

## **Schools Block Transfer to HNB 2022-23**

### **Project 5: Funding to support young people who are emotionally based school avoiders (EBSA) in secondary schools**

#### **Background**

One of the main pressures on the High Needs Block is the increasing numbers of children being placed in independent and non maintained special schools, particularly children with autism and children with SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties). Children and young people with SEMH and Autism form the largest proportion of those placed externally.

The incidence of emotionally based school avoidance was seen to be rising prior to the pandemic, but its prevalence has been exacerbated by Covid, as children who were already experiencing anxiety about attending school became accustomed to being at home during lockdown and found it even harder, or in some cases impossible, to return to school.

#### **Rationale**

In 2021, an exercise was undertaken to try to identify the number of children displaying emotionally based school avoidance in West Berkshire schools. Teams which contributed to the collation of data on incidence of EBSA included the SEN Team, the Autism Team, the Educational Psychology Service, the Emotional Health Academy, the Therapeutic Thinking Team, the Education Welfare Service, the Virtual School and Children's Social Care Teams. Approximately 250 children were identified as EBSA. This did not include children who were EBSA and who had been moved to specialist placements or children who were put on to Elective Home Education by their parents because of their high levels of anxiety about school attendance.

Children who are EBSA are at high risk of poor life outcomes. In addition, where school avoidance is entrenched to the point of becoming irreversible, a number of children are having to be placed in specialist schools. There is increasing pressure for EHC assessments of children who are EBSA as well as for the provision of specialist placements. In 2019-20 there were 79 children in specialist placements for ASD or SEMH at a total annual cost of £3,024,323. In 2020-21 this had increased to 87 children and a total cost of £3,445,031, a rise of approximately £421K in just one year.

An exercise undertaken in 2021 identified that of 87 children placed in specialist schools for ASD or SEMH, at a conservative estimate at least 11 were emotionally based school avoiders prior to being placed. These children were attending placements costing typically £53,000 per year, therefore the total cost to the HNB was approximately £583,000. In addition there were at the time 5 cases under statutory assessment where school attendance had ceased entirely and parents were seeking specialist placements. There were also 6 children with EHCPs who were EBSA and who were receiving Personal Budgets to support the families with provision of Elective Home Education, at a total cost of approximately £58,000 per annum.

This exercise is currently being updated and will without doubt show a further increase in children who are under EHC assessment due to EBSA and also in the numbers of young people placed in specialist schools due to EBSA.

Not all children who display emotionally based school avoidance will go on to need specialist placements. However, given the high cost of placements and the benefits to most children of remaining in mainstream school, it is important that we try to intervene earlier and more effectively in order to reduce the number of cases reaching this point.

In March 2021, the Schools Forum agreed to fund, for primary schools (and any secondary schools which chose to opt in), a package of support for children experiencing EBSA in order to avoid specialist placements. This included access for schools to an EBSA fund, via the EBSA Forum, and support from an EBSA Team consisting of a part time EBSA Coordinator / EWO, a part time Educational Psychologist and a part time Emotional Health Academy Worker. This project is showing promising results and will be fully evaluated in autumn 2022. It has been agreed by the Schools Forum that this project will continue to be funded in 2022-23.

Secondary schools (apart from one) chose not buy in to this project in 2021-22 and instead opted to share what would have been the cost of an equivalent secondary project in order to make their own arrangements to support children with EBSA. Schools will be asked to report on the use and impact of these funds in autumn 2022.

The pressure which children who are EBSA is putting on the HNB continues to be a significant issue and therefore there is an ongoing need to support secondary schools in their efforts to reintegrate and maintain young people with EBSA in a mainstream environment.

### **Proposal**

Allocation of £111,000 for delegation to secondary schools to support young people with EBSA at £11,100 per school.

Schools may use these funds creatively to support young people experiencing EBSA. This might include, for example, funding of tutors, TA support, on line learning packages or mental health support.

Secondary schools would be able to use their allocation to buy in to the Local Authority's EBSA Service if they chose to do so.

### **Aims**

To enhance support already provided by secondary schools for children who are experiencing emotionally based school avoidance in order to improve outcomes for those children

To retain young people who are experiencing EBSA in mainstream secondary schools wherever possible and avoid specialist placements

### **Success criteria**

- Young people in secondary schools experiencing EBSA show improved attendance

- Avoidance of specialist placements for young people of secondary age experiencing EBSA

**Cost**

£111,000

**Savings**

Avoidance of one specialist placement could save £62,000. If two specialist placements can be avoided the saving will be **£124,000**.