

EBSA Pathway Guidance

Definition of EBSA: Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA, sometimes known as Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance, EBSNA) is a term describing young people who have reduced or non-attendance at school for a prolonged period, i.e. **lower than 50% attendance for at least one school term**. A clear distinction is made between those that are absent from school due to truanting and those that are absent from school due to the specific emotional distress or anxiety that they experience around attending school. Rather than the term 'school refusal', the term EBSA recognises that this avoidance has its roots in emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues.

Introducing the North Somerset EBSA Pathway

[The EBSA Pathway](#) has been designed for use in all phases of education setting, from primary schools to post-16 colleges. The purpose is to encourage settings to take a step-by-step approach to gathering information and making changes which support an increase in school attendance.

The Pathway is based on the evidence that school non-attendance results from unmet student needs, for example a need for a sense of belonging or need for trusting relationships with adults. You may have noticed that in some families, one child will have a high level of attendance while a sibling does not attend at all. This indicates that there are individual differences relating to school attendance. In the past, school avoidance was met with punishments and fines but the evidence suggests that these are not effective responses to cases of EBSA.

The EBSA Pathway provides useful examples of what we can do to identify and meet students' underlying needs. Although it is important to recognise that the causes of EBSA are often complex and deep-rooted, we also need to remember that we have a range of actions available in schools and colleges which can support students to make a gradual and positive return to education.

How to use the EBSA Pathway

The EBSA Pathway contains 7 Steps which are designed to be taken one after another. Each Step is associated with specific examples of Provision, which we have linked to [here](#). In order to ensure that everyone is ready to move on to the next Step of the pathway, we must establish a target based on the student's views. We have created an [Example Outcomes](#) document but these targets will typically vary from student to student. It is essential that students participate in creating their own Outcomes for each step of the pathway so that they feel listened to.

As we identify target outcomes, select relevant tools and resources, and review progress towards them, we can record evidence of our Assess-Plan-Do-Review process using the [EBSA APDR Template](#). By working together to create Provision which links to specific, student-informed Outcomes, we are following an evidence-based approach to supporting gradual, positive progress towards an increase in school attendance at a rate which young people feel comfortable with.

