



**WISDOM**  
Research Network

**NIHR** | Oxford Health Biomedical  
Research Centre

# Autumn Term 2025 Newsletter

ISSUE 4

Welcome to the AUTUMN 2025 newsletter of the WISDOM Research Network!



[wisdomnetwork.org.uk](http://wisdomnetwork.org.uk)  
[wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk)

## Our Termly Newsletter includes:

### Research Opportunities for Schools

For example:

Opportunities for Primary, Secondary, and Further Education students, teachers & school staff

### WISDOM Network Updates

For example:

Articles written by our research partners

### From Beyond the Network

For example:

Updates from schools  
Interviews with experts  
Spotlight on CYP mental health issues



## Newsletter Content:

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## Please get in touch!

We welcome input from schools to understand better what you'd like to read about here going forwards.



# Research Opportunities

Below are our latest research opportunities for schools.

New Research Opportunities arise throughout the term, so check the [website](#) for our very latest opportunities!

Our “**Spotlight Study**” emails also showcase specific projects.

Don't forget that by engaging with any of our advertised research projects, your school will qualify for a membership upgrade and move up a tier, making you an Active or Advanced Member, depending on your current level.

Age Group	Research Title
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 11 - 18 years)	Understanding and Measuring Overwhelming Emotions in Adolescence
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 14 - 18 years)	Cross-Cultural Variations in the Relationship Between Perceived Parental Control, Warmth and Threat-Based Interpretation Biases in Adolescents
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 15 - 18 years) <b>NEW</b>	ATTEND - Adolescents and Carers Using Mindfulness Therapy to End Depression
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 15 - 18 years)	Social Anxiety and Classroom Concentration
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 14 - 24 years)	Oxford PERL Advisory Group
Secondary Teachers, Head Teachers & School Staff supporting the well-being of students over 16 yrs. <b>NEW</b>	The Activity Time Use Intervention

If you are interested in taking part in any of the above research activities, please contact the WISDOM Research Network about becoming a member:

[wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk)

# WISDOM: Network Updates

## Seeing the Future: When Over Imagination Fuels Anxiety

Written by: Reimagine Research Group - [www.psy.ox.ac.uk/research/reimagine](http://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/research/reimagine)



Imagination is a powerful tool. It helps young people to dream big, plan ahead, and tackle challenges. But **sometimes imagination can go into overdrive**. For some young people, anxious feelings are not just about thoughts. They come with clear mental pictures of things going wrong in the future. These images are called **flashforwards**.

Many young people with anxiety describe these flashforwards as overwhelming and intense. For example, a student might picture themselves failing an exam, being laughed at, or getting hurt, and **the image can feel like it is really about to happen**. This makes anxious thoughts stronger, harder to ignore, and often more upsetting. It is like the mind is running a scary movie on repeat and switching it off is not easy.



We are researchers from the University of Oxford, and in our research we are working with **young people to investigate how these flashforwards shape anxious feelings**. We want to know how common they are, what makes them so powerful, and how they might keep anxiety going. By listening to young people's experiences, we hope to get a clearer picture of how imagination and anxiety affect each other.

The ultimate aim is to use this knowledge to **improve support and treatment, such as therapies**. In lots of therapies, we often focus on anxious thoughts, but if flashforwards play an important role in anxiety, then finding ways to work with them too could make a real difference. We believe that by understanding these powerful images we **can help young people feel more in control of their imagination** and reduce feelings of anxiety.

If you think this project could be of interest to your school, please get in touch by emailing us at [alex.lauzhu@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alex.lauzhu@psy.ox.ac.uk)

We are particularly interested in hearing from:

Young people who experience anxiety  
Young people who experience flashforwards  
Autistic young people

# From Beyond the Network

## Emotion Based School Absence: Use of Reduced Timetables - by Dr Jennifer Sole

Jennifer is currently in independent practice in East Kent, offering direct therapeutic intervention, training, supervision and consultation. Prior to this she worked in the NHS for 13 years, most recently as a Locality Clinical Lead for the Mental Health Support Teams in schools in East Kent.

*All opinions expressed in this article are the author's own based on their practice experience.*

### EBSA EMOTIONAL BASED SCHOOL ABSENCE

School attendance remains a top priority for many schools, especially with persistent absenteeism still high post-pandemic. EBSA is now commonly used to describe children who do not attend school due to emotional reasons. Before adopting any targeted attendance strategy, schools should audit their implementation of the 8 Principles of the Whole School Approach. These principles aim to protect and promote pupil wellbeing and may reduce the need for reduced timetables to only a select few.

### A REDUCED TIMETABLE

A Reduced Timetable is a temporary agreement between the school, pupil, and family to reduce school hours, with absences registered as authorized. There is no fixed timeframe for such arrangements; government guidance recommends regular reviews to ensure they are in place for the shortest time possible.

Successfully implementing a Reduced Timetable requires time and resources, and there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Schools must anticipate setbacks and periods of trial and error. While resource-intensive, when used well, reduced timetables can foster trust between pupil and school, develop self-advocacy skills, and lead to sustained attendance and improved academic outcomes. Conversely, if adopted in a manner that places blame within the individual and it is unsuccessful, it can result in feelings of hopelessness and failure, further harming pupil wellbeing.



