

**KSAF**

Family Outreach Programme

# **A Family Guide for Parents and Carers**

2026 edition

**Warm, practical information for families across Kent**

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Kent Safeguarding and Attendance Forum CIC | Making Attendance Everyone's Business

# Welcome - this guide is for you

If KSAF has been mentioned to you, it may be because someone is worried about attendance, routines, emotional wellbeing or how your child is coping with education. This guide explains KSAF clearly so you know what to expect.

## First things first

You are not in trouble for reading this guide. Needing support does not mean you have failed. Lots of loving families need a bit of help when life becomes stressful, mornings feel impossible, or school starts to feel too much for a child.

## A message from our Founder

KSAF was created because families often fall into the gap between home, school and services. A child may be missing school, arriving late, feeling anxious, struggling with sleep, or finding routines difficult - but the family may not know what help is available or who to ask.

Our role is to listen, understand what may be happening underneath the worry, and help families and professionals agree realistic next steps. We are not here to blame parents or carers. We are here to help make the situation clearer, safer and more manageable.

Sometimes KSAF can offer direct family support. Sometimes a short advice conversation is enough. Sometimes another service is better placed to help. Whatever the route, we aim to be honest, respectful and clear with families.

### What families often tell us

- I feel judged because of attendance.
- I do not know what else to try.
- Mornings have become a battle.
- My child is overwhelmed and I feel stuck.

### What KSAF tries to do

- Listen carefully and understand the full picture.
- Look at the whole family picture.
- Focus on small, practical steps.
- Keep the child safe and visible.

## Key terms used in this guide

<b>Referral</b>	A request for KSAF to look at whether we can help your family.
<b>Consent</b>	You understand what is being shared and agree to support, unless there is a safeguarding reason to act.
<b>Signposting</b>	Helping you find a different service if KSAF is not the best fit.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	Keeping children safe from harm and acting when we are worried.

### Our family promise

We will speak to you with respect, explain our role clearly, keep the focus on your child's safety and wellbeing, and support safe next steps where more help is needed.

### This guide can help you

- understand why KSAF has been mentioned
- know what support may look like
- think about what you want to ask
- feel clearer about the next step

### You can read it slowly

You do not have to understand everything at once. You can come back to the page that matters most to you and ask someone to explain anything that feels unclear.

Warm regards,

Joshua Morgan

Director and Head of Safeguarding | Kent Safeguarding and Attendance Forum CIC

# What is KSAF Family Outreach?

KSAF Family Outreach is early help. That means we try to support families before worries become bigger, more stressful or harder to manage.

<p><b>We may be able to help when</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your child is finding it hard to attend school regularly.</li> <li>• Getting ready, leaving the house or mornings feel overwhelming.</li> <li>• Sleep, routines, boundaries or communication have become difficult.</li> <li>• Your child seems anxious, low in confidence or disconnected from school.</li> <li>• You feel stuck and would like practical support, not judgement.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We cannot replace</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency services or urgent safeguarding action.</li> <li>• Children's Social Care, police, health services or crisis support.</li> <li>• Clinical therapy, diagnosis or mental health assessment.</li> <li>• Specialist domestic abuse, exploitation or high risk services.</li> <li>• The legal responsibilities held by schools and local authorities.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>How we think about attendance</b></p>	<p>Attendance can be a sign that something else is going on. It might be anxiety, unmet need, family stress, routines, sleep, SEND-related barriers, bullying, grief, change or hidden worry. KSAF looks for the reason underneath the pattern.</p>
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## The way we work with families

<p><b>Kind and honest</b></p> <p>We aim to be warm, direct and clear so everyone knows what is happening and why.</p>	<p><b>Child centred</b></p> <p>Your child's safety, voice, wellbeing and education stay at the centre of support.</p>
<p><b>Practical</b></p> <p>We focus on realistic changes that can help at home, in the morning and around school engagement.</p>	<p><b>Respectful</b></p> <p>We recognise that families are complex and that parents and carers are often already trying very hard.</p>
<p><b>Safeguarding informed</b></p> <p>If we become worried a child may be at risk, we must record and share concerns appropriately.</p>	<p><b>Strength based</b></p> <p>We look for what is already working, not just what feels difficult.</p>

## Examples of worries we may explore

<p><b>At home</b></p> <p>Sleep, morning stress, family pressure, screens, conflict, routines, confidence and how your child manages big feelings.</p>	<p><b>Around education</b></p> <p>Attendance patterns, lateness, school anxiety, changes in friendship, SEND needs, transitions and what helps your child feel safe.</p>
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## Signs a child may be finding things hard

<b>Body signs</b>	Tummy aches, headaches, tiredness, feeling sick, panic, crying or shutting down before school.
<b>Behaviour signs</b>	Refusing, arguing, hiding, becoming angry, avoiding bags or uniform, or needing lots of reassurance.
<b>Emotion signs</b>	Worry, sadness, low confidence, fear of getting things wrong, or saying they cannot cope.
<b>Pattern signs</b>	More absence, late mornings, certain days becoming harder, or problems after weekends or holidays.

