



Briefing Note

Education Welfare Service

Impact of COVID – Social and Emotional Based Anxiety School Avoidance

What is the proposal?

A consultation with all schools in the local authority, of a proposed agreed targeted support plan to assist children and young people to return to school. This will be led by the Education Welfare Service and will be supported by a network of link professionals working across the TFF Directorate. It will need agreement and support from Cornwall's school leadership forums outlining a need for the local authority, schools and settings to collaborate to address any presenting barriers for children and young people returning to school. This initiative should come into effect at the point at which schools partially or fully reopen following lockdown and have sufficient capacity so that it can be scaled to meet projected worst-case scenario demand.

The roll out of this initiative alone is unlikely to improve all children and young people's school attendance without the need for statutory intervention. However, ensuring all schools follow a clear and consistent strategic targeted plan to address and support children and young people will ensure that all schools are able to evidence the support provided to any children and young people who have been adversely affected by the school closures and the pandemic in relation to their mental health and wellbeing.

Why is this being proposed?

- To anticipate and address concerns that schools in Cornwall, in common with other local authorities across the country, are likely see an increase in the numbers of children and young people experiencing social and emotional anxiety based school refusal or poor school attendance for reasons related to or exacerbated by the ongoing events of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To support the children and young people of Cornwall to return to school with clear plans in place to assist them and their families to understand information and communicate their experiences, and how they typically cope with stress. Action plans that manage and support children and young people with any adverse reactions which may include worrying about their health or that of family and friends, fear, avoidance, problems sleeping or physical symptoms.



- To establish a measured LA and schools' response to DfE recommendations that schools should work together with their LA to explore the reasons for student's absence from school and use statutory time to encourage children and young people to return to school.
- To prevent long term impact on children and young people in relation to social and emotional anxiety-based school avoidance.
- To ensure that children and young people's voices are central to recovery planning and that the LA and schools address experiences following lockdown 1, and the impact that this has had on the mental health and wellbeing of the children and young people of Cornwall,
- To ensure that when legislation is reapplied and school attendance becomes compulsory, that any statutory action against parents for failing to send their children to school has considered and evidenced school/LA targeted support plans which identify and address barriers to attendance that have been exacerbated and/or created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

What's happening now and what are the concerns/risks?

<p>COVID-19 related issues are evidenced in most current EWO referrals, linked directly or indirectly to pupil or family health related issues or concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex narrative that will continue to evolve with new worries and new populations effects / impacted. • DfE inflexibly for HT regarding attendance matters.
<p>Absence recorded as unauthorised inconsistently across Cornwall , particularly where children are themselves clinically vulnerable or live with family members that are CV or CEV. Consideration of children and young people's wishes and views, the views of parents and carers and the impact of social and emotional anxiety-based school refusal exacerbated and/or created by the pandemic is not necessarily consistent or able to fall within DfE guidance and expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in statutory intervention requests that do not meet the Public Interest test. • Increase in instances of children and young people needing long term mental health care. • Increase in number of children and young people not having the opportunity to fulfil their potential. • Increase in families deciding to choose EHE for their children where it may not be in the best interest of the child.

What is the desired position and actions?

Area	Positive outcomes
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Business case – Impact of COVID – Social and Emotional Based Anxiety School Refusal

<p>Directorate and school agreement of a consistent graduated response plan to support children and young people with social and emotional anxiety-based school avoidance.</p> <p>Linked TFF Leadership and key professional identified by pupil characteristic /category</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational outcomes for children and young people of Cornwall. • Improved social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people of Cornwall. • Robust legal evidence in any cases of statutory intervention. • Sufficient professional capacity and expertise, predominately relationship based.
<p>Agree a school response plan, outlining targeted support and timelines with agreed access to EWS support and assistance with all instances of Social and Emotional Anxiety based school avoidance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent response with agreed school and LA support outlined and provided to families to reduce stress and distress related to Social and Emotional Anxiety based school avoidance. • Will need endorsement and support from Cornwall's school leadership forums.
<p>School agrees to enter into a 10-week targeted support plan for all children and young people who are experiencing barriers to school attendance, with a focus on transition back to full-time attendance in school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools working with parents and learners to provide emotional support and clear and transparent re-integration plans, reducing emotional anxiety and related stress.
<p>EWO identified by SEWO to support and act as advocate for resolution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parents engage with the school to agree targeted support plans where Social and Emotional Anxiety based school avoidance has been identified. • School led but with other LA professionals support and oversight. • Children and young people offered targeted support plans inclusive of their wishes and views

What will the overall outcome be?

- Children and young people will have access to targeted support plans that are inclusive of their views and wishes to improve their school attendance, reduce overall anxiety and stress and increase their opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- Schools will be supported to improve outcomes for those children whose attendance is below school's average.
- The LA will work in partnerships with schools and Multi Academy Trusts to support children, young people and families of Cornwall in order to minimise any disadvantage caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and any related barriers to learning and attendance.
- The EWS will ensure that the evidence in cases progressing to statutory intervention is robust and has considered and evidenced support provided to the child/young person.