



Reducing Barriers to Education and Attendance (RBTE) Guidance Document 2026-27



[Reducing Barriers to Education Padlet](#)

Preventative: Whole School/College Approach

Develop staff understanding and whole school/college approaches to support early identification and intervention so attendance-related needs are addressed early.

- Regularly gather children and families' views (e.g. wellbeing, relationships, bullying, check-ins, surveys, EFS audits or BeeWell) and develop the use of Person Centred Planning Tools to build strong partnerships (EPS/ SEND Leaders can provide training).
- Book Reducing Barriers to Education (RBTE) training.
- Coordinate support across attendance, SEND and pastoral teams in school/college to ensure consistency in approach.
- Develop and regularly review your whole school/college approach to mental health and wellbeing to foster a culture of belonging and inclusion (e.g. EFS).
- Use the 'WARMTH- Whole School/College Audit' tool to inform your approach and available support (can be accessed on the Padlet).
- Monitor attendance data closely using the Banded Approach Guidance (Attendance Team).
- Ensure a robust graduated approach to identifying and responding to needs early. Use the Attendance and SEND Graduated Approach documents to plan support.
- Attend Termly Attendance Network Meetings for LA updates and peer support.

Early Intervention - if you have concerns about a child's attendance

Be curious and responsive. Listen, understand and formalise support. Consider with sensitivity the impact of attendance difficulties on the family.

- Explore pupil and parent/carer views, ensuring these directly inform support.
- Refer to early emerging concerns guidance (page 12).
- Develop and review support plans regularly with child and family - see Padlet for all resources to support assess-plan-do-review cycles.
- Share the RBTE parent/carer guidance and the monthly drop ins with families.
- Attend RBTE multiagency virtual problem solving sessions for advice.
- Use SSP to ensure holistic support for the whole family.
- Explore unmet SEND using the SEND Graduated Approach and support from other services (e.g. Attendance Team, Youth Service, LSS, PIT, EPS Drop In or casework).

Targeted Support and Extended Non Attendance

- Ensure a robust individual action plan is in place which is shared with your Attendance Officer. A Severe Absence (SA) Action Plan is required if attendance is under 50% but can be used much earlier to record support plans.
- Use the Banded Approach to Monitoring Attendance and Attendance Graduated Response to inform support plans and set achievable outcomes (see Targeted support - page 16).
- Ensure support from external services has been sought and reviewed (e.g. Attendance Team, LSS, PIT, EPS, Youth Service, Early Help, Thrive in Education Offer, CAMHS).
- School based interventions for parent/carers can be sought via EPS Packages and IReach.
- Consider Alternative Provision, Primary At Risk or Arbour Academy referrals.
- Compile evidence and request an Access to Education consultation via your Attendance Officer (where appropriate and checklist criteria have been met).

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RBTE support includes the following, which is free for all schools and colleges to access:

1.Training: Training is available on request for individual schools/colleges by emailing: EPS@Salford.Gov.UK

2.School/ College staff - virtual problem solving sessions with a multiagency team.

3.Professionals - virtual problem solving sessions with a multiagency team.

4.Supportive drop ins for parents/carers for signposting and peer support (led by the Educational Psychology Service, Salford Parent Carer Forum, parent/carers with lived experience and guests from multiagency teams).

Dates and supporting tools and **resources can be found on the Reducing Barriers to Education Padlet**. Please bookmark this page - all updated resources will be shared here. A QR Code to the Padlet can be found on the front page of this guidance.

Coproduction of Salford’s guidance and support offer

During the 25-26 academic year, in collaboration with [Salford Parent Carer Forum](#), we worked with parents/carers to:

- Develop the parent/carer drop-ins
- Develop this guidance document
- Develop resources to support home-school/college communication

During the 26-27 academic year, we plan to carry out co-production events with children and young people too. If you would like to be part of this work, please contact:

EPS@Salford.gov.uk



Section 1: Background

Overview and local context

School attendance is one of the biggest challenges COVID-19 has posed to children and young people, impacting on their academic outcomes, wellbeing and safety. In Salford, attendance in our schools has improved but still over 9,000 pupils were persistently absent last academic year (24-25). Improving attendance remains a key priority for the local authority, as detailed in Salford's [Attendance Strategy 24-26](#).

Support is available for children and young people in Salford who experience barriers to school or college attendance. We know outcomes are better the earlier difficulties are identified, and that supporting children and young people's access to education leads to good wellbeing and broader life experiences.

In this guidance, we emphasise the importance of **early intervention and reasonable adjustments** to remove barriers to attendance and educational engagement. This may mean a shift from seeing attendance difficulties as an individual (within child) problem to looking at all the factors within a child's life (e.g. school, home and community). Attendance difficulties require **broader, holistic support plans**.

Top Ten Tips recommended by Salford Schools to support school attendance

- ✓ **Identify a key adult** for the child to form a positive relationship
- ✓ **Nurture** the relationship with the family to build trust
- ✓ **Communicate** needs of child to all staff to ensure consistency in support
- ✓ **Uniform adaptations** to support any sensory needs
- ✓ **Plan in school support** e.g. soft starts, different entrance points, visual aids, reduced timetable
- ✓ **Peer-to-peer support** – group activities
- ✓ **Regularly review** and **adapt plans** with the young person and family
- ✓ **Home visits** from key adults to maintain connections and relationships
- ✓ **One size doesn't fit all** - every young person's progress will be different
- ✓ Consider that progress may be **small slow steps**

Research-base

Recognised drivers of non-attendance include:

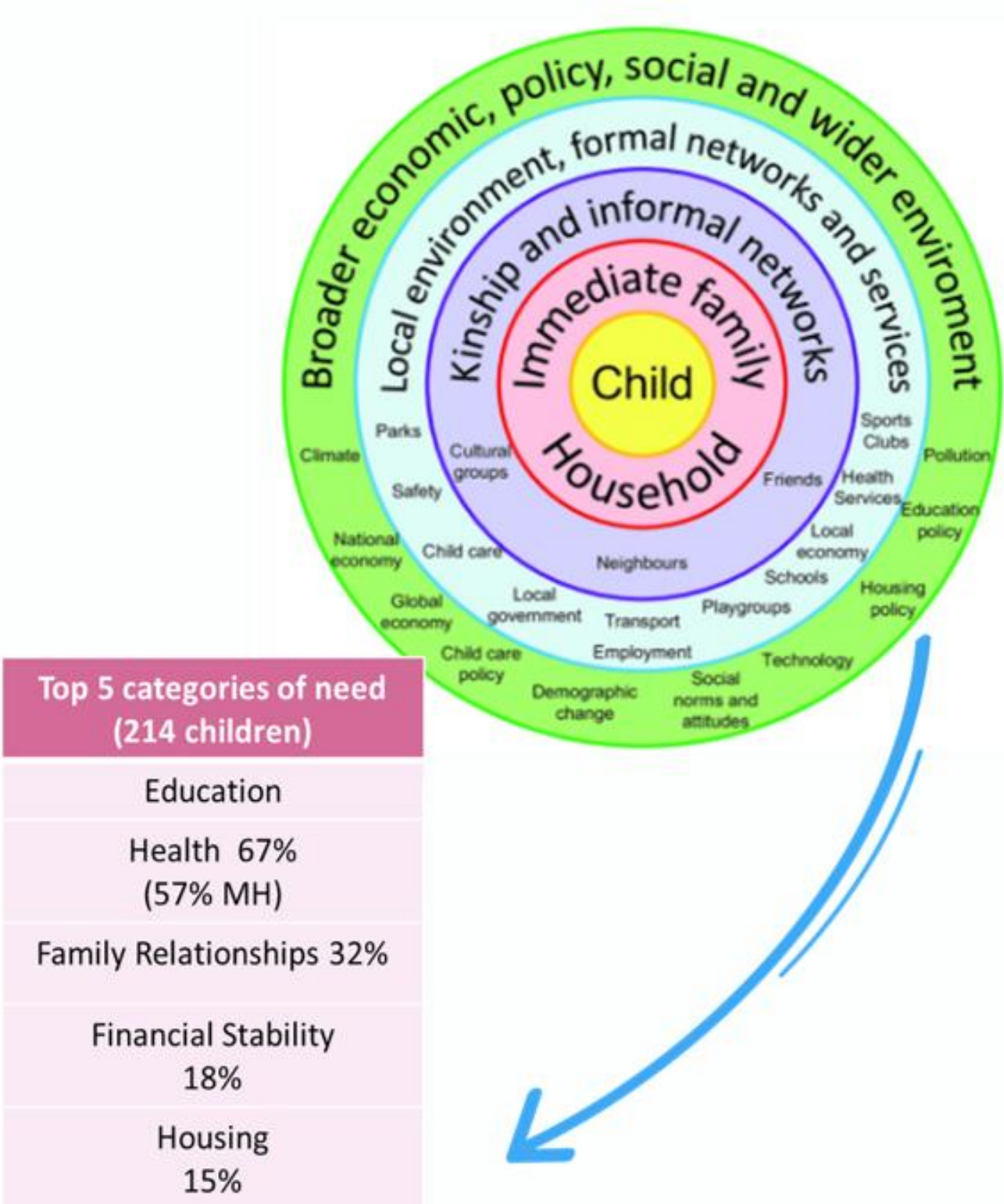
- Transition points, Year 7 appears to be a particular trigger for reduced attendance, but there is evidence for a second ‘transition’ point at Year 8. The impact of transitions on attendance is greater for those with SEND (ImpactEd, 2024).
- School based pressures (Popoola & Sivers, 2024; Good Childhood Report, 2024),
- Reduced sense of belonging at school (ImpactEd, 2024; BeeWell, 2025),
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND; Corcoran & Kelly, 2023) and neurodiversity (Connolly, Constable, Mullaly, 2023; Hamilton, 2024);
- Inequality, deprivation and marginalisation. The cost-of-living crisis and increase in poverty directly impact on attendance. Vulnerable children and those from disadvantaged areas are at higher risk of non-attendance (Burtonshaw & Dorrell, 2023; Bond et al., 2024).

