Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire Educational Psychology Service

School Non-Attendance

Booklet Two: Exploration and Action Planning.

Name of C/YP:

Name of staff member leading on support:

Date exploration commenced:

Date of reviews:

Version 2

Published: November 2023

Purpose/Aims

Staffordshire County Council's Recovery Plan was devised in the context of COVID-19. This plan incorporated several projects across SCC services, including the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to support educational settings in the aftermath of emergency restrictions. The EPS devised materials in several areas with the aim of providing educational settings with support that could be accessed immediately in the new academic year, without the need to refer into the service directly.

Extended absence from educational settings has exacerbated existing needs, meaning intervention and support is required to return pupils to regular attendance. Additionally, the contextual experience of COVID-19 has led to increased levels of school non-attendance (SNA).

This document aims to provide educational settings with guidance that highlights good practice/recommendations/resources and enables them to work collaboratively with parents/carers to support children and young people (CYP) with unmet needs, where school non-attendance is then present as an outcome. A key objective of the guidance is to facilitate educational settings in their planning, assessment and intervention with school non-attendance, at a school level.

It is acknowledged that school non-attendance can be complex and involvement from other services/professionals can be advantageous, appropriate and, at times, necessary. However, the aims/scope of the current guidance is to support early and effective intervention for school non-attendance, which could prevent the level of need escalating further and promote positive outcomes for the child or young person (CYP).

Stages of Exploration for School Non-Attendance (SNA)

This booklet (2) provides a framework for practice for the stages of SNA exploration detailed above. The stages of exploration (2-5) and summary/action planning (6) should happen within a short time frame (ideally 2/3 weeks) to ensure the support provided is implemented as early as possible. The 'do' stage will be agreed within the action planning process and should be individualised to the CYP, along with the agreed time frame for the review to take place.

Please take the time to explore/read booklet 1, prior to using booklet 2, it provides essential information and guidance for SNA exploration/action planning.

Stage One – Early Indicators Checklist

This checklist can be used with parents/carers to quickly screen for any early indicators of challenges with school attendance. Schools may wish to use this if a parent/carer mentions concerns, staff notice changes themselves or in communications with their community of parents/carers/staff about school attendance.

Any use of this checklist should result in a conversation/discussion about next steps, to explore possible concerns further and any support required.

It can also be used as a prompt tool for staff, to heighten awareness of early indicators.

Part 1: Changes in attitude towards school

- Reluctance to engage in school related activities ❒
- Talking negatively about school ❒
- Sharing worries about particular aspects of school ❒
- Becoming distressed when school is talked about ❒
- Avoiding getting ready for school ❒
- Worried about falling behind and/or catching up with school work ❒

Part 2: Signs of Worry

- Showing signs of being worried:
  - headaches ❒
  - stomach aches ❒
  - low appetite ❒
  - increased heart rate ❒
  - difficulty concentrating ❒
  - trembling ❒
  - shortness of breath ❒
  - difficulty sleeping ❒

- Becoming worried on separation from parent/carer ❒

- Worried about family and friends ❒

Part 3: Changes in behaviour

- Becoming withdrawn
  - Spending increasing amount of time alone in their bedroom ❒
  - Avoiding trips outside of the home ❒
  - Reduced social 'contact' with family and friends ❒

- Engaging in self-harming behaviours ❒

Checklist completed by *(name)*:

For *(name of child/young person)*:

Stage Two

Profile screening for pupils at risk of school non-attendance

The rating scales below should be used to explore feelings of safety and vulnerability for pupils. This should form part of the early explorations but could also be used as a progress/check in tool.

This activity should be completed by the child/young person but can also be completed by the parent(s)/carer(s) too.

Staff should consider whether any adaptions need to be made to support the C/YPs access to the activity e.g., use of images, language use.

The 6 psychological needs for normal healthy learning and development

The 6 areas below are derived from research and are the essential psychological needs for healthy and successful child/young people's learning and development. Scale (1 to 10) each of these needs to indicate the overall **vulnerability** of a young person at **risk** of having SNA needs. 'Scale scores' of 3 or below for each of these 6 areas of need indicates a pupil who is at '**high level of risk'** and **'vulnerability'.**

1.The need to feel emotionally and physically safe: This is the fundamental need of all young people to feel safe in their 'environment'. Initially, this is provided by parents or carers, and later by school and community.

