

DSPL7

Delivering Special
Provision Locally

EBSNA Parenting Support Summer term 2026



DSPL7

St Albans District, Harpenden and Villages
Redbourn, Wheathampstead and Kimpton

Spring 2026

This booklet outlines the courses and services that are being run by external providers during the Spring term 2026 to support parents and families who have a child or children with school anxiety. Please visit the relevant websites to book.

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INFORMATION AND ADVICE ABOUT EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL NON-ATTENDANCE (EBSNA) FOR FAMILIES

EBSNA can affect children and young people of any school age. It can happen as a result of a wide range of different factors – home, wider family, community, school, friendships – often a combination of some or all of these.

WHY COULD MY CHILD BE ANXIOUS?

Anxieties can stem from a number of things such as:

- An unmet special educational need such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia or dyspraxia
- Friendship issues, not 'fitting in', or bullying
- Finding schoolwork confusing and overwhelming
- Separation anxiety
- Trauma
- Bereavement
- Low self-esteem
- The environment itself - especially for those who are autistic and/or neurodivergent



A child might become anxious about school at any stage. It can occur when children start school or transition into secondary school, or it might be related to puberty or hormonal changes. Read more on the [Local Offer website](#).



WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS

- ? Can you spot patterns in your child's absence from school, e.g. certain days/activities?
- ? Does your child regularly say they don't want to go to school, or reluctant/delaying going to school?
- ? Does your child struggle with changes to environment, routine or stimulus?
- ? Are there physical symptoms on school days e.g. tummy aches, feeling sick, headaches?

(NB please always check with a GP to rule out any medical cause or illness).



WHAT TO DO

- 👍 Ask for a meeting with your child's school involving someone who knows your child e.g. class teacher, pastoral lead, SENCo. Be prepared by taking along any notes about the things your child finds difficult.
- 👍 Work together with school to build a child centred plan that understands the underlying problems which are making your child feel anxious about going to school. This could include adjustments to help your child access their education. There are tools which can help such as [Hertfordshire's EBSNA Framework](#).
- 👍 Include your child's voice in any plan as they are more likely to be able to stick to it. Check in after a while and review it with your school to see what is working well and what is not.
- 👍 Do advocate for your child's needs but also understand the limitations as to what your school might be able to do.
- 👍 If the agreed strategies are not working, speak again with your school to identify other services and professionals that might be able to support your child. The [Herts Hub](#) has a wealth of mental health signposting and ideas for early help.



STRATEGIES TO TRY AT HOME

- ✓ Develop a plan for the evenings, which can include calming activities before bedtime e.g. gentle music, bath, story or reading.
- ✓ Also plan for the morning, and where possible get things ready for the next day the night before (school bag, lunch box etc).
- ✓ Make a diary which includes your child's worries and also identifies positives and what works well.
- ✓ Respond with empathy whilst encouraging small, manageable steps.
- ✓ Visual timetables at home and school might also help.

REMEMBER...

- 🕒 With the right plan in place, being in school supports your child's academic progress, social development and mental wellbeing.
- 🕒 Small steps are often big wins.
- 🕒 ...also ensure that you find ways to support your own wellbeing in the process.



The Pioneer Club- Step Forward



FREE

**SCHOOL AVOIDANCE
SUPPORT GROUP**

GET INVOLVED, MAKE CONNECTIONS & STEP FORWARD!

**Wednesdays 1 - 3pm
The Pioneer Club, St Albans**

FREE TO ATTEND

DROP-IN SESSION

NO NEED TO BOOK

FREE REFRESHMENTS

ARTS & GAMES ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

A collaboration between

Vista
Support Services

**The
Pioneer
Club**
Registered charity number 302455

The Pioneer Club- Step Forward

STEP FORWARD

The Pioneer Club is working in partnership with Vista St Albans to deliver Step Forward: School avoidance support group. This programme will assist children and young people experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). EBSA is a complex issue affecting countless children who find it impossible to attend school due to overwhelming feelings of anxiety, fear, or distress. This struggle can leave children feeling isolated, misunderstood, and falling behind academically, socially, and emotionally.

