Barriers to Education & the WARMTH Framework

SPECTRUM GAMING

Salford City Council

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

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In partnership with:

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The aims of this session

To reflect on the current picture of school attendance difficulties

To share the co-production journey undertaken by the Barriers to Education group

To share an evidence-based framework for supporting attendance and engagement

To consider how the framework might support you in your own work with education settings, families and other services

Why are we talking about this?

Persistent absence rates hit 22.3% for academic year 22-23 (DfE data indicates this has doubled since the pandemic)

Persistent absence in secondary schools for this period was at 28.3%

37.9% of disadvantaged pupils persistently absent

Local authorities are reporting dramatic rise in young people struggling to attend for reasons of emotional wellbeing/mental health

Key insights

1 in 10 children in the Northern regions are (unauthorised) persistent absentees.

In 2023-24, the rate of **persistent absence** was:

- 38% in **SEND** schools,
- 15% in **primary** schools, and
- 27% in **secondary** schools.

In 2018-19:
Only **36%** of persistently absent

78% of rarely absent

pupils achieved expected grades in English and Maths GCSEs.

In 2023

37% of CYP on free school meals

46% of CYP supported by a social worker

67% of CYP supported by a youth offending team reported **skipping school due to feeling unsafe.**

Between 2015-16 and 2023-24, overall absence rate in England **rose from 4.6% to 7.2%** - a

57% INCREASE.

32 Attendance hubs across the country have been proposed.

In 2020, approximately

250,000

children were missing from education.

In the 2020-21 school year,

40,000

more children were home-schooled.

Persistently absent children have nearly

4X

increased risk of becoming **not in education, employment or training (NEET).**

Rates of unauthorised absence were

34%

higher in the North of England than in the South.

Autistic young people are

2X

as likely to be excluded compared to those without SEND.

Children not "school ready" are nearly

3X

as likely to become a persistent absentee compared to their "school ready" peers.

Families can face an **£80 FINE** if their child misses five days of school.

1/3

In 2022-23, **over a third** of pupils identified as **young carers** were persistently absent.

What is the relevance for EPs?

Young people with ND, Mental Health needs, or SEND are disproportionately vulnerable.

In a recent survey, 60% of EPs said at least half of their time was spent on supporting attendance difficulties.

60% of EPs had been involved in developing their LA or service's guidance on supporting attendance. 100% had been involved in promoting their guidance and delivering training.

90% reported working with school staff and other services directly, with 70% also working with parents and children.

How did we get here?

