

SNAP PARENT CARER FORUM

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SNAP PARENT CARER FORUM
CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

EMOTIONALLY
BASED SCHOOL
NON -ATTENDANCE
(EBSNA)
NEWSLETTER

Supporting Children and Young People with Barriers to Attending their Education Setting

Our focus as the local Parent Carer Forum is to create opportunities for parent participation and find areas for coproduction and to work in collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Council, the BMLK ICB, Bedfordshire Community Health Services and CAMHS. We continue to listen to parent's feedback about local SEND services through our 6C's survey, parent training sessions, events and through parents contacting us directly. We use this feedback to understand the issues that are affecting our families and work at a strategic level to provide support and challenge to find ways to make improvements.

A continued theme we were hearing from our members are issues with their child or young person having difficulties with Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSNA). Parents told us there was a lack of understanding about the anxiety their child was experiencing and the barriers to attending their education setting. We approached Central Bedfordshire Council to ask for a Steering Group to be created with a focus on EBSNA which was agreed and a multi-agency group was created. Over the past year, SNAP PCF has worked alongside colleagues across education, health, and care to develop a set of guidance, resources, and a clear pathway to help schools better support pupils who experience barriers to engaging in and attending school.

This work has been co-produced with a wide group of partners including Central Bedfordshire Council, the Virtual School, School SENCOs, the Educational Psychology Service, the SEND Advisory Team, the Access and Inclusion Service, CAMHS (MHST), and most importantly, children and young people.

A Central Bedfordshire EBSNA (Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance) guidance and planning tool, designed to help schools take early, preventative, and person-centred action to support pupils struggling with attendance.

Schools can download the full guidance and planning tool from the [Local Offer Website](#)

The materials include:

- An overview of the EBSNA pathway,
- Practical guidance on early identification and prevention, and
- Advice on how to use the CBC EBSNA planning tool for assessment and personalised planning.

EBSNA (sometimes known as EBSA – Emotionally Based School Avoidance) describes situations where a child or young person experiences reduced or complete non-attendance at school due to emotional or psychological factors. It's important to remember that these difficulties are not about defiance or refusal. Instead, they reflect a complex mix of emotional, social, and sometimes environmental challenges. Contributing factors may include unmet or undiagnosed SEND needs, anxiety, family circumstances, or other mental health concerns.

When supporting a child experiencing emotionally based barriers to attendance, we must take a curious, compassionate, and collaborative approach listening carefully, validating feelings, and building trust with the child and family. All planning should be person-centred, recognising that every child's situation is unique.

A Shared Language

Different areas use different terms to describe these experiences. For example, in Manchester, led by The Spectrum Gaming charity, the term "Barriers to Education" is used to focus on the goal of engagement in learning, which may sometimes take place outside the traditional school setting. In Central Bedfordshire, the term EBSNA is used to reflect that a child's non-attendance is often due to inability rather than unwillingness — a case of "can't, not won't."

We asked Central Bedfordshire Council to create some videos and publish these on the [Local Offer website](#), we are proud to have been part of the creation of these videos.

EBSNA Video 1

This video is for parents, carers, schools and professionals. It aims to outline the coproduced EBSNA toolkit. It has been developed to support understanding of the local authority's EBSNA Toolkit and better enable parents, schools, and other agencies to work with each other to support children and young people in Central Bedfordshire.

EBSNA Video 2

This video provides a parent's lived experience of EBSNA. This includes a SNAP PCF representative who shared her experiences with Dr Stephanie Little, how this has supported the development of the toolkit and the impact.

OUR EBSNA EVENT - NOVEMBER 2025

As part of our continued work on EBSNA we wanted to create an event for parents. We recognise the challenges parents are experiencing and wanted to create an environment 'that wrapped a hug around the parents.'

We approached Central Bedfordshire Council and secured some funding through the Change Programme, which was agreed, we would like to thank them for sponsoring this event.



The EBSNA Event was held on the 5th of November at The Rufus Centre Flitwick.

Lisa Lloyd ASD with a G & T, Author of Raising the SEN-betweeners shared her open, honest and frank lived experience as a SEND parent. Expressing the frustrations and difficulties faced by many families but also giving hope that when the right setting is available it can work.

During the afternoon the Mental Health Support Team (part of CAMHS) and the CBC Educational Psychologist Team presented information on the work they are doing with Central Bedfordshire schools regarding anxiety and the EBSNA toolkit.

We also had stalls from the SEND Advisory Team, Central Bedfordshire SENDIASS, CAMHS and Central Bedfordshire SEND Local Offer who came to share information too.

With thanks to everyone who helped to make this such a positive event - 100% of parents said they would recommend it to another parent.

"Always a brilliant event. Everyone is friendly and professional. I always come away feeling uplifted and supported." Parent

"Very helpful to know what training schools are being offered, particularly good to know it's evidence based." Parent

INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS



During the EBSNA event parents wanted to know where the opportunities were to support inclusion in schools. Whilst the parents recognised the good work of the new EBSNA Toolkit and CAMHS work to create a link with each school in Central Bedfordshire parents wanted to understand what else is happening locally.

PINS (Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools)

This is a national project bringing together health professionals, educators, and parent carers to support primary, lower, and middle schools.

PINS is designed to:

- Help schools shape how they support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Provide early interventions for children who might be struggling, including those without a diagnosis or who may be on the diagnostic pathway.
- Offer training to school staff to build confidence and increase skills.
- Strengthen partnerships between schools and families and improve communication.

PINS is led by the Department for Education, the Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England, with support from local health services (called Integrated Care Boards, or ICBs). The aim is to better support Neurodiverse children and their families directly within school settings.

We have 31 schools signed up to this project. We started to hold coffee events at these schools and are planning training sessions too.

We will be meeting with school leaders to discuss the outcomes from the survey we carried out and opportunities for parents to work together with school leaders to create inclusive environments.

Further information can be found on the [Local Offer website](#) about this project.

"We are excited to be part of the PINS Project. We aim to expand opportunities for co-production, using the lived experiences of parents to help shape inclusive school environments."

Bringing teachers and parents together, we seek to develop collaborative approaches that support children's learning, development, and wellbeing placing inclusive practice at the heart of everything we do.

We look forward to building relationships with the schools taking part in the PINS Project."

Kirsty Green
Director of SNAP PCF, CIC Ltd