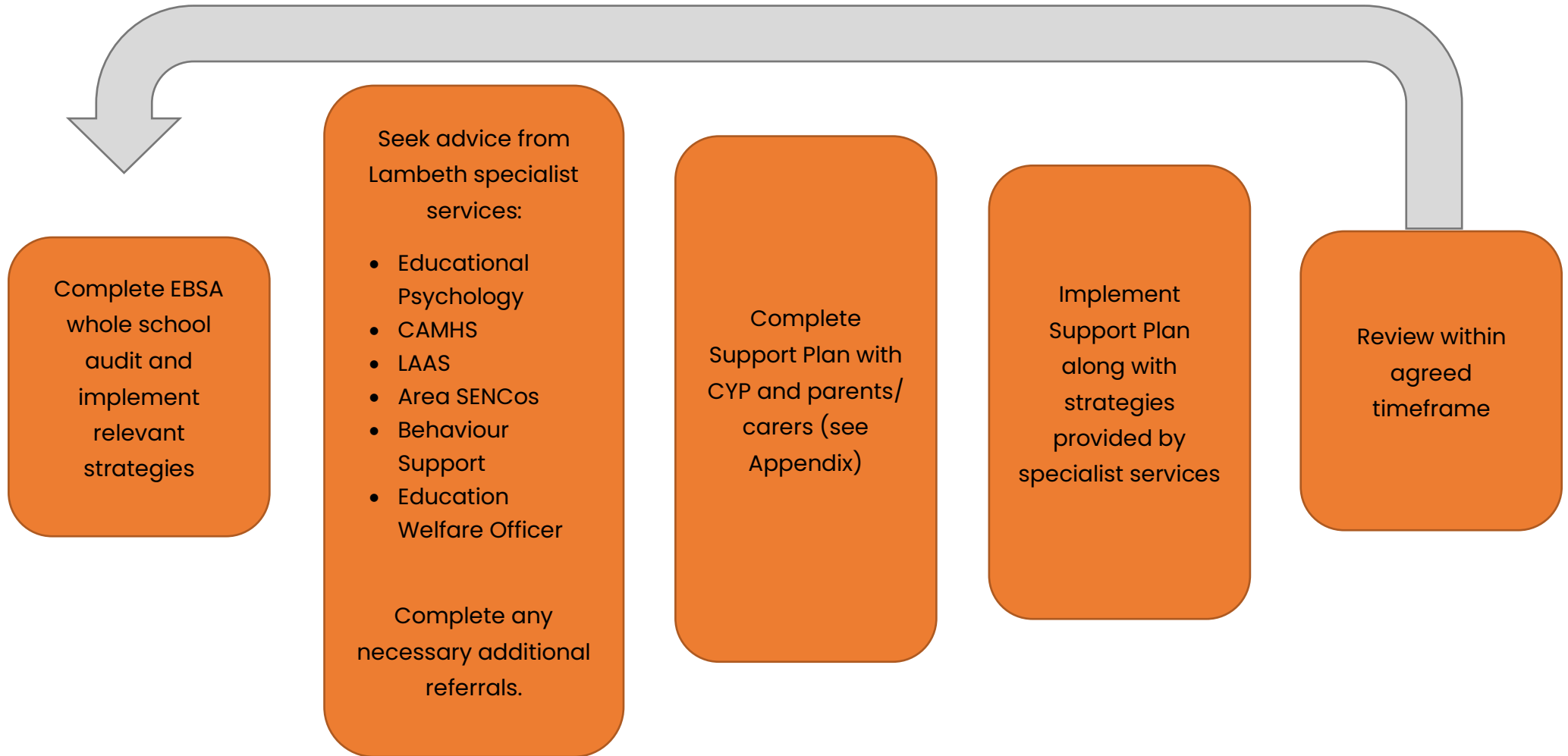
- EBSA is a term used to identify a group of children and young people who are facing challenges in attending school. It is also referred to as ABSA – Anxiety Based School Avoidance
- EBSA is apparent where difficulties with attending are the result of emotional factors and frequently children and young people (CYP) presenting with EBSA experience significant levels of both physical and emotional distress.
- The emotional element of EBSA is what makes it distinct from other forms of nonattendance. It is also not 'refusal' to attend (though this term has been used in the past).

- Frequently children want to attend school and it is the overwhelming experience of stress, anxiety and other emotions that lead a child to feel that they must stay away or 'avoid' school.

### **What caused EBSA? (Complex interplay of factors)**

- EBSA is not a diagnosis and there is not one underlying need or collection of needs common to all children and young people who experience EBSA.
- The overwhelming emotions, thoughts, and feelings that children and young people experience may be the result of many different underlying special educational needs (SEN), adverse life experiences and developmental needs.
- Researchers describe EBSA as happening when: "stress exceeds support, when risks are greater than resilience and when 'pull' factors that promote school non-attendance overcome the 'push' factors that encourage attendance" (Thambirajah et al, 2008: p. 33).
- It is only through understanding the individual experience of each child or young person that we are likely to help them improve or manage their EBSA.