Covid context

An increasingly narrow curriculum

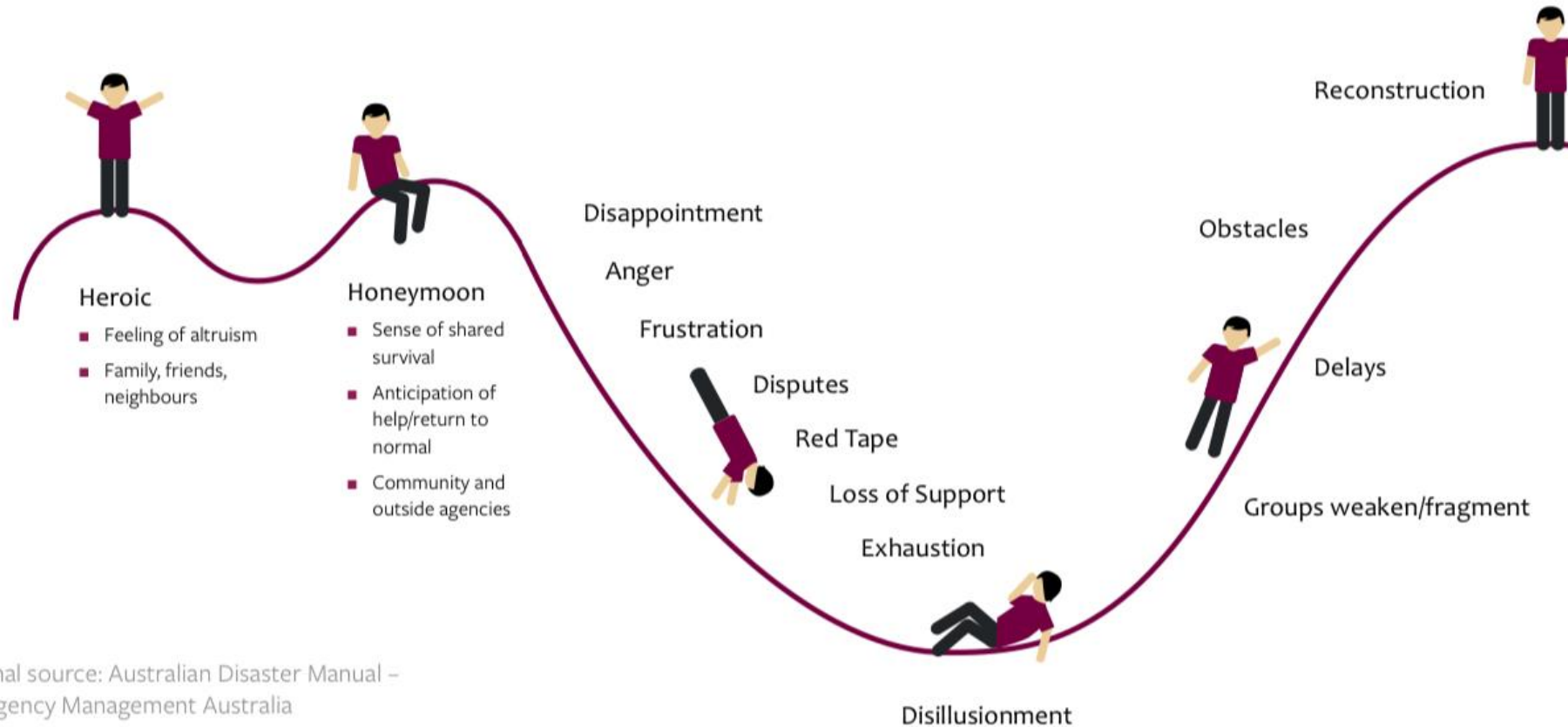Rigid approaches to behaviour and inclusion

Teacher stress

Poverty and cost of living crisis

The rise of Mental Health needs in the school population

Breakdown of home-school relationship/contract

We might have expected recovery, but the data isn't showing this.

How did we get here?

Heroic
- Feeling of altruism
- Family, friends, neighbours

Honeymoon
- Sense of shared survival
- Anticipation of help/return to normal
- Community and outside agencies

Disappointment

Anger

Frustration

Disputes

Red Tape

Loss of Support

Exhaustion

Disillusionment

Obstacles

Delays

Groups weaken/fragment

Reconstruction

Original source: Australian Disaster Manual – Emergency Management Australia

From: Global Disaster Preparedness Centre (2015) Leading in Disaster Recovery: a Companion Through the Chaos

What can we do?

Activity 1: what is going well?

Think about the work in your local area. What activity is happening under the following broad headings?

- Wellbeing
- Affirmative Practice
- Relational Approaches
- Mutual understanding and partnership working
- Timely Response to need
- Holistic Support for Young People

