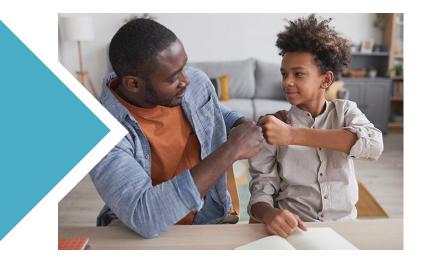


Graduated Return Pathway



The "3" pathways

Early prevention



Return to class/ lessons





EBSA is a 'spectrum of needs' and will require different levels of support according to the child/young person's (CYP) level of avoidance behaviours. CYP with EBSA range from:

intermittent avoidances \rightarrow frequent avoidances \rightarrow complete avoidance

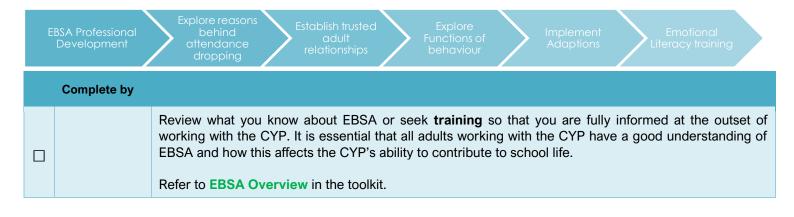
Therefore, we have set out three "pathways" to support you with early prevention planning, supporting a graduated return to class/lessons, or supporting with a graduated return to school.

There is no single support package, and all support needs to be tailored to the individual through a personcentered approach. All approaches will vary according to the CYP's areas of difficulty, support needs, background, life factors, level of understanding, overall language abilities, age, and stage of development. Therefore, each plan will be different and what works with one CYP will not necessarily work for another.

This guidance document has been designed to offer you steps towards supporting the CYP with suggested resources that can be used along the way.

Early Prevention

This pathway is to support the CYP/young person (CYP) that has begun to show school/class attendance difficulties. Their attendance has become intermittent or reduced below 85%. The CYP might be more frequently reporting that they are 'feeling unwell' (i.e., experiencing physical symptoms brought on by their anxiety). The CYP might also have started to have difficulties staying in class/lessons or are avoiding certain people or places. They might have made a recent transition (e.g., to secondary school) and are finding this increasingly difficult.





	 Meet with parent/carers to discuss the details around the drop in attendance. It is important to identify this early and before the CYPs attendance drops below 85%. This should be well before their attendance reaches 75%. During this meeting gather in-depth details around why attendance levels have changed so as to implement meaningful support. If there are signs that their attendance is dropping as a result of potential EBSA then more information gathering is needed in this area in order to offer meaningful support to avoid any further increases in avoidance behaviours. Refer to Questions to ask parents in the 'Working with Parents/Carers' section of the EBSA toolkit.
	 50 - 80% of CYPs with EBSA report co-occurring psychosomatic symptoms (i.e., experience physical symptoms that are brought on by their mental state). Therefore, if applicable, explore in further detail the reports of 'feeling unwell': Are these psychosomatic symptoms brought on by anxiety and the thoughts of attending school. Does the unwell feeling go away quickly when they are allowed to remain at home (the anxiety is removed). Do these reports of feeling unwell happen while getting ready for school or the night before a school day. What could be contributing to the 'unwell feeling' being brought on. The answers to these questions will help support you to determine if the CYP is starting to show signs of EBSA rather than having contracted any flu/cold/medical illnesses.
	Identify a 'trusted adult' in school who can start to build a relationship with the CYP and who the CYP knows they can go to with any worries. This adult must have a good understanding on EBSA and how to support the CYP "therapeutically" (i.e., they have had training in therapeutic approaches, such as reflective listening and displaying empathy). The trusted adult must determine the frequency that they should meet up with the CYP. The trusted adult must have dedicated and sufficient time to build rapport with the CYP. It will be the role of this adult to gather the CYP's views and explore their needs relating to EBSA. Ensure the CYP has "back-up adult/s" that they know they can go to if their key trusted adult is absent. If rapport is not possible with the selected 'trusted adult', change the staff member. Refer to 'What makes a 'trusted adult' guidance' document at the end of this document (Appendix A).
	 Determine the specific functions of behaviours that apply to the CYP by: Gathering detailed information and Identifying triggers/ commonalities within the avoidance behaviour. A class/lesson, people/places? Explore their potential anxious thoughts which might be triggering their intermittent avoidance in school or with attending school. Refer to the Cambridgeshire EBSA toolkit for resources that you can use to gather this information with the CYP, such as the Emotional wellbeing cards, Ideal school, etc. The West Sussex <u>Return to School Planning Tool</u> looks at the four main functions of avoidance in greater depth and how to analyse this information. You can refer to this document for further guidance.
	Following on from identifying the basis for the anxious feelings, agree on the adaptions that will be put in place to reduce the CYP anxieties and increase the willingness to attend school (i.e., 'Pull to' factors) Refer to the suggested strategies checklist (Appendix B) and the School wellbeing Cards Action Plan in the 'Gradual Return/Re-integration Plan' section of the EBSA Toolkit.
	 Alongside adaptions, start weekly emotional literacy sessions for the CYP focusing on anxiety. Teach them: to understand why their body reacts like this. about their negative automatic thoughts and how to counteract these. different calming/regulation techniques and practice along with them.



Return to class or lessons.

This pathway is to support the CYP whose attendance has dropped to under 75% and/or their avoidances have become frequent. This CYP is still accessing the school site, but they might also be refusing certain lessons, activities, or to enter the classroom/s while in school. The CYP spends a lot of time outside of class within a 'safe base/haven' or other planned area within the school. They might spend a lot of time with trusted adults or require more staff input to enter the school site.



refresh	gular trent trusted adult relationship trusted adult relationship trusted adult trusted a
Complete by	
	 Once again, seek Training/ refresher training/ re-familiarisation: If this has not already taken place in school, complete EBSA training. Consider any new staff that may have missed out on previous EBSA training opportunities. Refer to/familiarise yourself with the Cambridgeshire EBSA toolkit and your own resource bank. Bear in mind that the more the CYP is out of school, the more their EBSA is likely to be maintained due to: Increasing feelings of disconnection and isolation New academic anxieties related to falling behind and fears about how they will catch up Increased access to engaging and pleasurable activities at home The growing belief that their time at home is easier without the many social, physical, and sensory demands of the school environment.
	 It will be essential now to schedule regular parent meetings to review progress and problem solve any difficulties. Meet (again) with parents to gather their views and any potential changes/ 'trigger events' that have occurred at home/ at school (e.g., bullying) that have resulted in the CYP's attendance levels dropping further. Problem solve what might not have worked if early prevention measures were put in place and what could be done differently. Reflect on the relationship the CYP has with the trusted adult. Does the CYP feel this adult is trusted and they can go to them with any worries? Do they feel that this adult is available and responsive? Does the adult have the time to be responsive (e.g., are able to meet the CYP within 10 minutes of a situation occurring)? Review the CYP's progress with emotional literacy and any anxiety management strategies they have been taught. Are these strategies effective and meaningful for the CYP? Has their level of understanding grown, and can they demonstrate this? Are they actively challenging their automatic negative thoughts?
	Signpost parents to the 'Working with Parents/Carers' section of the EBSA Toolkit
	If a 'trusted adult' relationship was established as part of an 'early prevention' approach, then review this relationship. It is likely that the CYP will now require more frequent contact from this adult as part of more regular check in's/meet ups, emotional support, etc. Approaches like <u>AVIGuk Video Interaction Guidance</u> (VIG) could be used to help staff to identify and develop their relationship building skills by helping them to develop their skills of attunement. Please speak to your link Educational Psychologist for further information. If the CYP does not currently have a trusted adult in school, then schedule time for the CYP to build this relationship with an approriate school staff member. Please review the 'What makes a 'trusted adult' guidance' document at the end of this document (Appendix A).

During the time with the CYP:



	 Cover topics like what they enjoy in school and their strengths. This will help inform adaptions. Start emotional literacy support, and education around anxiety and regulation support - Identify and practise calming strategies and teach them about automatic negative thoughts <u>ANTS - Automatic Negative Thoughts</u>. Talk about worries regarding classroom/ lessons and ensure to ask sensory questions. Rag rate the school through the CYP's timetable to identify areas of difficulty. This can also be used to identify things that will draw them back to the classroom like favoured lessons. Note: It is essential to make the CYP feel heard, understood, and believed.
	(Note: You may have already completed this step as part of an early prevention approach. However,
	 'fact check' yourself and be open to the possibility that what you knew before might have changed) There are four main functions of avoidance: To avoid things or situations that elicit negative feelings or high levels of stress or anxiety. To escape difficult social situations. To get attention from or spend more time with significant others at home. To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating. CYP can show more than one function and most commonly present with both 1 & 2 or 1 & 3 at a minimum.
	Therefore, determine the specific functions of behaviours that now apply to the CYP by:
	 Gathering detailed information and Identifying triggers/ commonalities within the avoidance behaviour. A class/lesson, people/places? Exploring their potential anxious thoughts which might be triggering their intermittent avoidance in school or with attending school.
	Refer to the Cambridgeshire EBSA toolkit for resources that you can use to gather this information.
	The West Sussex <u>Return to School Planning Tool</u> looks at the four functions in greater depth and how to analyse this information. You can refer to this document for further guidance.
	Complete a Sensory Audit for Schools and Classrooms and individual sensory checklist (from the 'Gradual Return/Re-integration Plan' section of the toolkit) to support with making adaptions to the sensory environment for the CYP where this might be causing anxiety.
	 Following on from identifying the basis for the anxious feelings and/or identifying any problems that might have occurred with previous adaptions: agree on and put in place the (new) adaptions that will be put in place to reduce the CYP anxieties and increase the willingness to attend school (i.e., 'Pull to' factors) Ensure that these will be reviewed regularly. Initially this might be once a day, then once a week. This will depend on professional judgement and how the CYP presents at any given time. However, when attendance is becoming frequent so will the reviews need to be frequent. Refer to the suggested strategies checklist (Appendix B; e.g., 'safe spaces', calming tools, transition
	supports)
	 If emotional literacy training and support has already been put in place for the CYP as part of an early prevention approach, then review this. Does the CYP show a growing understanding of their own anxiety? Can they recognise how anxiety presents in their body? Can they regulate using the taught strategies or do they need alternative strategies? Are they challenging their automatic negative thoughts? <u>ANTS - Automatic Negative Thoughts</u>. If not already in place, then alongside adaptions, start once a week emotional literacy teaching for the CYP focusing on anxiety. Teach them: to understand why their body reacts like this. about their negative automatic thoughts and how to counteract these. How to practise different calming/regulation techniques, by explicitly modelling this with them.
	In some cases, the CYP needs time to build on their relationships with their class/lesson teachers.
	This will be important for any lessons they are avoiding.This needs to be 1:1 time outside of the lesson.



	 The teacher should show understanding of the CYP's needs and adaptions in the lesson and speak to them about this so that they CYP knows that their needs will be met. This will reduce their anxieties. Establish a way that the CYP can indicate they have an issue and a way for the teacher to acknowledge them and indicate they will be with them shortly – in a way that is most comfortable for the CYP.
	 Factors to consider with problem solving: Was the plan gradual enough? Steps small enough? Did the CYP say they were ready to move on when they weren't? Were they prepared for the next steps? Has something changed at home? In School? Are there exams? Do they have sufficient time to build relationships in school with staff? Did something go wrong and the CYP did not have the opportunity to explore their day and have issues resolved before a return?

🛱 Return to School

This pathway is to support the CYP who is no longer attending school full time. They might be on a reduced timetable and/or are only accessing school for very brief periods (e.g., once a day for an hour/ 3 times once a week for an hour, etc). Best practise would suggest that the CYP has received a high level of support prior to this occuring through early prevention measures and support to return to lessons/class/activities.



Regular Planning meetings Home education Risk & Resiliency Building relationshi on plan Making adjustment s prepare CYP for return Adult check in's Review			
Complete by			
	Now that the CYP is outside of school it is more important than before to continue contact with parents and significantly increase supportive measures. <u>Regular joint planning meeting:</u> (Continue to) meet with the parents/carers and the CYP to gather their views and further background information regarding school attendance difficulties. (e.g., are any family members in the home experiencing a longer-term sickness that is making leaving the home difficult for the CYP? Has there been a bereavement? Etc) Support parents to feel heard and understood in a non-judgmental way. Having a CYP with EBSA increases anxiety and parents often feel blamed. It is important to be direct during conversations and, if relevant, discuss how their own parent anxiety might be maintaining the CYP or young person's anxiety and school avoidance, such as parents declining activities on the CYP's behalf. Signpost parents to support: <u>https://notfineinschool.co.uk/; https://www.teamsquarepeg.org/</u>		
	 Ensure parents are keeping up with consistent routines and expectations within the home and limiting tangible reinforcers. Re-establish everyday basics: Establish calm morning routines, Continue with sleep routines as if the CYP were expected to be going to school (i.e., approriate bedtime and wake times still set in place) Dressing in their uniform or dressing for the day (i.e., wearing something that would be approriate for going out in public even if there is no intention of this happening). Organising their school bag and/or learning space 		



 Practising the walk or drive to school. Completing home learning to closely reflect school timetable or within school hours. Supporting with chores at home
 Increase rewards for attending school and decrease rewards for non-attendance. Please review the Cambridgeshire EBSA Overview document on 'push away' and 'pull to' factors for more clarity. Tangible reinforcers are those things within the home that make it more likely for the CYP will want to remain at home rather than return to school, e.g., additional gaming time, additional technology use, extra time to engage in other pleasurable activities or personal interests, limited or no expectations within the day, limited or no requirement to complete learning tasks. CYP must have boundaries on their access to 'tangible reinforcers'. They need to still have limits on this as if they were attending a school day.
Signpost parents to the Parent Guides in the 'Working with Parents/Carers' section of the EBSA Toolkit.
Any missed education can heighten anxiety and increase the CYP's resistance to returning to school. The CYP must continually access education at home , for example, through home learning packs, tuition and accessing lessons online. It is essential that the CYP is shown that any work they have done at home is still valued by their school. This helps supports them to feel connected and that their efforts are valued. Therefore, they need to have consistent feedback from teachers on any work they complete.
 Complete the Risk and Resilience Questionnaires and Scoring Template (in the 'Working with Parents/Carers' section of the EBSA Toolkit) Risks to address: Bullying/social isolation/difficulties making friendships - school will need to head off bullying or put a social development program in place to support the CYP navigate social situations and conflicts. Separation anxiety - consider supports during this time, e.g., meet and greet. Family stress/bereavement and loss/parental illness/young carer/parental mental health - signpost to external supports e.g., CAMHS, Family Worker, YOUnited, young carers. Discuss any other changes at home. Difficulties in particular lessons - complete academic assessments to determine any learning needs that will inform next steps of support. Review the CYPs academic progress and any areas where they need additional support. Consider any upcoming tests/transitions that may make the EBSA worse. Neurodiversity like ASD – consider sensory difficulties and complete sensory audits (provided in the 'Gradual Return/Re-integration Plan' section of the EBSA Toolkit).
 Schedule time for the CYP to continue to have and build on their trusted adult relationships with school staff. This will be particularly important while they are out of school, and they should continue to have regular contact with their trusted staff member. Consider where this will take place (in school or at home visits). It is best for this to be face-to-face. During the time with the CYP: Cover topics like what they enjoy in school and their strengths. This will help inform the return plan. Start emotional literacy support, and education around anxiety and regulation support - Identify and practise calming strategies and teach them about automatic negative thoughts <u>ANTS</u> - <u>Automatic Negative Thoughts</u>. This can and should continue online if the CYP is unable to return to school. Talk about worries regarding school returns and make notes to support the return plan. Create a timeline of significant events in CYP's life and scale the levels of anxiety experienced. Support them to prepare a script to respond to peers when they ask them why they have not been attending school. Rag rate the school through the CYP's timetable to identify areas of difficulty. This can also be used to identify things that will draw them back to school like favoured lessons and teachers. Reduce areas of high anxiety (e.g., meet and greet, peers to walk with in school, 'safe spaces', calming tools) agree a 'stepladder'- graded hierarchy of exposure to the feared situation (e.g., The Ladder of Strength & Courage from the 'Gradual Return/Re-integration Plan' section of the EBSA Toolkit). Ensuring planned regulation/relaxation/grounding strategies are in place.



