DEVELOPMENT OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS WITH PARENT AND EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

LITERATURE

[1] Cook, P. J., Dodge, K. A., Gifford, E. J., & Schulting, A. B. (2017). A new program to prevent primary school absenteeism: Results of a pilot study in five schools. Children and Youth Services Review, 82, 262–270.

[2] Creswell, C., Shum, A., Skripkauskaite, S., Pearcey, S., and Waite, P. (2021) Report 10: Children and adolescents' mental health: one year in the pandemic. Available at: http://cospaceoxford.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Report-10_05May2021.pdf Accessed 14th June 2021.

[3] Kearney, C. A., & Graczyk, P. (2014). A Response to Intervention Model to Promote School Attendance and Decrease School Absenteeism. Child and Youth Care Forum, 43(1), 1–25.

[4] Melvin, G. A., Heyne, D., Gray, K. M., Hastings, R. P., Totsika, V., Tonge, B. J., & Freeman, M. M. (2019). The Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) Framework: An Inclusive Bioecological Systems Approach to Understanding School Absenteeism and School Attendance Problems. Frontiers in Education, 4, 61.
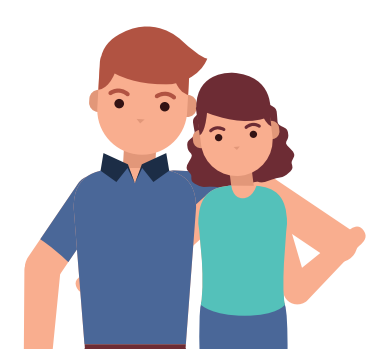
INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 pandemic has caused widespread **disruptions to education a**nd this has been particularly difficult for children with emotional difficulties including **emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)**.

The onset of EBSA is likely to occur in primary school [1] and, although the importance of **early intervention** has been evidence in mitigating the negative outcomes, there is yet to be a focus on **support for primary school-aged children** in the UK [1].

This study aims to develop a **new intervention** specifically for families affected by EBSA, taking into account the evolving **Covid-19 context**

OBJECTIVE

What intervention components might work best?

What should the intervention aim to change?

Who should deliver the intervention?

How should the intervention be delivered?
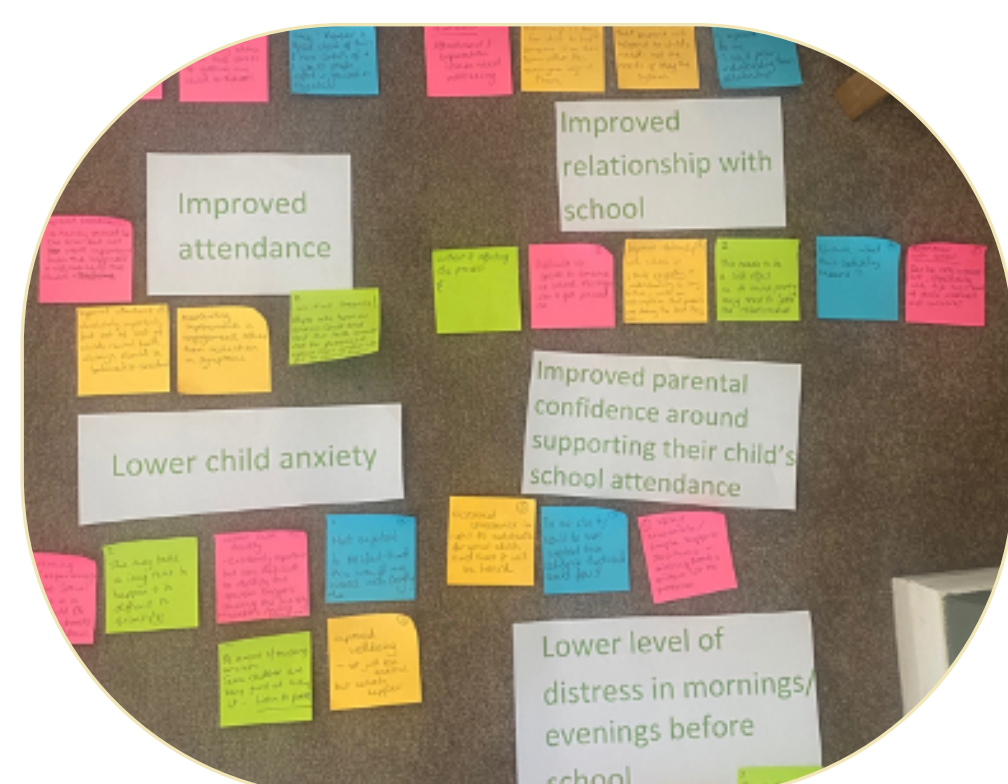
METHODS