Maintain wellbeing & attendance



## **Resources:**

### *Guidance and information:*

#### - Newcastle

[Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance \(EBSNA\) Support and Information](#)

#### - Tower Hamlets

[www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/documents/1585-emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa-guidance-information-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/documents/1585-emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa-guidance-information-for-parents-and-carers)

#### - Manchester

[search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/manchester/fsd/files/anxiety\\_based\\_school\\_avoidance\\_manchester\\_schools\\_guidance\\_document\\_sept\\_2021.pdf](https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/manchester/fsd/files/anxiety_based_school_avoidance_manchester_schools_guidance_document_sept_2021.pdf)

#### - West Sussex

<https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483>

#### - Buckinghamshire

[www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=530&type=pdf](http://www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=530&type=pdf)

### Example support plans:

[manchesterparentcarerforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Anxiety-Based-School-Avoidance-Manchester-Schools-Guidance-Document-2020-final.pdf](http://manchesterparentcarerforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Anxiety-Based-School-Avoidance-Manchester-Schools-Guidance-Document-2020-final.pdf)

[schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483](https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483)

### Examples of provision:

[bromleyeducationmatters.uk/Page/18350](http://bromleyeducationmatters.uk/Page/18350)

### Whole School Approach:

[www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=530&type=pdf](http://www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=530&type=pdf)

### Early Identification:

[Trafford Directory | School Attendance Difficulties and Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance \(EBSNA\)](#)

*Local support:*

- [Lambeth Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Services for Children And Young People](#)
- [www.thewellcentre.org](http://www.thewellcentre.org)
- [slam.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people](http://slam.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people)
- [www.mosaic-clubhouse.org](http://www.mosaic-clubhouse.org)

*National support:*

- [Home - Kooth](#)
- The Academic Resilience Framework ([www.youngminds.org.uk/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/) , [www.boingboing.org.uk/](http://www.boingboing.org.uk/))

## Appendices:

### Strategies for Children and Young People to Support Those at Risk of Experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance

<b>In the Classroom</b>
➤ Use concise and concrete language – ‘Say Less, Show More’. ‘KISS (Keep It Short and Simple).
➤ Use the child or young person’s name to gain attention –they may not follow whole class instructions consistently.
➤ Allow an average of 10 seconds longer to process information. Do not repeat the instruction during this time as this may just overwhelm.
➤ Use task planners – do not avoid visual support by assuming there is understanding. Break down the task into short steps.
➤ Keep the instructions for the task in order.
➤ Check the level of understanding and where appropriate ask the CYP to repeat the instruction back to you.
➤ Create an individual strategy around listening skills – do not insist on eye contact as this may make listening more difficult for an autistic young person.
➤ Consider creating a personal profile on the CYP which can be shared with all school staff including office staff and lunch supervisors.
➤ Be aware of literal interpretations from CYP which may appear off hand or rude without intention.
➤ Explain and show unplanned changes to the CYP in advance, even if you think this is not necessary – it is.
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➤ USE VISUALS! To explain rules and expectations of the classroom environment. Have visual prompts ready to use to support both focus and engagement.
➤ Try to have clutter free areas, especially around the main white board.
➤ Use movement breaks in a meaningful way, e.g., give jobs to the CYP every day, every lesson.
➤ Use mind mapping to visually create steps and to demonstrate key information.
➤ Have scribes, audio recordings and keyboards available as alternative methods of recording.
➤ Use Comic Strip Conversations/ Social Stories/ ABC charts to identify triggers.

- Always use a 'help' card available or use red and green cards to indicate 'okay or not okay'.

### **Managing Sensory Processing**

- Ensure the CYP has the right support in place for organising their actions and regulating their system.
- Allow fidget toys and regular movement breaks.
- Have a calm break out space available.
- Complete a Sensory Profile (LAAS can provide from the AET Toolkit) then make sure additional resources are in place linked to the profile.

### **Maintaining motivation for the student**

- Know the special interests of the individual and use these in their learning where appropriate.
- Have individualised systems, whole class systems can often be counterproductive and lead to low self-esteem or unnecessary anxiety or confrontation.

### **Managing Emotional Regulation**

- Have access to colour coded emotional scales such as Zones of Regulation or 5-point scale. Ensure they understand and recognise what each colour represents.
- Support CYP to understand how much work they need to do and when breaks are available through visual planners. Use white boards! 'Now and Next' boards
- Use self-advocacy.
- Use a small-step target approach to avoid overwhelming with information.



## SUPPORT PLAN

Name:

Date:

➤ At school, these things can make me feel upset:

➤ What will help?

➤ My attendance will be different for a short time.

I will attend these lessons on these days: .....

I will attend these lessons at these times: .....

Until this date: .....

➤ Changes to my timetable will include:

➤ Any other changes will include (daily routines, break times, lunch times, classroom expectations such as early transition times, talking to others, how much homework is given)

➤ Things that others can do to make me feel better (staff and friends):

➤ Things that my family can do to support me to attend school:

➤ Places in school I can go to where I can feel safe and supported:

➤ This plan will be reviewed regularly. Next review date:

My signature:

School Support Person's signature:

Parent/Guardian's signature:

