Extended Non-Attendance in Schools

Early Support

Coventry City Council

Coventry SEND

Background to Extended Non-Attendance in Schools (ENAS)

Attending school is often seen as crucial for developing not only children's academic ability but also their skills, values, cultural knowledge and sense of citizenship[1].

Equally, it is recognised that most children will occasionally not attend school for a short while during their education. However, for a proportion of the school age population, this absence becomes extended and acts as a barrier to learning and development[2].

Due to the varied reasons for attendance difficulty, ENAS should not be thought of as a unitary concept; indeed, Government guidance regarding attendance makes reference to multi-causal reasons for non-attendance resulting in a highly heterogeneous population[3].

Terminology

Several terms are used interchangeably to refer to absenteeism, including truancy, school refusal and school phobia.

Reasons for the non-attendance are in consistently ascribed to these terms, such as whether it is pupil motivated, the legitimacy of the absence and whether there is an emotional basis for the attendance difficulty. The assumptions aligned with these terms however, can result in misleading explanations for pupil absence and mask the complexity and individualised nature of the reasons for the non-attendance.

These terms also focus the attendance problem as a 'within child' difficulty rather than recognising the influence of the environments (systems) that influence the young person's experience and development i.e. home and school[4]. In recent years, there has been increased awareness in particular of the role that school environments play in attendance difficulties and the importance ofunderstanding the pupils schoolexperience;[5] this therefore necessitates amulti-systemic approach to understandingthe difficulty and to implementingappropriate support.

The term 'extended non-attendanceat school' (ENAS) has been used inacademic literature to reduce the riskof assumptions being made about thecauses of a specific period of absence,by offering a descriptor of the resultingbehaviour aligned with the school system in which it occurs6. This term willbe used in this document to promotethe individualised and multi-agencyapproach to understanding difficulties andsupporting young people that is beingused across Coventry and Warwickshire.

[1] Thambirajah, Grandison and De Hayes, (2008)

[2] DFE: School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, (2016)

[3] Bronfenbrenner, (2005)

[4] Knollman, (2010); Havik, Bru and Ertesvåg, (2010)

[5] Pelligrini (2007); Gregory and Purcell, (2014)

The Impact of ENAS

Extended non-attendance has been associated with negative short and long-term consequences for young people, their families and the wider community[7] and is considered a serious mental and physical health concern[8].

As may be expected, research indicates that pupils with prolonged absence accrue poor academic attainment; it also shows however that this group of young people are at greater risk of developing a psychiatric disorder that may continue into adult life, have difficulties with peer relationships, may experience reduced future prospects, including employment difficulties, and experience greater problems transitioning and adjusting to adulthood[9]. Such long-term effects of ENAS and the associated safeguarding risks are recognised in Government policy:

'Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.' [10]

Factors contributing to ENAS

Due to the heterogeneous nature of ENAS, the combination of factors which precipitate and sustain the attendance difficulty will vary between pupils.

However, a number of key contributory factors have been identified and are summarised in Table 1; these are considered in relation to the stresses that the child is experiencing and their resilience to overcome these, in order to facilitate attendance[11].

School	Child	Family
Bullying Transition, between schools, across years, or during the day. Unidentified learning needs Inadequate provision for SEND or a lack of reasonable adjustments Subject specific difficulties Peer or staff relationship problems.	Separation difficulties Anxiety in peer relationships Fear of failure Lack of self confidence Deelopmental problems Fear of parental separation Over-dependence on parents Concerns about parental well-being Physical or mental health needs Undiagnosed SEND; Adverse Childhood Experiences; Being a Young Carer; Trauma.	Recent transitions e.g. divorce, relocation Recent family loss Changes in the family Parental anxiety and/or other mental health difficulties Lack of involvement of the father Level of parental stress in relation to child's anxiety and school refusal Poverty & deprivation; BAME; EAL; Insecure housing; Job insecurity; Family history of distrust of education.

The peak times for attendance difficulties to begin are at transition points between educational settings and at ages 7-9 and 15-16 years of age[12]. At transition points between settings, other difficulties experienced by the pupil, such as social communication and understanding difficulties and lack of peer group relationships, can become more prominent due to the change in school environment, routines and expectations.