	 return to school will lead to feelings of increased anxiety so be mindful of this. Adults must: Actively listen. Ask open-ended and curious questions. Acknowledge their thoughts, feelings, and particularly their anxiety and reassure them through specific supports that will be in place. Paraphrase and clarify. Summarise and prompt to CYP to think about what they need. See EBSA Toolkit section on 'Gathering CYP's Views' for tools to support with this.
	Agree on gradual reintegration to school plan with CYP and Parents. Use the information you have gathered on risks, strengths, and resilience to create the gradual and graded return to school. Link these to the aspirations of the CYP for their future.
	The return to school must be at the earliest opportunity. The longer a CYP is outside of school the more their EBSA behaviours will be maintained.
	 Create a visual method for breaking down the component parts of the CYPs returns constructed with the CYP. The steps must be small and realistic, and agreed by all involved. For example: Thursday start as there is not much of the week left and they can have the feeling of
	 completing a week partway. End of day to feel the success of completing a day. Start during P.E. or other favoured lesson. Or at breaks to see friends
	 There must be opportunities for success at each stage. Anticipate difficulties, such as those within the home-to-school transition and what supports are needed e.g., Agree clear routine for saying goodbye or entering school. Plan/expect periods of regression.
	 The aim is always to decrease the risk factors and increase the resilience factors. Always stick to the plan agreed with the CYP - don't change things if they are going well and ask them unexpectedly to stay longer that day or week. The CYP might say this is okay to please the adult but then will feel pressurised and lied to when agreements aren't stuck to. See Appendix C for examples of small steps and weekly targets.
	Ensure that all of the adaptions/ supports are in place before the CYP returns to school to ensure that their re-integration is successful and to reduce their anxieties. The CYP must be able to rely on what the adult has told them would be in place actually being in place when they need it.
	 Prepare the CYP for their return. What they can expect in the day How they can access their trusted adult and when they will see them What they can say to their peers if they are asked why they were absent Explain how the CYP can access safe spaces/ regulation activities & how to ask for help (e.g., key adult/s) Etc
	 Transition objects for psychological comfort might also be helpful such as: Photo of parent/carers Matching hearts drawn on hand <u>Separation Heart</u> Spray of perfume Special charm or item Phone calls to check in with parents
	Special jobs can also help with transitions that are difficult.
	Ensure check-ins from a trusted adult during times they are in school. The frequency of the meet ups will depend on the needs of the CYP, e.g., mornings, several times a day, throughout the day, end of day. Spend additional time welcoming the CYP back to school.



 Ensure time is scheduled to check in with CYP at the end of any time in school to address issues that may have occurred and discuss what went well. The check-ins must happen at the end of their time in school to ensure the CYP doesn't go home with any unresolved issues that may cause them to avoid school. Identify 3 things that went well that day, even if small. Praise any successes they have had like making the next step. Discuss what did not go well and what will make this better next time or what additional support will be put in place.
 SENDCo/ Senior Leadership Team/ Lead/Allocated staff member to review the plan every week. Continue close communication between home and school. If working well set next steps/targets. If not, problem solve. Factors to consider with problem solving: Was the plan gradual enough? Steps small enough? Did the CYP say they were ready to move on when they weren't? Were they prepared for the next steps? Has something changed at home? In School? Are their exams? Do they have time to build relationships in school with staff? Did something go wrong and CYP did not have opportunity to explore their day and have issues resolved before a return?



Appendix A What makes a 'trusted adult'?

<u>For example</u>, an experienced teaching assistant, teacher or adult who has appropriate training and/or experience in therapeutic approaches and EBSA.

