

THE EMOTIONAL LITERACY SUPPORT ASSISTANT (ELSA) PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT

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Introduction

Background to the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Programme

The ELSA programme was originally developed in 2004 as a pilot study in the Hampshire area by Sheila Burton (Principal Educational Psychologist). The pilot programme was perceived positively, with 91% of 70 teachers perceiving ELSA input to have been beneficial for pupils (Burton, 2004). Since 2004, the ELSA programme has run successfully in several Local Authorities across the UK.

ELSA is a preventative intervention which aims to build the capacity of schools to support pupils' emotional/social needs from within their own resources. ELSAs are Teaching Assistants or Learning Mentors working within schools who attend five days of specific training from Educational Psychologists (EPs). The five days of training entail:

1. Emotional literacy in schools/ Raising emotional awareness,
2. Self-esteem/ Active listening and communication skills,
3. Anger management/ Working with puppets,
4. Social skills, Autism Spectrum Disorders and Social Stories,
5. Friendship skills/ Writing therapeutic stories.

Following initial training, ELSAs are responsible for planning and delivering interventions within their school, which may involve individual or small group intervention. Training is based on psychological principles, meaning that it is relevant to pupils from Reception-Year 13, within both mainstream and specialist provisions.

Following initial training, ELSAs are offered half-termly group Supervision with CEPs. Supervision aims to offer ELSAs casework support, discussion of areas not covered in the five days of initial training, information about useful resources, access to peer support and opportunities for shared problem solving. During Supervision, ELSAs are also offered the opportunity to participate in a group problem-solving model, a Solution Circle (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996). Recent research (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015) has indicated the benefits of the Solution Circle approach in allowing a sense of openness, a shared focus and a more detailed analysis of the problem being presented leading to greater motivation and enthusiasm towards solving the problem at hand. Research has also indicated the positive effects of ELSA Supervision on schools as a whole, with EPs commenting that ELSAs are often supporting pupils who previously would have been raised for Consultation, meaning that more timely support may be provided within school for pupils causing concern (Burton, 2008).

Research regarding the ELSA Programme

Burton (2008) showed that both initial training and ongoing Supervision were rated positively by ELSAs within the Hampshire area. Involved ELSAs commented on how empowered they felt by training and Supervision and reported a greater sense of value in school in their new role. Burton also evaluated the impact of the programme from the viewpoint of 54 pupils who had accessed an ELSA intervention. 83% of primary and 50% of secondary aged pupils felt they were making improvements, with remaining pupils commenting that they felt they were sometimes getting better. Pupils commented that they liked having someone to talk to, who listened uncritically to them and who preserved their confidence. Teachers of the primary pupils also noted positive improvements in terms of pupils' emotional understanding, social/friendship skills, self-esteem, confidence and behaviour. Burton, Osborne & Norgate (2010) evaluated the impact of the ELSA Programme within a Welsh Local Authority, showing significant improvements in empathy, self-awareness and social skills for primary and secondary pupils who had accessed an ELSA intervention. Improvements in motivation and self-regulation skills were evident only for primary aged pupils, although there were low numbers of secondary pupils in the study making it difficult to draw conclusions. Burton et al., highlight that it is difficult to evaluate effectiveness of ELSA support due to the fact that support offered differs depending on individual pupil need, rather than intervention being offered to pupils with a common need.

Bravery & Harris (2009) note that 17 Head Teachers reported that ELSA was having a positive impact on both relationships throughout their school and on pupils' behaviour and emotional well-being. Almost 50% of surveyed Head Teachers also perceived a positive impact on attendance and attainment and a reduction in bullying. Head Teachers suggested that the impact of ELSA work in schools could be promoted through good communication, by recognising and understanding ELSA work, by providing a key area for ELSA sessions and by giving sufficient time for ELSAs to plan and deliver sessions.