# If you are feeling overwhelmed

Families are often referred or signposted to support at a point where everyone feels tired, worried or stuck. This page explains what KSAF involvement is meant to feel like for families.

## You might be thinking

- Are people blaming me?
- Will this make things worse?
- Will information be shared about my family?
- What if my child refuses to engage?
- What if I have tried everything already?

## What we want you to know

- It is okay to ask questions before agreeing to support.
- We will explain what KSAF can and cannot do.
- Your family story matters and should be heard properly.
- Small steps can still be meaningful progress.
- Support should feel clear, not confusing.

## What usually happens first

<b>A worry is noticed</b>	This may be linked to attendance, lateness, routines, emotional wellbeing, family stress or a child finding education difficult.
<b>A conversation happens</b>	A parent, carer, school or professional may speak with KSAF to understand whether we might be the right support.
<b>Consent is discussed</b>	For most family support, you should understand what is being shared, why KSAF is involved and what may happen next.
<b>KSAF reviews fit</b>	KSAF considers whether advice, five week support or another service is the safest and most helpful route.
<b>Next steps are explained</b>	You should be told what happens next, who is involved and what support may look like.

## Family voice

You can share what you think is happening, what has already been tried, what helps your child, and what feels unrealistic. Your views are part of safe decision making.

## It helps to tell us

- what a normal morning looks like
- what makes things worse
- what helps your child calm down
- who your child trusts

## You do not need to

- have all the answers
- use professional words
- hide how hard things feel
- pretend everything is fine

## Simple ways to explain what is happening

<b>Instead of</b>	'They just won't go.'
<b>Try saying</b>	'They become upset before school and I am not sure what is causing it.'
<b>Instead of</b>	'Mornings are bad.'
<b>Try saying</b>	'We struggle with sleep, getting dressed, leaving on time and staying calm.'
<b>Instead of</b>	'Nothing works.'
<b>Try saying</b>	'We have tried rewards, talking and earlier bedtimes, but we still feel stuck.'

# Who can ask for help or advice?

KSAF can be contacted by families and by professionals supporting children. Some contact is for advice only. Formal outreach support usually needs clear information and consent.

<p><b>Parents and carers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can contact KSAF for early advice and signposting.</li> <li>• Can ask questions before agreeing to a referral.</li> <li>• Can share worries about attendance, routines, wellbeing or family stress.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Schools and education settings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can suggest KSAF when attendance or engagement is becoming a concern.</li> <li>• Can make a referral where informed parental consent is in place.</li> <li>• Can share attendance information and what support has already been tried.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health, early help and community professionals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can signpost families to KSAF where family routines, wellbeing or attendance concerns are emerging.</li> <li>• Can help families understand why support may be helpful.</li> <li>• Can share information with consent where it supports safe decision making.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Councillors and community representatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can signpost families to the Support and Advice Line.</li> <li>• Can help families find the right route where they do not know where to turn.</li> <li>• Should not use KSAF for emergencies or immediate safeguarding risk.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Before a referral</b> You can ask what information will be shared, why KSAF is being suggested, what support has already been tried, and what will happen after the referral is sent.</p>	
<p><b>A good referral includes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your child's details and attendance picture.</li> <li>• What the main worry is and when it started.</li> <li>• Your views and your child's views where possible.</li> <li>• What has already been tried and what helped.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A referral may not be accepted if</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concern needs urgent or statutory action.</li> <li>• The main need is clinical therapy or crisis support.</li> <li>• Another service is already the right lead.</li> <li>• There is not enough information for safe triage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You can still ask questions</b> Before you agree, you can ask why KSAF is being suggested, what information will be shared, who will see it, and what happens if you say no to voluntary support.</p>	
<p><b>If you are not ready</b></p> <p>You can ask for more information first. KSAF support is usually voluntary, so you should understand the offer before agreeing to it.</p>	<p><b>If things feel urgent</b></p> <p>KSAF is not an emergency service. If a child may be unsafe now, use urgent safeguarding or emergency routes straight away.</p>

# Pathway 1: Advice, reassurance and signposting

Pathway 1 is often a first conversation. It can help you make sense of worries and decide what might be helpful next.

