

**TITLE OF REPORT:           Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Learning Mentors 2020/21**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of School Forum the work of the Emotionally Based School Avoidance (ESBA) Learning Mentors during academic year 2020/21 and to consider the funding of this resource moving forward.

### **Background**

2. Nationally UK literature reports, that between 1 and 2% of the school population are absent from school due to emotional reasons (Elliott, 1999, Gulliford & Miller, 2015).
3. Over the past few years Gateshead has seen an increasing number of children and young people who are refusing to attend school due to EBSA. This is not just a mainstream school issue, as we also have children and young people with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) who are refusing to attend their special school placement as well as, children and young people who have been taken out of school to be home educated due to mental health/anxiety issues.
4. This issue is complex and multi-layered, Kearney and Silberman's (1990) review of the literature indicates that there tends to be four main reasons for school avoidance:
  - To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood
  - To avoid situations that might be stressful; such as academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment
  - To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others, such as parents and/or other family members
  - To pursue tangible reinforces outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time
5. Given the complexity of the issue, it was previously agreed at School Forum to pilot a two new positions with Gateshead Council known as Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Learning Mentors with one of these positions being funded from the high needs block and the 2<sup>nd</sup> being funded through schools until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 in the first instance. It was originally agreed that these posts would be paid at Grade H (40,245-43,967) however, this was revised and they are now funded at Grade G (25,481-27,741). This does not include travel costs for the two posts. The posts were filled by a 0.6 and full time colleague.

6. The work of the EBSA Learning Mentors is allocated through a referral system to Education Inclusion Panel (EIP) which is multi-disciplinary. The referral categories are:
  1. Either children/young people currently not attending school or
  2. Those still attending school but there is declining rate of attendance
7. Both types of referral have to present an evidence base that clearly demonstrates EBSA. In referral type 1 the Panel also require evidence from an appropriate medical professional and the child/young person should be in receipt of a tutor.
8. The EBSA Learning Mentors are line managed by the Education Support Service who oversee the management of EIP, and the provision of home tuition for children and young people unable to attend school due to medical reasons.
9. Education Support Service had also been successful in securing £33,000.00 of funding to pilot the use of 10 AV1 Avatars across primary, secondary and special schools as a bridge to support children/young people back into formal educational settings.
10. The anticipated benefits to schools of these two posts were:-
  - Improved attendance as children/young people are supported more effectively back into a school setting or to improve their attendance
  - Possible reduction in school costs for alternative provision
  - Schools supported with strategies and interventions to help the children/young person transition back to school or improve their attendance
  - Future pro-active work with schools and pupils to prevent EBSA

### **Evaluation of work completed by EBSA Learning Mentors 2020/21**

11. There were 79 referrals to EIP in this period. 70 (96%) of these referrals were directly linked to EBSA and of these, 53 (76%) were appropriate referrals. 26 (49%) of the 53 appropriate referrals requested an EBSA Learning Mentor.
12. Of the 26 referrals for an EBSA Learning Mentor in 2020/21 - 6 (23%) of children/young people have successfully returned to school after non-attendance due to EBSA with the support of the EBSA Learning Mentor. 3 (12%) cases were closed for other reasons. The remaining 17 referrals remain active.
13. Referrals to EIP in relation to EBSA has fluctuated throughout 2020/21 with the sharpest referral rate May to June 2021. The referrals during this period were evenly distributed across all year groups and could be the result of children and young people returning to school after lockdown restrictions were eased.
14. Our data demonstrates that females are more likely to be referred to EIP for EBSA than males (F: 59% M:41%). Although numbers are not statistically significant, males were referred more than females under the category of 'other mental health'. These included Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Psychosis and eating disorders.

15. The work of the EBSA Learning Mentors during this period has been significantly hindered by:
1. Covid
  2. Staff absence
  3. Referral information
  4. EBSA Learning Mentor working model
  5. Poor uptake of AV1 Avatars
16. During 2020/21 the EBSA Learning Mentors were prohibited from delivering their support face to face. Although they did make valient efforts to engage children/young people remotely and at door steps this proved less than satisfactory in supporting the children/young people back into school. There was similar restrictions when working with schools who tried very hard to accommodate us. This decreased opportunity to give this programme the traction it needed to embed.
17. Staff absence has hindered continuity and development of this work. One EBSA Learning Mentor took maternity leave in April of 2021 after taking up post in November 2020. This 0.6 position was filled by a colleague who had attended interview for the post of EBSA Learning Mentor – this colleague decided to return to a previous post after a short period with us. We were able to replace this colleague with a suitably qualified person but they were only able to commit to 0.4 position. Our full time EBSA Learning Mentor has been absent from work for a number of weeks. This has complicted the impacted on effective and efficient service delivery in 2020/21.
18. Experience has shown us that the referral system for children/young people not attending school due to EBSA was not sharply focused and EBSA Learning Mentors, although their work was valued, were allocated at a point when the child/young person was far from returning to school. In light of this we have reviewed the referral process which is now a more robust two step referral mechanism for this type of referral that will hopefully enable EBSA Learning Mentors to work more strategically and with greater success to achieving the aim of this support.
19. The EBSA working model was initially not fit for purpose with little cohesion between the work of the two EBSA Learning Mentors. This was confusing for the EBSA Learning Mentors, children/young people, their families and our schools. We have implemented an initial assessment model once an EBSA Learning Menotor is allocated and this directs our work more systematically and consistently. We have also instigated weekly case review meetings to ensure this.
20. Although initially welcomed by schools the AV1 Avatars have had little, if any, uptake. It is hard to ascertain for sure the reason(s) for this but from anecodatal information it is, in part, due the logistical movement of these devices around school.