Person Specification

- They have a friendly personality which others find endearing and welcoming.
- They demonstrate good interpersonal skills with children and adults.
- They can stay calm under pressure, such as when faced with an anxious/ withdrawn and emotional child or young person (CYP).
- They can gain the confidence of children or young people who display difficult or dangerous behaviours or who are socially withdrawn.
- They understand and have training on how to regulate big feelings and emotions, such as stress, anxiety, grief, worry, anger, and conflict.
- They can model compassion, warmth, and empathy. Be respectful and value each child/young person.
- They have the time and flexibility to be responsive to meet the child/young person's (CYPs) needs. Therefore, the adult/s must have flexibility in their timetable. This is because the frequency with which they might meet the CYP will vary greatly and depend on the CYP. Initially they are likely to meet more frequently and have this reduce over time according to their professional judgement and how the CYP is presenting. Meeting or check-ins should be planned in consultation with CYP at a time that the CYP feels will be most beneficial.
- They can be associated with safety and support. This person must be someone that the CYP has a positive and trusted relationship with or rather someone that has the time to develop this trusted relationship to a point where the CYP feels they can turn to this person with any worries and knows that they will be available.
- They have experience in supporting children and young people with emotional based school avoidance (EBSA), or at least sufficient knowledge on how to support children and young people with EBSA (i.e., they have been given the opportunity to complete training and review the EBSA guidance documents and toolkit).
- They can support the CYP with their emotional development through modelling and/or guided activities (which may require training or planning time).
- They can support the CYP to develop their social participation and interaction skills, i.e., supporting them to initiate and maintain friendships through engagement in social activities.
- They enjoy learning and continuing their professional development.
- They understand how the CYP's emotional needs impact on their ability to contribute to school life and how essential it is to make small steps of gradual progress.
- They have training and experience in 'reflective listening':
 - Display empathy (not sympathy)
 - o Listening actively (this involves a high level of self-awareness and concentration)
 - Maintaining an open posture and body language. Controlling facial expressions.
 - Validating thoughts and feelings
 - Asking open-ended and curious questions
 - Paraphrasing and clarifying
 - $\circ~$ Prompting the CYP to think about what they need.
 - They can work independently and show initiative.
 - They have good time management and organisational skills.
 - They can plan programmes of support that incorporate variety, interest, and pace.
 - They can keep succinct records of involvement and review these and any other plans to problemsolve and ensure continued success forward.
 - They can liaise with teachers and other support assistants about the needs and progress of CYP receiving support.
 - They can liaise with parents in line with the school policy.



Appendix B

Strategies Checklist

The below is list of potential strategies that can be trialled with the CYP. Not all these strategies will be relevant or appropriate to all CYP. Therefore, all support needs to be tailored to the individual through a person-centred approach. What works with one CYP will not necessarily work for another.

Tick off those which were or are being used	Details (e.g., how this was implemented, for how long, how this was adapted further through problem solving, etc)
Transport arrangements	
Meet & greet	
Buddy System	
Safe haven/ base	
Trusted adult/s	
Emotional literacy support	
Regulation training	
Flexible timetable	
Reduced timetable	
Adult check ins (as agreed throughout the day)	
Transitional objects	
Text or phone calls home	
Environmental Sensory audit	
Individual Sensory Checklist	
Anxiety mapping/ Observational Schedule of stress	
Structured social time	

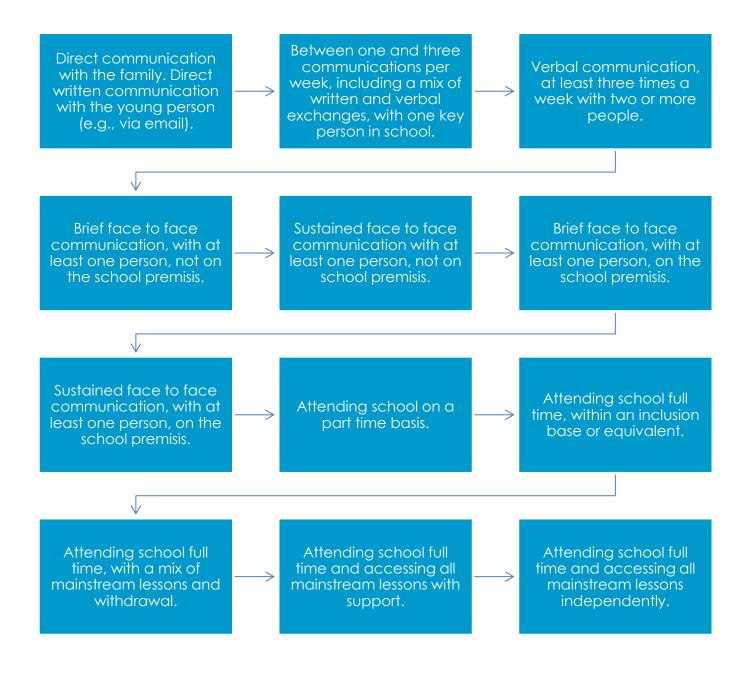


Seating in class	
End of day check in	
Entering class when it is empty	
Leaving class 5 minutes early	
One-on-one time with teacher/s to build rapport	
Alternative routes to education	
Special jobs/tasks	
Strategy sheet shared with all staff	
Increase intrinsic rewards	
Offer them a script to communicate to peers on why they were absent	
Person- Centred Planning Tools	Person Centred Planning What Is Person Centred Planning? (inclusive-solutions.com) Speak to your link Educational Psychologist for more information and support with this approach.



Appendix C

Example of Small Steps







Example of Weekly Targets