<p><b>You might contact Pathway 1 if</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are worried about your child's attendance or lateness.</li> <li>• Your child becomes distressed before school.</li> <li>• Mornings, sleep or routines are becoming difficult.</li> <li>• You are not sure whether to speak to school, health, early help or another service.</li> <li>• You want advice before agreeing to a formal referral.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What can be talked through</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What the main worry is and when it started.</li> <li>• What your child says or shows through behaviour.</li> <li>• What has already been tried at home or school.</li> <li>• Whether the concern sounds urgent or needs another service.</li> <li>• What information may help professionals understand the situation.</li> </ul>
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## What happens after advice

<b>Listen</b>	KSAF listens to the concern and asks proportionate questions.
<b>Clarify</b>	You may be helped to understand what information matters and what options may be available.
<b>Signpost</b>	You may be signposted to your child's school, Early Help, health services, mental health support or another route.
<b>Refer</b>	If KSAF outreach may be suitable, you can be advised about consent and the referral process.
<b>Escalate</b>	If a child may be at immediate or significant risk, urgent safeguarding action should be taken without delay.

<b>Expected outcome</b>	A clearer idea of what to do next, less drift, and better informed decisions for your family and anyone supporting you.
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<p><b>Before you call</b></p> <p>It can help to write down the main worry, when it started, what has already been tried and what you would like to change first.</p>	<p><b>After the call</b></p> <p>You should have a clearer next step. This may be advice, a referral, school contact, another service, or urgent safeguarding action if needed.</p>
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## Advice may include

<b>Questions to ask</b>	What is the hardest part of the day? What helps? What has changed recently?
<b>Information to gather</b>	Attendance pattern, late marks, sleep pattern, worries, school contact and what has already been tried.
<b>Possible next step</b>	Speak with school, request a meeting, agree a small home routine, make a referral or use another service.

## Pathway 2: Five week family support

Pathway 2 is structured, practical family support. It is usually used when KSAF is the right service to help with attendance, routines, wellbeing, communication or parenting confidence.

**What this means** Your family is allocated a Case Manager and Family Outreach Practitioner. Together, you agree a main focus and work on small, realistic steps over five weeks.

### Support themes

<b>Attachment</b> Building connection, emotional safety and calm responses between parent/carer and child. Length: 5 weeks	<b>EBSA</b> Understanding anxiety-linked non-attendance and planning gentle steps back towards education. Length: 5 weeks
<b>Positive Parenting</b> Creating calmer routines, clear expectations and confidence at home. Length: 5 weeks	<b>Positive Reinforcement</b> Using praise, motivation, small goals and success planning to build engagement. Length: 5 weeks
<b>Boundaries</b> Developing calm, predictable boundaries that support safety and reduce conflict. Length: 5 weeks	<b>Emotional Wellbeing</b> Supporting coping strategies, emotional regulation, confidence and resilience. Length: 5 weeks
<b>Routines</b> Building healthier sleep, morning, homework and home routines that support attendance. Length: 5 weeks	<b>Tailored support</b> Choosing the focus that best fits your family's main need when worries overlap. Length: 5 weeks

**How the focus is chosen** KSAF looks at the referral, your family story, what your child is finding difficult, and what is most likely to improve safety, wellbeing and engagement.

**Support is about**  
 small steps, safer routines, clearer communication, better understanding and helping your child stay connected to education.

**Support is not about**  
 blame, judgement, punishment, forcing quick change, or replacing school, health or social care responsibilities.

### Your support plan may include

<b>One main goal</b>	A clear focus, such as mornings, routines, boundaries, confidence or return to education.
<b>Small actions</b>	Steps that feel possible in real life, not a long list of things to change overnight.
<b>Review points</b>	Checking what worked, what did not work and what needs to change.

# What five week support may look like

Five week support is not about doing everything at once. It is about choosing a clear focus, trying practical steps and reviewing what helps.

<b>Week 1</b>	Initial conversation, consent check, family story, strengths, worries and goals.
<b>Week 2</b>	Practical support begins. The main barriers are explored in more detail.
<b>Week 3</b>	The agreed focus is strengthened, such as routines, communication, wellbeing or boundaries.
<b>Week 4</b>	Progress is reviewed and small adjustments are made with your family and supporting professionals.
<b>Week 5</b>	A completion summary, next steps, signposting or closure plan is agreed where appropriate.