2.The need to belong: This is the emotional need for young people to feel that they 'belong'. It is initially provided by parents and family and later can be provided by friends, school and community and membership of sports teams, clubs, hobby groups or religious groups. The importance of 'belonging' is to feel accepted by 'significant others' who at times of distress and anxiety provide unconditional support and reassurance.

3.The need to have a positive 'sense of self' as a learner: This is the essential need for life-long learning. This process first develops within a family and is continued in nursery, school and community with the support of significant others e.g. friends, teachers, teacher assistants, social workers, mentors and community workers.

4.The need to feel 'empowered': The 'empowering process' starts in infancy within a family setting and is nurtured in nursery, school and community. It involves a young person having a 'voice' that is listened to, respected and acted upon. This process is vital in developing a young person's self-confidence, independence and identity.

5.The need to make choices: This need is linked to the empowering process above and involves young people being given the opportunity and responsibility for making choices (and making mistakes) in their life. It can involve daily choices such as personal hygiene, eating habits, dress code, and lifestyle and educational choices, e.g. music, friends, school subjects, leaving home, career choosing a partner.

6.The need for enjoyment while learning: This need is arguably the psychological need that most defines us as 'human beings'. It is the 'enjoyment' or 'flow' experienced when using our skills and abilities to meet life's challenges and to achieve our personal goals and ambitions. This is a learning process that involves taking and accepting risks. It is not to be confused with leisure and pleasure.

Stage Two

Profile screening for pupils at risk of school non-attendance

2.1 CYP Rating Scales

1. I feel safe at school

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

2. I feel like I belong in school

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

3. I know what support I need with learning and what learning I am good at

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

4. I feel like people listen to me in school and respond to what I say

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

5. I get to make my own choices

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

6. I enjoy learning

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

Additional observations/comments:

(Please ask the CYP about their ratings e.g., Why do you think it's a 3? What could move it more towards a 7?)

Profile completed on *(date)*:

Profile completed by *(name)*:

CYP Name:

Stage Two

Profile screening for pupils at risk of school non-attendance

2.2 Parent/Carer Rating Scales

1. My child feels safe at school

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

2. My child feels like they belong in school

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

3. My child knows what support they need with learning and what learning they are good at

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

4. My child feels like people listen to them in school and respond to what they say

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

5. My child gets to make their own choices

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

6. My child enjoys learning

.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true at all									Very true

Additional observations/comments:

(Please ask the parent/carer about their ratings e.g., Why do you think it's a 3? What could move it more towards a 7?)

Profile completed on *(date)*:

Profile completed by *(name)*:

Parent/carer Name:

Stage Three – 4 Broad Areas of Need

SEND (special educational needs and disability) has been identified as a key contributing factor to school non-attendance. It is important that staff explore the four broad areas of need to establish whether there are any unmet SEND needs for the CYP.

This stage is incorporated into the booklet to encourage key adults to gather information in relation to SEND needs, so they are included in the holistic picture of SNA and action planning stages. Even if the CYP has support in place already e.g., on the school's SEN register, has an Education, Health and Care Plan, these needs/provision should be considered/reviewed within this process.

The table below can also be helpful to gather information within secondary school settings, by sharing it with all the CYP's teachers and asking them to contribute to each section.

1. What are the CYP's primary areas of need?
2. What are some of the CYP's strengths and interests?
3. Communication and Interaction: Please describe the CYP's strengths and any needs in this area.
4. Cognition and Learning: Please describe the CYP's strengths and any needs in this area, including academic skills and attitude to learning.

5. Social, Emotional, and Mental Health: Please describe the CYP's strengths and any needs in this area.
6. Physical and Sensory: Please describe the CYP's strengths and any needs in this area.
7. What strategies have been implemented to support this CYP? Have any been effective?
8. Is there any other information you would like to share about this CYP?

Stage Four – Risk and Protective Factors

4.1 Adult Views

CYP Name:	Date:
Name of Person Completing this summary:	
Who contributed to this information (e.g. CYP, staff names, parents/carers, professionals)?	

Guidance

Ideally, this activity would be completed during a meeting with staff, parents/carers and all professionals involved. This allows for multiple perspectives to be gathered and then discussion to take place if any perspectives differ.

Example format for a meeting:

1. Purpose of information gathering explained, along with key messages e.g., some statements can be challenging to read in isolation/print, to allow a shared understanding to be reached, curious rather than judgemental.
2. All at the meeting complete the risk/protective factors checklist individually. At this stage whoever knows the parent/carer best should sit with them and support them during this process. Offering guidance when needed, but also support for reading statements that need to be handled sensitively.
3. The facilitator then brings the group back together. Attendees are asked to share their perspective on different risk/protective factors, including the reasonings for their ratings. Start with high/medium risk factors and low protective factors.
4. The group can either agree on a shared rating or agree that any risk factors rated as high (by just one person) are recorded as high and the same with low protective factors.
5. The facilitator records a summary of the discussion and a collective summary of risk/protective factors and their corresponding ratings (use table on p19.).
6. Any immediate actions can be agreed, or the information can be summarised and shared/discussed/acted on in the 'action planning' meeting stage (so long as this is being held in a timely manner).

If the meeting above is not feasible, these checklists should be completed by staff in discussion with the parent/carer, **NOT** presented to them to complete in isolation. Some of the areas within this checklist need to be explored sensitively and in a supportive context. Staff can however use this as a framework when engaging in discussions with the CYP or

parents/carers, to allow them to provide ratings that are based on richer information, if it is not possible to arrange a meeting with everyone present.

The 'risk' and 'protective' factors card sorting activity (stage 4.2) can be used to help elicit the CYP's views in this area.

It would be beneficial to consider completing this checklist at future time points too e.g., reviews, timed intervals, to monitor the CYP's progress in response to support/intervention.

If there are any areas within the 'risk factors' checklist rated as 'low', staff should continue to monitor them and respond accordingly. For areas within the 'risk factors' checklist that are rated as 'med' or 'high', it would be appropriate for these to be explored further and included within the action plan/support.

The 'protective factors' checklist should be used to help identify the CYP's strengths and areas which can be drawn on to make their educational experience more successful and positive. However, any 'low' ratings could indicate support in that area may be beneficial.

Level	Risk Factors	Category Placement			Additional Exploration/Comments
		Not True	Sometimes True	Often True	
Individual	CYP finds it easy to understand their feelings				
	CYP finds it easy to talk to others about their feelings				
	CYP knows how other people are feeling				
	CYP thinks they will do well in school				
	CYP thinks the work they do in school is good				
	CYP has a lot of friends				
	CYP likes being around other students/children				
	CYP likes talking to other students/children				
	CYP feels ok when CYP have to leave their parents/carers				
	CYP feel good about themself				
	CYP knows their family are ok when in school				
	CYP's parents/carers do too much for them				
	CYP has been excluded from school				
	CYP has additional health needs or illness				

Family	CYP spends a lot of time with their family				
	CYP can talk to their family				
	CYP's family do activities together				
	CYP's family get on well				
	There is something/somebody CYP have lost				
	CYP's family argue				
	CYP's parents/carers give them freedom				
	There have been some changes in CYP's family				
	CYP's parents/carers need help				
	CYP see their parents/carers as much as they want				
	CYP's parents/carers are calm				
	CYP's siblings are at home e.g. home educated, due to health needs				
	CYP's parents/carers have additional mental health needs				

School	The CYP classrooms are organised and quiet				
	CYP knows what to expect in school				
	CYP feels safe and secure in school				
	Their teachers are fair				
	Their teachers are kind and calm				
	CYP gets along well with their friends				
	Other students/children like the CYP				
	There are some children who are unkind to the CYP				
	CYP finds learning easy				
	CYP likes their teacher(s)				
	CYP likes all activities in school				
	The class sizes are too large for the CYP				
	There has been recent transitions in school for the CYP – secondary/change of school/class				

Level	Protective Factors	Category Placement			Additional Exploration/Comments
		Not True	Sometimes True	Often True	
Individual	The CYP can identify their own strengths				
	The CYP can identify their own interests				
	The CYP wants the current situation to change				
	The CYP has a positive level of self-confidence				
	The CYP has a positive level of self-esteem				
	The CYP has a positive level of self-efficacy				
	The CYP has a positive level of emotional literacy				
Family	The family are developing an understanding of the CYP's needs and feelings				
	There are positive relationships in the family and/or community				
	The family are willing to work in partnership with school and support agencies				
	The parents/carers are showing good parenting skills				
School	The CYP has positive relationships with a member/s of staff				
	The CYP shows a willingness to work in partnership with family and support agencies				
	The CYP has positive relationships with peers				
	The CYP is experiencing success in school				
	The staff have a flexible approach				
	The staff are developing an understanding of the CYP's needs and feelings				

