

Steps and Stories: The BrightPaths Newsletter

Welcome to the January edition of Steps and Stories!

We would like to take a moment to reflect on our achievements of 2025 to look at the progress that we have made. Taking a step back to see how far we've come, helps us to appreciate how many young people we have been able to support.

Amongst our 2025 roundup, we also have published recent articles about emotional school avoidance and inclusivity in public spaces, created a timeline of events and workshops we've hosted this year and we'd like to shout out our incredible mentors who are integral to everything we do here at BrightPaths.

This month's free resource is a no-equipment sensory circuits guide - perfect for helping children to regulate themselves at the start of a school day.



Recent highlights

Anxiety based school avoidance

This month, we published a new thought leadership article on Emotional School Avoidance (EBSA), also known as anxiety based school avoidance. Drawing on UK guidance, current research and our day to day work with children, families and schools, the article explores why EBSA is not a choice or a behaviour issue, but a nervous system response to overwhelm.

We look at why attendance pressure often makes anxiety worse, how masking and unmet needs are frequently missed, and what genuinely helps children feel safe enough to re engage with learning. The article also sets out practical, evidence informed steps for parents, carers, schools and professionals, with a strong focus on early identification, relationships and small, timely adjustments.

At BrightPaths, we see time and again that attendance improves when children feel understood and supported, not when pressure is increased. This piece reflects our engagement first approach and our commitment to preventative, compassionate support.

 [Read the full article on our website](#)

Inclusivity in public spaces

In a recent blog post, one of our volunteers, Laura, reflected on a challenging experience during a family trip to Disneyland Paris. Her account highlights the importance of inclusive design – not only in physical spaces, but also in the accuracy and transparency of accessibility information. The piece calls on organisations to consider how inclusive practices impact families navigating additional needs.

Ultimately, organisations must listen to the lived experiences of children and families to ensure their spaces are genuinely inclusive, and that accessibility guides reflect sensory needs as well as physical access, in order to make families feel informed and welcomed.

 [Read the full piece on our website](#)

2025 highlights and impact

As we step into 2026, we wanted to pause and reflect on the breadth of work delivered over the past year. We have created a visual snapshot of our 2025 highlights, showcasing the range of projects, workshops, and initiatives we delivered in partnership with schools and communities.

 [View our 2025 highlights](#)

Alongside this, we've pulled together a brief overview of all that we have achieved so far. Here is a snapshot of BrightPaths impact and progress we've made since our inception:

Academic year 2024-5 to date

Type of Support	Delivered so far
Free consultations & advice (incl. follow-up)	40+ hours
Group & workshops	21 Sessions
Targeted 1:1 support	13 pupils
YES Mentoring	11 pupils
Total supported	153 children and young people

Impact overview (since 2021)

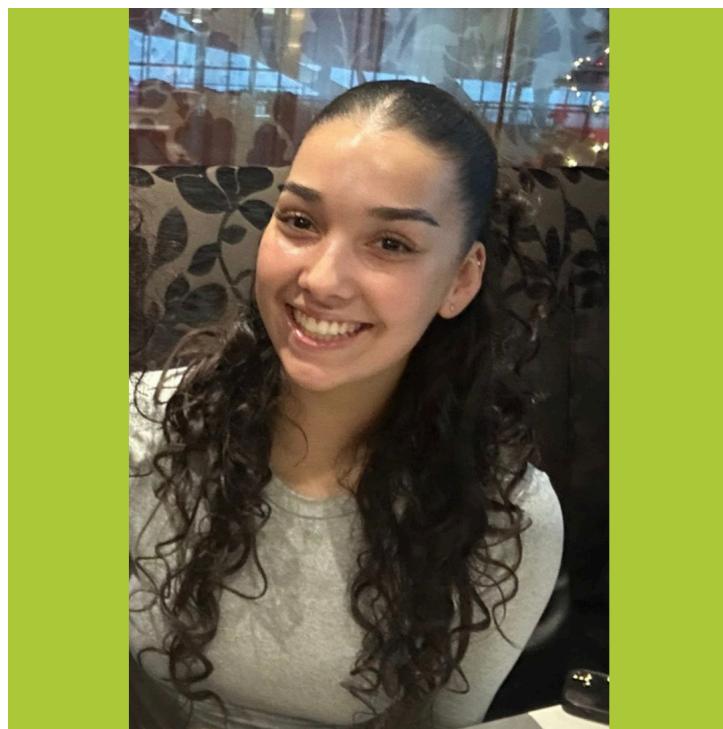
Support	Impact
Children, Young People or Families Supported	918 (plus) across 76 schools in Bedfordshire, Luton, and Hertfordshire
Targeted 1:1 Support	100+ children, averaging 8 sessions each – over 800 hours of direct support
YES Mentoring	71 young people accessed free weekly sessions (up to 12 weeks each)
Free Consultations & Advice	Guidance and follow-up for families and school partners – far exceeding 100+ hours

Team spotlight

Our mentors are at the core of what we do and this month we would like to thank our lovely mentor Yasmin for all her amazing work with us.

Yasmin works to create a safe, supportive environment where children feel able to talk openly about the challenges they're facing. She has seen the positive impact mentoring can have, particularly in building self-confidence and supporting improved relationships at school.

Yasmin also recognises the importance of being adaptable to meet each child's needs, and advocated for one of her mentees when she felt that the 12 week program needed to be extended in order to provide more meaningful support.



How you can get involved

There are lots of ways to support our work, whether you're an educator, young person, or part of a community group.

Volunteer with us - we are currently looking for someone to help out with our social media and content creation, if you or someone you know might be interested, check out [more info here](#)

Help spread the word - If you know a school, educator, carer, or young person who could benefit from our support, please share our details.

 support@brightpaths.org.uk  [01234 958493](tel:01234 958493)  [Contact us](#)  [Support us](#)

This month's free resource: No-equipment sensory circuits guide

Sensory circuits are short sequences of physical activities designed to optimise a child's level of alertness, helping them feel ready to focus and engage with learning. They can be particularly beneficial for children with sensory processing differences and difficulties with concentrating, but are overall useful for all children.

The activities can be adapted to suit individual needs and should always be led at the child's pace. When used consistently, sensory circuits can support regulation, concentration, and emotional wellbeing at the start of the school day.

 [Download the sensory circuits guide](#)

Some official resources and guidance including equipment guides and benefits:

 [Activity cards with equipment](#)

 [NHS guidance](#)

 **Stay connected**

Thank you for reading this edition of Steps and Stories.

To keep receiving monthly updates, free tools, and ways to support children's wellbeing, make sure you're subscribed – and please share this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

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