Co-Design workshops

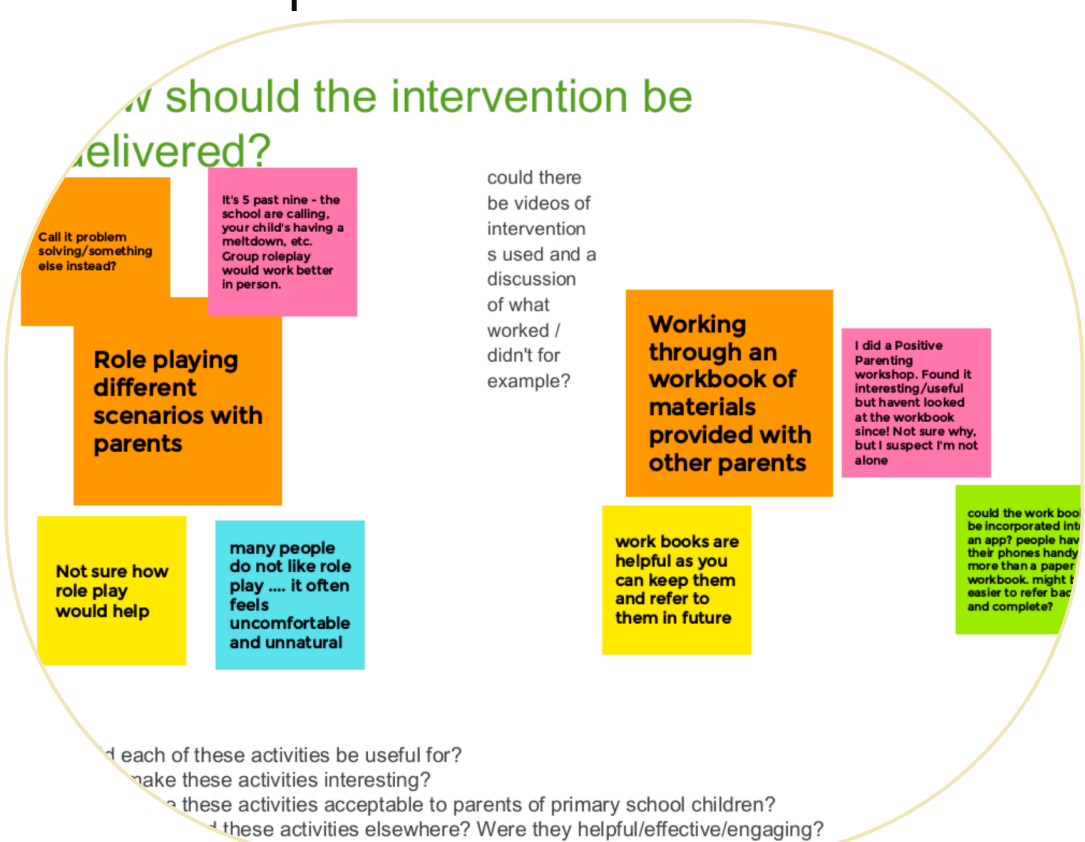Parents of primary school children experiencing SAP

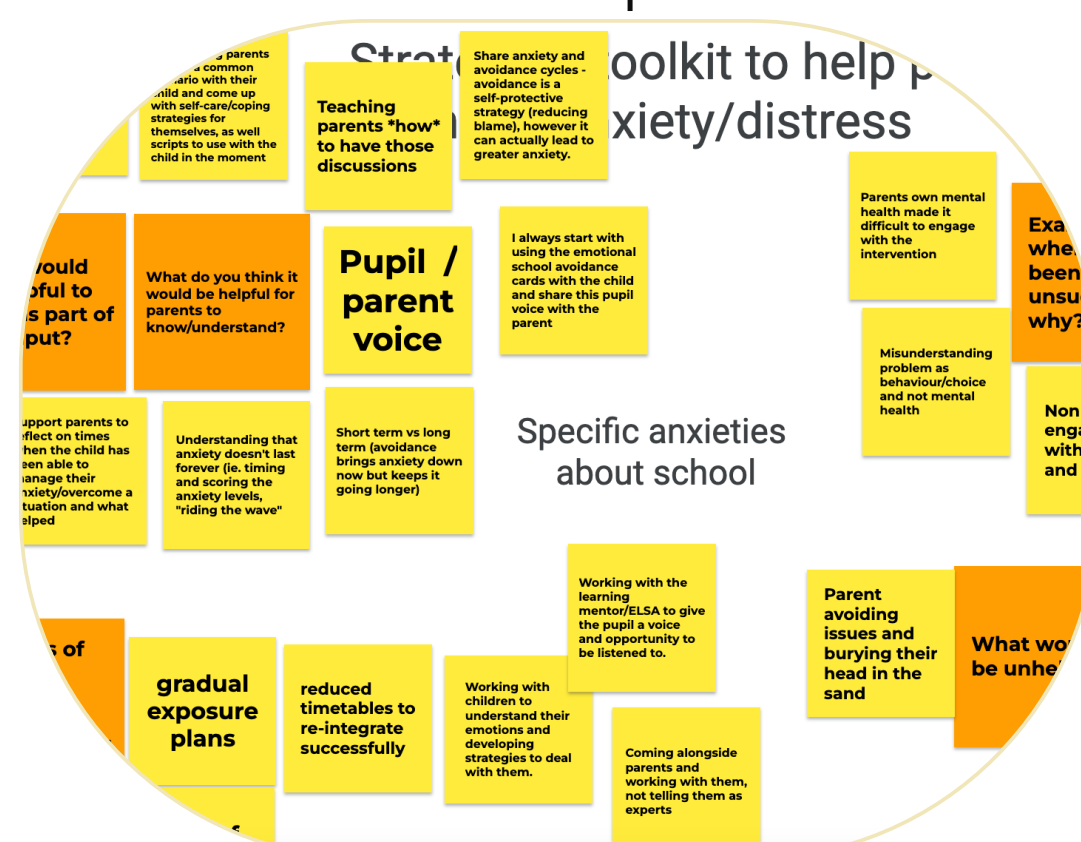Educational professionals that work with primary school children experiencing SAP.