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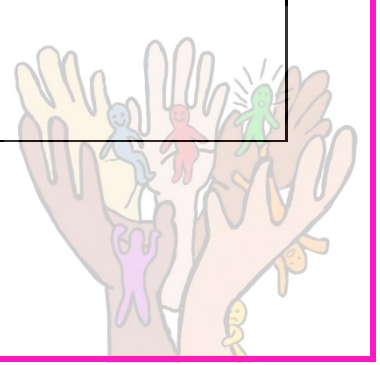
Summary Profile of Risk and Protective Factors for .....*(name)*?

Level	High	Medium	Low
RISK FACTORS			
PROTECTIVE FACTORS			



Stage Four – Risk/Protective Factors

4.2 C/YP's Views

CYP Name:	**Date:**
Name of Person Completing this activity with the CYP:	

Guidance

This card sorting activity has been created to help gain the CYP's view of possible SNA 'risk' and 'protective' factors which have been included in the corresponding checklist. Some of the statements have been reworded to make them more accessible and positive.

The activity should be carried out by an adult that the CYP has a positive and secure relationship with. It is important that enough time has been protected to complete this activity. It is possible that discussing some of these sensitive areas could lead the CYP to become upset, so there needs to be freedom to extend the session if required.

The CYP should be told that the aim of the activity it is to help staff explore if there are any areas that need support, but also to identify positives. Category headings, 'not true, sometimes true and often true', have been included, but these can be adapted to meet individual needs/situations. These headings should be placed in front of the CYP and discussed prior to beginning the activity. The adult should then pass the CYP each picture card and read it to them/explain its meaning. The CYP should then be asked to place each one under the heading they feel is most appropriate.

It is important that it is not just viewed as an activity to be ticked off; if there are any areas that need exploring further, this should take place. Staff should also ask questions to gain richer information e.g., if it asks about friends/teachers then ask the CYP which teacher/friend they are thinking of or ask why they have placed a particular card under a specific heading. The table included (p21-22) can be used to mark the CYP's responses during the activity and note down any comments/discussion that takes place.

Once completed the information should be considered to identify areas of need/strength and the most appropriate support. The CYP should also be asked if they have any ideas what might make things better/easier e.g., if for 'I feel safe and secure in school' they responded with 'not true' then ask them if there is anything that makes them feel safe/anything adults can do to make them feel safer. It is important that any views are shared sensitively with parents/carers, so the support agreed is consistent across contexts, and outcomes can be worked towards collaboratively.

Level	Card No	Factors	Category Placement			Additional Exploration/Comments
			Not True	Sometimes True	Often True	
Individual	1	I find it easy to understand my feelings				
	2	I find it easy to talk to others about my feelings				
	3	I know how other people are feeling				
	4	I think I will do well in school				
	5	I think the work I do in school is good				
	6	I have a lot of friends				
	7	I like being around other students/children				
	8	I like talking to other students/children				
	9	I feel ok when I have to leave my parents/carers				
	10	I feel good about myself				
	11	I know my family are ok when I am in school				
	12	My parents/carers do too much for me				

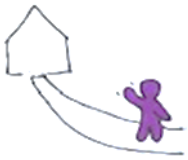
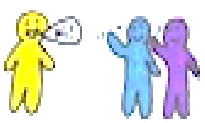
Family	**13**	I spend a lot of time with my family				
	14	I can talk to my family				
	15	My family do activities together				
	16	My family get on well				
	17	There is something/somebody I have lost				
	18	My family do not argue				
	19	My parents/carers give me freedom				
	20	There have been some changes in my family				
	21	My parents/cares need help				
	22	I see my parents/carers as much as I want				
	23	My parents/carers are calm				
School	**24**	My classrooms are organised and quiet				
	25	I know what to expect in school				
	26	I feel safe and secure in school				
	27	My teacher is fair				
	28	My teacher is kind and calm				
	29	I get along well with my friends				
	30	Other students/children like me				
	31	There are some children who are unkind to me				
	32	I find learning easy				
	33	I like my teacher(s)				
	34	I like all activities in school				

