

# LOCAL AREA CASE STUDY

**Title:** EBSA Horizons: Multi-Agency Workforce Development for Emotionally Based School Avoidance

**Programme Duration:** May 2025 – ongoing (9 months); **LISO Component:** Training function – building workforce capacity; **Delivery Partner:** EdPsychEd / EBSA Horizons

## Aim

- Provide appropriate level of EBSA training for all school staff, all LA and allied professionals, and all parents and carers.
- Actualise a universal offer which can prevent the continued escalation of school related anxiety, and associated impact on attendance rates in schools
- Develop shared multi-agency understanding of EBSA across schools, LA services, health, and families
- Shift school and multi-agency cultures to compassionate, anxiety-informed support
- Create sustainable whole-school approaches where 'every interaction is an intervention'
- Enable earlier identification and intervention, reducing escalation to statutory processes
- Build long-term capacity that lasts – embedding change in school culture, not just individual practice
- Achieve sustainable change that extends beyond the 2 year initial project lifecycle

## Impact

### Sustainable Workforce Capacity (pre/post training metrics)

- Three dimensions measured across school staff completing training:
  - Awareness: 62.2 → 87.3 (+40% improvement)
  - Knowledge: 71.2 → 86.7 (+22% improvement)
  - Confidence: 61.3 → 88.3 (+44% improvement)
- Training rated 'Very/Incredibly helpful' by participants

### Professional Engagement by Service

- Attendance team, Educational Psychology, Specialist Teachers, NHS/School Nursing most engaged services
- Cross-sector reach achieved: LA, NHS, VCS all represented

### Early Attendance Indicators

- Preliminary signals of improvement in illness-related absence (Code I) in trained schools
- Emerging patterns in unauthorised absence reduction
- Further time-series data collection underway to verify impact at scale

The survey methodology measures three dimensions of sustainable culture change: **Empathy** (shifting attitudes from punitive to compassionate responses), **Understanding** (recognising EBSA as emotional need rather than behaviour), and **Confidence** (practical skills in identification, support, and collaboration). The substantial improvements across all three dimensions indicate meaningful shifts in how staff understand and respond to attendance needs.

Nationally, EBSA Horizons has worked with over **1,350 schools** across **9+ Local Authorities**. The 'every interaction is an intervention' principle ensures that everyone – from reception staff greeting an anxious child to SLT planning strategic response – becomes part of the solution. Early evidence suggests schools achieving highest completion (whole-school engagement) see greater reductions in overall and persistent absence. The critical distinction is moving from '*expertise islands*' to consistent whole-school understanding that becomes embedded in culture.



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## Activities

Since May 2025 (9 months of 24 month project):

### School Staff 3-Tier Training Model

- 735 school staff registered across Wakefield in 9 months
- 444 completed Level 1 – foundational awareness (60.4% completion)
- 22 completed Level 2 – intervention strategies
- 12 completed Level 3 – School Lead comprehensive training

### Whole-School Implementation

- 5 schools achieved Whole School status (>75% L1 completion)
- 23 schools preparing or currently progressing toward Whole-School status

### Multi-Agency Professional Training

- 118 professionals registered from 8 organisations
- Services represented: Attendance (14) | Educational Psychology (10) | Early Help (12), NHS/School Nursing (22), Specialist Teachers (12), Social Care (2), Other: VCS, Family Action, Shaw Trust, Compass UK, YLC, Highwell (46),

### Family Horizons

- 61 family registrations for 5-chapter parent/carers programme
- Referrals via both school and LA service pathways
- Supporting families with understanding, strategies, and wellbeing

## Feedback

### What is working well

- Strong school staff appetite: 735 registered in 9 months
- Significant culture shift: empathy, understanding, and confidence
- Multi-agency reach across LA, NHS, and voluntary sector
- Whole-school model creating consistent, shared language and approach
- Training rated 'Very' or 'Incredibly' helpful by participants

### Emerging good practice from trained schools

- 'Botheredness factor' – genuine relationship-building with all pupils
- Flexible accommodations: adjusted timetables, entry points, policies
- Dedicated safe spaces with consistent, trusted staffing
- Child-led pacing with realistic timescales for reintegration
- Family partnership with non-judgmental, collaborative approaches

## Next Steps

### Maximise impact

- Maintain momentum and scale to train 2,000+ more staff across the LA

### Impact Evaluation

- Continue longitudinal attendance data collection
- Apply difference-in-differences methodology
- Track school-level outcomes by training completion tier

### LISO Integration

- Embed EBSA Horizons as core LISO Training function
- Align with LISO Advice and Direct delivery components
- Connect with wider SEND/AP reform agenda