Once established, the absence from school may become sustained through a perpetuating cycle of attendance difficulties. The perpetuating factors may differ from those that first prompted the ENAS; for example, if a pupil initially experienced difficulties due to lack of motivation and engagement, the increased isolation resulting in difficulties re-integrating in to lessons following a period of non-attendance, the response of staff to the absence and falling further behind with school work, may result in increased anxiety about attending school that perpetuates the attendance difficulty.

Identifying Extended School Non-Attendance

Due to the differentials in the terminology used, the associated criteria and the methods of data collection employed by local authorities, it is not possible to produce an definitive estimate regarding the proportion of pupils who experience ENAS.

It is hard to say for sure what proportion of young people experience extended non-attendance. In the autumn of 2020, there were over 916,000 children (13% of the school population) classed as persistent absentees (missing 10% or more of the academic year)[13]. Early identification of attendance difficulties and proactive intervention are identified as a key indicator for positive outcomes for the pupil[14]. Such difficulties are most readily identified when schools monitor patterns of attendance as well as the overall percentage of sessions attended.

[7] Pellegrini, (2007)

[8] Kearney, (2001)

[9] McShane, Walter and Rey, (2001); Freemont, (2003); Lyon and Cotler, (2007); Gregory and Purcell, (2014); Elliot and Place, (2018)

[10] DFE: School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, (2016)

[11] Common Factors involved in School Refusal, summarised from Thambirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes, (2008)

[12] Pellegrini, (2007); Thambirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes, (2008); Goodman and Scott, (2012); Nutall and Woods, (2013)

[13] https://www.teamsquarepeg.org/

[14] Kearney and Tilson, (1998); Knollman et al, (2010)

Our Local Approach to ENAS

In Coventry, we believe that addressing extended non-attendance means:

- Promoting wellbeing, happiness and an optimistic outlook for all.
- Offering compassionate, person-centred support to students whose attendance is beginning to fall.
- Nurturing the resilience of children and young people who are not attending school and helping them to re-engage with learning.

Our Local Offer includes information about the services that are available from Education, Health and Care to help schools and families achieve these aims.

In addition, school staff can access ENAS-specific workshops and consultation from specialists including Educational Psychologists, Specialist Teachers and the Attendance Team. Details of this support is shared at planning meetings and SENCo Network events.

What to do when a student's attendance starts to fall

The best way for schools to support students with extended non-attendance is to work in partnership with their families. This means working together to:

- understand what is happening and why;
- agree individualised support and,
- seek assistance from more specialist services, if needed.

The support offered to families can be split into three graduated cycles, each of which is described overleaf:

School Support

The priority during this cycle is to respond quickly to signs that a student's attendance is beginning to fall. This is usually evidenced by ten days of non-attendance over a three-week period. This guide sets out a step by step process to help you better understand the reasons why a student's attendance has started to fall; put in place support for them and determine whether consultation with the multi-agency panel is needed

Multiagency Panel

The multi-agency panel is comprised of professionals who have experience of supporting students with extended non-attendance. It provides a space for SENCos to discuss the needs of their students and how they have responded to the support put in place by the school. After listening to your concerns, the panel may offer additional strategies to try in school or suggest involvement from a more specialist team.

Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment

Children with the most complex and severe needs may require support that is over and above that which is typically available in schools. When this happens, it may be necessary to request an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment from the Local Authority.