## **Recommendations**

21. That School Forum provides feedback from all schools and agrees to de-delagate for maintained mainstream schools for a EBSA Learning Mentor to support children/young people with EBSA (Appendix 1).

22. Academies and schools that cannot de -delegate agree to pay towards the cost of a EBSA Learning Mentor to support children/young people with EBSA (Appendix 1)

**For the following reason(s):**

To ensure that all children and young people in Gateshead receive an education that is suitable and appropriate to their age, aptitude and abilities.

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## Appendix 1

		Primary	Secondary
		£1.11	£2.22
School Name	Phase	NOR	
Barley Mow Primary School	Primary	153	£339.66
Bede Community Primary School	Primary	185	£205.35
Bill Quay Primary School	Primary	208	£230.88
Birtley East Community Primary School	Primary	189	£209.79
Blaydon West Primary School	Primary	175	£194.25
Brandling Primary School	Primary	178	£197.58
Brighton Avenue Primary School	Primary	290	£321.90
Caedmon Community Primary School	Primary	214	£237.54
Carr Hill Community Primary School	Primary	297	£329.67
Chopwell Primary School	Primary	180	£199.80
Clover Hill Community Primary School	Primary	204	£226.44
Colegate Community Primary School	Primary	144	£159.84
Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School	Primary	196	£217.56
Crookhill Community Primary School	Primary	191	£212.01
Dunston Hill Community Primary School	Primary	388	£430.68
Emmaville Primary School	Primary	388	£430.68
Falla Park Community Primary School	Primary	194	£215.34
Fell Dyke Community Primary School	Primary	255	£283.05
Fellside Community Primary School	Primary	210	£233.10
Front Street Community Primary School	Primary	391	£434.01
Glynwood Community Primary School	Primary	410	£455.10
Greenside Primary School	Primary	180	£199.80
Harlow Green Community Primary School	Primary	378	£419.58
High Spen Primary School	Primary	164	£182.04
Highfield Community Primary School	Primary	110	£122.10
Kells Lane Primary School	Primary	416	£461.76
Kelvin Grove Community Primary School	Primary	304	£337.44
Larkspur Community Primary School	Primary	123	£136.53
Lingey House Primary School	Primary	395	£438.45
Lobley Hill Primary School	Primary	354	£392.94
Oakfield Infant School	Primary	167	£185.37
Oakfield Junior School	Primary	236	£261.96
Parkhead Community Primary School	Primary	282	£313.02
Portobello Primary School	Primary	193	£214.23
Ravensworth Terrace Primary School	Primary	345	£382.95
Riverside Primary Academy	Primary	273	£303.03
Roman Road Primary School	Primary	194	£215.34
Rowlands Gill Community Primary School	Primary	198	£219.78
Ryton Community Infant School	Primary	92	£102.12
Ryton Junior School	Primary	143	£158.73
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	Primary	243	£269.73
South Street Community Primary School	Primary	217	£240.87
St Agnes' Catholic Primary School	Primary	200	£222.00
St Aidan's Church of England Primary School	Primary	197	£218.67

St Alban's Catholic Primary School	Primary	189	£209.79
St Anne's Catholic Primary School	Primary	131	£145.41
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School	Primary	299	£331.89
St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Birtley	Primary	82	£91.02
St Joseph's Catholic Junior School, Birtley	Primary	106	£117.66
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Blaydon	Primary	209	£231.99
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Gateshead	Primary	186	£206.46
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Highfield	Primary	108	£119.88
St Mary and St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School	Primary	212	£235.32
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School	Primary	204	£226.44
St Oswald's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School	Primary	196	£217.56
St Peter's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School	Primary	208	£230.88
St Philip Neri Roman Catholic Primary School	Primary	178	£197.58
St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School	Primary	112	£124.32
Swalwell Primary School	Primary	130	£144.30
The Drive Community Primary School	Primary	184	£204.24
Wardley Primary School	Primary	249	£276.39
Washingwell Community Primary School	Primary	130	£144.30
Whickham Parochial Church of England Primary School	Primary	206	£228.66
White Mere Community Primary School	Primary	141	£156.51
Windy Nook Primary School	Primary	293	£325.23
Winlaton West Lane Community Primary School	Primary	362	£401.82
		14559	
Cardinal Hume Catholic School	Secondary	1276	£2,832.72
Grace College	Secondary	1109	£2,461.98
Heworth Grange School	Secondary	1072	£2,379.84
Kibblesworth Academy	Primary	151	£335.22
Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive School	Secondary	851	£1,889.22
Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy	Secondary	1249	£2,772.78
St Thomas More Catholic School	Secondary	1222	£2,712.84
Thorp Academy	Secondary	1029	£2,284.38
Whickham School	Secondary	1351	£2,999.22
XP Gateshead	Secondary	100	£222.00
		9410	
		23969	£37,220.52