Barriers to Education
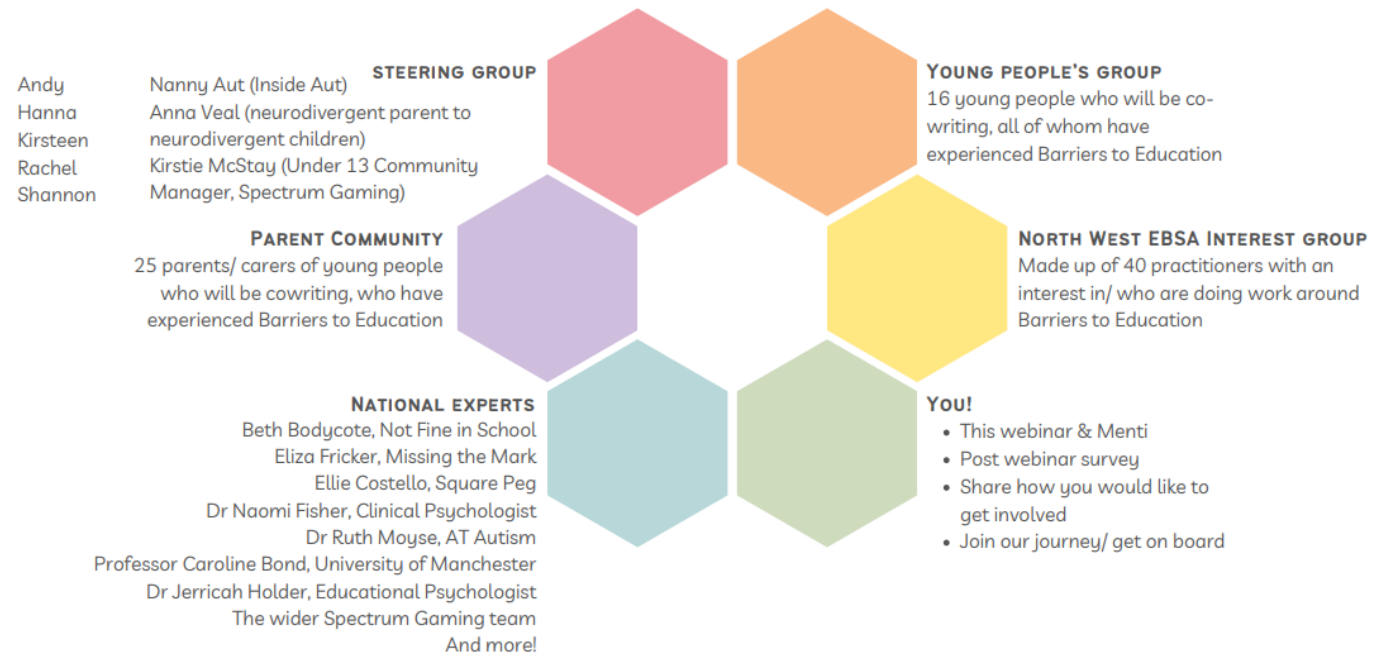
An Evidence Based Approach

Barriers to Education

- We started this project as a way to find a solution to a gap we were experiencing in our work with children and families, as the current guidance did not appear to be meeting their needs (entrenched/extended non-attendance, and primarily neurodivergent young people).

- Over time, there has been a growing parent/carer voice (online, in books), new academic research and increased media interest; attendance is currently a top priority for the DfE and Ofsted (and therefore schools).

- We recognise the complexities and competing demands this raises, and the reduced funding/capacity within education and public sector services currently.

- Our aim is to collaboratively build a toolkit that is supportive for families, schools and services that is aspirational and practical.

The Team

This was the team, as of 9th April, but the current interest and demand for the project means that the collaborative team is continuing to grow.

THE TEAM

STEERING GROUP
Andy
Hanna
Kirsteen
Rachel
Shannon

Nanny Aut (Inside Aut)
Anna Veal (neurodivergent parent to neurodivergent children)
Kirstie McStay (Under 13 Community Manager, Spectrum Gaming)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUP
16 young people who will be co-writing, all of whom have experienced Barriers to Education

NORTH WEST EBSA INTEREST GROUP
Made up of 40 practitioners with an interest in/ who are doing work around Barriers to Education

PARENT COMMUNITY
25 parents/ carers of young people who will be cowriting, who have experienced Barriers to Education

NATIONAL EXPERTS
Beth Bodycote, Not Fine in School
Eliza Fricker, Missing the Mark
Ellie Costello, Square Peg
Dr Naomi Fisher, Clinical Psychologist
Dr Ruth Moyse, AT Autism
Professor Caroline Bond, University of Manchester
Dr Jerricah Holder, Educational Psychologist
The wider Spectrum Gaming team
And more!

You!
- This webinar & Menti
- Post webinar survey
- Share how you would like to get involved
- Join our journey/ get on board

Evolving terminology

Many terms associated with low attendance, e.g.:

- EBSA, EBBSA, EBSNA, EBSR

- School refusal

- School phobia

- Truancy

- Separation anxiety

- Persistent / severe absenteeism

- Suspensions/ exclusion

Greater Manchester project to radically re-write the EBSA Guidance:

[Barriers to Education (padlet.com)](padlet.com)

Understanding Attendance:
Findings on the drivers of pupil absence from over 30,000 young people in England

IMPACTED EVALUATION

BELONGING

. **Sense of school belonging** is a key driver of attendance across all contexts. This may be particularly important for females and is closely linked with **feeling safe** at school.