Complexity of school attendance difficulties:

The 2024 Child of the North’s [Attendance Report](#) summarises the current research literature on school attendance difficulties (which has grown considerably since the pandemic) and details the complexity of school absence. Attendance difficulties are rarely due to a single cause; rather, they emerge through the cumulative effect of multiple factors.

“Attendance has always been a symptom, rather than a cause, a manifestation of complex issues across the education system and beyond” (Burtonshaw & Dorrell, 2023)

Research following the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted barriers often overlap and include factors such as mental health, SEND, poverty, bullying, racism, discrimination, and caring responsibilities (Shafan-Azhar & Bottomley, 2024; Heyne et al., 2024; ImpactEd, 2024).. For example, female pupils eligible for free school meals who also have SEND are particularly at risk. (Bond et al., 2024; ImpactEd, 2024;). Within Salford, the role of Family Help Practitioners (FHP: Early Help Practitioners focused on attendance support) has highlighted the interlinked nature of school-based experiences, health/ mental health, family relationships, financial and housing stability on attendance.



Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (influencing systems around children) and FHP data 24-25 (areas needing support in pink box)

Working together with families

The statutory guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE, August 2024) makes the link between improving attendance and wider school culture clearer, including the importance of working in partnership with families and adopting a support-first approach. Rigorous monitoring of attendance patterns (using the banded approach to monitoring) and close liaison with families supports early identification. Where difficulties arise, support plans can be developed through listening and understanding and formalising support plans (through assess-plan-do-review cycles, (see pages 12-15).

There have also been changes in the parent-school relationship following the pandemic, which impact attendance. For example, term-time holidays have become normalised and fines are not an effective deterrent (Bond et al., 2024, ImpactEd 2024, Burtonshaw & Dorrell 2023). However, some findings contradict popular opinion. For example, research does not support a causal link between increased parental home-working and non-attendance (Burtonshaw & Dorrell, 2023).

The guidance therefore also **places strong emphasis on working with families**. Families often face stigma and blame when attendance difficulties arise, yet they are key partners in developing solutions. **Successful practice involves inclusive whole school approaches that foster a sense of belonging for pupils and families, strong relationships, good communication systems and holistic support plans.**

Multiagency Support for families

We recognise that **barriers to attendance cannot be reduced by schools and colleges alone**. Multiagency collaboration is a consistent theme throughout the Attendance Strategy, and the Reducing Barriers to Education (RBTE) support offer has been developed through collaboration between the following services: School Attendance Team, Educational Psychology Service (EPS), Early Help Team (including Early Help School Coordinators), Salford School Partnership (SSP), Family Help Practitioners, SEND Leaders, Primary Inclusion Team (PIT), Learning Support Service (LSS), Autism and Social Communication Team (ASC), CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) & iReach, Salford Parent Carer Forum and SIASS (Salford Information, Advice and Support Service).

“When my son hit a crisis point and couldn’t attend school anymore, the thing that made the biggest difference was having professionals genuinely come together. I got to know the people involved in his case, from the school pastoral lead, SENCo, Educational Psychologist, Access to Education and Learning Support Services, and over time we built trust and report information was shared transparently. It started to feel like a real team around my child, with a shared goal: to understand his needs and shape a plan together.” Parent

Belonging and the importance of relationships

School culture and ethos is at the heart of supporting attendance (ImpactEd, 2024a; Bond et al., 2024). School belonging refers to the extent to which young people feel accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in school; maintaining a sense of belonging is a basic human need and therefore fundamental to wellbeing (National Children's Bureau, 2024).

ImpactEd (2024a) surveyed over 30,000 young people and found having **a sense of school belonging to be a key driver of attendance. This appears particularly important for females and is closely linked with feeling safe at school.** This was explored further with 350 schools, to highlight practical case studies and resources that have been effective across the UK, summarised in the image below, further detail and school case studies can be found here: [ImpactEd](#).

National #BeeWell Research (2025) demonstrates that school belonging is the strongest predictor of later wellbeing from all of the school-related domains in the survey. There is a reciprocal relationship between school belonging and wellbeing. In Autumn 2024, Salford's BeeWell data highlighted:

- 3 in 5 young people (58.7%) in Salford feel like they belong at school 'quite a bit' or 'a lot', but this was higher in some areas than others (compared to 59.6% in Greater Manchester).
- A sense of school belonging is lower for older pupils (65.2% of young people in Year 7, compared to 51.6% of young people in Year 10).

1

The start of the year is crucial. The decline in attendance in the 23/24 academic year was most steep between the first half term and the second half term. This is mirrored in the social and emotional data reported by young people, especially in Year 7. A strong start to attendance routines could therefore have significant benefit for the rest of the academic year.

2

Sense of belonging continues to be associated with school attendance, and quality of relationships may be an important influence. Over 80% of pupils indicated that they were aware of the consequences of skipping lessons. A much smaller proportion felt that their teachers or school cared when they missed school.

3

To build belonging, a focus on small communities, individual attention and specialist support can help. Schools in the project found success in focusing on small groups such as form group, lunch and after school clubs as accessible ways to help pupils engage with some aspects of the school community.

4

Schools can develop a sense of safety through close attention to their physical and social environment. Schools found success through identifying "hotspot" areas in the school that are associated with disruptive behaviour. Addressing these, combined with strong daily routines around attendance, was found to be successful.

5

A relational and targeted approach to intervention was particularly effective. Alongside whole-cohort policies and strategies, schools found in-depth engagement with a small group of pupils to be particularly beneficial, focusing on building deep relationships with individuals.