Bradley (2010) provides a summary of the scope of ELSA work in Hampshire during 2009-2010. There was wide variation in sessions offered, depending on the needs of the young person, with most interventions focusing on social, anger management and self-esteem skills. Most ELSAs worked with both individuals and groups of pupils. On average, ELSAs offered five children ongoing 'maintenance support' after ELSA intervention, suggesting that although positive outcomes may be achieved by intervention, additional resource may be required in terms of ongoing support for pupils. Bradley showed that there was much variation in the amount of time ELSAs were given by their school for interventions, with an average of 5.83 hours per week being offered; in some schools, ELSAs were working in the role on a full-time basis. 54% of ELSAs stated that they would welcome further ongoing support and training for the role, particularly in term of different interventions and resources that they could use with pupils. Open ended responses suggested that ELSAs enjoyed the role and found it rewarding, but that they felt that the role could sometimes be challenging. Although ELSAs mentioned positive support from other staff in their school, many cited a lack of support, indicating that they were offered insufficient time to carry out the role.

Osborne & Burton (2014) offer a recent evaluation of the impact of ELSA Supervision in Hampshire, from the viewpoint of 278 ELSAs. Responding ELSAs rated their Supervision experiences very positively, commenting that, in Supervision, they generally received 'advice and ideas' and 'general support'. ELSAs also noted the benefits of sharing resources/training, gaining emotional support/reassurance, celebrating successes and having the chance to network with other trained ELSAs. The majority of ELSAs rated their relationship with their EP supervisor as very good but some ELSAs commented on the need for more input from their supervisor over and above group Supervision sessions. Suggestions included more EP contact with the ELSA's school, more direct contact with children in receipt of ELSA support, more promotion of ELSA training opportunities, providing more 1:1 support/ being available in between ELSA Supervision sessions, modelling strategies, and providing more specific advice on topics such as parent separation or drug use. Where an ELSA attended supervision with another ELSA from their school, this was felt to aid discussion by allowing a shared understanding of discussion and mutual support. Most ELSAs did not feel that there were any disadvantages to having group Supervision, however, 35 ELSAs commented that there was insufficient time to discuss cases in group supervision. Two ELSAs perceived Supervision to have a negative impact on children due to the associated amount of time out of school. As the ELSAs surveyed worked with different age groups, some commented that the ideas gained could not always be directly applied to their children they worked with. 20 ELSAs felt that Supervision gave the ELSA role a higher status and led to greater recognition of the role within the school but 10 ELSAs suggested a lack of support from colleagues regarding their role. However, ELSAs also said that Supervision had helped them to be more assertive with school colleagues regarding ELSA sessions.

The ELSA programme in Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC)

The ELSA programme was introduced to CWaC schools in September 2014, as part of the Psychology Service's traded offer. The model detailed in The ELSA Trainer's Manual (Burton, 2009) has been delivered, with ELSAs attending 5 days of initial training and later receiving half-termly supervision with a CEP. Supervision is offered within local areas with Secondary Schools attending Secondary specific Supervision. Initial training took place during Autumn 2014 - Spring 2015 at two local bases. In total, 36 ELSAs completed initial training; 22 ELSAs attended from Winsford /Northwich schools and 14 from Ellesmere Port / Chester schools. Trained ELSAs work in primary, secondary and specialist provisions. Once ELSAs have attended initial training and four supervision sessions they become registered as an ELSA within CWaC.

The aims of the current report

This report offers an evaluation of the short-term impact of the ELSA programme in CWaC and summarised training and Supervision evaluation forms completed by ELSAs during 2014-15. Also summarised are responses from two questionnaires that were sent to trained ELSAs and their line manager (i.e. Head Teacher or SENCo) to help evaluate the short-term impact of ELSA support on pupils and schools (i.e. approximately five months after initial ELSA training). 25 ELSAs and 23 Line Managers returned completed questionnaires.