Y7-Y8

Challenge of a '**second transition**' from Year 7 to Year 8 is particularly pronounced for Pupil Premium pupils with SEND. **Sense of belonging** appears to be particularly associated with likelihood of attendance for Year 8 pupils.
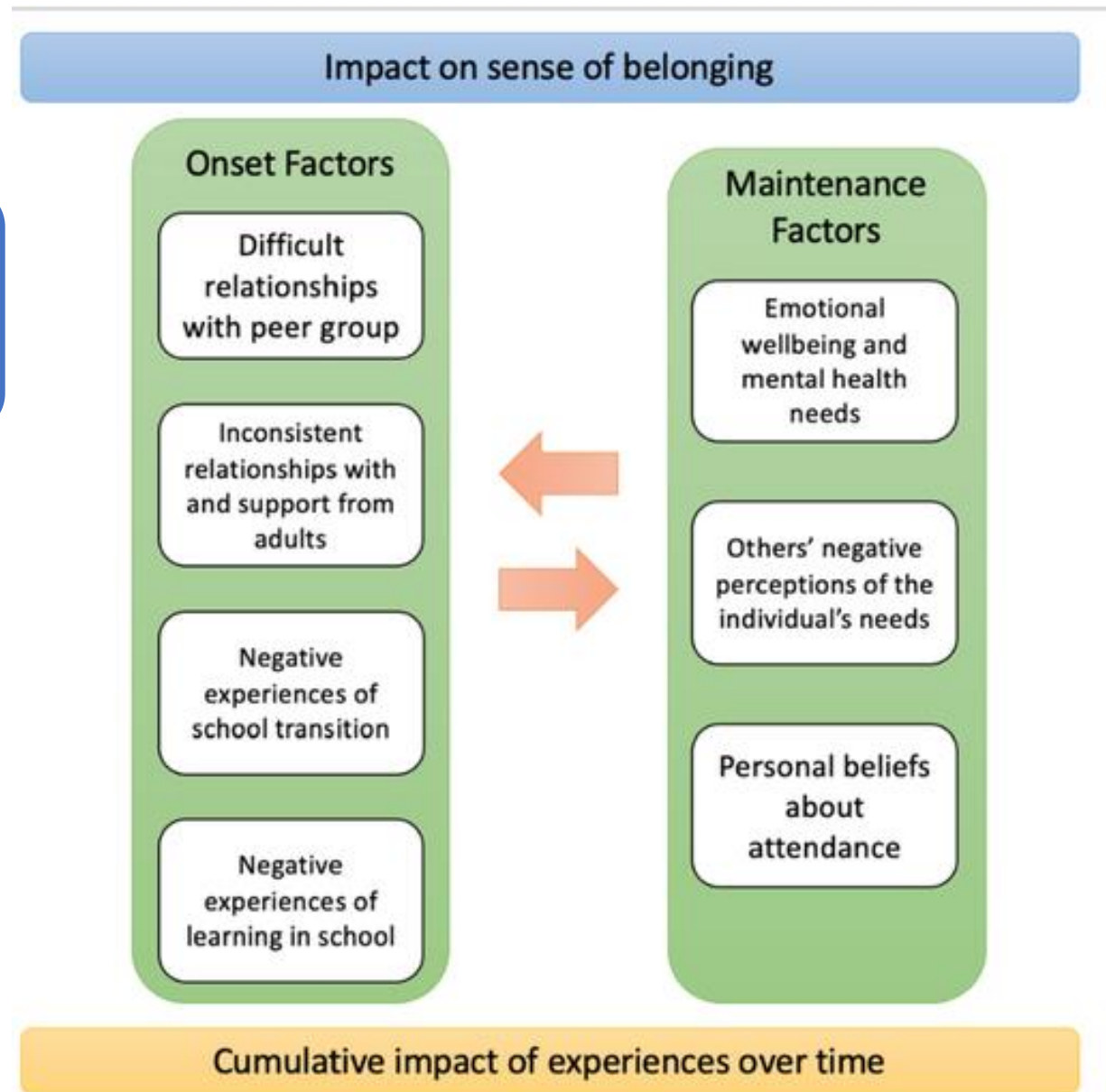
INTERSECTIONAL

Attendance drivers are intersectional. School leaders should avoid considering demographic factors in isolation. Female pupils who are eligible for Pupil Premium and have a special educational need are particularly likely to be low attending.