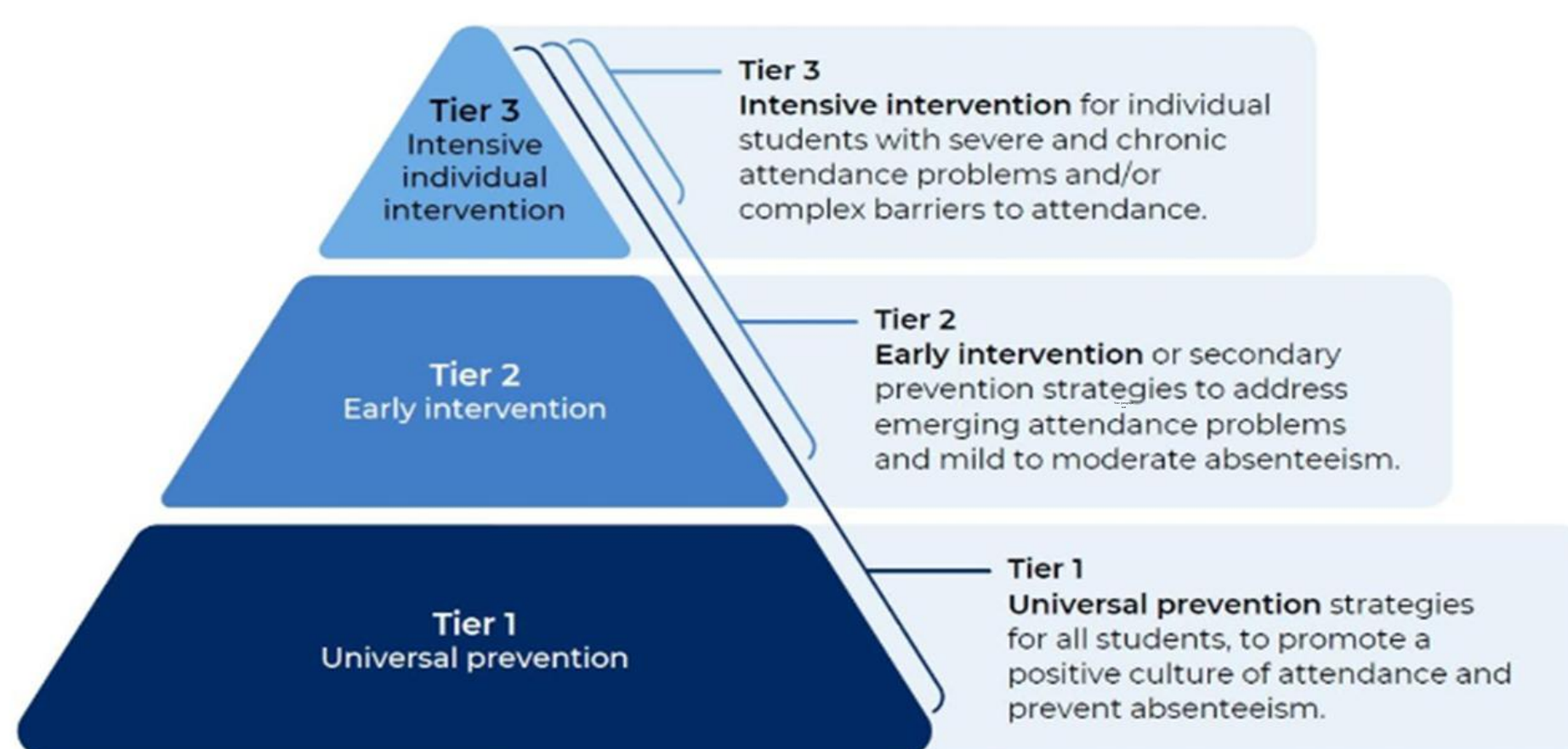
6

Seeing attendance as everyone's job can help build a sense of action around absence. Attendance is not a discrete issue and is closely linked to quality of teaching and areas such as reading. This can be used to build a community around attendance for all school staff. Using student leadership as part of this process can be powerful.

Effective approaches to intervention

Effective intervention to improve attendance is best organised through a Multi-Tiered System of Support focused on interventions at different levels (Kearney & González, 2022; Bond et al, 2024). This is a structure that is familiar within educational settings:

- **At Tier 1**, schools should embed universal practices that promote school belonging, wellbeing, and inclusion for all pupils.
- **At Tier 2**, targeted interventions such as environmental adjustments and adaptations, trusted key adults, mentoring and peer support systems, family support, and flexible reintegration plans help prevent escalation in difficulties and a drop in attendance. This may include approaches such as telepresence technology (AV1 robots, see Fletcher et al., 2024) to access lessons from a safe space in school, as part of a re-integration plan, to prevent missed learning.
- **At Tier 3**, multi-agency work is needed, often including mentoring or therapeutic support, access to smaller or more nurturing spaces within school (resource bases), or alternative



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

Previously, research and guidance around non-attendance has been largely focused on the anxiety cycle at an individual level, and the use of graded exposure to manage this. This can be relevant when incorporated in a broader person-centred approach. However, it should not be the starting point. In many cases, an anxiety-focused approach won't be effective if there have not been changes to the environment and a full understanding of what is causing the worry. This is a helpful read: [Anxiety at school is complicated](#).

Central to all tiers is co-production with families and listening to young people's voices.

Young people repeatedly tell us (research literature and practice-based evidence) that they do not feel listened to early enough. Worries are reduced when support is put in place sooner:

- Young people describe their non-attendance as a logical and understandable response to the situation.
- Difficulties tend to start gradually. They want to be at school and have tried hard to be, but without changes to the environment it becomes too hard, meaning that not going to school is a last resort. Their wellbeing is further impacted by not going to school.
- Listening and understanding as soon as issues are raised (parents or child) is most effective.

Children and young people tell us important information and try to solve their problems through their actions and behaviour; we need to listen (Corcoran and Kelly, 2022)

Supporting Neurodivergent children and young people

There is a growing evidence-base to indicate that autistic children and young people experience barriers to education at a significantly earlier age, and their experience of it is more long lasting (Connolly et al., 2023). This can be a result of not feeling well understood (by others and/or by themselves, their self-identity), and ‘a poor fit between school environments and autistic ways of being in the world’ (Hamilton, 2024).

“I had no clue that this was actually a thing that happened to a lot of people and that it was linked to autism... I couldn’t have done anything without the proper support and that wasn’t my fault. I can’t blame myself for not going to school” (Neilson & Bond, 2023)

In addition to the recommendations in this guidance, which are supportive for **all** children and young people, there are additional resources at the back of the guidance specifically for autistic and neurodivergent children and young people.

Training on Neurodiversity Affirming Inclusive Practices is available through the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and Autism and Social Communication Team. The EPS provide workshops for parents/carers, which can be booked via the online **Neurodevelopmental Offer** which provides a range of online support for families including webinars, workshops and courses. There is also a [Neurodiversity-Information, Guidance and Support](#) Padlet which is updated regularly.

Salford’s Youth Service offers a range of clubs for children and young people to connect through shared interests such as [NERD Club | mycity Directory](#): A weekly get together for young people to talk about their passions for pop culture, film, tv, anime, comics, and games of all kinds. If you’re a young person who is passionate about something, the group want to hear from you! **Salford Youth Zone (SYZ)** is open to young people aged between eight and 19 and up to 25 with additional needs. SYZ opens 7 days a week, offering over 20 creative and sporting activities every night for just 50p per visit: [Young People - Salford Youth Zone](#)

Spectrum Gaming is an autistic community and advocacy group available for children in Salford to join. Freely available resources written with young people on topics such as school, sleep, behaviour policies are also available on their website: [Home | Spectrum Gaming](#) (please also see the links included on page 27).

Measuring progress

Attendance data

As described within the Banded Approach to Monitoring Attendance Guidance, this approach analyses pupil absence using 5% brackets – moving away from banding pupils in large categories (e.g. above or below 90%), to focus on smaller steps and targets by working towards the next 5% band, rather than setting targets that may seem unobtainable. Each 5% improvement equates to around 2 additional weeks in school each year. For pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 – moving up one 5% band increased their chance of achieving their expected outcomes by 30%. For pupils in Key Stage 4, moving up one band equates to a 10% increase in their expected outcome (DfE, 2025: [The link between attendance and attainment in an assessment year](#)). Finer grained analysis using these bands can also support a whole school strategy.

Accessing this data can be done through **View Your Education Data** (VYED) or through a school’s internal management system. The Attendance Team can provide further guidance and support.

Success measured against co-produced outcomes

Target Monitoring Evaluation (TME) (Dunsmuir, 2009) is a way of actively involving everyone in the action planning process, jointly setting targets and recording progress towards the goal being achieved (Dunsmuir 2009). Your link EP can explain more about this process.

Person Centred Tools, such as a PATH or MAPS, uses both a clear process and visual recording to create a shared vision of a positive future for individuals, teams and whole organisations. They draw on people's ability to visualise different futures and to plan backwards to set shorter term goals to work towards and review. The EPS or SEND Leaders can provide training.

For some young people, measuring wellbeing more generally using scaling or opportunities for engagement across the week (e.g. to leave the house, meet a mentor or friend, engage in something enjoyable, access tuition) may be a better indicator of much smaller steps of progress (please see the section on extended non-attendance on page 17).

The Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle should be completed with families to monitor impact over time. EPS can provide guidance and modelling on the use of all the above.



WARMTH Framework & Key Principles

Salford EPS is part of The Barriers to Education Project, which is working with families, a wide multiagency team and the University of Manchester to develop better guidance to support children and young people who experience barriers to education. The [website](#) provides detailed information on this framework, including a toolkit of resources and case studies. The framework was included as a good practice example in this research summary: [An evidence-based plan for improving school attendance](#) (Bond et al., 2024).

The core principles of this project drives Salford's approach to supporting attendance difficulties and the name change (moving from 'EBSA' to 'Reducing Barriers to Education'). We recognise children and young people want to do well; to enable this, the right support needs to be in place at the right time. This requires a strong preventative approach, alongside early identification and planned support when difficulties arise. Wellbeing is key to supporting access to education and needs to come first.

Through the coproduction process, the Barriers to Education Project has developed the WARMTH Framework, which identifies six key foundations to reduce barriers to education:

- **Wellbeing First:** The understanding that young people are at their best when we prioritise their wellbeing. Focusing on wellbeing, not attendance, is the best way to both improve school attendance and to enable learning.
- **Affirming Practice:** Approaches underpinned by the understanding that everyone is different, and that acceptance of difference ensures equity for all. This means it is important to move towards using an approach that accepts and accommodates for all differences, whether young people have a diagnosis or not.
- **Relational Approach:** Adopting a relational approach doesn't mean having no rules or expectations. A relational approach means supporting young people from a foundation of trusting relationships and addressing the underlying reasons behind observable behaviours, taking a nurturing approach *and* providing boundaries and expectations.
- **Mutual Support and Partnership:** Working together in collaboration to achieve the best outcomes for young people. This part of the framework is about how we can work together, with the knowledge that we are all working together to try and achieve the same thing: the best possible outcomes for young people.
- **Timely Response:** Providing the right support at the most effective time and clearly communicating the support available. Professionals must take family concerns seriously and act quickly. The quicker support is offered when concerns are identified, the less likely young people will reach crisis or experience long term attendance difficulties.
- **Holistic Support:** A whole family/wider service approach, exploring and addressing young people's needs across all facets of their life, reducing silo working by supporting services.