Evaluation information

ELSA evaluations of the five days of initial training

Following each day of training, ELSAs were asked to rate their experiences on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being excellent'). The following ratings were evident (please see Page 1 for further details of the content of each training day):

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Overall rating for the session	4.78	4.79	4.88	4.82	4.62
Content of session	4.8	4.77	4.88	4.82	4.67
Handouts	4.88	4.77	5	4.84	4.87
Delivery of training	4.81	4.86	4.91	4.73	4.82

As can be seen above, ELSAs were overwhelmingly positive about each of the five days of training. Although still receiving a high overall average rating, the lowest rated day was Day 5. This training day focusses on Friendship Skills and Therapeutic Stories, with a focus on the Circle of Friends approach. It is possible that this training day could be slightly adapted to ensure it better meets the needs of ELSAs attending from primary, secondary and specialist provisions.

At the end of each training day, ELSAs were also asked to comment about (a) what they liked most about the training day, (b) what could have been better and (c) what key points they will take away. Responses can be summarised in terms of:

Positive aspects of training

- **Sharing and gaining ideas/ resources:** ELSAs commented positively about discussion opportunities and the benefits of sharing ideas, resources and experiences. For example, *“really informative, lots of resources, lots of hand-outs, lots of ideas for sessions”, “activities and ideas of how puppets can be used without the idea of them being silly”, and “I enjoyed sharing solutions between schools and the resources explained exactly how we can use them straight away and how to adapt them”*. ELSAs also commented about the information provided about the ELSA role, *“structure for planning and delivering sessions, all the background research, resources”*.
- **Supportive training approach:** For example, *“the amount of knowledge that was delivered but at an acceptable rate and clarifying understanding”, “it was confidence building to feel that the presenters were well grounded and would be able to offer appropriate support and encouragement to get ELSA off the ground in our school”, and, “relaxed atmosphere, felt able to contribute”*.
- **Mutual support:** ELSAs frequently commented on the benefits of meeting other trainee ELSAs and of working together to share solutions for working with pupils and beginning the ELSA role. For example, *“really enjoyed the opportunity to discuss personal experiences and to hear other’s opinions about certain issues”, “handouts, other ideas, solutions, meeting other like-minded professionals – It’s been fun too!” and, “talking about any problems and getting ideas to try to solve them”*.

- **Training content:** ELSA training is based on psychological principles and ELSAs noted the benefit of this. For example, *“it was great to gain an understanding into the ‘why’s’ of behaviour”, “the importance of emotions and the effect they can have on the readiness for pupils to learn”, and “will now look at self-esteem in a different light and work towards identifying children’s difficulties and planning to support those needs”*. Some ELSAs commented that information gained had helped reframe understanding, for example, *“enjoyed autism section, gave me a much better insight into the child’s mind”, “having the time to be reflective” and “love the way everything links together. What I thought was an anger issue is probably triggered by low self-esteem so I can really start to dig down into the underlying issue”*.
- **Cascading information to school staff:** Comments related to a desire to locate resources and to raise the profile of emotional literacy to facilitate ELSA sessions in their school, for example, *“[I will] arrange a meeting with Head/SENCo to sort time/area”, and “[I will] start to plan sessions using the ELSA structure/procedures, purchase resources displayed at session, timetable sessions/ identify children, inform parents, have a go!”*. However, some ELSAs indicated frustrations in terms of this, for example, *“insist I am given some time to find/plan resources”* and, *“be firm in asserting myself as an ELSA in terms of SLT prioritising the initiative and making sure it happens”*. ELSAs also spoke positively about sharing information gained with school colleagues, for example, *“the information learnt today will help in the classroom environment and ideas to help the class teacher as well as me when working with the children needing guidance in social skills”* and *“[I will] pass on info re: anger management to others within school”* .
- **Recognising and gaining skills:** ELSAs spoke positively about gaining both a sense of validation regarding their existing work in school and also of gaining further skills. For example, *“I feel more confident to be able to talk to children in a more open way, using skills demonstrated and talked about”, “this session has helped me to think outside of the box, externalise pupils’ feelings – the ideas of using puppets/ toys was really interesting and something I wouldn’t have considered using before today but definitely will”, and “reaffirming some knowledge I already had, adding new ideas for improving self-esteem”*. ELSAs also spoke of a clearer focus being gained, *“I will be more focussed on the aims of a session and on assessment and evaluation of a child’s progress”*. ELSAs also commented positively about the opportunity to practise skills during training activities, for example, *“very informative, great activities! Really helps to see from the pupil’s point of view”*.
- **Gaining confidence and recognition of role:** ELSAs spoke both of gaining confidence during training days and also of a sense that their role would become better recognised within school. *“I’ve gained so much knowledge, which has helped me gain more confidence in my role and become more confident as a person”, “I will take away lots of knowledge, ideas for lessons,*