RELATIONSHIPS

Awareness of sanctions and consequences isn't strongly linked to improved attendance. **Understanding of the importance of school** and **relationships with peers and teachers** were more strongly associated with attendance.

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Children tell us important information and try solve their problems through their behaviour → we need to listen.
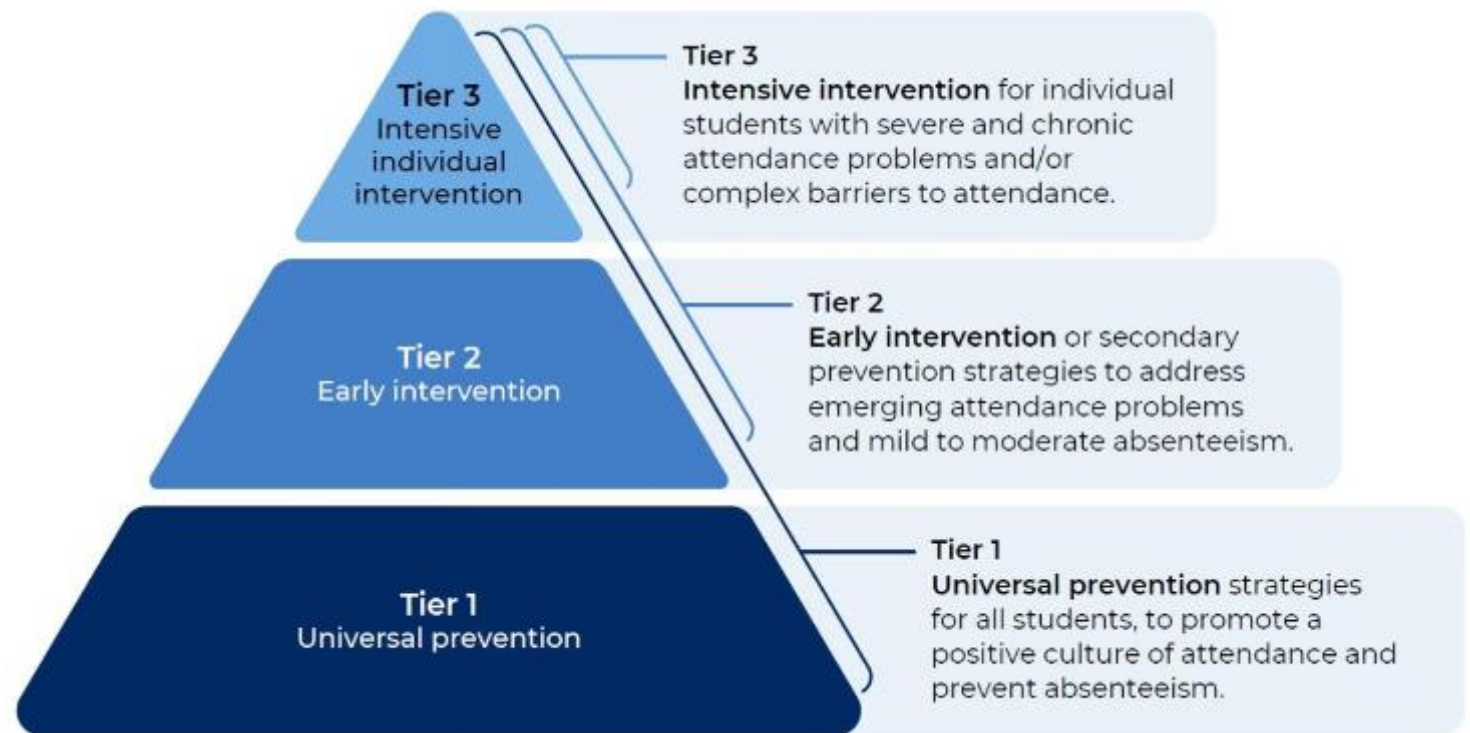
- Young people describe their non-attendance as a logical and understandable response to the situation.
- They want to be at school and have tried hard to be, but without changes to the environment it becomes too hard → not going to school is a last resort.
- Difficulties tend to start gradually and help early on, as soon as issues are raised, is important.
- Their wellbeing is impacted by not going to school.

