**Video 1 - What is EBBSA?**

**What is EBBSA?**  
Emotionally based barriers to school attendance is not a new phenomenon associated with the coronavirus pandemic. However, it has become highlighted as many more of our children and young people experienced increased levels of anxiety following lockdown and periods of absence from their school. Some have had some difficult experiences during the pandemic, while some children found being at home safe and nurturing and felt nervous returning to the school environment where they may have to navigate issues on a daily basis. The Government expects schools and local authorities to promote good attendance and reduce absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education and act early to address patterns of absence. We know there are a variety of reasons why pupils do not attend school or attend school with difficulty which are important in terms of distinguishing between emotionally based barriers and other forms of non-attendance.

**Evolving Language Around Low Attendance.**

School phobia, school refusal, persistent absenteeism, emotionally based school avoidance, school withdrawal, truancy, children missing in education.  
A range of definitions and terminology continues to be used by professionals and schools to describe non-attendance. Language like school refusal and school phobia implies that the child has choice and control over barriers to attendance. It locates blame within the child, presuming the child is the problem. This creates a misconception that children with emotionally based barriers to attendance do not want to attend school and the behaviour is deliberate or chosen. Which has significant implications for the responses, suggesting or potentially prompting those which may be punitive in nature. It can also cause misunderstanding by locating the problem solely within the context of the school, when in reality the situation is usually more complex than this, and any assessment or intervention needs to take into account factors at the level of the child, family and school.

**What is EBSA?**  
You may have noticed that we have mentioned the acronym EBSA and EBBSA.  
The term EBSA with one ‘B’ stands for emotionally based school avoidance and was a term first used by West Sussex County Council in 2018. A broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school.  
EBSA is a spectrum. It sees attendance as a continuum and not identified purely by non-attendance. You can see the EBSA as a spectrum arrow with occasional avoidance and full attendance at one end, and complete avoidance and persistent non-attendance at the other end, and then in the middle there can be all sorts of different experiences around finding it difficult to attend on certain days, certain lessons, certain times. It really is a spectrum.  
So EBBSA in North East Lincolnshire Council. We've broadened the term to be EBBSA, standing for emotionally based barriers to school attendance, which emphasises consideration of potential barriers across the three interrelated factors. The child, the family, the school or setting without judgement, requiring a relational person-centered approach. Sometimes children and young people's behaviours can be misinterpreted as not wanting to attend school. Our discussions with children and families locally this year in 2022 and 2023 found that most children want to attend school and they really want people to know that.

Here are some of their views:  
“I really want to go to school, but I can't leave my home. I feel sick and can't stop crying.”  
“I feel like I'm entering a prison. It's so scary.”  
“I need to stay home to look after my mum. I haven't got time for school.”  
“I hate all the crowds at playtime, so I try and hide inside.”  
“I can see my child's mental health is deteriorating dramatically, but because of her rigidity of thought around the law, she makes herself go.”  
They can't yet, not won't attend school.  
EBBSA is a description of experience, not a mental health disorder. It is a combination of symptoms that indicate a young person is experiencing emotional distress relating to school attendance.

**School is Not My Enemy - Video**

Here is a video that we wanted to share to show a visualisation of emotionally based barriers to school attendance.  
I just can't. It won't let me go. You wake me up in the morning to get ready for school, but I just, I can't do it. There is something holding me back and I can't fight it. You don't understand why I do this. Neither do I. You push me, I must go to school.  
That only makes it worse. At school I try to hide it. I do my best in class. Try to avoid any troubles. It's really exhausting. I don't want to be at school, at all. You wake me up again. The thought of having to go to school enters my mind. It's paralysing me. The stress, the fear, the sickness, all those feelings I can't explain. They won't go away. And I, I don't know why they're here. I refuse. I scream, I panic. There's no way I'm going back to school, ever. Why? Why can't I just be normal? Every time I fight, it gets harder and harder. I'm tired of it. I go see a doctor. I can stay at home again for five weeks now, but I know that is not going to solve the problem. The few good grades I had are all gone. I will miss many lessons again. The teacher says if I continue like this, I won't even reach the end of the school year. And my friends will probably forget about me anyway. I give up. Can I just never go to school again, please? Some friends came to visit me today. That was nice, they said the teachers are worried too. Maybe I'm not alone after all. You take me to another doctor. He doesn't talk much. He listens to me. He seems to understand. I wonder if he can see it. My parents don't blame me. They try to understand and also want to help me. Things are different now. It doesn't hold on to me that much anymore.  
I take only small steps at a time, but I'm going forward. At school I don't have to hide it anymore. They know. And that's OK. They help me when needed and I have someone to talk to when I struggle. You try to understand. You try to see what's going on. It's no longer me against you. It's us now. I still have a long way to go.  
But now I know that school is not my enemy. Mostly.

**References and Inspirations**

Displaying the reference and inspirations for the training using the logos and names of the organisations and people, alongside images of key texts and authors.

* Anna Freud logo. Anna Freud: building the mental wellbeing of the next generation
* Bright and Hove City Council logo. BEEM: Brighton and Hove Education and Enterprise Marketplace.
* Not Fine in School logo
* EdPsychEd logo
* Dr Jerricah’s twitter handle @DrJerricah
* DNAv International logo
* Duncan Gillard’s twitter handle @Duncanjee
* Missing The Mark logo
* Square Peg logo
* School Wellbeing logo
* EBSA Horizons logo
* Image of the front cover of Understanding and Supporting Children and Young People with Emotionally Based School Avoidance by Tina Rae (Clinical Psychologist) @DrTinarae
* Image of the front cover of Can’t Not Won’t by Eliza Fricker @\_MissingTheMark
* Image of Square Pegs: Inclusivity, compassion and fitting in – a guide for schools @teamsquarepeg
* Image of Changing Our Minds: How children can take control of their own learning by Naomi Fisher, Clinical Psychologist @naomifisher
* Image of front cover of Addressing emotionally-based school avoidance by Anna Freud: National centre for children and families @ANFCCF

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