resources and the confidence to deliver those lessons, and “ELSA will help me to gain a professional role within my school and allow me to make a difference to children’s lives”.

ELSA’s suggestions for improvement

Very few suggestions for improvement were offered at the end of each training day, suggesting a positive impact of training. Comments can be summarised as:

- **Providing further resources:** Such as resources suitable for secondary pupils and more ready-made resources (e.g. a six week programme).
- **Training logistics and provisions.** Some ELSAs commented on the need for shorter breaks, for less trainer input at times and more opportunities to make resources for ELSA sessions, for less repetition of information and for more opportunities to move around during activities.

ELSA’s feelings of confidence in the ELSA role

During Day One of training, ELSAs were invited to complete a rating scale to evaluate their levels of confidence in a number of key areas relevant to ELSA support. ELSAs were then asked to re-rate their confidence in the same areas in the end of year evaluation questionnaire. 35 ELSAs completed pre-training questionnaires, with 25 ELSAs completing end of year questionnaires. The following mean scores were evident (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being ‘very confident’).

Skill area	Pre-training (January 2015)	Post-training (July 2015)
Identifying pupils that may benefit from support with emotional literacy skills and knowing what programmes of support may benefit them	2.97	4.20
Supporting pupils’ self-esteem	3.31	4.54
Supporting pupils presenting with challenging behaviour	3.31	4.42
Supporting pupils’ social/ friendship skills	3.28	4.54
Supporting pupils with social communication needs/ Autistic Spectrum Conditions	3.06	4.21
Supporting other staff in your school to support pupils’ social and emotional needs	3.34	4.33

Pre-training responses indicate that ELSAs were most confident in terms of *supporting other staff in their school to support pupils’ social and emotional needs*; and least confident in *identifying and offering emotional literacy support for pupils*. End of year evaluation responses indicate that ELSAs have gained confidence in all areas, with the greatest gain in terms of *supporting pupils’ social/ friendship skills*.

ELSA’s experiences of Supervision

At the end of each Supervision session, ELSAs are asked to complete evaluation forms, giving a rating on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 is completely) of (a) how helpful the supervision session was and (b) how empowered they now feel about undertaking ELSA work. In total, 93 ELSAs completed evaluations after half-termly Supervision sessions. An average rating of 4.53 was evident in relation to how helpful ELSAs found the Supervision session, with an average of 4.52 in relation to

how empowered they felt after the session. This suggests an impressive impact of the Supervision process in enabling ELSAs to fulfil their role in schools.

ELSA comments suggest that they value:

- Discussion with other ELSAs regarding experiences, concerns and progress in facilitating ELSA support in their school.
- Sharing of resources and ideas, including resources regarding transition and sexualised behaviour.
- The Solution Circles approach and the general emphasis on solution-focussed discussions.
- The expertise of CEPs facilitating the sessions.

One ELSA commented, *“current format is helpful and flexible enough that I would have no hesitation in bringing up a problem/ subject for discussion in the session if I needed help at a particular time”*. Some ELSAs indicated barriers to putting ELSA support in place in their school, in terms of availability of time, resources and other working commitments. However, ELSAs comment on the benefits of Supervision in realising that others are experiencing similar barriers and sharing of problem-solving ideas. For example, one ELSA commented *“sense of moral support generated by the group”*. Regarding general experience of a supervision session, another ELSA said, *“brilliant. It made me reflect”*. ELSAs are also asked to comment on how Supervision sessions could be improved. Only three out of 93 ELSAs offered suggestions, indicating that the current format of Supervision is meeting ELSA’s needs. Comments related to the need for further information regarding strategies to support pupils with Autism Spectrum Conditions, the opportunity to see how other ELSAs plan their sessions and the possibility of setting up an online resource to allow ELSAs to share resources with one another.