WARMTH is explained with case study examples, within the RBTE training for Salford schools, colleges and services.

Wellbeing first

Even if school or college is meeting a child or young person's academic needs, it isn't possible to be at your best, feel ready to learn, and attend regularly if:

- You do not experience a sense of belonging, connection and community
- You do not have meaningful friendships or relationships in and out of school
- You do not have opportunities to practice and pursue interests and passions
- Your environment is not accommodating to your needs, and you don't feel safe
- You do not understand or accept yourself (self-esteem, neurodivergence, gender identity)
- You are worried about family relationships at home (caring responsibilities, parental mental health needs)
- You have unprocessed trauma as a result of previous negative experiences in the school environment (e.g. strong emotional reactions linked to past feelings and situations which have not been talked through, processed or resolved, so remain a strong trigger)

A sense of belonging and safety in school supports good wellbeing, readiness to learn and attendance.

Use of **sanctions and consequence (external motivators)** are not strongly linked to improved **attendance**. Understanding the importance of education, creating a culture of inclusion and belonging, and strong relationships with peers and teachers are more strongly associated with better attendance (ImpactEd, 2024). The Centre for Mental Health (Shafan-Azhar & Bottomley, 2024) similarly reports a coordinated, whole-family approach is far more effective at enabling regular attendance than sanction-based models.

To put this into practice, **Self Determination Theory** (Ryan & Deci, 2020) provides a helpful way to consider (at a whole school and individual level, for both staff and pupils) how positive connections and opportunities for growth and development (using intrinsic motivators) are provided at school/college to support belonging and a desire to attend:

Autonomy - having choice and control over their actions; **Relatedness** - feeling connected with and accepted by the people around you; **Competence** - feeling that you are learning/developing skills

Salford EPS, Primary Inclusion Team (PIT) SEND Leaders and Thrive in Education offer can support you to apply these principles and the development of your whole school/college approach to mental health using:

- Salford's [Emotionally Friendly Settings \(EFS\)](#) Whole School/ College Approach to mental health
- Relational Guidance Toolkit and [Working Relationally in Educational Settings](#) Padlet
- Resources from the [RBTE Padlet](#) incl. the WARMTH Audit and SDT Reflective Tools

Key messages and principles

- 1.Can't, not won't – children do well if they can.
- 2.Preventing and responding to attendance difficulties needs to be a whole school approach. Early intervention is key.
- 3.Support first. Build trust and work with families.
- 4.Prioritise wellbeing and address wider wellbeing needs (belonging, friendships, self identity) – this supports access to learning.
- 5.Children and young people's views need to be central, and plans needs to be agreed at their pace.



Wellbeing First



Affirming Practice



Relational Approach



Mutual Understanding & Partnership



Timely Response



Holistic Support

Examples of good practice in Salford

We have collated examples of good practice being used in Salford into an overview document on the RBTE Padlet to celebrate supportive approaches and share learning between schools and colleges.

We are keen to hear from schools and colleges who are developing new and innovative ways to support children and young people's access to education.

Previous projects have included:

- The **earlier use of AV1 robots** in schools, enabling 30 children and young people to experience a supported return to lessons that built on confidence and engagement, to find out more see: [A Gradual Pathway Back to Lessons Using AV1 Robots - AV1 by No Isolation](#)
- **Transition Pyramid Clubs** to support the move between primary and secondary school (see page 25).

If you are interested in running a Pyramid Club or using a robot in your school/ college please contact: EPS@Salford.gov.uk

Section 2: Early emerging concerns

Early signs or indicators:

- A change in presentation or attitude towards school/college, family sharing concerns about distress related to school/college attendance (which may not be seen in school/college e.g. before or after attending) reluctance to leave home in the morning, get out of the car, or late arrivals.
- The young person may be in school/college but regularly missing lessons (feels unable to attend, hiding in toilets or seeking frequent pastoral or medical support).
- Physical changes or symptoms (stomach aches, extreme tiredness/difficulty sleeping, feeling sick, headaches, panic attacks, aching, unexplained pains, sudden weight gain or loss etc.).
- Evidence of underachievement compared to their learning potential, which could be caused by heightened emotions, difficulty in concentration, toll of masking needs to appear to be coping.
- Social isolation, bullying, or ongoing friendship difficulties, leading to avoidance of peers and low mood as well as low self-esteem and confidence.
- Dysregulation or significant emotional upset, particularly in relation to specific situations at school or demands (e.g., refusal, threats, insults, aggression, panic, meltdowns,).
- Regular illnesses or a pattern of non-attendance (e.g. particular days and/or subjects, after weekends/holidays etc).

If the above indicators are noticed then action is required, even if attendance percentage is unchanged, to ensure early intervention and to prevent further difficulties. See also: '[Attendance Graduated Response Document](#)' on the RBTE Padlet

1. Assess: Information Gathering. Listen and understand - curious & non-judgemental

Ask 'What's going on here?' rather than 'How do we get you back to school/college?'. Take a blame-free, solution-focused and collaborative approach, placing the voice of the child or young person at the centre. Gather parent/carers and child or young person views to develop a person-centred plan.

- Arrange a meeting between parents/carers and staff to discuss attendance difficulties as soon as possible. Use the **EINT (Early Identification of Needs Tool)** to structure conversations and to generate initial ideas to reduce worries (see [Padlet](#)).
- Include the child or young person in gathering their views. Depending on their preferences, they may want to meet separately rather than attend the meeting (there are example information gathering tools on the Padlet). Choose one most suitable for the child or young person you are working with(e.g. **Colour coding or drawing, Mapping the Landscape, Card Sort activity**) and ensure work is completed with the child's identified trusted adult.
- Listen to the family's experience (see [Words have Power Document](#)) and co-produce support plans to address factors contributing to worries/ non-attendance (see [Trust Test](#)) Ensure a shared understanding between home and school is developed around priorities and progress.
- If meeting in school/college is a challenge, offer alternatives e.g. a home visit, Teams.
- Build a trusting relationship by taking a collaborative and blame-free approach. Be open in acknowledging that people may hold different perspectives of the same situation and that is normal and OK - working to understand these will help develop better solutions and better support plans. Be curious about differences between presentations at home compared to school/college.



- Identify **all** the contributing factors (barriers to attendance and supporting factors). There are often several different things which interact to affect a child or young person's attendance. It is **important to consider the environment or situations around the child or young person**, both inside and outside of school/ college. The young person's views and EINT should help to identify these.
- For wider family factors such as transport, finance, housing, relationship or emotional support (difficulties with attendance often impacts the whole family), it is helpful to seek support from **Salford School Partnership (SSP) and through consultations with your Early Help School Co-ordinator**.
- **Explore unmet needs** by ensuring a joined-up approach between SEND, Pastoral and Attendance teams/ leads within school and ensure wider multi-agency service already working with the family are involved throughout (e.g., Virtual School, Social Worker, SEN Caseworker). Salford's SEND Graduated Approach Toolkit can be found here: [Supporting SEND young people • Salford City Council](#). Factors to explore could include: reduced sense of belonging or social relationships; unidentified/unmet SEND and/or Neurodiversity/ reasonable adjustments.

2. Plan: Facilitate Support by formalising support plans – be responsive

Once information has been gathered, hold a meeting to co-produce a plan, using the information from the assess stage. Involve the family and young person (if appropriate and they want to attend) and key staff who know the young person well and can advocate for them. Share the information so all are supported to understand any barriers and supportive factors. Create next steps together, aimed at reducing barriers and strengthening wellbeing.

- When setting up the meeting, introduce everyone and ensure the purpose of the meeting is clear. Explain how information will be recorded/shared afterwards so all have a copy.
- Using the information gathered, create an individual **action plan** that is agreed by everyone involved (see suggestions for next steps in the **EINT ideas bank**), including the child or young person (if they are not in the meeting, possible next steps will need to be shared with a trusted adult to gain their views before being finalised).
- **A key factor is that everyone agrees and commits** to the next steps and agreed adjustments and a review date is set (ideally within 2-4 weeks to ensure plans are working).
- Action plans need to be realistic, achievable and clearly recorded. You can use existing school templates or those shared in the RBTE training and [Padlet](#).
- **The Severe Absence (SA) Action Plan** should be used if attendance is below 50%, but it can be used as a template for all children and young people where an individual plan is needed (including those below 50%).
- Support planning should include involvement (where appropriate) of **external support** services such as the Attendance Team, Youth Service, Learning Support Service, Primary Inclusion Team, iReach/Place2Be/42nd Street (via Thrive in Education) and the Educational Psychology Service (see the Attendance Graduated Approach).