We believe that every child deserves the support, tools, and environment they need to overcome these challenges and to flourish both in and outside of school. Our programme aims to empower children with EBSA to have a safe space to come to, and the opportunity to engage in fun and social activities. We will also offer families the chance to build a network and have access to support through Vista's staff.

DETAILS:

When: weekly termtime, Wednesday 1 to 3pm drop in, 4-6pm
Dungeons and Dragons gaming group

Where: The Pioneer Club, Heathlands Drive, St Albans AL3 5AY

Who: Young people and families aged 5-18 with EBSA

Facilitators: Vista School Family Worker and Behaviour Support
Practitioner, Pioneer programme workers

Cost: Free to attend, drop in



Not Fine in School

Not fine in school

My Child is Struggling to Go to School - What can I do?

Unfortunately there are many children and young people struggling with school-based anxiety and other mental health and SEND difficulties that can lead to school attendance difficulties.

Such difficulties shouldn't be viewed as a behavioural or parenting problem as they are much more complicated than that. There are many different things that can trigger anxiety and attendance difficulties including bullying, academic pressure and sensorial issues in the school environment.

Fine or Not Fine?

Sometimes schools are aware of the difficulties children face, but unfortunately many parents report their child is described as 'fine in school', even if they are not in reality.

It is common for children to mask or hold in their distress until they get home from school. This leads to misunderstandings and differences in opinion between home and school.

Government good practice guidance acknowledges the importance of professionals working in partnership with parents and listening to the voices of children & young people.

Relevant Government Documents:

- + Children & Families Act, 2014
- + The Equality Act, (2010)
- + Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE)
- + Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school (DfE)
- + SEND Code of Practice (2015)

Believe your child's distress is real, listen to what they say and trust your instincts as a parent

Request Help

Schools should offer mental health support, counselling, and access to a School Nurse, they can also ask an Educational Psychologist to make an assessment of your child's difficulties. You should also speak to your child's GP and ask for a referral to a Paediatrician or CAMHS.

Ask the School to Assess Your Child for any Relevant SEND

An underlying Special Educational Need or Disability often contributes to anxiety levels; this can include Autistic Spectrum Conditions, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder or Dyslexia. Undiagnosed or unsupported these can make school a difficult place to be and can contribute to mental and physical health deterioration.

SEND includes Social, Emotional or Mental Health Difficulties

which can affect a child's ability to establish friendships, cope with strong emotions, and increase vulnerability to bullying. These are all barriers to learning requiring the use of SEND assess-plan-do-review cycles and possibly an EHCP. Severe anxiety is also classed as a disability and therefore protected by the Equality Act 2010.

Apply for an EHCP Assessment

Some children will need an Education and Health Care Plan if a school does not have the expertise or funding to fully meet their needs, or offer the provision they require to access an education. SENCOs or parents can apply to the LA for an ECHP assessment.

Contact SENDIASS, IPSEA or SOS SEN or other sources of advice about SEND and educational provision. Some offer local advice and support, and can often attend meetings with you at school.

If Bullying or Sexual Assault (by peers) are Factors Preventing

Attendance There are legal duties on schools and LAs to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including preventing bullying and assault.

Read your school's policies and government statutory guidance for SEN, Disability, Mental Health, Bullying, & Attendance
- Are they being followed?
If necessary follow the school's complaints policy