Impact on sense of belonging

Onset Factors

- Difficult relationships with peer group
- Inconsistent relationships with and support from adults
- Negative experiences of school transition
- Negative experiences of learning in school

Maintenance Factors

- Emotional wellbeing and mental health needs
- Others' negative perceptions of the individual's needs
- Personal beliefs about attendance

Cumulative impact of experiences over time

Young people's experiences of extended school non-attendance (Corcoran & Kelly, 2022)

A Holistic Approach

Attendance has always been a symptom, rather than a cause, **a manifestation of complex issues across the education system and beyond**.

N8's evidence-based plan for improving school attendance (2024) encourages the development of cross-service collaboration for holistic support: "Young people's lives are shaped by a dynamic interplay of factors, and a holistic approach involving education, health, social services, and community organisations is essential to improve attendance."

Schools are often blamed by parents for failures in other areas of the system, including CAMHS, the NHS, housing support and the welfare system. Better join up between these different agencies to holistically address the wider challenges that impact attendance would enable schools to focus on providing the educational support they have expertise in (Burtonshaw & Dorrell, 2023).

ATTENDANCE DRIVERS ARE INTERSECTIONAL (IMPACTED EVALUATION, 2024)

What's needed?

CESE (2022);
Kearney et al.
2019a and
2019b

Tier 3
Intensive
individual
intervention

Tier 2
Early intervention

Tier 1
Universal prevention

Tier 3
Intensive intervention for individual students with severe and chronic attendance problems and/or complex barriers to attendance.

Tier 2
Early intervention or secondary prevention strategies to address emerging attendance problems and mild to moderate absenteeism.

Tier 1
Universal prevention strategies for all students, to promote a positive culture of attendance and prevent absenteeism.

Barriers to Education website

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION WEBSITE

What support is helpful at each stage of burnout

Understanding burnout and burnout recovery

LONG TERM ABSENCE

Exploring alternative ways of learning

An audit tool and support for schools around implementing preventative school wide approaches

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE START STRUGGLING TO ATTNEND

Working with the young person and people around them to identify and support any individual barriers

Exploring alternative ways of learning

Guidance for people at different levels:
- Local Authority
- School senior leaders
- Classroom wide approaches
- Individual approaches

PREVENTATIVE SCHOOL WIDE APPROACHES

WARMTH Framework for schools

Website features:

The website will give different information depending on your remit so it isn't too overwhelming

Accompanying handouts to share with parents/ services/ supporting professionals

The WARMTH Framework

home   case for change   key principles   guidance   about us

key principles

wellbeing first   affirming practice   relational approach   mutual understanding & partnership   timely response   holistic support

DO WE NEED TO RETHINK 'ATTENDANCE'?

The world is changing, schooling is different, and our approach to school attendance and each learner's relationship with education must be different too (p1)

a focus on learning and well-being

wherever learning occurs

current work now includes

increased effort to understand barriers & facilitators

supporting attendance

supporting engagement with learning

supporting readiness for adulthood
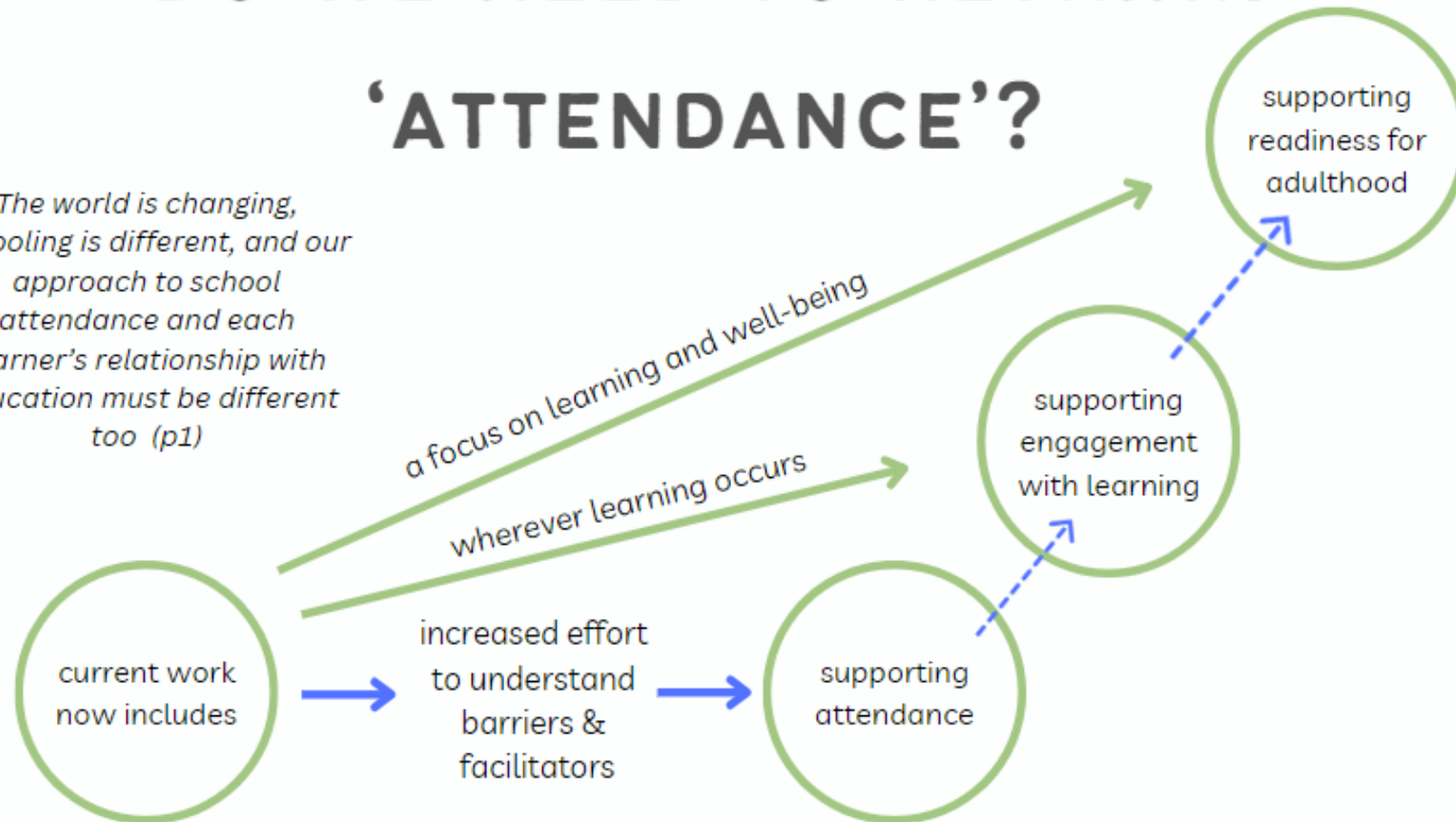
Heyne D, Gentle-Genitty C, Melvin GA, Keppens G, O'Toole C and McKay-Brown L (2024) Embracing change: from recalibration to radical overhaul for the field of school attendance. Front. Educ. 8:1251223. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2023.1251223

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So, why a Local Authority Approach?

A strategic and consistent approach across the organisation allowed misconceptions about attendance to be identified and challenged, and promoted earlier identification and intervention for attendance difficulties through organisational culture shifts and evidence-informed practice (Corcoran, Kelly, Bond and Knox, 2023).

So, why not a GM or National approach?

Harnessing our collective influence

The unique role of EPs

- How do we take forward what we know works?

- How do we leverage collective power in this space around school non-attendance **locally**? How do we do it **nationally**?

- How do we support co-production of guidance and the delivery of services *with* service users?