Step by step guide to School Support

Step	What do I need to do?	Key considerations	What resources do I need?
1a **Recognise concerns** (The student has been out of school for more than 10 school days over a 3 week period.	The school professional who has responsibility for monitoring attendance should make contact with the parent or carer for an initial conversation. They should make sure that the relevant people in your school are aware of the situation, e.g. The Head of Year, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, and the Senior Leadership Team.	Support should be offered to students as soon as there are concerns that they may be at risk of extended non-attendance and, in all cases when: • The student has been out of school for more than 10 school days over a three week period. • There is no reported physical illness. • There is concern that the young person may be experiencing low mood or anxiety.	'Guidance for schools on management of School Attendance' (Sept 2021)
1b **Identify a Key Worker**	Identify a Key Worker to coordinate support for the student. This will usually be someone who has an existing relationship with the family. It is best practice to ask the family to help identify a suitable person.	The Key Worker may be the SENCo, Head of Year, a Pastoral Lead or a learning mentor. They will be responsibility for coordinating support for the young person; liaising with the family and convening meetings. It is likely that the key worker will be required to visit the family home.	None
1c **Gather background Information** You should aim to reach this point two weeks after the start of the process.	Meet with the parent or carer together information about the current situation. You can use the Dimensions Tool, ATTEND Tool or ENAS Profile to help structure your conversation with the family. You should also ask a member of school staff who knows the young person well to complete the School section of either the 'ENAS Profile' or the 'ATTEND Resource'.	Dimensions is an online resource designed specifically for children and families living in Coventry and Warwickshire. It will help you and the family you are working with to identify accessible support across the local area. The 'ENAS Profile' and 'ATTEND Resource 'will help you and the family consider possible reasons for a young person's ENAS and the resources they have available to help them overcome it.	Home and School Information Sheets. The ATTEND framework. Dimensions Assessment – hyperlinked to: https:// dimensions. covwarkpt. nhs.uk/ Default.aspx

Step	What do I need to do?	Key considerations	What resources do I need?
2a **Agree how best to Support**	Together with the family, review the information that you've gathered. Agree a plan, and record your plan on the School Support Planning Sheet or using your school's own intervention planning proforma. Remember to agree a date to review the support. At this stage is also important to ask the family whether it would be helpful to send work home and, if so, agree how best to do this.	A range of resources have been created to help you with this. If you agree a reintegration timetable, remember to confirm this using the LA's webform.	ENAS Resources School Support Planning Sheet
2b **Provide Support**	Implement the support plan	It is helpful for the young person, their parent/carer and their key worker to keep notes on how the situation changes over this period.	None
2c **Review impact of support** You should aim to reach this point no more than eight weeks after the start of the process.	Implement the support plan.	It may be helpful to keep notes of the support that has been provided and the young person's response to it.	None
2d **Review impact of support** You should aim to reach this point no more than eight weeks after the start of the process.	Convene a meeting with the family to review progress. If the student is ready to return to School, continue with the current offer of support and agree a date for a second review meeting. If the student is not ready to return to school then consider whether support from external professionals may be helpful.	In some cases, it may be helpful to speak informally with your link Educational Psychologist, or EHAC	None

Attendance & Inclusion Traded Services

The Attendance Service provide a range of support to improve the attendance and punctuality of students and engagement with parents.

The Inclusion Service deliver interventions to improve educational and behavioural outcomes for students. The service predominantly support students in danger of permanent exclusion and students struggling with a transition to mainstream provision.
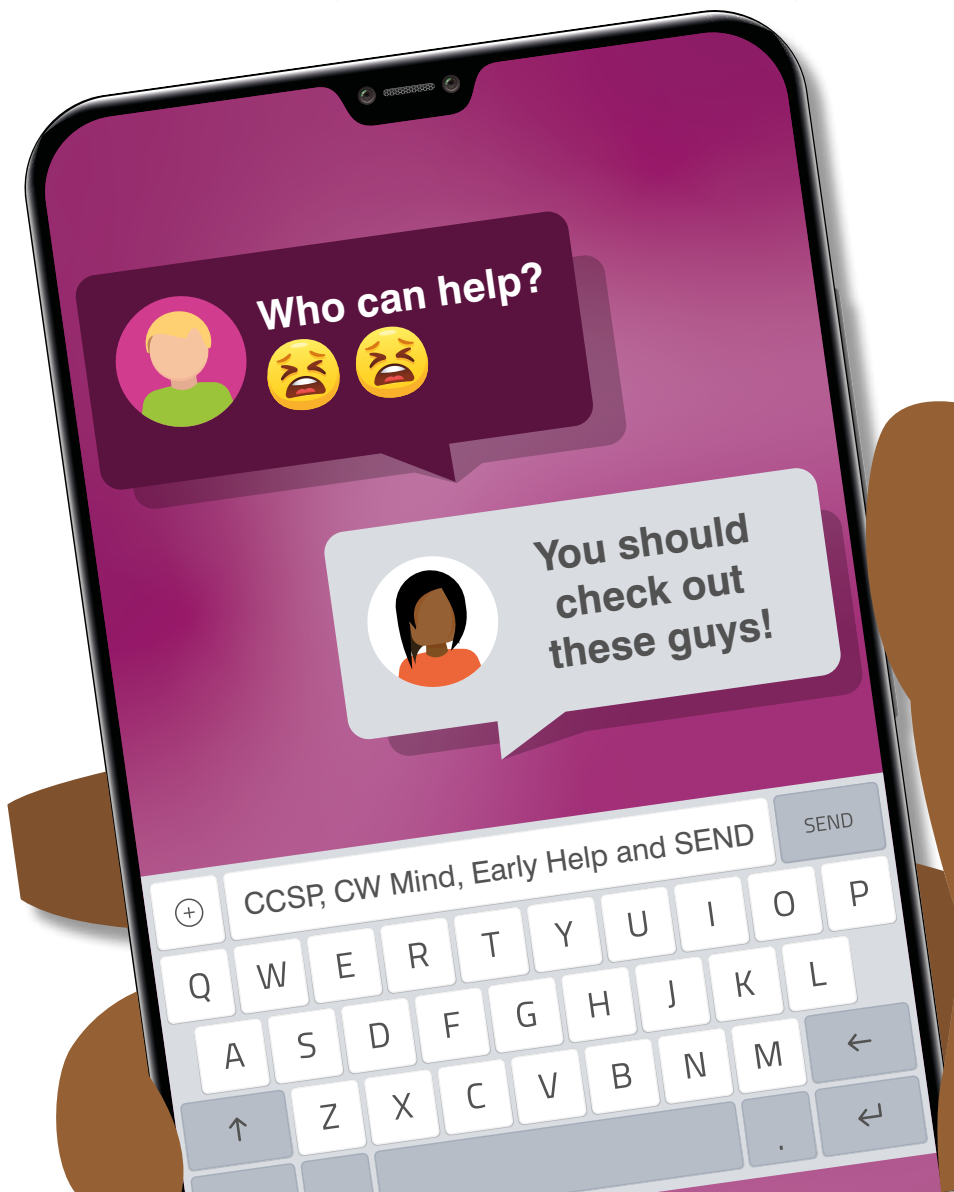
Early Help

The Early Help Assessment is used to assess the needs of the child, young person or family. It provides a framework for professionals and families to work together to improve outcomes for children. Further information about Early Help can be provided by your link EHAC.

SEND Traded Services

The SEND Support Service provide specialist teaching and educational psychology services to children, families and young people. These services can be targeted to the individual needs of the young person.

CW Mind

Coventry and Warwickshire Mind provide group support for young people at local venues. To support focusses on helping the young person to understand and manage worries and anxiety.

Who can help? 😫 😫

You should check out these guys!

CCSP, CW Mind, Early Help and SEND

Step	What do I need to do?	Key considerations	What resources do I need?
3a **Request support from external agencies (if required)**	Consider the range of support available to support children and young people experiencing ENAS -the illustration below can help with this. As the family which (if any) support they feel will be helpful and request this.	If you feel it is appropriate, you can request support form more than one service at the same time. Keep in mind that the list below is not exhaustive and that it may be appropriate to consider and make referrals to other agencies, for example, the RISE Navigation Hub	Referrals information for: CCSPs CW Mind Early Help SEND Support Services
3b **Agree and implement a plan with external partners**	In collaboration with the family and external services, prepare and implement a plan to support the young person.	This plan should be a gradual extension of the support that is already in place and be based on the information that you and the family have gathered to date. It is helpful, at this stage, to record information using My Support Plan.	School Support Record Sheet
3c **Review Progress** You should aim to review progress 4-6weeks after external agency support has commenced.	Complete a follow-up Dimensions assessment. Convene a meeting with the family and professionals to review progress and agree next steps.	The student's progress should be determined by the extent to which they have increased their school attendance.	Dimensions Tool
4 **What to do if the young person's situation does not improve.**	If the support put in place up until this point has not been successful, then you can seek advice from the ENAS Panel. This panel includes representatives from the Inclusion and Attendance team as well as the SEND Service and Hospital Education Service. The panel can provide advice and signposting to appropriate support.		

This guidance has been produced locally by professionals working in collaboration with experts by experience