FREE ONLINE SUMMER 2026 WORKSHOPS FOR HERTS PARENTS/CARERS

Online Workshops funded by Hertfordshire County Council	Day	Date	Time
Identifying ADHD and/or Autism	Mon	13.4.26	10:00 - 11:30
Understanding Autism	Wed	15.4.26	19:00 - 20:30
Understanding ADHD and Autism in the Early Years	Fri	17.4.26	10:00 - 11:30
Understanding ADHD for Parents/Carers of Girls	Mon	20.4.26	10:00 - 11:30
Understanding ADHD	Wed	22.4.26	19:00 - 20:30
Tips & Tools for Sleep	Mon	27.4.26	10:00 - 11:30
Understanding PDA	Wed	29.4.26	19:00 - 20:30
Understanding Challenging Behaviour	Fri	1.5.26	10:00 - 11:30
Tips & Tools to Manage Anger	Wed	6.5.26	19:00 - 20:30
Understanding Neurodivergent Teens	Fri	8.5.26	10:00 - 11:30
Understanding Sensory Differences	Mon	11.5.26	10:00 - 11:30
Tips & Tools to Manage Sensory Differences	Wed	13.5.26	19:00 - 20:30
Working in Partnership with School	Mon	18.5.26	10:00 - 11:00
Tips & Tools to Manage School Absence	Wed	20.5.26	10:00 - 11:30
Half Term			
Applying for an EHCP	Mon	1.6.26	19:00 - 20:30
Preparing for an EHCP Review	Wed	3.6.26	10:00 - 11:30
Understanding Anxiety	Fri	5.6.26	10:00 - 11:30
Tips & Tools to Manage Anxiety	Mon	8.6.26	19:00 - 20:30
Tips & Tools to Support Puberty	Wed	10.6.26	10:00 - 11:30
Tips & Tools to Build Self-Esteem	Mon	15.6.26	19:00 - 20:30
Understanding Medication Options	Wed	17.6.26	10:00 - 11:30
Tips & Tools to Support Social Skills	Mon	22.6.26	19:00 - 20:30
Tips & Tools to Manage Eating Difficulties	Wed	24.6.26	10:00 - 11:30
Tips & Tools to Support Emotional Development	Mon	29.6.26	19:00 - 20:30
Tips & Tools to Manage Everyday Changes	Wed	1.7.26	10:00 - 11:30
Tips & Tools to Support Executive Function	Mon	6.7.26	19:00 - 20:30
Tip & Tools for Positive Behaviour	Wed	8.7.26	10:00 - 11:30

**"What a fantastic workshop - thank you so much!
I've taken away a wealth of information"**

**"Absolutely incredible workshop, it has
been extremely beneficial to my child"**

☎ 01727 833963

✉ herts@add-vance.org

🌐 <http://www.add-vance.org/>

Book your FREE ticket on <http://add-vance.eventbrite.com/> or visit our website

These workshops are funded by Hertfordshire County Council's Targeted Parenting Fund and are open to residents of Hertfordshire only
Recordings are sent to all registered participants to view for 7 days, even if you don't attend live.

Lumi Nova - Fun digital therapy for childhood anxiety



Digital therapy enabling children to self manage their worries.

LUMI NOVA
TALES OF COURAGE

- ✓ For ages 7-12 yrs
- ✓ Suitable for children with mild - moderate anxiety*
- ✓ NICE recommended

Get free Access

luminova.app/get-access



Lumi Nova: Tales of Courage is an engaging child-led, parent/guardian supported therapeutic intervention that can be used on most smartphones or tablets. It facilitates graded exposures (the active ingredient of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) with psychoeducation to empower 7-12 year olds with mild to moderate needs to learn to self-manage fears, worries and anxiety. It is practical, age appropriate, non-stigmatising, encourages self management and provides user progress and health outcomes data in real time to authorised professionals.

A therapeutic digital intervention (game) for childhood anxiety:

Therapeutic basis: Psychoeducation and Exposure therapy

Embedded outcome measures

Built in safeguarding & accessibility features

Provides data to Authorised Professionals securely through the VitaMind Hub

Co-created with young people, guardians, teachers, clinicians, academics, game experts

(Lumi Nova is not recommended for use with children who have severe anxiety, are in crisis, have suicidal thoughts or at risk of self harm.

Supporting You Project - tbc for Summer '26



Hertfordshire County Council Services for Young People

Supporting You Project

Supporting You Project
for 13-17s
Every Thursday 6-8pm
at Pioneer Young People's
Centre
Heathlands Drive
St Albans
AL3 5AY

Supporting You is a project which equips young people with the tools to help themselves to strengthen their resilience and emotional well-being. Attendees will learn 12 CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) skills plus a method for planning how to achieve goals. Sessions are delivered by Youth Workers trained to deliver CBT.

Complete the SFYP referral form (QR code below) or contact the St Albans Team to join.

Hertfordshire County Council is excited to offer young people the opportunity to participate in the **Supporting You Project**, which is designed to build resilience and emotional well-being. This project is aimed at 13-17 yr olds, takes place every **Thursday from 6-8pm** at the **Pioneer Young People's Centre in St Albans** (Heathlands Drive, AL3 5AY).

The **Supporting You Project** provides young people with the tools they need to help themselves navigate challenges and develop positive mental health. Over the course of the project, attendees will learn 12 CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) skills, as well as a method for planning and achieving personal goals. These valuable skills are delivered by Youth Workers who are specially trained in CBT techniques.

If you or someone you know would like to join, you can complete the SFYP referral form by scanning the QR code in the poster or contact the St Albans Team for more details.

Tel: 01442 454060
SFYP.StAlbans@hertfordshire.gov.uk
www.servicesforyoungpeople.org
X f i @HCCSFYP



Sandbox

What Is The Sandbox?

The Sandbox is an innovative **digital mental healthcare** service for **Children and Young People**.

Mental health struggle is something most of us will experience at some point in our lives – it's simply part of being human. We're here for you when that happens.

We work together with the **NHS, local government, and other organisations** to help Children and Young People with their mental health.

Not sure where to start? Head over to the **Service Zone**.



Who Is The Sandbox For?

The Sandbox is for **Children and Young People** who want additional support for their mental health.

Everything on **The Sandbox website** can be accessed **without registering**.

If you need **additional support**, continue reading below where you will find a **self-referral assessment** to access **NHS funded therapy**.



The Toolbox – Autism & ADHD Resources



The **Toolbox** is a brand new website for Young People who have been diagnosed with or suspect they have **Autism** or **ADHD**.

Find out about **local workshops** (Hertfordshire only), national organisations, and go through our **resources** to help you better understand and live with those conditions.

Let's Go!

A graphic for 'The Talkbox' podcast. It features a woman with grey hair wearing a yellow sweater, standing next to a laptop. The text 'The Talkbox' is at the top, with 'by The Sandbox' and 'exclusively on sandbox.mindler.co.uk' at the bottom. A circular badge on the right says 'A PODCAST ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH FOR PARENTS, CARERS, AND PROFESSIONALS'.

The Talkbox
by The Sandbox
exclusively on sandbox.mindler.co.uk

The Talkbox
Our **podcast episodes** on topics related to young people's mental health

WHAT IF YOU FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT SCHOOL?



Feeling nervous or worried about school? That's because of something called "automatic thoughts." These quick thoughts pop into your head without you even realizing it, and they can make you feel anxious.

For example, if you think, "I'm going to fail this test," it can make you feel really stressed. But here's the thing: these thoughts aren't always true.

By noticing these thoughts and writing them down, you can start to understand why you're feeling anxious and learn to manage it better. With practice, you'll feel more confident about school.

HOW CAN THIS TOOL HELP ME?

This tool can help you understand what's going on in your mind when you suddenly feel worried or stressed.

By writing down your thoughts and feelings, you'll start to see patterns and learn why you feel the way you do. This is the first step to feeling better and handling tough situations like school more easily.

HOW SHOULD I USE IT?

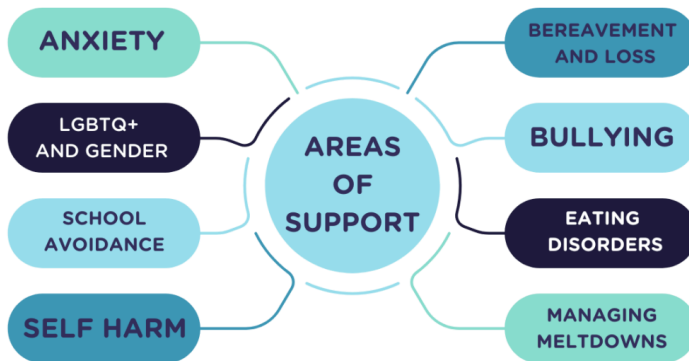
Start by picking a moment when you noticed a big change in how you were feeling. Maybe you felt nervous or upset out of nowhere – that's usually because of an automatic thought. Write down what was happening, what you felt, and what went through your mind. Try to do this soon after it happens, so it's fresh in your memory.

The Sandbox

Nessie is funded to support families of children and young people with emotional and mental health needs.

The aim of this work is to help parents/carers in developing a positive and more confident approach to supporting their young person, whilst offering a chance to gain peer support, useful strategies and practical tools.

Areas of support include, but are not limited to:



Nessie's staff are all qualified therapists, mental health practitioners and teachers who have been delivering this support for several years and have extensive experience in supporting parents. We can offer parent workshops and support, face-to-face within the school or community setting or online.

These 'live' informal workshops usually run for 1.30 hours with time for questions and discussions at the end. There are also additional opportunities for more targeted 1-1 sessions with individual parents/carers, should it be needed. Recorded webinars can also be found on our events page.

For more information or to book a workshop, please email: info@nessieined.com

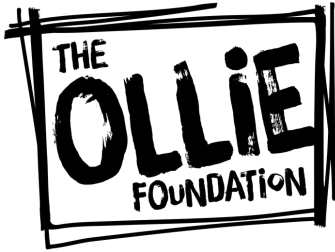
Herts Support Services:

Most school-anxious/school refusing children do WANT to attend school however their difficulties and anxiety are overwhelming. They care about their education and want to succeed, however they need understanding and support at home and at school. They may need adjustments to their daily routines, timetables, or even their school environment. Pressures to focus on attendance rather than the child's needs can make things even harder to fix.

Other Hertfordshire-Specific Support Services:

- **Childline** – if you're under 19, you can call **0800 1111** to talk to the helpline between 7:30am and 3:30am every day. The number will not appear on your phone bill.
- **Sandbox** – NHS-funded service to support children and young people in South Staffordshire and Hertfordshire with their mental health and well-being.
- **Papyrus** – Tel: **0800 0684141** Text: **0778 6209697** Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org, 10am-10pm weekdays, 2pm-10pm weekends and bank holidays.
- **Samaritans** – Call **116 123** to talk or email: jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours.
- **Just Talk** – multi-agency campaign, steered by young people.
- **Hertfordshire Local Offer** – The Local Offer lets parents and young people know what special educational needs and disabilities services are available in Hertfordshire, and who can access them.
- **Herts Mind Network** – Their aim is to make sure that no-one has to face a mental health problem alone.
- **First Step ED skills** – offers free online workshops for Hertfordshire parents, carers & older siblings, who are supporting a young person with their body image, disordered eating and/or eating disorders.
- **With Youth** – provides online support to children and young people experiencing mental ill health and/or emotional distress. Available for any Hertfordshire resident aged 5-18, as well as parents, carers and professionals.
- **Angels Support Group** – For Parents/carers with children with ADHD and/or on the Autistic spectrum
- **ADD-Vance** – A Hertfordshire-based charity that supports families affected by ADHD, Autism or a related condition and the professionals who support them.
- **Space** – supports families of children and young people who are autistic, or have ADHD or other neurodiverse conditions.

OLLIE Foundation



Parents and Carers

When your child (no matter their age) feels distressed, overwhelmed, or sad, chances are you do too, and we know that navigating the available support can be both daunting and isolating.

If you are also worried that your child may be self-harming or having thoughts of suicide, you may find yourself walking on eggshells, not sure what to say. At Team OLLIE, we know how delicate you and they are feeling right now, and we are here to support you. OLLIE can signpost you to immediate help and guide you through some useful resources and/or training that may feel helpful.

Training

OLLIE's **training** is designed to be both highly relevant as well as actionable for parents and carers, providing you with additional skills and knowledge to understand what might help in your situation and what other help is available.

From mindful drawing classes, talks exploring the neuroscience of emotion and stress, through to prescription safe plans, suicide prevention, intervention and postvention support, OLLIE is here to help. Our online talks and **training sessions** are always fully funded for parents and carers.

Events

We hope that by attending an OLLIE event we deepen your understanding of well-being, and leave you with hope for the future. Our event programme is designed to nourish the mind, body, and soul.

Below, you will find information on all of OLLIE's upcoming events and activities. Additional dates are always being added so please check back regularly or **sign up to our mailing list** where we can keep you up to date with all things OLLIE.

For general enquiries please call **07715 311 891** or email **contactus@theolliefoundation.org**.

OLLIE Foundation

Need help now?

If you believe your child is in crisis or feeling suicidal [get emergency help here](#).

If your gut instinct is that something is wrong, trust it. You know your child better than anyone. If your child has shared that they're feeling suicidal, or have acted on those thoughts, as difficult as it might be, they need you to stay as calm as possible and think for them. If you want some help and advice on how to talk with them, OLLIE provides some gentle guidance in the [Help and Advice section](#) and in particular, these [FAQs](#) may feel useful. During office hours, and if there isn't an immediate threat to life, there is usually someone at OLLIE that you can speak to, too!

Helplines

Many national and local helplines provide the opportunity to talk about how you're feeling, share your problems and find out how you can access more support.

- [PAPYRUS HOPELineUK](#) is manned by suicide prevention advisers who are mental health professionals trained in suicide prevention intervention skills.
- [Samaritans helpline](#) is answered by trained volunteers who will listen to you and help you talk through your concerns, worries and troubles.
- [CALM](#) offers confidential anonymous, and free support, information and signposting for anyone anywhere in the UK through their helpline.
- The [SANEline](#) is a national out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support, guidance and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers.
- [Shout](#) is the UK's first free 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Shout is powered by a team of volunteers, who are at the heart of the service. They take people from crisis to calm every single day.
- [7 Cups](#) – Free online and confidential chat with therapists and trained listeners.

Please be aware that all the helplines listed can get very busy, and you might ring at a time when there are no call handlers available.

Please don't give up. You could try the [Hub of Hope](#), a UK online service directory as they may list other organisations that will be able to support you.

Download our [service directory](#) to find UK services covering a range of concerns.

Call our Parents Helpline for free on [0808 802 5544](tel:08088025544).

We're open Monday - Friday 9:30am - 4:00pm.

**Children’s Wellbeing Practitioner Workshops
January – March 2026**

Workshops are open to all young people & parents/carers of children and young people who attend a school or are registered with a GP in Hertfordshire. A referral is not needed to access a workshop.

All workshops are currently being delivered online via Microsoft Teams. For more information about what each workshop covers and to book a place onto a workshop, visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/hct-childrens-wellbeing-practitioners-33494371787>



Workshop	Date & Time
<p align="center">Emotional Wellbeing (For Young People 11-16)</p> <p>A workshop focused on adolescents managing their emotional wellbeing and things parents/carers can do to help.</p>	<p>Thursday 22nd January 6-8 pm Thursday 12th March 6-8 pm</p>
<p align="center">Adolescent Self-Esteem and Resilience</p> <p>A workshop focused on adolescents improving their self-esteem and resilience and what parents/carers can do to help.</p>	<p>Tuesday 27th January 6-8 pm Tuesday 3rd March 6-8 pm</p>
<p align="center">Supporting your Child’s Self-Esteem and Resilience</p> <p>A workshop focused on parents/carers supporting their child to improve their self-esteem and resilience.</p>	<p>Tuesday 24th February 10-12 pm</p>
<p align="center">Supporting with Sleep Difficulties</p> <p>This workshop focuses on supporting children and adolescents with managing their sleep difficulties and things parents/carers can do to help.</p>	<p>Tuesday 3rd February 6-8 pm</p>
<p align="center">Developing your Child’s Emotional Literacy</p> <p>A workshop focused on parents supporting their child with developing emotional literacy.</p>	<p>Thursday 8th January 6-8 pm Tuesday 10th February 10-12 pm Tuesday 24th March 6-8 pm</p>
<p align="center">General Emotional Wellbeing and Regulation Tips for Parents/Carers</p> <p>A workshop focused on parents supporting their child’s general emotional wellbeing and ability to emotionally regulate.</p>	<p>Tuesday 13th January 10-12 pm Thursday 19th February 6-8 pm Wednesday 18th March 10-12 am</p>

To access the recorded **Emotionally Based School Avoidance Webinar** please visit:

**To access the Emotionally Based School Avoidance Webinar
click here and scroll down to watch**

Supporting links - new courses on school anxiety to follow

TALKING ANXIETY in FAMILIES



Wednesdays 9.45 - 11.30am Online Course ID: 801
04-Feb, 11-Feb, 25-Feb, 04-Mar, 11-Mar, 18-Mar 2026

6, weekly sessions for parents and carers of children aged 2-11, supporting you to:

- **Understand why children and adults get worried or anxious.**
- **Develop strategies to handle anxiety in yourself and others within your family.**
- **Recognise the early signs of anxiety and be able to avoid escalation.**
- **Reduce stress and tension.**
- **Encourage resilient behaviour and strengthen relationships in the family.**

Our online sessions are delivered weekly via Zoom.

Groups are open to parents, carers, grandparents and guardians living, or with a child in school, in Hertfordshire.

“This course has helped us massively. We are responding so differently, and it's really helping us to cope day to day.”

Booking essential

Please quote the course ID
To check eligibility and book a place,
contact Supporting Links on:

07512 709 556

bookings@supportinglinks.co.uk

www.supportinglinks.co.uk

 These courses are provided free to participants by Hertfordshire County Council's Targeted Parenting Fund 







Information you share with us is used to process your booking. This will be held securely and only shared in accordance with our GDPR Policy.

[Click here to view or book courses](#)

If your child is anxious about school, or they are unable to go to school, we have advice on supporting them and working with the school and other services.

If your child is being affected by bullying, we have information and advice in our guide that can help.

Follow these steps to start a conversation with the school:

-  1. Ask for a meeting with the class teacher or tutor group lead, the pastoral lead or the school's SENCO.
-  2. Make notes of what to say beforehand. Then during the meeting, go through the specific things your child is finding difficult. You can also ask the teacher whether they have noticed any situations that seem particularly challenging for your child.
-  3. If you and your child have already identified some things that might help, ask for specific changes. If you're not sure where to start, you can ask them what changes the school can offer. Or have a look at our ideas below.
-  4. Take notes during the meeting. Agree changes you're going to try, and follow up with them afterwards by email. You could also ask for the changes to be formalised in an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This is a plan schools can use to make sure your child is given consistent adjustments across all of their lessons.
-  5. Arrange a time when you will check-in again to see if things have improved. Give enough time for your child to try out the new change or routine first.
-  6. If the person you're speaking to isn't helping, find someone else who will. This could be their head of year, a member of the pastoral team or the deputy head. If you need to, you can also escalate the problem to the head teacher, governors, academy trust or the Local Education Authority.

Childline



If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, chat online or email about any problem big or small.

[Sign up](#) for a free Childline locker (real name or email address not needed) to use their [free 1-2-1 counsellor chat](#) and email support service.

[Can provide a BSL interpreter](#) if you are deaf or hearing-impaired.

Hosts [online message boards](#) where you can share your experiences, have fun and get support from other young people in similar situations.

Opening times:24/7
0800 1111

 [Childline](#)

Papyrus



Offers confidential advice and support for young people struggling with suicidal thoughts, as well as family and friends; and information about how to make a safety plan.

Its helpline service - HOPELINE247 - is available to anybody under the age of 35 experiencing suicidal thoughts, or anybody concerned that a young person could be thinking of suicide.

Opening times:24/7 every day of the year
[0800 068 4141](#)
[88247](#)
pap@papyrus-uk.org

 [Papyrus](#)

Shout



Text SHOUT to 85258.

Shout provides free, 24/7 text support for young people across the UK experiencing a mental health crisis.

All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors.

Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

Texts can be anonymous, but if the volunteer believes you are at immediate risk of harm, they may share your details with people who can provide support.

Opening times:24/7

 [Shout](#)

Samaritans



Whatever you're going through, you can contact the Samaritans for support. N.B. This is a listening service and does not offer advice or intervention.

Opening times:24/7
116123

jo@samaritans.org

 [Samaritans](#)

NHS 111



To get urgent mental health advice from the NHS, call 111 and select the mental health option. 111 will tell you where you can get help. They may also be able to put you through to a trained mental health professional over the phone.

111 can support anyone who is feeling unsafe, distressed or worried about their mental health. They can also give information and advice about what to do if you're worried about someone else.

If you would rather get help online, you can use [111 online](#).

Opening times:24/7
111



Managing Anxieties Around School

Here are some suggestions for parents if children are struggling to go to school or feel anxiety in the lead up to going back to school after holidays or are anxious about moving to a new school or class.

Giving time and space to your child

Create a culture in the family where emotions are talked about. Make time daily to be with your child without other distractions, to enjoy time together and to have conversations. This opportunity sometimes leads to a child sharing concerns.

Modelling calmness

Parents may be struggling with their own worries. Be aware of how you model your own anxiety.

Listening and validating

Listen to your child. Hear what their concerns are. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know that you know it's tough for them.