THE WARMTH FRAMEWORK - WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

WELLBEING

- Asking the schools view and gaining C/YP's voice - asking what would help?
- Supervision
- Working with MHST
- AEPs funded by health intervention support
- Mental health in schools network – EP lead
- ELSA training and ongoing supervision
- Emotion coaching
- Emotional wellbeing workers
- 3 tier model
- In reach and out reach
- NESSIE (public health)
- Pastoral support in schools
- Attachment aware schools
- Research re audit tool
- Wellbeing champions
- Emotionally friendly schools training
- Parental well-being
- CYP who are ND struggling to attend – relational EP/FSW

TIMELY RESPONSE

- Support schools with earlier intervention
- EBSNA training available/guidance – inclusion toolkit
- Graduated approach for identifying EBSA
- Training
- Share resources/practices
- Decision tree – capacity building in schools
- Early intervention
- Ongoing offer
- Early intervention
- Process
- Links into other processes
- Healthy schools
- Transition support for vulnerable pupils
- EBSNA pathway
- Offers from hospital schools – Short Term placement
- Medical education panel – discuss and provide timely response
- EBSA time in EPS allocations

RELATIONAL

- Wakefield EPS – Relate to Educate guidance
- Relational policies, practice and training offer
- Relational network from Devonshire – policies and practices
- AV1 robot to keep CYP connected to school
- Attachment and trauma informed school projects – conference
- Training in schools
- Trauma informed expert in the LA
- Belonging guidance for schools
- Liverpool – links with EWOs/attendance strategy
- Psychoeducation work
- Social communication resource B&H YP/Family focus
- VIG
- DDP
- ATTEND tool B&H

W Wellbeing First

A Affirming Practice

R Relational Approach

M Mutual Understanding & Partnership

T Timely Response

H Holistic Support

HOLISITC SUPPORT

- More reasonable adjustments
- Adaptability re uniform
- Wellbeing focus rather than EBSA/EBSNA
- Engagement rather than attendance
- Early Help/family work
- Use of youth workers (with MH/ASC knowledge) working with schools/ health/ education
- Dedicated EBSA service
- SEND drop ins for parents
- Family hubs – outreach
- Clear offer around 'entrenched' EBSA
- Community and home based support
- Multi-disciplinary approach
- EBSA co-produced toolkit for all

AFFIRMATIVE PRACTICE

- Training on ND affirmative practice and reflecting in our reports
- Valuing flexible learning and engagement
- Trauma informed practice
- Giving recovery time
- Use of AV1 robots
- Importance of language
- Training for schools and services
- Professional curiosity
- Affirm others fears and concern
- Work with local organisations in the community

MUTUAL/ PARTNERS

- Multi agency model – joint problem solving
- Team around school – high level of attendance issues
- Schools, families, EPS, attendance working together
- Parent partnerships and Parent/carer groups
- Bradford Parent/Carer Forum joint working on guidance – early intervention and evidence base
- School and community teams for early intervention
- Training with social care
- Need to involve liaise with CAMHS
- Public health
- Youth workers funded by health
- Processes support by multidisciplinary team
- Advocacy group – LA, Local and national
- Project Anna Freud
- Specialist EPs – attendance and SEMH EWOs
- EBSNA co-ordinator – co-supervised by an EP
- Attendance team
- Education inclusion panel – EP rep
- Working with schools through traded service
- SLA's across agencies
- Inclusion panels
- EBSA pathway
- Dynamic support register
- OAP

Next steps for the Barriers to Education project:

- Launch of the Barriers to Education website in Spring 2025, phased approach to support the development of additional material over time

- Co-construction of a national EP position paper outlining effective and evidence-based practice (NAPEP, BPS-DECP, AEP) – building on activities at NAPEP Course (May 24) and Autumn 24 – Spring 25 workshop series

Following today

1. Take a look at the Barriers to Education Padlet for more information and to watch our webinars: https://padlet.com/spectrumgaming/barrierstoeducation

2. Take a look at the N8 Attendance Report's recommendations https://www.n8research.org.uk/research-focus/child-of-the-north/2024-campaign/attendance/

3. Join (or set up) a regional attendance/EBSA interest group.

4. Get involved with the NAPEP attendance workshops (or encourage your service lead/PEP to).

5. Take key learning from today back to your colleagues and reach out to local service leads, parents/carers and young people in your area. Consider how you could develop guidance, multi-agency working and co-production further.

Here and Now:

- Expressions of interest for regional groups

- Share contact details with colleagues to share practice examples and materials

Key contacts:

- Spectrum Gaming Projects
  projects@spectrumgaming.net

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- Rachel Lyons
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