

THE HAVEN

Operated by the Autistic Girls Network charity — 1196655 (England and Wales), SC054837 (Scotland)

Re-Integration Policy

Back to Balance and the Haven re-engagement pathway

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Owner	Head
Approved by	Proprietor + Governing Body

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how The Haven supports young people to re-engage with learning after a period of school absence, school refusal, or significant disengagement from education. It describes the principles and practice that underpin our Back to Balance programme and the wider re-integration pathway through our online provision.

The Haven specialises in supporting neurodivergent young people who have been unable to attend school — many for extended periods, sometimes for years. Re-integration is therefore not a side activity. It is the core of what we do.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all learners joining The Haven who are returning to learning after a period of absence or disengagement, regardless of route in — privately funded, Alternative Provision commissioned by a school, or Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) commissioned by a Local Authority. It applies equally to learners returning to The Haven after a period of pause, illness or crisis.

3. Principles

Our approach to re-integration is grounded in the following principles:

- Re-engagement is relational before it is academic. Trust comes first; learning follows.
- Pace is set by the young person, not by an external timeline. Forced re-entry damages trust and rarely produces durable engagement.
- Re-integration is non-linear. Progress is celebrated; setbacks are expected and held without judgement.

- Lived experience matters. All Haven educators are themselves neurodivergent; learners are met with understanding, not interpretation.
- Communication is not a precondition. Learners may join with cameras off, microphones off, and contribute only through chat. This is welcomed, not corrected.
- Re-integration is family-shaped. Parents and carers are partners in the process and are supported alongside their young person.
- Identity is foundational. Helping young people understand and accept their neurodivergent identity is part of the work, delivered through Neurodiversity University and embedded in our practice.

4. The Back to Balance programme

Back to Balance is a 12-week gentle reintroduction to learning, designed specifically for young people who have been out of school for an extended period or who are currently unable to attend any provision.

4.1 Who Back to Balance is for

Back to Balance is appropriate for young people who:

- Have been out of school for an extended period.
- Are currently school-avoidant or in burnout.
- Are not yet able to commit to a full or part-time curriculum.
- May not yet be able to turn on a camera, speak out loud, or interact directly with adults outside their family.
- Need a low-demand, predictable, neuro-affirming environment to test whether re-engagement is possible.

4.2 How Back to Balance works

The programme runs over twelve weeks with low-demand, short sessions delivered online by neurodivergent educators. Sessions prioritise:

- Predictability of routine, staff, and format.
- Low sensory load and clear permission to disengage at any time.
- Interest-led content rather than imposed curriculum.
- Gradual exposure to peer presence, beginning with no expectation of interaction.
- Identity work and self-understanding through Neurodiversity University.
- Time with a key trusted adult — usually the learner's mentor. Learners are not expected to complete every session, contribute verbally, or produce written work. Engagement is measured against the young person's own baseline, not against year-group expectations.

4.3 What success looks like

By the end of Back to Balance, successful indicators include any of the following — different young people make progress in different orders:

- Logging in to sessions reliably.
- Tolerating peer presence.

- Communicating with an educator, whether in chat, voice, or video.
- Forming a relationship with a key adult.
- Identifying interests and curiosities that could form the basis of further learning.
- Expressing a wish — or readiness — to continue into part-time or full-time provision.

5. Pathway after Back to Balance

Following completion of Back to Balance, learners move into one of the following routes, agreed in partnership with the young person and their family:

- Continued part-time learning at The Haven, with subjects and timing chosen collaboratively.
- Full-time learning at The Haven, working towards GCSEs where appropriate.
- Transition to another provider, where The Haven's online model is no longer the best fit, with handover support.
- A period of further pause, with a planned point at which re-engagement will be revisited. None of these is a failure. The right next step is the one that fits the young person.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The learner

Sets the pace. Contributes feedback in whatever form works for them. Has the right to pause, decline, or change direction at any point.

6.2 The family

Partners with The Haven, signs the Family Attendance Agreement, provides context, and supports the young person around sessions. Receives regular communication and is invited to scheduled review meetings.

6.3 The mentor and key educators

Build the relationship that underpins re-integration. Hold and adjust expectations. Notice and record progress in ways that make sense for the young person. Escalate concerns to the DSL.

6.4 The Head / DSL

Oversees the re-integration pathway. Ensures safeguarding, wellbeing, and attendance monitoring are integrated. Convenes review meetings and signs off transitions.

6.5 The commissioner, where applicable

Where a placement is commissioned by a Local Authority or school, the commissioner receives planned progress reports and is engaged in transition planning. Communication routes are agreed at the point of admission.

7. Monitoring engagement and progress

Engagement and progress are monitored using methods proportionate to the young person:

- Attendance against the planned timetable (recognising that absence is part of the picture, not a failure).
- Educator reflective notes after each session.

- Learner voice through structured check-ins, in-platform feedback, and conversation with the mentor.
- Parent/carer voice through scheduled reviews and ongoing communication.
- Where appropriate, externally relevant indicators — for example, willingness to attend GP appointments, leave the house, see friends — captured with family consent. Engagement data is reviewed termly under our Quality Assurance Policy, and concerns about wellbeing or safeguarding are routed immediately to the DSL.

8. Safeguarding

Re-integration work involves some of the most vulnerable young people in our cohort. Safeguarding is therefore embedded throughout this pathway. Educators are trained to recognise signs of distress and to escalate appropriately. The Designated Safeguarding Lead oversees re-integration safeguarding under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

9. Related documents

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Family Attendance Agreement
- Mental Health and Well-being Policy
- Relational Behaviour and Regulation Policy
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Admissions and Referrals Policy

10. Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head / DSL and approved by the Board of Governors. It will be reviewed sooner where statutory guidance, regulatory expectations, or operational learning require.

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