### A RELATIONAL APPROACH

Successful implementation requires understanding that school non-attendance is a result of the relationship between the child and their context, rather than locating 'the problem' solely within the child. The question becomes: Why this pupil, at this school, at this time? This reframing adopts compassionate curiosity, making it the responsibility of a network of people to resolve, not just the child.

Careful consideration is needed regarding who comprises this network and the roles of power and identity. Complex dynamics can arise, especially when liaising with Attendance Officers who have the authority to issue fines. Allocation of roles and responsibilities need to be thoughtful, for example; who is best placed to gather information from the child about their school experience? If an unknown adult in a position of power, how honest is the child able to be, is this task best placed with a parent or teacher with whom they have a strong connection. Schools need to think carefully about 'who' and 'how' roles are allocated, appreciating the relational component of tasks such as leading reviews, monitoring progress and gathering information.

It is important for schools to anticipate and allocate the resources required in order to maintain change and limit the likelihood of drift. Having named adults allows for both accountability and closer monitoring for any external factors such as ill health or changes in family circumstances which could hinder the progress and review whether steps are achievable and if not may need breaking down into more manageable chunks. If the pupil is unable to successfully complete the steps, it is vital the plan is amended, not the child confronted with an unachievable step. For some, this process may be quick and simple; for others, it may require frequent trial and error to ensure steps are pitched 'just right'.



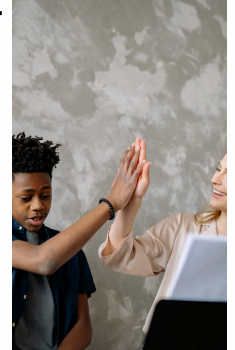
### COLLABORATIVE UNDERSTANDING

Children avoid school for many reasons, and no two experiences are the same. Creating a reduced timetable requires a careful review of the entire school week, not just taught lessons, but also transitions, peer interactions, arrival and departure, and use of facilities. Resources such as 'mapping the landscape' can aid this process. Collaboratively agreeing on goals helps set expectations and ensures a shared direction, adding predictability for pupils.

# From Beyond the Network

The hopes for a reduced timetable may vary; for some, 'full-time' attendance may look different to other pupils. It is vital that there is a collaborative understanding of why difficulties with consistent attendance emerged as simply returning a pupil to the same environment with no other support is unlikely to create sustained change.

For some children whose non-attendance was a result of a specific period of absence for example ill health, a phased return to school may well be enough to gradually expose a pupil to a setting and build capacity to manage the full school day. However, for others who have presented with long standing reluctance to attend school which is understood as a result of the lack of necessary accommodations to the learning environment, a reduced timetable would be best employed alongside installation of accommodations (e.g., visual timetables, access to quiet spaces, specific learning supports). Or perhaps a pupil is currently experiencing an episode of anxiety that requires targeted support from external agencies (e.g., psychoeducation work with a Well-Being Practitioner).

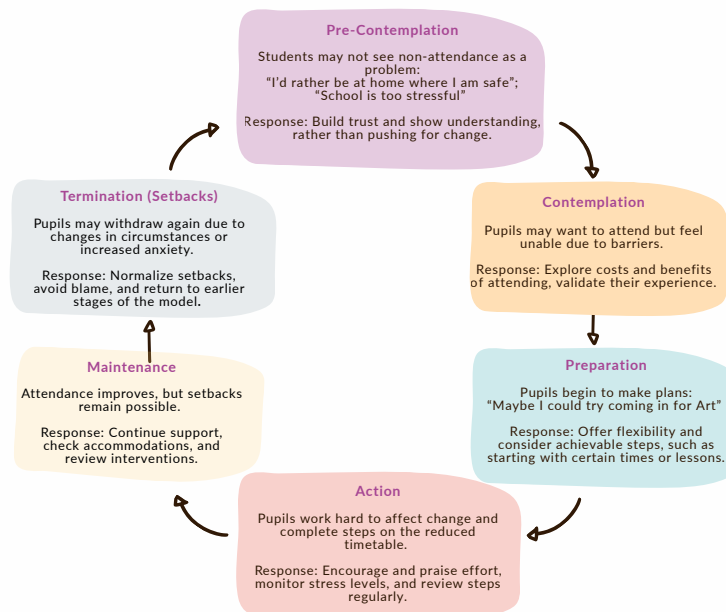


## STAGES OF CHANGE

Adopting the Stages of Change Model (Prochaska & DiClemente), a therapeutic technique for behaviour change, may be a helpful framework. The model acknowledges that progress is not always linear, and people can move back and forth between stages. It acknowledges that setbacks are to be expected and are useful in developing understanding.

Rather than being seen as failures set-backs can help further understanding of a pupils needs and requirements. If, in the rare scenario, it is learnt a pupil cannot return to the setting in a meaningful capacity, this is a helpful outcome as it can carefully guide requirements of any future settings.

Often, people are ambivalent about change, or perhaps not yet ready to make a change, thus responses must be tailored to meet them where they are. Frustration and disappointment can arise when there is a mismatch between a pupils readiness to change and the approach taken by school/family. Use of the stages for change model can help guide responses.



## CONCLUSION

To successfully tackle attendance schools need to acknowledge the relational component of EBSA. Reduced Timetables can be effective tools to improving a pupils' attendance, yet they need to be bespoke to individual needs. Use of the Stages of Change model may help carefully guide responses to facilitate and maintain change.