Not True

Sometimes True

Often True

I find it easy to understand my feelings 1	I find it easy to talk to others about my feelings 2	I know how other people are feeling 3	I think I will do well in school 4
I think the work I do in school is good 5	I have a lot of friends 6	I like being around other students/children 7	I like talking to other students/children 8
I feel ok when I have to leave my parents/carers 9	I feel good about myself 10	I know my family are ok when I am in school 11	My parents/carers do too much for me 12
I spend a lot of time with my family 13	I can talk to my family 14	My family do activities together 15	My family get on well 16

There is something/somebody I have lost 17	My family do not argue 18	My parents/carers give me freedom  19	There have been some changes in my family 20
My parents/carers need help 21	I see my parents/carers as much as I want 22	My parents/carers are calm 23	My classrooms are organised 24
I know what to expect in school 25	I feel safe and secure in school 26	My teacher is fair 27	My teacher is kind and calm 28
I get on well with my friends 29	Other students/children like me  30	There are some students/children who are unkind to me 31	I find learning easy 32

I like my teacher(s) 33	I like all activities in school 34		

Stage Five

C/YP Card Sorting Activities

Guidance

These card sorting activities have been created to help gain the CYP's views about their educational experience and current situation.

The activities should be carried out by an adult that the CYP has a positive and secure relationship with. It is important that enough time has been protected to complete these activities. It is possible that discussing some of these sensitive areas could lead the CYP to become upset, so there needs to be freedom to extend the session if required.

The CYP should be told that the aim of the activities e.g. it is to help staff explore if there are any areas that need support, but also to identify positives. Category headings have been included, but these can be adapted to meet individual needs/situations. These headings should be placed in front of the CYP and discussed prior to beginning the activities. The adult should then pass the CYP each card and read it to them/explain its meaning. The CYP should then be asked to place each one under the heading they feel is most appropriate.

It is important that it is not just viewed as an activity to be ticked off; if there are any areas that need exploring further, this should take place. Staff should also ask questions to gain richer information e.g. if it asks about friends/teachers then ask the CYP which teacher/friend they are thinking of or ask why they have placed a particular card under a specific heading. The record forms included can be used to mark the CYP's responses during the activity and note down any comments/discussion that takes place.

Once completed the information should be considered to identify areas of need/strength and the most appropriate support. The CYP should also be asked if they have any ideas what might make things better/easier e.g. if they place 'maths' under hard, ask if there is anything that would make maths move to ok/easy. It is important that any views are shared sensitively with parents/carers, so the support agreed is consistent across contexts, and outcomes can be worked towards collaboratively.

Stage 5.1 – School Views

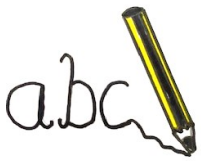
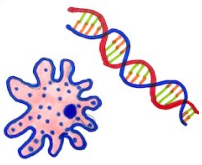
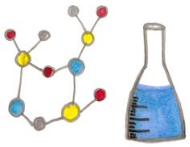
CYP Name:	Date:
Name of Person Completing this Activity with the CYP:	

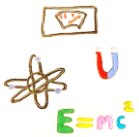
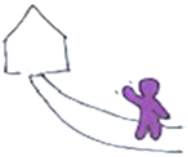
Activity		Category Placement			Additional Exploration/Comments
		Easy	OK	Hard	
1	Spelling				
2	Reading				
3	Writing				
4	Phonics				
5	Maths				
6	English				
7	Science				
8	P.E.				
9	History				
10	Geography				
11	IT				
12	Art				
13	Music				
14	Languages				
15	Biology				
16	Chemistry				
17	Physics				
18	Drama				
19	Technology				
20	PSHE				
21	Ethics & Philosophy				
22	Interventions				
23	Assembly				
24	Form time				
25	School				
26	Home				
27	Breakfast club				
28	After-school club				
29	Friends				
30	Teachers				
31	Talking				
32	Reading out loud				
33	Answering questions				
34	Free Time				

Easy

OK

Hard

Spelling  1	Reading 2	Writing 3	Phonics 4
Maths 5	English 6	Science 7	P.E. 8
History 9	Geography 10	IT 11	Art 12
Music 13	Languages 14	Biology  15	Chemistry  16

Physics  17	Drama 18	Technology 19	PSHE 20
Ethics and Philosophy 21	Interventions 22	Assembly 23	Form Time 24
School 25	Home  26	Breakfast Club 27	After-School Club 28
Friends 29	Teacher(s) 30	Talking 31	Reading out loud 32
Answering Questions 33	Free time 34		

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Stage 5.2 – What I Need…

CYP Name:	Date:
Name of Person Completing this Activity with the CYP:	

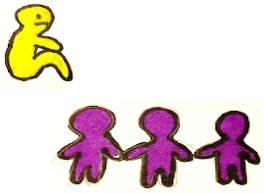
Activity	Category Placement			Additional Exploration/Comments
	Don't need	Some times	Often need	
1.Time				
2.Quiet				
3.Help with my work				
4.Help with my friends				
5.Help with my emotions				
6.Adults to listen				
7.Friends to listen				
8.Instructions repeated				
9.Help with food				
10.Help with my uniform				
11.Equipment for school				
12.Help getting up in the morning				
13.Help at home				
14.To sit near friends				
15.A quiet place to go				
16.Harder work to do				
17.Easier work to do				
18.To talk about my worries				
19.To know what is going to happen				
20.To know who will be in the classroom				
21.Someone to talk to				
22.More time with my parents				
23.Help with social media				
24.Help with bullying				
25.Someone to make me feel safe				
Other:_____				

I don't need...

Sometimes I need...

Lots of times/often I need...

Time 1	Quiet 2	Help with my work 3	Help with my friends 4
Help with my emotions 5	Adults to listen 6	Friends to listen 7	Instructions repeated 8
Help with food 9	Help with my uniform 10	Equipment for school 11	Help getting up in the morning 12
Help at home 13	To sit near my friends 14	A quiet place to go 15	Harder work to do 16
To talk about my worries 17	To know what is going to happen 18	To know who will be in the classroom 19	Easier work to do 20

Someone to talk to **21**	**More time with my parents** **22**	**Help with social media** **23**	**Help with bullying**  **24**
Someone to make me feel safe **25**			

Stage 6 – Summarising the Information Gathered and Action Planning

The following summary framework has been developed to help staff summarise exploration stages 2-5 in preparation for the action planning stage. This summary will also support with the analysis of all the information, to identify any needs.

It is recommended that the action planning takes place in a meeting with staff, parents/carers and any professionals involved. The following format could be undertaken during this meeting:

1. Share purpose and plan for the meeting
2. Discuss/share the strengths and interests of the CYP.
3. Share the summary of information gathered using pages 1-5 as a framework.
4. Check if anyone wishes to add any further information.
5. Based on the summary of information the group should agree identified needs and support/actions needed.
6. The support/actions needed should incorporate the 'do' stage of APDR. This should not solely include referrals and signposting; it should detail provision within school/home too.
7. Agree a review date.

School Non-Attendance Summary

*****CONFIDENTIAL*****

CYP name:	**Date of Birth:**
Setting:	**Year group:**
Completed by:	
Date exploration started:	

's Strengths and Interests

Insert images

Early Indicators/Context

Safety and Vulnerability

Need	CYP Rating	Parent/Carer Rating	Date actioned
To feel emotionally and physically safe			
To belong			
To have a positive /sense of self' as a learner			
To feel empowered			
To make choices			
For enjoyment while learning			

Note: 1 = not true at all 10 = Very true

SEND

Broad Area	Needs	Strengths
Communication and Interaction		
Social, Emotional and Mental Health		
Cognition and Learning		

Physical/Health/ Sensory		

Risk Factors – Adult Views

	Individual	Family	School
Low			
Medium			
High			

Protective Factors – Adult Views

	Individual	Family	School
Low			
Medium			
High			

Risk/Protective Factors – CYP's Views

	Individual	Family	School
Often True			
Sometimes True			
Not True			

CYP's School Views

Easy	Ok	Hard

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CYP's Views – What I Need….

I don't need	I sometimes need	I often need

Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire Educational Psychology Service

SNA Action Plan – Page 1

Contributors:	Date:	
Identified Need	**Support/Do**	**Review Date**

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SNA Action Plan – Page 2

Contributors:	Date:	
Identified Need	**Support/Do**	**Review Date**

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Review

Contributors:			Date:
Identified Need	**Progress/Response**	**Agreed Actions**	**Review Date**

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SNA Guidance Feedback Form

If you have used this guidance booklet, it would be helpful if you could complete the evaluation form, accessed via the link below. This feedback will allow us to explore what has been useful and what adaptions may be required.

School Non-Attendance EPS Feedback

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