Workshop one: In-person
Six parents

Workshop two: Online
Four parents

Workshop three: Online
Ten educational professionals

Sharing previous helpful and unhelpful experiences of specific interventions and services

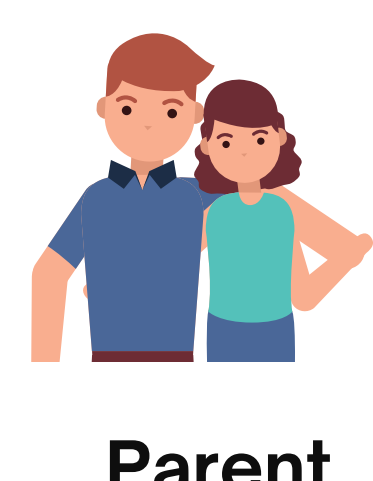Commenting on a draft intervention model informed by previous research

Co-design activities

Relating lived experiences to specific parameters of the putative new intervention.

Considering the pros and cons to aspects of the intervention.

RESULTS

WHAT?

Help parents respond to child's anxiety/distress, with strategies/toolkit for:
- Specific anxieties about school
- Scenarios with high levels of behavioural anxiety/distress
- School transitions
- Building child's confidence

Parent

Emotional Support for parents to:
- Feel empowered
- Manage the stress/anxiety of supporting their child
- Feel supported. and connected.

Supporting parent/school relationship
- Advice/knowledge sharing on statutory context of attendance
- Strategic tools for communicating with school
- Build parent's confidence to approach schools
- Sources of mediation.

Child

Anxiety

School attendance problems

School

Recognise the impact of (but cannot change)
- School environment
- School those
- Covid-19
- School response to child/parent
- Support/resources provided by schools

HOW?

Accessible and manageable
- During the day/week days
- Small home-learning tasks
- One focal point of resources (i,e, website)
- Pre-contact; directions, what to expect etc.

Interactive and engaging
- Workshop style
- Activities and learning from professionals and parents
- Active participation
- well organised
- Involve children in home-based tasks

Group-based peer support
- In-person
- opportunities to connect and learn from other parents
- Time to 'get to know' one another.

WHO?

'Knowledgable about anxiety and SAP'

"impartial from school'

'Good listener'   'train-the-trainer?'

Who would make a good group facilitator?

'focussed on problem solving not moaning'

'Energized but relaxed'

'mix of peer and professional support'

'Mental health support teams?'

'empathetic'

'Child and Family works?'

'Can share own experiences of SAP'

'non-judgemental'

'Kind'

CONCLUSION

Feedback from stakeholders was consistent with an **applied ecological systems model of EBSA** (e.g. Melvin et al., 2019), highlighting relevant risk and protective factors across **environmental, family and individual child domains**. In particular, stakeholders endorsed **strategies to improve parent-school communication,** and better understand statutory requirements around attendance. Strategies were also recommended to help **parents effectively respond to a child's anxiety/distress about school** through cognitive-behavioural techniques.

In terms of intervention providers, stakeholders pointed to the need for **knowledgeable and impartial facilitators** with scope for parents to obtain **group-based peer support. A**dditionally, stakeholders advocated for in-person delivery that is accessible and manageable with a**dditional supportive resources** such as a website and/or workbook. Also value was given to providing the intervention at the **early stage/onset of EBSA.**

Next steps, will be to consider to create an intervention blueprint and materials, with continued co-design, that can be field-tested

By Brontë McDonald,
Supervised by Dr. Daniel Michelson and Dr. Kathryn J. Lester.

US UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex