Risk & Resilience Factors

There is rarely one single cause of EBSA. Each CYP experiencing EBSA will have varying needs and factors impacting upon them and their attendance in school.

The following is not an exhaustive list, nor should it be seen as a 'tick box' exercise. However, we encourage you to use this list to identify CYP who may be at risk of developing EBSA. Any action plan should then address aspects of all factors.

RISK FACTORS

SCHOOL

- ✗ Bullying
- ✗ Academic difficulties in specific subjects
- ✗ Particular subjects (e.g. PE)
- ✗ Transition to new key stage or new school
- ✗ Poor SEN provision
- ✗ Learning needs not identified or being met
- ✗ Academic demands
- ✗ Transport/journey to school
- ✗ Exams
- ✗ Environmental factors (e.g. noise levels)
- ✗ Relationship difficulties with staff or peers

HOME

- ✗ Family change (e.g. separation, divorce or change in family dynamic)
- ✗ Family conflict or complex family interactions
- ✗ Parental physical/mental health needs
- ✗ High levels of family stress
- ✗ Loss and bereavement
- ✗ Family history of EBSA
- ✗ Being a young carer

CHILD/YOUNG PERSON

- ✗ Learning difficulties
- ✗ Autism or other social communication differences
- ✗ Low self-confidence or self-esteem
- ✗ Physical illness
- ✗ Separation anxiety from parent/carer
- ✗ Worrying about home situation/family
- ✗ Traumatic events
- ✗ Difficulties with peers
- ✗ Sensory differences
- ✗ Poor emotional literacy
- ✗ Age (linked with key transition points)

When working with CYP who are experiencing EBSA, it is also really important to identify and build upon protective or 'resilience factors' which can be supported and developed further to promote their attendance in school.

RESILIENCE FACTORS

SCHOOL

- ✔ Positive relationships with staff members
- ✔ Positive relationships with peers
- ✔ Flexibility in approaches and strategies
- ✔ Whole-school approach to EBSA and emotional wellbeing
- ✔ Staff understanding of EBSA
- ✔ Safe space in school
- ✔ Experiences sense of belonging to school
- ✔ CYP feels supported by staff in school
- ✔ School willingness to work with family and support agencies

HOME

- ✔ Parents/carers value education and talk positively about school
- ✔ Willingness to work in partnership with school staff and external professionals
- ✔ Good communication between home and school
- ✔ Stable family dynamics
- ✔ Close relationship with family
- ✔ Feels safe/secure at home
- ✔ Can separate from parents/carers
- ✔ Siblings consistently attend school

CHILD/YOUNG PERSON

- ✔ CYP has a desire to attend school
- ✔ Ambitions and aspirations for the future
- ✔ Interests and activities out of school
- ✔ Academically able
- ✔ Able to recognise strengths and demonstrates pride in themselves
- ✔ Good emotional understanding
- ✔ CYP has effective emotional regulation strategies
- ✔ CYP feels listened to and understood
- ✔ Good friendship group

It can be helpful to think of 'risk and resilience' factors as push and pull factors:

'Push' factors – push the CYP towards attending school (i.e. resilience factors)

'Pull' factors – pull the CYP away from attending school (i.e. risk factors)

When pull factors are greater than the push factors, or when risk factors are greater than resilience, Emotionally Based School Avoidance is more likely to occur (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

Functions of EBSA

There is rarely one single cause of EBSA and it likely to be underpinned by 'several complex and interlinked factors including the young person, the family and the school environment' (Thambirajah et al, 2008).

However, through an extensive literature review, Kearney and Silverman (1990) identified four main functions, or reasons, as to why EBSA occurs:

To **avoid** uncomfortable feelings (e.g. anxiety and low mood) brought on by attending school

WORRY JAR

> " I feel worried when I'm at school. "

To **avoid** situations that might be stressful e.g. academic demands, social situations, environmental factors
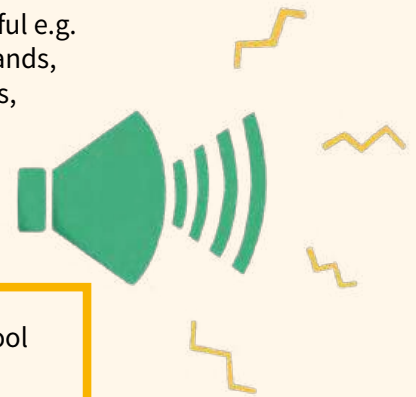
> " I find the school environment overwhelming. The corridors are so noisy and busy! "

To **reduce** separation anxiety or to seek attention from significant others e.g. parents or family members

what is mum doing? is she okay? I miss her and I want to see her. I'm worried about her.

> " I'm worried about my mum "

To access **rewarding** experiences at home e.g. playing computer games during school time, going shopping

> " I get to watch TV and play games if I stay at home "

'All behaviour is communication'

By considering the function of a CYP's EBSA, or what their behaviours might be trying to communicate, we can then start to consider what we can do to help them more effectively.

✔ What are their behaviours telling us about how they are feeling?
✔ What are their behaviours telling us about what they need?

✔ What situations are they trying to avoid?
✔ What does their avoidance achieve for them?