



Emotional based school none attendance

Emotional based school none attendance (EBSNA) is a term used to describe children and young people who experience challenges attending school due to negative feelings, such as anxiety.

Signs of EBSNA can include:

- Distress in the mornings
- Avoiding certain morning routines to prolong going to school
- Refusing to leave the house
- A decline in their mental health or showing signs of burnout
- Being reluctant to attend school or being unable to attend school at all
- Difficulty sleeping or changes to sleep patterns
- Changes in appetite

It's important to remember that it is not a conscious choice that the person is making and there is no one to blame. A focus on the child's attendance rather than supporting their needs can make things more difficult to fix. When referring to EBSNA it is important to consider the language being used, for example 'won't attend', 'refusal', 'truancy', and 'phobia' place the problem within the child/ young person

EBSNA is a multifaceted difficulty with a range of home and school's factors which contribute to the person's anxiety around attending school. Questions to think about:

- Does my child mask at school, and is the EBSNA a result of this?
- Could my child be in autistic burn out?
- Are there any other factors that could be contributing, such as bullying?
- Have there been any changes recently at school that could have had an impact?
- Are things happening in my child's home life which could be contributing?
- Are there any transitions coming up in my child's life which may be having an impact?
- Has my child had any health issues which may be contributing

Supporting a child with EBSNA can be incredibly difficult and it can feel very overwhelming. As a starting point we suggest that parent/carers do the following:

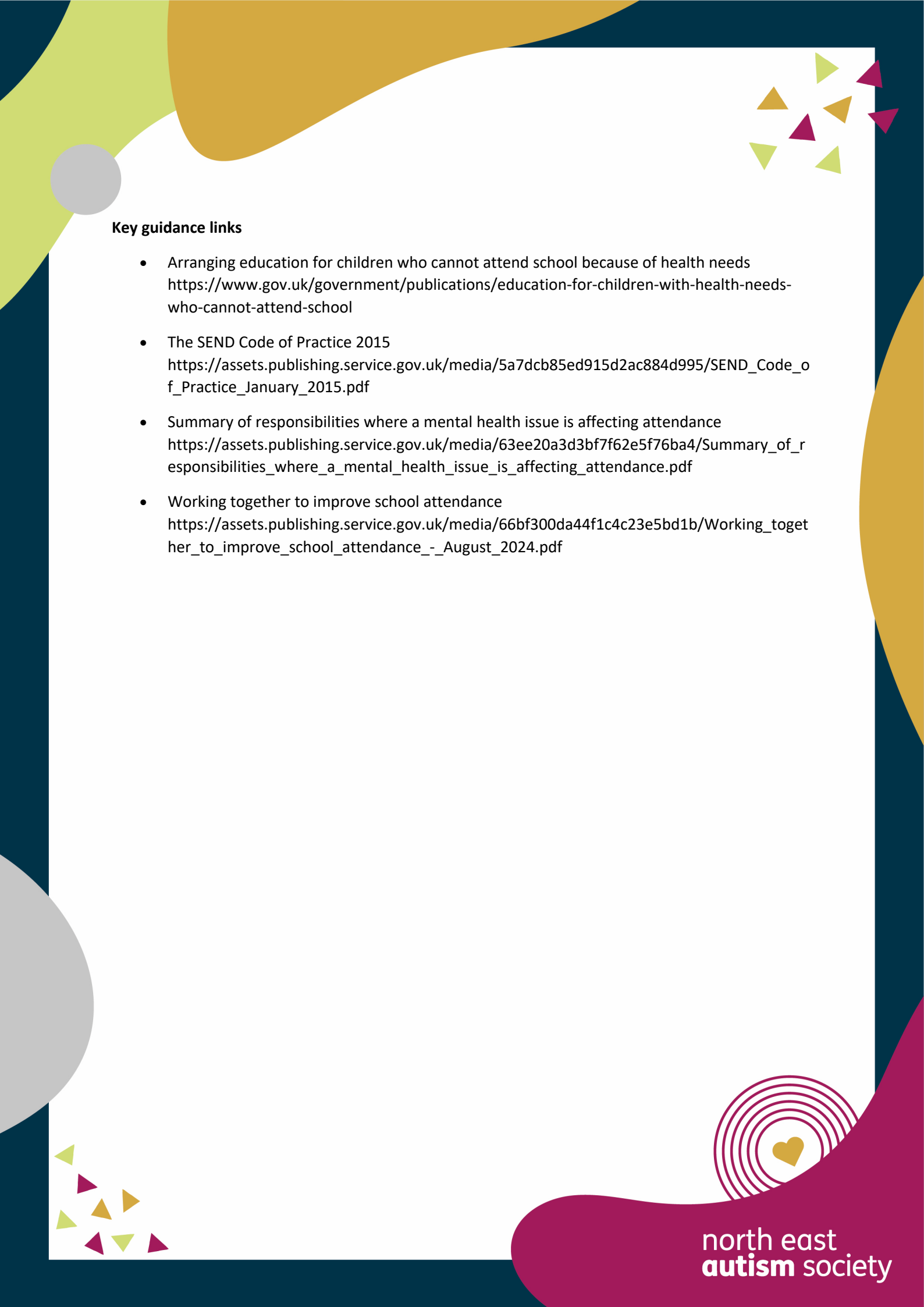
- Consider how you can gain the views or experiences of your child/young person. This may not mean a traditional conversation but more creative methods.
- Request help. Contact your GP or CAMHS / CYPS to discuss your child or young person's anxiety and any support that might be appropriate.
- Report absences correctly and consider the language you are using when reporting the absence.



- Keep records of everything. This helps to build a picture of the problem and the steps that have been taken. A paper trail can be crucial evidence of your actions in trying to resolve the situation, in case you are faced with attendance fines / prosecutions.
- Seek medical evidence where possible. In some cases your GP may be able to write a supporting letter explaining your child's difficulties and the impact of those difficulties on their attendance.
- Consider making a parental request for an EHC needs assessment if all other avenues of support within school have been explored and have been unsuccessful. If your child has an EHCP, request an early annual review.
- Meet with the school SENCO to look at current support and any further support that could be offered. It is important to work with the school and other professionals where possible to promote the best interests of your child/young person.
- Read key legislation documents to ensure the correct processes are being followed.
- Do not deregister your child or home educate in place of support being offered.
- Contact agencies for support e.g. SENDIASS, IPSEA.

A neurodevelopmental diagnosis or mental health diagnosis does not need to be in place for a person to receive support in school. How can school support?

- Have open and proactive conversations with parents / carers regularly.
- Conduct assessments for SEND if SEND needs have not already been identified.
- Where possible obtain the views of the child to identify barriers and solutions to attendance.
- Absences must be recorded as authorised where it is not possible for a child to attend due to a mental health need.
- Consider reasonable adjustments. This may be sending work home or in some circumstances a part-time timetable may be appropriate. However a part-time timetable is not a long term solution and must only be in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Seek advice from specialists on interventions and / or make referrals to external agencies for additional support e.g. educational psychologist. The local authority must also be informed by the school if it is clear that the child will be away from school for 15 days (this can be consecutive days or over the course of a school year)



Key guidance links

- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>
- The SEND Code of Practice 2015
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dcb85ed915d2ac884d995/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63ee20a3d3bf7f62e5f76ba4/Summary_of_responsibilities_where_a_mental_health_issue_is_affecting_attendance.pdf
- Working together to improve school attendance
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf