

# Emotionally-Related School Avoidance: profile of risk and resilience for early years and school readiness

## Definition of ERSA

Emotionally related school avoidance (ERSA) describes a group of children and young people that experience difficulties attending school due to school, parent or child factors, as well as wider societal factors. The roots of ERSA lie in emotional, psychological and relational issues. ERSA presents as a continuum, ranging from children and young people who are attending school, but present with anxiety and behavioural symptoms, through to complete absence from school for an extended period of time.

## Using the Profile of Risk and Resilience (PoRR)

The PoRR consists of six key areas. Each contains a number of items you are asked to consider in terms of their possible importance in influencing an emotionally related attendance problem. The rationale for the content is based on risk and resilience factors identified in this guidance.

When completing the PoRR, it is important to be as objective as possible, and to base assessments on evidence. It is therefore recommended that completion of the PoRR is a joint venture between the lead professional at school, involved professionals (such as a social worker, education welfare officer, early help worker) and the family. The child or young person can also be involved if appropriate; checking and questioning can lead to the best judgements in terms of item importance. The statements are written from the perspective of the child or young person to help consider the situation from their point of view.

During the process of completing the PoRR, it may be useful to note factors associated with particular items, such as:

- this has been an issue in the past, but doesn't appear to be now
- this has been an issue in the past and has persisted as an important item

Items are not quantified by a typical rating scale. This may be that one single item (such as the death of a parent) is so important it cannot be rated numerically in the same way other items might be rated. Its influence could be proportionately much greater than a rating scale could accommodate.

Some factors could present either as a risk or resilience factor. We therefore suggest first identifying its presence (Yes/No) and then deciding whether it is a risk or resilience factor for the child or young person. You might choose to rate the risk factors with a red, amber, green (RAG) rating with green indicating a low level of concern and red indicating a high level of concern.

Where there is a resilience factor, a tick in the box can highlight this. If there is a risk or resilience factor, it is crucial that additional information is provided in the comments section to best understand the context and needs of the child. These comments will also inform the next steps regarding additional support and what is needed in the support plan.

If the resultant profile suggests to you that the child is at risk of emotionally related school avoidance, the next step is to obtain the views of the child, parents, carers and relevant staff or professionals involved and engage the child-led ERSA support plan, adapted to the developmental levels that the child can access as appropriate. It is expected that the close adults at school and home who know the child best, working in partnership, with the child at the centre of their thoughts, will complete the profile.

## Profile of risk and resilience of ERSA

Family dynamics and readiness	Yes/No	Risk concern	Resilience factor	Additional comments
I feel close with my family at home				
I have a close relationship with my wider family (for example: cousins, aunts, grandparents)				
I feel safe and secure when at home				
I have a stable and predictable home routine				
I feel comfortable being away from my parents or carers				
I have a supportive family (for example: my family talks positively about school, my family is motivated to support me to attend school, my family values education)				
There has been a birth of a new child in my family				
My siblings consistently attend school				
My parents are separated				
My parents or carers constantly argue or fight				
I have practical problems coming to school				
I feel jealous of my sibling(s)				
I often fight or argue with my sibling(s)				
I worry about being away from my parents				
I stay home to spend time with my family member				

Loss and change	Yes/No	Risk concern	Resilience factor	Additional comments
I feel a sense of loss (for example: due to bereavement, parental separation or divorce, death of a pet)				
I have lots of changes with my home or school life (for example: I am not always certain which house I am staying in each night, I do not know who will be at home, there have been lots of different teachers and moves in my life)				
I am or will be moving house, school (for example: to a new setting from nursery), area				
I have experienced a loss of a classmate				
My parents, carers, relatives or friends are ill				

## Child readiness factors

Social and emotional development	Yes/No	Risk factor	Resilience factor	Additional comments (including N/A)
I am building my play skills (imaginative, co-operative)				
I am building my social skills (for example turn taking)				
I like to play with others				
I have an understanding of simple emotions				
I have an understanding of others' emotions				
I need an adult I like to help make me feel better when I am upset				

I often present as anxious				
I have positive relationships with at least one staff member or adult outside of school (such as a nursery nurse)				
I attend and enjoy a range of activities such as soft play or going to the park with my parents				
Other children like to play with me				

Language	Yes/No	Risk factor	Resilience factor	Additional comments (including N/A)
I use English as a second language				
I can tell you my wants and needs verbally/non-verbally)				
I have an age appropriate vocabulary				
I can independently develop simple sentences				
I can ask simple questions				
I can answer simple questions				
I can understand simple instructions				

Play, learning and emerging skills	Yes/No	Risk factor	Resilience factor	Additional comments (including N/A)
I am building my concentration and attention skills				
I am building my listening skills				
I can follow instructions (one step or multi-step)				

I can accept adult direction				
I enjoy stories				
I am developing my early literacy and language skills (recognising rhymes, syllables, letter sounds)				
I am developing my early maths skills (counting)				

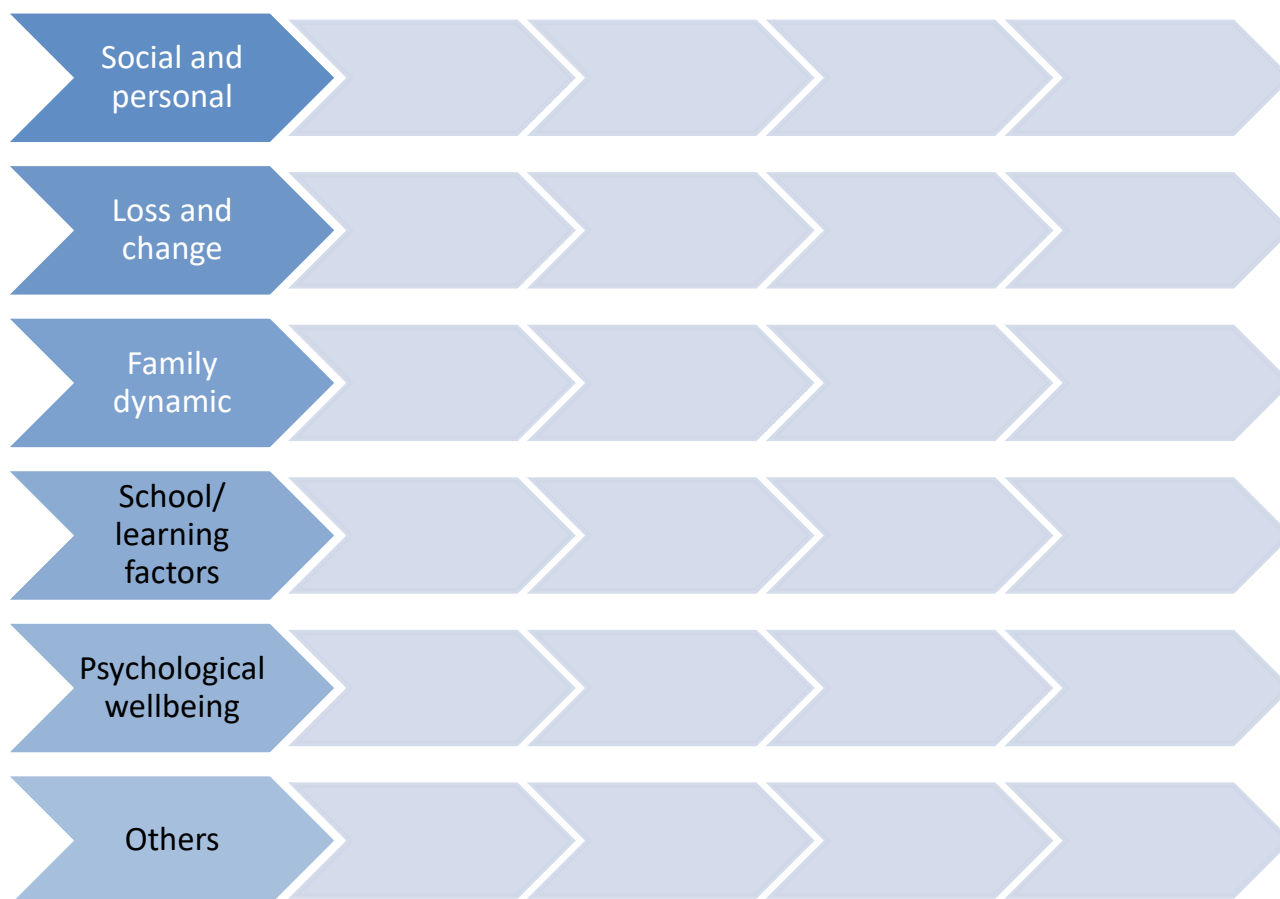
<b>Physical</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Risk factor</b>	<b>Resilience factor</b>	<b>Additional comments (including N/A)</b>
I am toilet trained				
I have well developed dressing skills				
I have developed feeding skills (for example: using a spoon, drinking from an open cup)				
I have age-appropriate fine motor skills (holding pencils, mark making shapes or letters, using scissors)				
I have age appropriate gross motor movement skills (balancing, ball skills)				
I have good core muscles and agility				
I am hungry a lot of the time				
I eat anything (non-edible) that helps me to self-soothe (for example: stones, sand, wires, soap, paper, furniture, sticks)				
I am developing my ability to keep myself safe (awareness of danger)				

<b>Routines</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Risk factor</b>	<b>Resilience factor</b>	<b>Additional comments (including N/A)</b>
I sleep well most of the time				
I have a good morning routine that I know well and it helps me				
I have a good after nursery or school routine that I know well and it helps me (for example: getting a snack)				
I find it hard to adapt when routine changes				

<b>Other considerations</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Additional comments (including N/A)</b>
Is there any outside agency involvement (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, health visitor, paediatrician)		
Is there any information in the child's history that is important to inform us of?		

## Overview of key risk and resilience factors identified

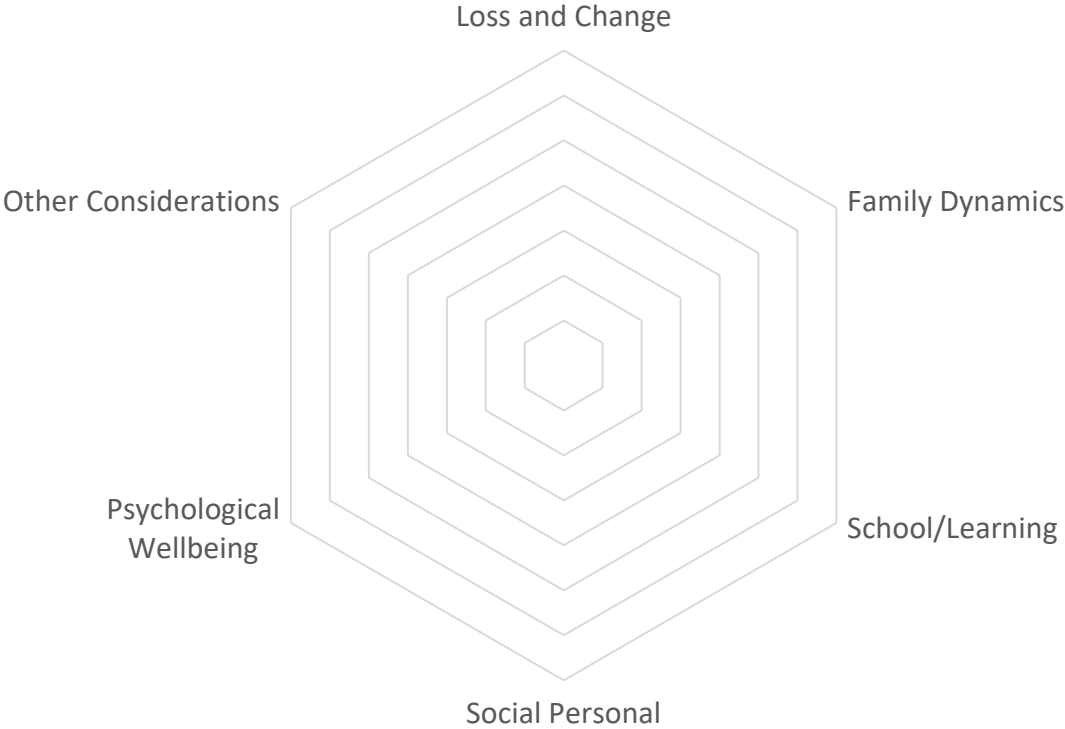
You may wish to add in the key risk and resilience factors here for an overview and to inform the key areas to address in the ERSA support plan or ERSA person-centred path. Consider using two different colours for the risk and resilience factors.



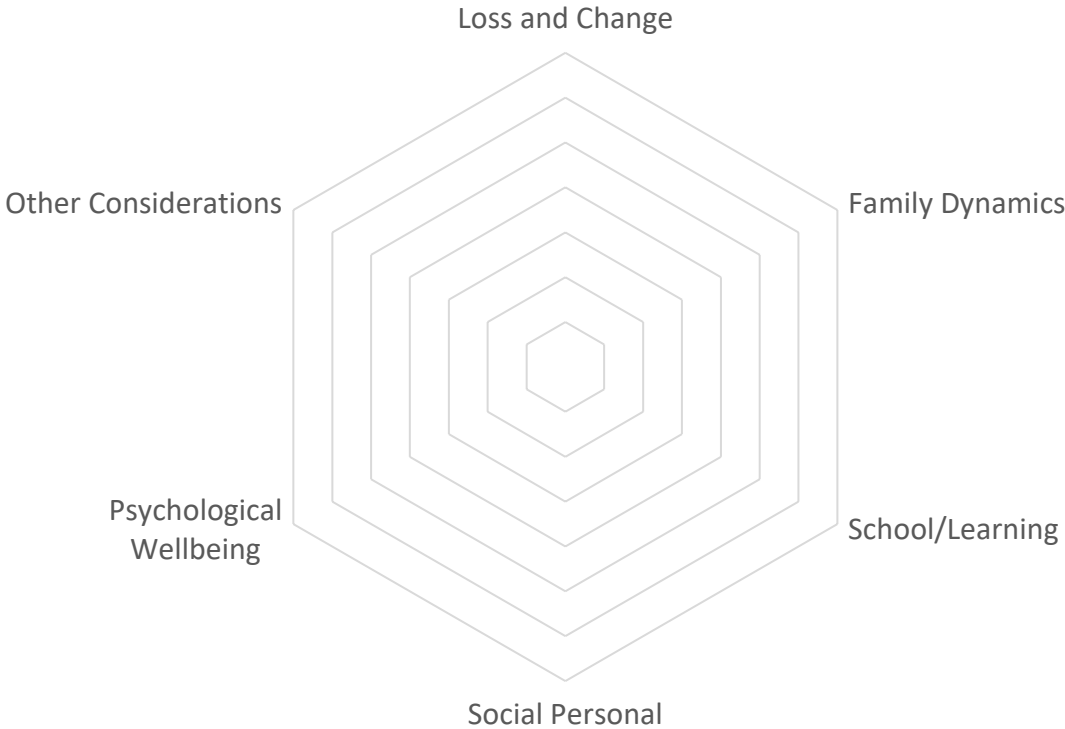
Mapping the risk and resilience factors onto the respective webs below can provide a clear visual representation of areas needing support and strengths. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you with this process.

- **Quantify factors:** For each category, identify the number of risk and resilience factors.
- **Plot the points:** Starting from the centre, mark points along each line corresponding to the number of factors. For example, if there are five risk factors in the family category, mark five points along the family line on the risk factors web.
- **Connect the points:** Connect the points for each category to form a web. This visual will help you see which areas have more risk factors and which have more resilience factors.
- **Analyse the web:** Look at the web to identify areas with high risk factors and areas with strong resilience. This can guide your support strategies. It should be noted that a high quantity of risk factors in a specific area does not diminish the impact of individual risk factors in other areas.