<p><b>What families can expect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A named KSAF contact once allocated.</li> <li>• Clear communication about the focus of support.</li> <li>• Respectful conversations about strengths and worries.</li> <li>• Practical ideas that fit real family life.</li> <li>• Next steps explained at the end of support.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What helps support work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being honest about what is hard.</li> <li>• Letting KSAF know if circumstances change.</li> <li>• Trying small agreed actions between sessions.</li> <li>• Sharing what worked and what did not.</li> <li>• Keeping communication open where possible.</li> </ul>
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**Important** A five week intervention is not a magic fix or a promise that attendance will improve immediately. It is a focused period of support to understand barriers, build confidence and agree safer next steps.

<p><b>Small wins count</b></p> <p>Getting dressed earlier, reducing conflict, making one successful school contact, sleeping a little better, or understanding a trigger can all be meaningful progress.</p>	<p><b>If things change</b></p> <p>If the situation becomes more serious or a different need becomes clear, KSAF may change the plan or recommend another service.</p>
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## Examples of small goals

<b>Morning</b>	Choose clothes the night before and agree one calm first step.
<b>Sleep</b>	Move bedtime back slowly and reduce screens before sleep.
<b>School worry</b>	Name the hardest part of the day and agree one support step.
<b>Parent confidence</b>	Agree one boundary and use the same words each time.

<p><b>What if a week goes badly?</b></p> <p>That does not mean support has failed. It gives useful information about what is still too hard and what needs to change.</p>	<p><b>What if things improve quickly?</b></p> <p>KSAF can still help think about how to keep the progress going and what to do if difficulties return.</p>
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# Practical family themes

KSAF support often focuses on everyday pressure points. These are the moments where family life can become stressful and where small, consistent changes can make things feel more manageable.

<p><b>Mornings</b></p> <p>Preparing the night before, reducing last-minute decisions, using calm reminders and making the first steps feel smaller.</p>	<p><b>Sleep</b></p> <p>Looking at bedtime routines, screens, worry time, tiredness and how sleep affects attendance and mood.</p>
<p><b>Big feelings</b></p> <p>Helping children name emotions, use coping strategies and recover after overwhelm or conflict.</p>	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Finding calmer ways to talk about school, worries, expectations and what support feels possible.</p>
<p><b>Boundaries</b></p> <p>Using clear, predictable boundaries that feel calm, fair and consistent rather than reactive or pressured.</p>	<p><b>School connection</b></p> <p>Helping families and education settings share useful information and avoid misunderstandings where possible.</p>

**Family strengths** KSAF will also ask what your child enjoys, who they trust, what helps them feel safe, what has worked before, and what your family is already doing well.

<p><b>Questions you may be asked</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did things start to change?</li> <li>• What does your child say about school?</li> <li>• What happens on a difficult morning?</li> <li>• What helps your child feel calmer?</li> </ul>	<p><b>You can also ask KSAF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the main focus of support?</li> <li>• What should I try before the next contact?</li> <li>• Who will receive updates?</li> <li>• What happens at the end of five weeks?</li> </ul>
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**Keep it simple** Parents and carers do not need to use professional language. Saying 'mornings are awful', 'my child cries', or 'I feel stuck' is enough to start a helpful conversation.

## Things you could try this week

<b>Pick one thing</b>	Choose one small routine to practise, not five changes at once.
<b>Use calm words</b>	Try using the same short phrase each morning, such as 'first clothes, then breakfast'.
<b>Notice effort</b>	Praise the first small step, even if the whole morning is not successful.
<b>Write it down</b>	Keep a simple note of what helped and what made things harder.

# Safeguarding, privacy and trust

KSAF wants families to feel respected and informed. We also have safeguarding responsibilities, which means there are times when information must be recorded or shared to help keep a child safe.

<p><b>What we record</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The referral or reason for contact.</li> <li>• Family conversations and agreed actions.</li> <li>• Concerns, risks, strengths and protective factors.</li> <li>• Decisions, next steps and any signposting.</li> <li>• Information needed for safeguarding oversight.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Why records matter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They help staff understand what has happened.</li> <li>• They keep decisions clear and accountable.</li> <li>• They support safer handover between staff.</li> <li>• They help spot patterns or increasing risk.</li> <li>• They protect children and families by keeping an audit trail.</li> </ul>
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## Information sharing explained clearly

<b>With consent</b>	Most routine family support is based on informed consent. KSAF should explain what information may be shared and why.
<b>Need to know</b>	Information should only be shared where it is relevant, proportionate and helpful for support or safeguarding.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	If KSAF believes a child may be at risk, information may need to be shared even if consent is not given.
<b>Transparency</b>	KSAF will aim to explain decisions wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so.