Do: What helps when developing support plans

- Identify key adult/s and points of contact within school/college, to ensure consistent home-school/college communication.
- There should be a named lead professional who is responsible for ensuring ongoing APDR cycles are carried out and recorded. They should be a consistent adult for the young person - usually the key adult in school/college, but may be a supporting professional.
- Ensure plans are personalised and flexible.
- Change the environment to make sure it feels psychologically safe. See Salford's Relational Approaches to Inclusion Guidance and the following resources for neurodivergent children and young people:
 - [Guide for Schools](#)
 - [NEST Approach](#)
- Ensure **reasonable adjustments** are in place (see the [SEND Graduated Approach](#)).
- Focus on what **supports general wellbeing** (this should not be contingent on attendance).
- Provide child or young person support from a trusted adult to process and understand feelings and experiences linked to school/college, for example:
 - SEMH section of the [SEND Graduated Approach Salford SEND Graduated Approach website](#)
 - EFS Manuals [Emotionally Friendly Settings](#)
 - [Anna Freud Centre Anna Freud Centre resources](#)
 - [Greater Manchester's Resource Hub Greater Manchester Mental Health resources](#)
 - [Wellbeing resources Wellbeing resources from public health england](#)
 - [Understanding Your Anxiety](#).
- Consider how access to education will be facilitated to reduce anxiety about missed work (e.g. set up arrangements to send work home, access to online learning systems, AV1s including their use in school to access lessons from a safe space).
- Consider the impact of transitions on the child young person and ensure these are planned for (this may be a transition between settings, year groups, key stages, home and school, or within the school day). Good transition planning may include: information sharing to ensure consistent approaches, pupil passports (or similar) being ready ahead of the new academic year, time to build new relationships/ get used to new environments.
- Have a longer term goal and maintain a sense of appropriate stretch when the young person's wellbeing is good and they have the correct support in place. This must be agreed with the young person at their pace. This should aim for the 'stretch zone' (between comfort and danger), similar to the zone of proximal development when learning.
- Consider **wider family support**:
 - Share the monthly parent/carers drop ins with families (see [Parent/Carer Support 26-27](#)).
 - Use **Salford School Partnership (SSP)** to ensure holistic support, alongside consultations with your **Early Help School Co-ordinator**. This can help to establish if an Early Help Assessment will be useful.
 - [Share information about online workshops](#) (e.g. [Solihull approach](#), available online for free), support around reducing conflict ([Relationships matter resource](#)), and webinars/workshops available as part of [Salford's Neurodevelopmental Offer](#) (children do not need to be on the ND Pathway for families to access these).

4. Review (Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycles) – be reflective

Ensure regular communication between home and school. Be open to needing to be flexible and change plans. Reflect on what has gone well and areas that require further support and adjust individual support plans as needed.

- Review progress with the child or young person and their parents/carers within **2-4 weeks**.
- Meet often, especially at the start, even if for a short meeting to ensure support plans can quickly be adjusted if needed.
- If TME was used to set targets (page 8), ensure these are reviewed.
- Consider use the '**4 plus 1 questions**' to structure reviews:
 - What have we tried?
 - What have we learned?
 - What are we pleased with?
 - What are we worried about?
 - Given what we know, what are our next steps?
- Celebrate all small steps of progress and record what has made this possible (e.g. capture effective interventions).
- Ensure reviews are **recorded and shared** with key people.
- Continue with frequent check ins and reviews, closely monitoring progress.
- Continue with reasonable adjustments if they are effective.
- **Ensure good communication** with the wider staff team.
- Attend the **virtual group problem solving sessions** to gain further ideas and strategies - see key dates document.
- Expect 'wobbles' or bumps in the road, this is to be expected and wobbles should be planned for using the **Wobble Plan Template** (see [Wobble Plan Template](#) on the Padlet).
- **If no progress is not being made following SSP recommendations, seek consultation with your Early Help School Co-ordinator.**



Has progress been made?

Yes

Continue with supportive adjustments. Monitor progress regularly, prepare for potential trigger points such as transitions and holidays (e.g. create a **wobble plan**).

No

Complete another review cycle. Attend virtual problem-solving session for support. Seek peer support from attendance champions in other schools. Refer to other agencies as appropriate (e.g. Primary Inclusion Team, Educational Psychology Service, Thrive in Education Partners, SSP, Early Help).

If little or no progress has been achieved over multiple assess, plan, do, review cycles, and/or non-attendance is now longer term, see Targeted Support & extended non-attendance sections. Ensure Attendance Team are aware.

Section 3: Targeted Support

A personalised support plan

Assess, plan, do, review cycles established during the early intervention phase should be sustained. Even if progress feels slow or stuck, it is supportive for families to know reviews are in place. If progress has stalled, it is helpful to revisit the Assess stage in detail, with a broad holistic lens. Family and young person views should be explored in depth leading to a shared understanding and meaningful adjustments to support plans. Regularly revisit ‘what helps when developing support plans’ (page 13) to ensure these principles are in place.

Adapt the educational environment

One of the biggest causes of anxiety for children and young people is unmet needs within a school environment. This includes a lack of trust and positive relationships with school staff, which children and young people noted as one of the most important factors for feeling safe at school. There are 4 key areas they typically need support around when they have struggled to attend school:

1. Supportive school staff
2. Making the environment accessible (considering both anxiety and sensory differences)
3. A sense of belonging within school and social connection opportunities
4. Support to re-engage with learning and catch up on missed education

Use of build up timetables

If a build-up timetable (BUTT) is needed, ensure it is agreed with parent/carers, clearly recorded and submitted to the LA ([School attendance team](#)), regularly reviewed and documented using the BUTT template. Timetables should be built up gradually and at the child or young person’s pace – use the BUTT template to record this.

Successful interventions for SEND – *Greater Manchester Attendance Action Alliance, 2025:*

- Inclusive mainstream practices
- A personalised curriculum
- Strong relationships between school staff and any outreach/support, and with the young person and family
- Flexible, part-time provision, that is built up gradually, and may include access to mentoring, youth groups, AV1s from safe spaces in the school building
- Flexible funding
- Placement in a setting with a small nurturing environment (e.g. in-house provisions or specialist provisions)

You can’t overcome anxiety and pressure with anxiety and pressure (Dr Naomi Fisher).

One key theme shared by children and young people and their parents/carers is that professionals often push for a return to education too soon. Parents/carers report feeling conflicted by breaking their child or young person’s trust and needing to follow what professionals are suggesting. Sometimes children and young people need to recover from their experiences and have time to begin to thrive outside of an educational environment. Then, children and young people will be able to learn, and very often want to learn when they are ready. Families need to be trusted and supported to go at the right pace.

Section 4: Extended Non-Attendance

From recovery to rediscovery

A different focus is required when supporting young people who have struggled to attend regularly for a long time, or who have had extended time off once they have spent a period of time in school, or who have not been able to engage with education or attend school for prolonged periods. There should be a focus on recovery and promoting wellbeing initially, and an acceptance that progress may be in very small steps and is not likely to be linear.

Measurement of progress may need to shift away from a discussion about returning to school/college, instead removing immediate pressure to return and focus on what will support their health or wellbeing.

In contrast to traditional approaches which place emphasis on return to school, Jerricah Holder's Recovery to Rediscovery Model (Holder, 2023) - illustrated below - notes that in some circumstances, young people may require a period of recovery in which they are not expected to attend a setting. Holder outlines the need for recovery, followed by time to reconnect in safe relationships and rediscover their curiosity, prior to reengagement in learning, when they are ready.



Step 1: Wellbeing first - focusing on mental health and wellbeing

This requires a consistent (lead) professional over a long period of time, who can act as a key contact and support the involvement of other services at the right time. School should always remain actively involved in support planning even if an immediate return to school is not expected.