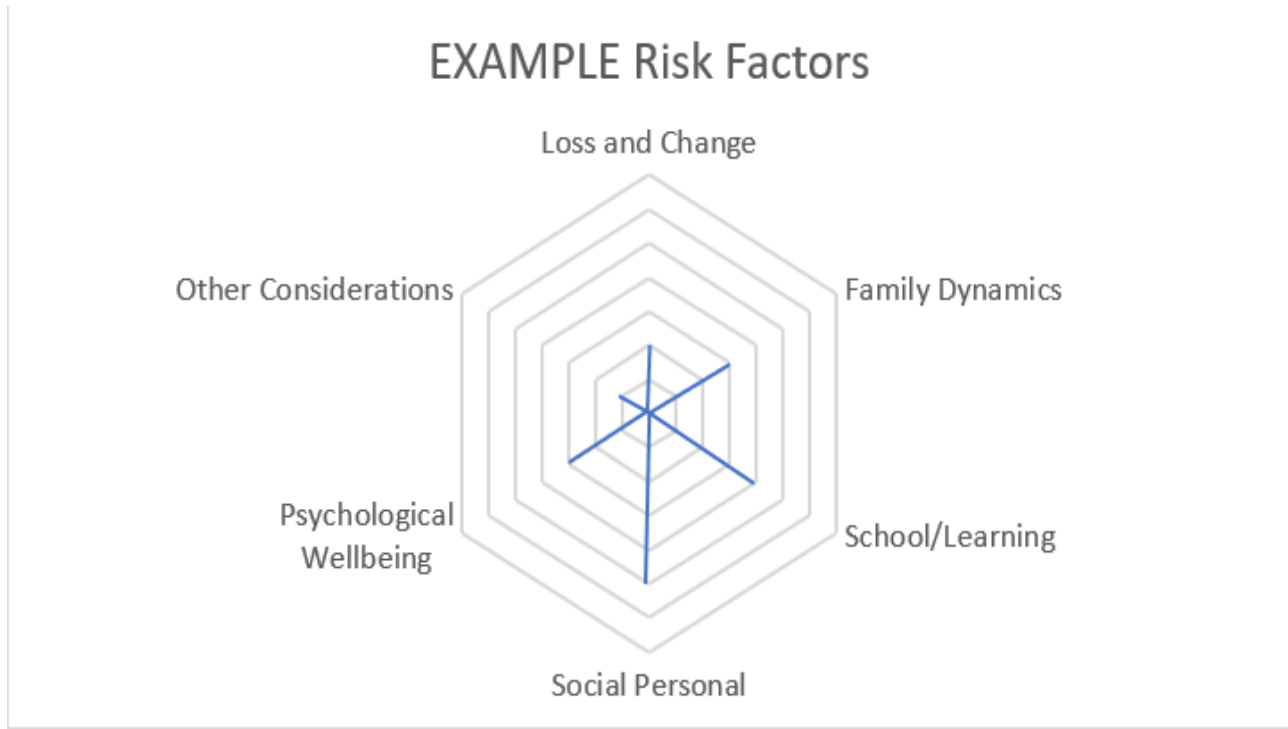
# Resilience Factors



# Risk Factors



## Example case:



### Breakdown of example risk factor web

- **Loss and change (2):** Child A transitioned to a new school during the Covid-19 lockdown (change of school and great uncertainty during the pandemic had a big impact on the return to school).
- **Family factors (3):** Child A does not feel comfortable being away from their parents, they often argue with their siblings, and there is a practical problem with getting to and from school.
- **School or learning (4):** Child A finds reading and writing difficult, they often feel frustrated by learning tasks because they are too hard, they struggle to keep up with the pace of the work set in class, and they are not motivated to attend school.
- **Social personal (5):** Child A experiences difficulties within peer interactions. They often report being bullied by peers, they do not feel well liked by peers, they do not have supportive peer relationships, they have reported not feeling safe in school, and they present as anxious during break times.
- **Psychological wellbeing (3):** Child A has a low self-esteem, they are fearful of making mistakes in class, and they are not currently able to communicate their emotions effectively.
- **Other considerations (1):** Child A has a diagnosis of autism.

With thanks to guidance from West Sussex EPS and EBSA Horizons Risk and Resilience Profiles from which this ERSA Profile of Risk and Resilience has been adapted.