**Important** KSAF does not replace emergency or statutory safeguarding action. If a child may be at immediate risk, urgent help should be sought without delay.

<p><b>You can ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what is being recorded</li> <li>• why information is being shared</li> <li>• who may be contacted</li> <li>• what happens next</li> </ul>	<p><b>We may need to act if</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a child may be unsafe</li> <li>• risk increases</li> <li>• new serious information is shared</li> <li>• another service needs to protect a child</li> </ul>
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<b>We aim to</b>	Be clear with you about normal information sharing and consent.
<b>We cannot</b>	Promise to keep information private if a child may be at risk of harm.
<b>You should</b>	Ask if you are unsure why information is needed or who it may be shared with.

# When another service is better placed

Sometimes KSAF is not the right or safest service to lead support. This does not mean you have done anything wrong. It means another route may be more helpful for the level or type of need.

<p><b>Another route may be needed for</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate safeguarding danger or emergency risk.</li> <li>• Crisis mental health support or urgent medical needs.</li> <li>• Domestic abuse as the main safety concern.</li> <li>• Exploitation, serious youth offending or high risk concerns.</li> <li>• A situation already being led by statutory services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>KSAF may help by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining why another route is recommended.</li> <li>• Signposting to a more suitable service.</li> <li>• Supporting onward referral where appropriate.</li> <li>• Sharing information with consent where helpful.</li> <li>• Keeping safeguarding decision making clear and recorded.</li> </ul>
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## Examples of onward support

<p><b>Early Help</b></p> <p>Family support where a wider plan may be needed.</p>	<p><b>Health or mental health</b></p> <p>Support where emotional wellbeing, medical needs or clinical input are the main concern.</p>
<p><b>SEND or inclusion support</b></p> <p>Advice where needs, adjustments or education access require specialist input.</p>	<p><b>Statutory safeguarding</b></p> <p>Children's Social Care, police or emergency services where risk or threshold requires it.</p>

**Emergency reminder** If a child is at immediate risk, call 999. If you are worried a child may be at risk but it is not an immediate emergency, contact the relevant local safeguarding service.

<p><b>If KSAF steps back</b></p> <p>You should be told why KSAF is not the best service and what route may be more helpful. This should be explained clearly.</p>	<p><b>You are not being left</b></p> <p>Where possible and safe, KSAF aims to support clear next steps so families are not passed around without knowing what to do.</p>
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## A safe handover should make clear

<b>Who</b>	Who is best placed to help next.
<b>Why</b>	Why that service is more suitable than KSAF at this time.
<b>What</b>	What information may need to be shared.
<b>Next</b>	What you or the professional supporting you should do next.

# How to get help and what to do next

You can contact KSAF directly for advice, or speak with a professional who already supports your child or family. If a formal referral is needed, KSAF will usually need consent and enough information to review the situation safely.

<b>1. Ask</b>	Ask why KSAF is being suggested, what the main concern is and what information will be shared.
<b>2. Consent</b>	Make sure you understand what you are agreeing to and who may be contacted.
<b>3. Review</b>	KSAF reviews the concern, consent, risk, family strengths and whether our service is the right fit.
<b>4. Pathway</b>	You may receive advice, five week family support, or signposting to another service.
<b>5. Next steps</b>	KSAF aims to explain the next steps clearly and respectfully.

<p><b>Contact KSAF</b></p> <p>Call: 01795 504355          Email: info@ksaf.uk          Safeguarding: safeguarding@ksaf.uk          Web: www.ksaf.uk/family-outreach</p>	<p><b>KSAF is not</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An emergency helpline.</li> <li>• A crisis mental health service.</li> <li>• A statutory safeguarding agency.</li> <li>• A replacement for school or local authority duties.</li> <li>• A transport, childcare or clinical therapy service.</li> </ul>
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**Final family message** Asking for help is not failure. It is a protective step. KSAF exists to help families feel heard, make worries clearer, and support safer next steps for children.

<b>Before you finish</b>	Write down your main worry, one thing that helps your child, one thing that makes mornings harder, and one question you want to ask.
<b>Bring with you</b>	Attendance letters, notes from school, health information, or examples of what happens at home can help, but you do not need to have everything ready.

<b>Keep this guide</b>	<b>One step is enough</b>
You can use it when speaking to school, a professional, or KSAF. You can also use it to write down questions before a call.	You do not have to fix everything today. One honest conversation or one small change can be the start of support.

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