- The immediate pressure needs to come off but remain hopeful and in contact with the young person.
- Sitting with a pause can be needed; a time for rest and recovery. This may result in some further withdrawal from activities/interactions with others. It can feel hard when it feels like nothing is happening or changing.
- Shorten or change the focus of goals whilst there is a need for rest, to those based around wellbeing, physical health, self care, etc.
- Returning to school may be a long-term goal, with a number of much smaller steps linked to wellbeing needing to take place first, which are recorded on the action plan.
- Maintaining good communication between home, school/college and other services. Nominate a lead professional to keep in touch with the family and the wider professional group.
- Support gradual reconnection through building of safe relationships with trusted adults. As children and young people begin to feel better about themselves and their relationships (and the world feels safer); their curiosity tends to return. This is where mentoring services that can work on wellbeing before introducing learning/tuition sessions can be very effective. Other gradual steps back into education may include: support to access self-led learning opportunities, online learning (Academy 21) or AV1 Avatars, to access learning in a safe space in school/college, or from home initially. Plans need to be agreed with the family and at a pace the child or young person is comfortable with.
- Recovery and a return to education will take as long as needed. Sometimes planning for the next phase of education is needed. But little green shoots will start to show. Rushing plans and re-introducing pressure won't help. **It may take time, but there is always hope.**
- When ready, provide support to look to the future; this may include considering educational environments other than mainstream school (as it is important to recognise that school doesn't work for everyone) and their next stage of education (e.g. college).
- Signpost wellbeing support including:
[Partners in Salford](#); [Kooth](#); [Salford CAMHS](#); [Salford Thrive \(EHWB\)](#) | [Partners in Salford](#)

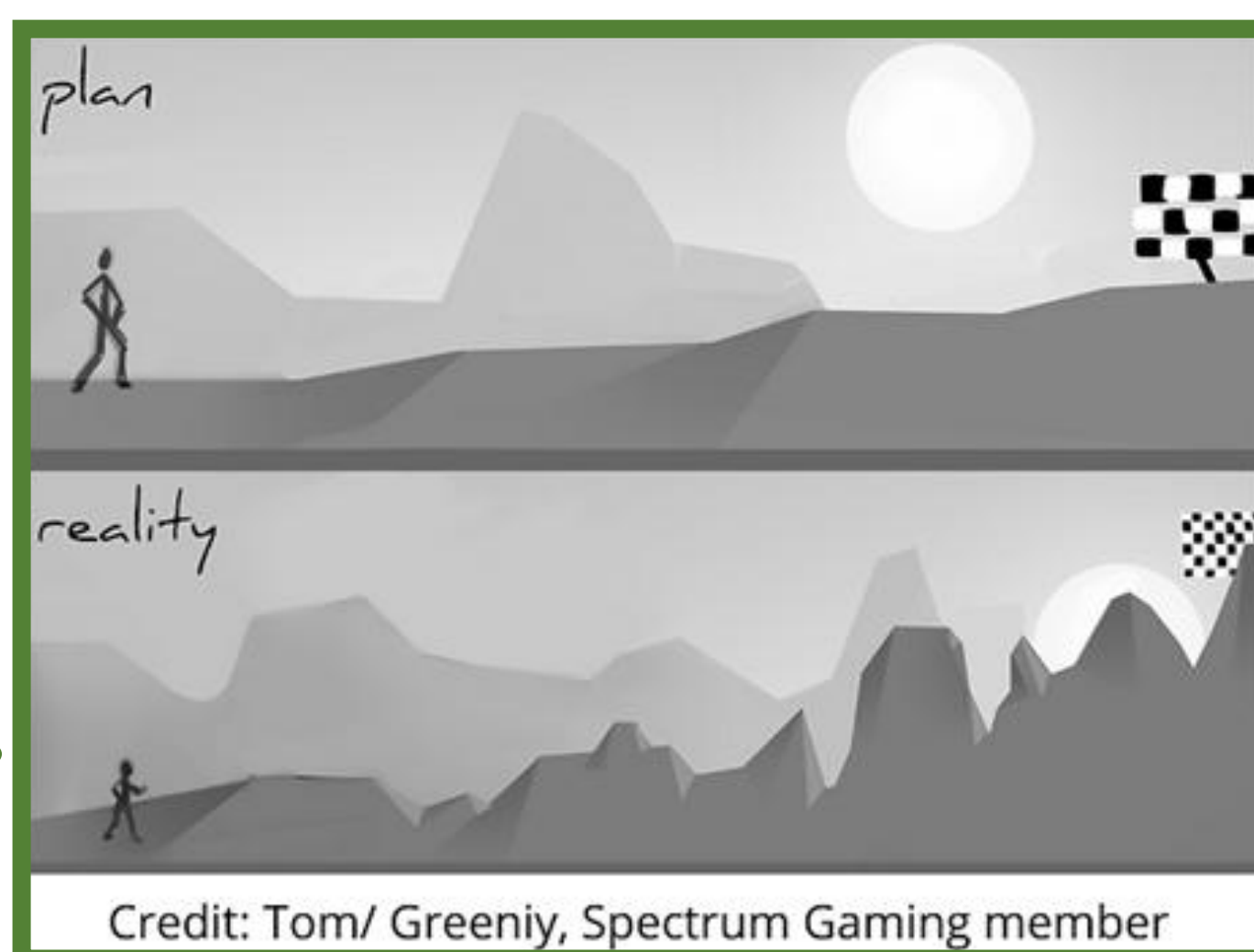
Step 2: Challenge and plan next steps at an agreed pace

Once a child or young person is experiencing more positive mental health and wellbeing - and there are trusted key adults in place - they may feel ready to re-engage with wider activities. This could include social opportunities, visiting places they enjoy, re-engaging with learning and/or school. They may feel ready to engage in setting goals or completing anxiety ladders (graded exposure), but this needs to be led by them (their goals and at their pace).

At this stage continuing with a small steps approach is really helpful, but there are some additional considerations to minimise anxiety but maintain a sense of challenge within their 'stretch' zone (this lies between comfort and danger):

- To develop an individualised action plan, which is co-developed with children and young people and their families: the [Checklist for Professionals to Support Extended Non-Attendance](#) (see Padlet) will enable key adults to identify first steps for intervention and support and signposts to recommended strategies/resources.
- Children and young people need to understand their experiences of anxiety. They need to have tools and support to regulate their emotions – through developing personalised emotional toolkits. This needs to be balanced with adjustments to the environment.
- Children and young people and their families need to be central to planning and the pace of change. If a small steps programme is being used, children or young people need to be in the lead of this, so they aren't pushed to do something they are not ready to do. Everyone needs to stick to the plan, even if you believe they could be doing more or staying longer; pushing too quickly breaks trusts and can cause setbacks.
- A return to learning or education needs to feel purposeful; children and young people report feeling frustrated if they are not supported to learn when they are in school, especially if they have felt worried about entering the school building. Plan their return to lessons well, and consider the curriculum they are accessing carefully so it supports their ability to achieve qualifications and move on to the next phase of their education.
- Self Determination Theory (see page 10) and considering the three psychological needs can be useful to consider when working to develop support plans that are motivating and that supports growth.

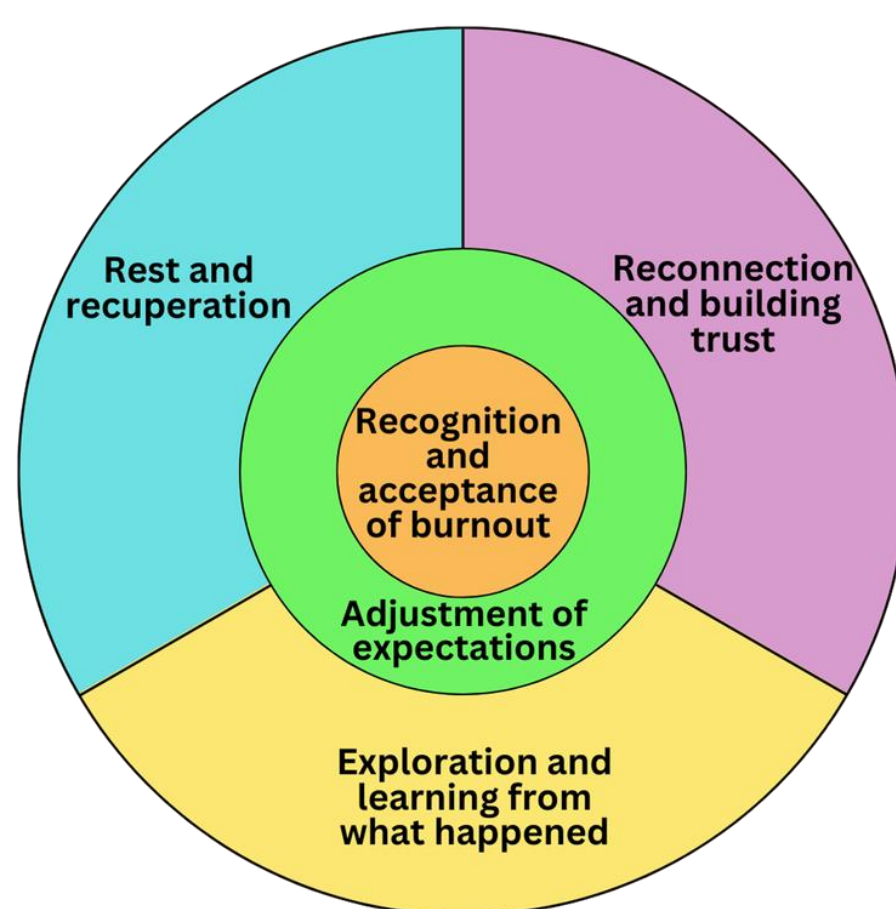
Expect setbacks but focus on the progress that has been made. As this image shows, there are often bumps in the road



Burnout recovery

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion accompanied by decreased motivation, lowered performance, and negative attitudes toward oneself and others (APA, 2018). It can result from prolonged stress and tension. Autistic burnout can result from ongoing life stress and a mismatch of expectations and abilities without adequate supports being in place (such as environmental adaptations), and it is characterised by pervasive, long-term (typically 3+ months) exhaustion, loss of function, and reduced tolerance (National Autistic Society, 2022).