Limit reassurance

Asking questions is helpful but giving excessive reassurance is not. It's very tempting to give lots of reassurance to your child, as it may relieve anxiety in the short term. In the long term it keeps it going. Instead listen and ask them what they think, and what they think will help.

Deferring worries

Children can be encouraged to make a list of worries and have an agreed deferred time to worry about things on their list. For example, at 4pm spend

30 minutes discussing the worrying. This can help to contain worries, and often the worry feels less distressing at this deferred time.

Encourage a growth mindset

Help children to recognise that building tolerance of uncertainty can help them manage their anxiety and develop their growth mindset. It is like building up 'mind muscles'. Encourage children to ask questions, and support skills in problem solving so they can consider their own solutions.

Rewards

Use rewards to help children manage their anxiety about getting to school and managing at school. This should be age appropriate and not too expensive

Taking care of self and others

Encourage children to think about their own mental health including eating healthily, exercising, doing things they enjoy, spending time with others. In addition, practice being kind to self and others.

Dr Jess Richardson

[Click here to access the website and online webinars](#)



[Nip in the bud](#)

Emotional Based School Avoidance

AUTISM IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

What can be Difficult about School?

- ▶ Every Child has the right to an Education
 - ▶ Children learn things they find interesting
 - ▶ They spend time with friends
 - ▶ They get to do activities they like
 - ▶ They can obtain qualifications to enable them to find a career and achieve their ambitions and goals in life
 - ▶ School can give structure and routine
-
- ▶ Being away from parents they rely on to support communication and understanding can be distressing.
 - ▶ They may struggle with the work
 - ▶ The expectations and demands may be too high for their developmental level
 - ▶ They may struggle with being able to show what they know
 - ▶ They may have difficulties with literacy and numeracy
 - ▶ Executive function dysfunction
 - ▶ Speech and language needs
 - ▶ They may struggle communicating their emotions
 - ▶ They may struggle with peer interactions, playground politics
 - ▶ Navigating friendships
 - ▶ Making sense of arguments
 - ▶ Others not following the rules
 - ▶ Bullying

What can be Difficult about School Cont'd

- ▶ They might struggle with the adults – staff not understanding their responses or reactions
- ▶ Reasonable adjustments not being made
- ▶ Lack of understanding around their sensory needs
- ▶ Not making adjustments to behaviour and uniform policies
- ▶ A fear of failure or getting into trouble
- ▶ They may struggle with the environment
- ▶ It might be too noisy, smelly, visually overwhelming, chaotic, others walking or running in unpredictable directions,
- ▶ Sensory issues with uniform
- ▶ Classrooms or other areas may be difficult for their sensory processing.
- ▶ **SCHOOLS ARE A VERY CHALLENGING SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

Need more help?

- ▶ Not Fine In School – www.notfineinschool.co.uk
- ▶ DfE Guidance - Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- ▶ SENDIASS
- ▶ HPCI Guide for parents of children with SEND on Attendance and Exclusions - Final-Col-HPCI-Exclusions-Parent-Guide-A4.pdf (hertsparentcarers.org.uk)
- ▶ Angels Website – www.angelsupportgroup.org.uk

[Angels - Website](http://www.angelsupportgroup.org.uk)

Created by Penny Howarth - Angels
Support Group



[Angels - School worksheet printable](#)



Neurodiversity Support Hub

For Parents, Carers and Professionals across Hertfordshire

 **01727 833 963**

 **supporthub@add-vance.org**

Whether you need practical advice, emotional support or simply a listening ear, we're here for you.

Helpline hours:

Term Time: Mon, Wed & Fri: 9am - 1pm

Tues & Thurs: 9am - 3pm

Wed evenings (by appointment): 7pm - 9pm

School Holidays: Mon - Fri: 9am - 1pm

All our helpline team are parents/carers of neurodivergent children.





Delivering Special Provision Locally

Who are we?

DSPL7 supports parents and carers, staff in early years settings, schools and further education colleges by ensuring there is a range of provision and support services within the St Albans and Harpenden area for children and young people with additional needs.

Contact Us



DSPL7, The Hub, 228 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW



01727 519229



admin@dspl7.org.uk



www.dspl7.org.uk



dspl7_stalbansandharpenden