Burnout recovery should be thought of as having elements to consider rather than stages to work through. Recovery is likely to be non-linear, and will look different for every young person. Having to move the focus between different elements should not be seen as a backwards step, but as part of ensuring a holistic approach is taken. Recovery cannot be rushed (even though it may feel like there is pressure to return to full-time attendance). If pushed too soon, it is likely to make things worse.



Stages to consider when supporting burnout recovery. Developed by those with lived experience through the [Barriers to Education Project](#)

Questions to consider:

- How can parents and professionals support rest and recuperation at home? What about at school/college/educational setting when they begin to re-engage?
- During this time, how can we build on existing relationships to rebuild connection and trust? Who is/needs to be involved (e.g. youth service, mentor, academic tutor)? How can school/college retain connection and begin to build trust? How can home or welfare visits be planned in a way that feels safe (e.g. well planned, consistent, focused on wellbeing, may include playing enjoyable games/ activities)?
- At the same time, we need to reflect upon what we've learnt about the young person and how this needs to inform their future educational provision. What has depleted their energy/impacted negatively on their wellbeing? What are they finding hardest? What do they enjoy? What supports their wellbeing?

During recovery, reviews may be less frequent and held with one lead professional (who can liaise with a multiagency team as needed). During re-engagement, very regular reviews are essential. It may be necessary to adjust our expectations of the pace of change as well as changes to the provision. Supporting the young person, parent/carer and staff to identify key

Case Studies (1)

The following case studies illustrate how effective multiagency working led to positive outcomes for children with complex attendance-related difficulties through targeted support. Real names are not used.

Primary

David (Year 2). Different presentations across home and school, appeared 'fine' in school but often very upset at home. Initially attendance remained high but quickly declined. Following limited progress to increase attendance through school-based support plans and a significant decline to his wellbeing, EPS involvement was sought.

What the team around David did:

- EP led assess, plan, do, review (APDR) cycles with David's mum and the school's Attendance Lead, SENCO, Autism and Social Communication Team and Attendance Team.
- Autism and Social Communication Team met with David to gather his views of school (using the Ideal School activity - included on the Padlet) to ensure his views informed support plans.
- Parent attended the RBTE parent/carers drop ins.
- Referral to Access to Education.
- Referral to Local Authority for an Education, Health and Care Plan

Outcome (end of Year 3): Regular reviews improved home-school relationships and understanding of the situation. David remains on role at his local primary school and accesses mentoring via Alternative Provision (AP, City Wall) twice per week (frequency and duration has increased). As David's wellbeing has improved through engaging with the AP tutor, David has accessed activities outside of the home and short sessions at school, as part of a gradual reintegration plan. David's special educational needs are well-understood via an EHCP to enable effective provision to be planned at school.

How the WARMTH framework was applied:

- **Wellbeing First** – Pressure to attend school was removed to prioritise David's emotional recovery. Increased engagement within the home first, followed by activities in the community and then re-engagement in learning and visits to school.
- **Affirming practice** – parents felt listened to around concerns about masking behaviour and demand avoidant profile (this understanding supported AP tutor's relationship with David)
- **Relational approach** – Positive relationships with key adults and peers at school prioritised; low-demand approach taken by AP Tutor to build a relationship with David at his pace before any small steps towards learning activities were introduced
- **Mutual understanding and partnership** – Co-production of all plans with family, school and multiagency team (including pupil views) strengthen home-school partnership.
- **Timely response** – Education Inclusion Officer attended a review meeting at school which supported a swift assessment of whether David met the threshold for Section 19 and referral to Access to Education. Frequent multiagency meetings and weekly updates to professionals from AP tutor provided supported a timely response to any 'wobbles' and ensured next steps could be sent when progress was made.
- **Holistic support** – Genuine co-production of plans with David's mum ensured the wider impact of David's difficulties upon parental mental health and employment were understood, and support plans were broad (covering wellbeing, neurodivergence, engagement with wider family and the community, learning, friendships and transition between year groups).

Case Studies (2)

Primary - using MAPS to create change when progress felt very 'stuck'

Jenny (Year 3). Attending a special school and supported at Child in Need (CIN) for a number of years, with concerns over attendance persisting since Reception. Jenny had never attended school full-time. Professionals were unsure if it was unmet need or educational neglect.

Outcome: Jenny's parent has the relevant support for herself and her children in place, she feels heard and that her children now have goals to work towards. Jenny has built a relationship with the tutor who is starting sessions in the wider community with a view to making small steps towards holding these sessions in school.

What the team around Jenny did:

- Through attendance focused Child in Need meetings, drawing on Self Determination Theory (page 7) it was identified that building a sense of competence and autonomy as well as a sense of belonging to school for both Jenny and her parent were the priority areas when facilitating change.
- EP completed a home visit with the Social Worker to build a relationship with parent and explore her views and build her confidence to share these. Following this, EP facilitated a MAPS session (person centred planning meeting, which uses visual recording to create a shared plan). This enabled Jenny's mum to share her personal experiences in more detail, which led to a greater understanding of what support was needed to generate change.
- Reviewed the MAPS plan after 5 weeks.

Outcome: Jenny's parent now feels that she has the relevant support for herself and her children in place, that she and her children have goals to work towards, Jenny has built a relationship with the tutor who is considering starting sessions in the wider community with a view to making small steps towards school.

How the WARMTH framework was applied:

- **Wellbeing First** – Prioritised wellbeing of Jenny and her parent. Identified previous experience at school which parent experienced as traumatic and contributed to her fears of taking Jenny to school.
- **Affirming practice** – Social Worker ensured referral to ND Pathway was made. EP encouraged all to hold hypotheses of early trauma and possible ND in mind, using appropriate strategies.
- **Relational approach** – Positive relationship with the Social Worker supported relationship building between the tutor, Jenny and her parent. Specifically addressing previous trauma supported the parent to feel heard. Parent sought support to use relational approaches in her parenting and uphold consequences consistently in a nurturing and predictable way.
- **Mutual understanding and partnership** – MAPS provided an opportunity outside of CIN meetings for all to 'put their cards on the table', and make plans towards the 'dream' and away from 'the nightmare'. Strategies which parent advised worked at home were shared and implemented leading to more effective support for Jenny.
- **Timely response** – Ongoing CIN meetings ensured momentum. MAPS reviewed after 5 weeks to ensure support plan was working.
- **Holistic support** – Educational support alongside Social Care involvement ensured support was in place for Jenny and her mum, and the interlinked nature was well understood, helping to shift perspectives so new solutions could be generated.

Case Studies (3)

Secondary

Sally (Year 8). Initially appeared to manage Year 6 to 7 transition well, but stopped attending school in October of Year 8. Non-attendance appeared sudden and unexpected and was followed by a significant decline in wellbeing and withdrawal.

What the team around Sally did:

- Training for staff team on Reducing Barriers to Attendance.
- Held regular reviews with all adults involved to unpick Sally's school experiences since primary school and better understand her views.
- School remained involved throughout and regularly sent home postcards to Sally to support ongoing connection.
- Assistant EP weekly 1:1 work (6 weeks) with Sally at home to gain views, leading to Art Therapy sessions.
- School funded Alternative Provision (mentor) who worked with Sally at home to build a relationship over time, this evolved to self-led learning at home with her mentor.
- Mentor then supported a gradual reintegration to school, by working with Sally on interest-based topics within the school building.
- EHCP applied for and supported personalised provision in school.

Outcome: After a period of extended non-attendance, Sally has returned to her mainstream high school and is attending regularly.

How the WARMTH framework was applied:

- **Wellbeing First** – Took pressure off, sought to understand first and focused on general wellbeing (leaving the house, engaging in preferred activities to boost wellbeing).
- **Affirming practice** – Support for Sally and her family to understand her recent autism and ADHD diagnoses. Neurodiversity affirming approaches used by all adults working with Sally.
- **Relational approach** – Built trust with parent, extended 1:1 work with Sally to support her to share her views and process past experiences of bullying (which she'd not previously disclosed).
- **Mutual understanding and partnership** – Parent was listened to and actively involved in developing support plans. School worked in partnership with family after EPS involvement closed and trusted their judgement when agreeing next steps.
- **Timely response** – Short review timeframes initially help to ensure support plans were correct and contain fears that Sally may be unable to return to school. Professionals stayed involved over time and supported handover between services / lead professional's role.
- **Holistic support** – Multiagency involvement and comprehensive information gathering built a holistic picture which supported longer term planning via an EHCP.

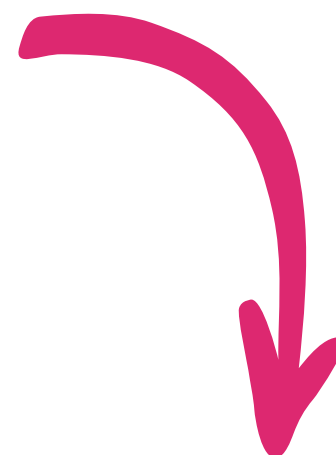
Case Studies

Secondary - Family Help Practitioner (FHP) Impact Case Study

Who

The young person was 15 years old when the Family Help Practitioner began working with them and their family.

The young person is transgender.



Presenting needs

Concerns around the young person's persistent absence which was often as a result of late arrival at school. Attendance was 72% at referral. The young person was struggling with self-confidence relating to appearance and access to appropriate toilets. Finances were also a worry due to Dad's self-employment and cashflow. This impacted on access to food at school. The young person often felt very overwhelmed in school and at home.

Work Undertaken

- Used Mind Of My Own app to understand the young person's voice.
- Support the young person and Dad to put a morning and evening routine in place.
- Dad took part in online learning about parenting teenagers and the teenage brain.
- Access to a gender-neutral toilet at school.
- School offered breakfast and a system so Dad could pay for lunches in arrears.
- Linked young person up with LGBTQ+ group with Salford Youth Service.

Impact

- Attendance improved from 72% to 82%.
- Peer support from LGBTQ+ group supported self esteem and identity.
- Young person reported feeling much more confident in appearance and lates reduced.
- Young person sat GCSEs (at time of referral school didn't think they would feel able to).
- Confidently attended Prom.
- Now doing well in college (school were concerned that the young person would be NEET) .

Case Studies (Group work)

Transition Support - Year 6 to Year 7 Transition Pyramid Club

Group work to support transition for vulnerable pupils to secondary school (using an adapted Pyramid Club)

What we did:

- Supported a high school to work with three feeder primary schools to identify Year 6 children who were at risk of attendance difficulties in Year 7.
- With a secondary school staff member, an Assistant EP delivered small group work sessions at the secondary school (after school) during the second half of the summer term.
- The sessions include a snack and games and supported the children to become familiar with the school building and key staff (e.g. school tour, a treasure hunts, using a map of the school to identify the location of certain lessons on their timetable), and address any transition specific concerns (e.g. forgotten homework, PE kits, bullying, uniform).

Outcomes:

- The sessions enabled the pupils to develop their confidence in the secondary school environment and school staff to get to know the children in advance, so additional support could be offered in the autumn term.
- The sessions continued into the autumn term to check in on progress and provide additional information or support if there were ongoing concerns.
- For children who had made a positive start, it was an opportunity to celebrate this.
- The link staff member at the school was very positive about the impact of the sessions, reporting attendance rates of 100% for some pupils.

Salford City Council

Salford Educational Psychology Service

Pyramid Club

What were we asked to do?

The Assistant Educational Psychologist was asked to run a Pyramid Club intervention for pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. The focus of the group was:

- To boost the group's self-esteem and confidence through teamwork, feeling valued, and experiences of success.
- To improve the children's resilience and protective factors through a nurturing group.
- To encourage the children to voice their opinions and develop confidence, resulting in high participation in class and improved progress.



What did we do?

Within the group sessions, the children worked together to develop their confidence through the use of games, quizzes, and practical activities, such as arts and crafts and cooking.

We used Person Centred Planning to ensure all children's views were considered in the planning of the intervention. Their interests were incorporated into the sessions, such as drawing.

The use of the PACE model may have helped the children to trust and share within these sessions.

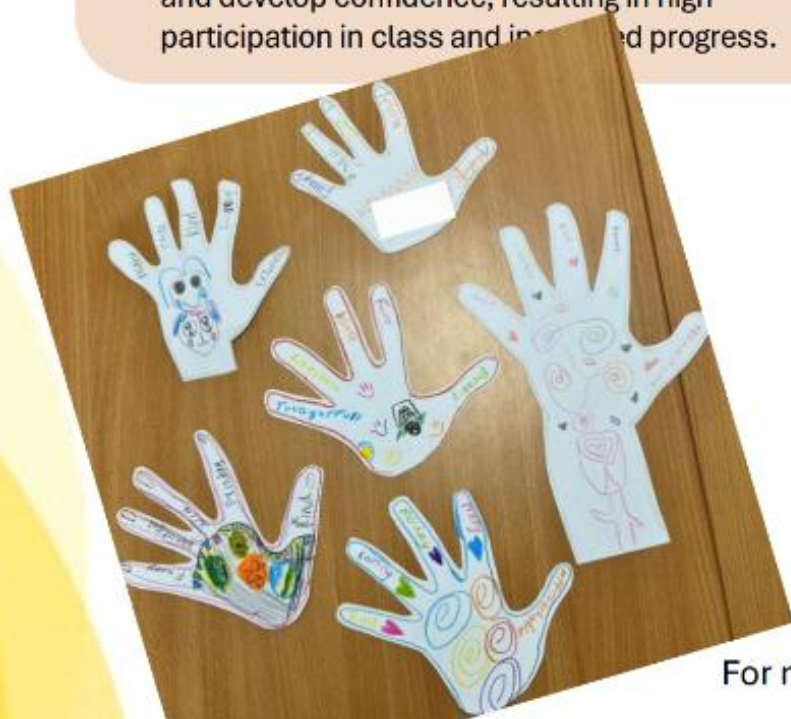
❖ *(PACE is a therapeutic approach that encourages the adult to incorporate Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy into their interactions with children and young people).*

What was the outcome for the group?

The pre- and post-measures indicated that the intervention had positive outcomes for all children. Their body language became noticeably more relaxed, and they voiced that they felt more comfortable to share experiences and feelings as the sessions progressed.

The children responded well to adult-led activities and instruction. This was supported by using clear explanations and creating opportunities for the children to make decisions and choices around activities, as well as receiving individualised praise.

The Teaching Assistant who was present in all sessions reported that she felt the intervention had a positive impact on the children.



For more information about how we work, please contact EPS@salford.gov.uk

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Supporting tools and resources

General:

- See our [Padlet](#) for all resources (pupil views, assessment/information gathering etc).
- [Salford Youth Service](#) - offers 1:1 mentoring and a range of group interventions and youth groups.
- Resources detailed on Salford's Local Offer around [Supporting children and young people with SEND](#) and the graduated approach
- [Barriers to Education website](#) – toolkit and further information about the WARMTH Framework.

For extended non-attendance:

- Through research with children and young people, we have developed a [Checklist for Professionals to Support Extended Non-Attendance](#) (see Padlet) for supporting professionals to plan a step-by-step return to school/ education.
- We have **case study** examples of children and young people in Salford who have successfully returned to education which are discussed during training sessions. These highlight successful approaches at the whole school, family and individual level. Please also see the [Barriers to Education website](#)

For neurodivergent children and young people:

- [Salford's neurodevelopmental offer • Salford City Council](#) – Support for families including webinars, workshops and courses
- Spectrum Gaming is an autistic community and advocacy group available for children in Salford to join. Plus freely available resources written with young people on topics such as school, sleep, behaviour policies:
 - [How Can Schools Better Support Neurodivergent Young People](#) - guidance for schools written by autistic children and young people
 - [Understanding Autism \(spectrumgaming.net\)Sprectrum Gaming resources Introduction to Autism and Trauma \(spectrumgaming.net\) understanding autistic burnout and recovery guidance](#)
 - [Autism Understood](#) - website about autism, written by autistic children and young people
 - [Epic Autism Resources \(padlet.com\)](#) – Neurodiversity affirming resources collated and quality assured by Spectrum Gaming
 - [The Nest Approach](#) - structured approach to supporting autistic children and young people with meltdowns/ overwhelm

For parent/carers:

- [Not Fine in School](#) are a parent led organisation which has a network of over 46,000 families and there is a number of resources on their website. There is also a Facebook group for professionals: [Not Fine in School: Professionals Resolving School Attendance Difficulties | Facebook](#) To understand the lived experiences of parent/carers (particularly of neurodivergent children and young people), the following resources are particularly helpful:
 - Eliza Fricker, parent and author/illustrator of [“Can’t Not Won’t”](#) - a very accessible read
 - Eliza's illustrations about attendance difficulties are free on Facebook: [Missing the mark](#)
 - Heidi Mavir writes about a neurodivergent parent’s experience: [Your Child is Not Broken](#)
 - Ellie Costello is an advocate for more inclusive education systems ([Square Peg](#)) and author of the book [Square pegs](#)