ELSA evaluations regarding impact of the ELSA Programme

25 ELSAs responded to an end of year evaluation form; 5 specialist provision ELSAs, 3 secondary school ELSAs and the remaining respondents worked within primary schools. 72% of ELSAs gave a rating of 5 (where 5 is ‘very much so’) in terms of the extent to which initial training helped prepare them for their role as an ELSA. Comments from ELSAs included, *“without the training I would not have been confident to deliver the ELSA Programme”* and, *“the tools enable the children to succeed at school in all aspects despite issues that are affecting their ability to maintain consistent success with learning, their peers and mentors”*. ELSAs also commented on effective delivery of training and the chance to problem-solve any concerns with CEPs during training.

ELSAs were asked to describe what they had achieved so far in their role as an ELSA. Responses can be summarised in terms of:

- **Pupils gaining skills:** Responses indicate that ELSAs have used the approaches/ideas addressed in training to deliver ELSA sessions. This included approaches to support emotion recognition/ regulation skills, friendship, social, anger management, relaxation skills and self-esteem.
- **Improved ELSA confidence:** For example, *“I would not have been able to help as confidently without this training”*, *“helped my confidence to work with children with needs”* and *“I have always felt positive coming away from the*

[supervision] sessions knowing that all issues are listened to and advice given even when time has run out”.

- **Identifying need and monitoring progress:** ELSAs commented on a greater sense of confidence in identifying areas of support that pupils may benefit from, resources to help with this and a greater awareness of the need to monitor progress. For example, *“we can now identify which areas each pupil needs to focus on”,* and *“ELSA helped me to set up emotional literacy sessions in my school as a recognised programme with purpose and outcomes”.* ELSAs also spoke of the need to share information with other staff members, for example, *“we need to complete these assessments with the class teachers/ TAs and provide more time for feedback after ELSA sessions so that targets can be worked on in class when opportunity arises”.*
- **Sharing information with colleagues:** ELSAs commented that they had shared information gained during training with other staff in school, resulting in positive outcomes. For example, *“the assault cycle [anger management theory] has been shared with other members of staff, as we all too readily tackle children straight after incidents have happened”* and *“staff within school have come to me for advice as they know what I have covered on the course”.* ELSAs also commented on the benefit of sharing information gained during sessions, for example, *“shared my ELSA session plans and the evidence that I have identified after each session”.*

100% of ELSAs commented that working as an ELSA has helped facilitate improved outcomes for pupils accessing sessions. Positive outcomes were noted for pupils in terms of improved behaviour, self-esteem, emotion recognition, anger management, social skills, confidence and feelings of anxiety. Six ELSAs also commented on a wider impact, for example, *“teachers made more aware of issues affecting a pupil and continue support by backing up strategies devised in ELSA sessions”,* *“all children have formed relationships with others dramatically”* and *“the staff have all noticed that the children on the ELSA programme have improved with their behaviour and attitude”.* Comments from parents were also noted, *“the parents of two children have said they’ve noticed improvements in their children at home”.*

64% of ELSAs reported that they had experienced barriers to putting ELSA support in place in their school, with the remaining ELSAs commenting that staff in their school had been supportive. Barriers experienced can be summarised in terms of:

- **Time:** This was the most common barrier experienced, with 14 ELSAs expressing concerns. This included other responsibilities in school meaning that the ELSA couldn’t fulfil planned sessions (sometimes at short notice) and pupils being unable to attend ELSA sessions due to other events in school. Most prominent was ELSAs not being given enough time by line managers to prepare and facilitate ELSA sessions. Some ELSAs offered suggestions of how they had overcome this barrier, including providing ‘drop in’ sessions to pupils and discussing time concerns with their line manager.
- **Resources:** Some ELSAs commented that they were self-funding resources, rather than school providing this.
- **Room:** Four ELSAs commented that they did not have a suitable available space from which to run ELSA sessions.
- **Understanding of role/ ELSA aims:** Some ELSAs commented on how they had overcome the barrier of their school colleagues not valuing the ELSA

programme and role. For example, “*some teachers needed encouraging to be on board and see the benefits*”, “*Head and SENCo are very supportive of the role...some teachers were reluctant to release children at first*” and “*teacher assessment before starting needed chasing*”. However, for some ELSAs this was a current concern, “*staff seem to see me as a ‘mop up’ person*” and one ELSA commented on her aim to further inform staff, “*I am planning to put together a pack... to help staff understand more about ELSA*”.

ELSAs’ suggestions for improvement

ELSAs were asked how they felt the Psychology Service could improve support offered to ELSAs and schools. Few suggestions for improvement were noted, with many positive comments instead offered regarding initial training and Supervision sessions. Responses can be summarised in terms of:

- **Content of training sessions:** One ELSA commented that she would have liked some topics to be covered in more detail (e.g. Autism, Loss and Bereavement), one ELSA commented that some training sessions felt rushed with another stating that some aspects of training felt repetitive.
- **Schools’ awareness of the programme:** Some ELSAs commented on the need for school colleagues to be more aware of what ELSA support entails. Suggestions for improvement included Line Managers attending supervision/ training to gain further information regarding the programme.
- **Further access to resources:** ELSAs commented that they would like further ways to share information/ resources with other trained ELSAs and the possibility of a local library being created containing useful resources was noted. One ELSA commented that she would like further ‘ready-made’ programmes to be available, such as a six week programme to support friendship skills.
- **Secondary school provision:** ELSAs from Secondary Schools commented that they would have liked more Secondary staff to attend training (the majority of trainees were from Primary settings).

Head Teacher/ SENCo evaluations regarding the impact of the ELSA Programme

During July 2015, Head Teachers/ SENCos supporting ELSAs were sent a questionnaire to evaluate their perspective of the programme and how ELSA support has impacted on their school. Of the 29 Head Teachers/ SENCos currently supporting 36 ELSAs, 23 returned completed questionnaires. Two line managers represented specialist provisions, one represented a Secondary School with the remaining working at primary schools.

78% of Head Teachers / SENCos rated a 4 or 5 (where 5 is ‘very much so’) in terms of the extent to which the ELSA in their school has shown increased competency in supporting pupils’ emotional well-being since undertaking initial training. Two Head Teachers / SENCos stated that they felt unable to comment as ELSA was in the early days of being set up within their school.

Head Teachers / SENCos were also asked to rate the extent to which ELSA support has impacted on individual pupils accessing ELSA sessions. This was rated on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 indicating ‘great impact’).

Skill area	Average rating
Pupils' self-esteem and confidence	4.23
Pupils' presenting with challenging behaviour	3.82
Pupils' friendship skills	3.81
Pupils' social/ communication skills	3.91

This suggests that the greatest perceived impact of ELSA sessions has been on pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Some line managers reported that it was difficult to rate impact both due to the limited amount of time that ELSA support had been in place and due to differences between individual pupils. Comments regarding the impact on individual pupils can be summarised as follows:

- Increased knowledge and understanding:** Line managers commented on an increase in the ELSA's confidence and knowledge, both in terms of how to support individual pupils and in assessment procedures. For example, *"she has far more understanding of the emotional needs of children and is better able to deal with these"*, *"strategies for assessment [has supported pupil progress]"* and *"the ongoing training and support is very powerful for the ELSA and ensures her confidence and subject knowledge is sustained"*.
- Positive impact on pupils:** Positive impact on pupils' behaviour, confidence, friendships and emotional awareness were described. For example, *"Pupil H has dramatically improved in confidence and is using skills taught in ELSA sessions to help cope with the classroom"*, *"the small group friendship sessions have had a really positive impact on a number of children who struggle to make and maintain friendships"* and *"this has been a useful resource which has this year has supported some of our vulnerable pupils"*. Comments also indicated that pupils are independently applying skills gained, for example, *"children understand the feelings that their bodies have and are able to use tactics instead of getting angry"* and *"children have taken ownership of strategies and are becoming less reliant on ELSA"*.
- Forming of relationships:** Line managers also commented on the positive impact of ELSA support on pupils' relationships. For example, *"children have known they have someone they can turn to in school, who is on their side, who is specifically there for them with the intention of helping them; this has had greatest impact on the self-esteem and confidence of the children involved and all children involved have been noticeably happier around school"* and *"students now seem willing to discuss incidents, situations and feelings with staff"*.
- Environmental impact:** Positive impact, both at home and within the classroom environment, was also noted. For example, *"significant positive improvement, both from personal observation and parental anecdotal evidence on behaviour at home"* and *"noticeable improvements on pupil engagement in lessons, general sense of well-being and belonging"*.

Head Teachers / SENCos were also asked to rate how having a trained ELSA in school had impacted on the school as a whole. This was rated on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being 'great impact'):

Skill area	Average rating
School's ability to identify pupils that may benefit from support with emotional literacy skills and knowing what support may benefit them	3.90
Other children in school	3.65
Other staff members in school	3.57
The school as a whole	3.71

This suggests that the greatest perceived impact has been on the ability of schools to identify and provide emotional literacy skills support to pupils. Comments can be summarised as follows:

- Earlier identification and intervention:** Line managers commented on an improved ability to identify pupil need and provide appropriate programmes of support. For example, *“staff are raising concerns with the SENCo earlier”, “staff are better equipped at identifying pupils with emotional needs. Our ELSA has the knowledge to recommend which types of support would be most beneficial”* and *“staff have discussed and liaised with ELSAs about certain students and have gained a greater awareness of the social and emotional upset of student learning”*.
- Impact on peers:** For example, *“other children have commented on the behaviour of the children on the programme”* and *“solving’ these problems has impacted positively on other children as invariably these issues were affecting others through displayed behaviours that have now been reduced”*.
- The need for further embedding:** Three line managers commented that it was difficult to ascertain impact at this point in time and that they hoped that greater impact would be evident the next academic year. Line managers commented on the need for greater staff awareness, for example, *“not all staff are aware and totally on board with the ELSA programme”,* and *“more work to be done to increase this [staff] awareness and appreciation [of ELSA support]”*. Some line managers commented on planned ways to further embed the programme, for example, *“it would be good for [our ELSA] to outline the ELSA training with staff to increase awareness”, “further training for the whole staff would be great... if staff have a better understanding of the pedagogy of ELSA it would have further impact”* and *“we need to make sure that all teachers get feedback so that they can carry on and support practice themselves in the classroom”*.

73% of Head Teachers / SENCos stated that they were planning to purchase Supervision sessions from the Psychology Service for their ELSA during 2015-16. This suggests that schools value Supervision and are committed to continuing the ELSA role in their school. One line manager commented, *“continuous supervision has had a positive impact on work in school with children”*. Line manager suggestions regarding adaptations included, ELSAs being provided with a greater range of intervention programmes and strategies (particularly early on in initial training), the possibility of free and more regular Supervision meetings and further CEP contact with staff groups to share information about the ELSA Programme.

Summary and Key Learning Points

The information contained within this report provides a short-term evaluation of the ELSA Programme within CWaC during 2014-15. Information gathered suggests that

both initial training and ongoing Supervision provided by the Psychology Service are rated very positively by ELSAs. This highlights the importance of Supervision in providing a forum for ELSAs to raise any concerns, gain resources/ideas and to liaise with CEPs to ensure that appropriate support is being provided in their school. Information gathered also indicates that trained ELSAs feel an increased sense of confidence in providing emotional literacy skills support and a greater sense of value regarding their role in school. Most importantly, both Line Manager and ELSA responses indicate that improved outcomes are evident for pupils who have accessed ELSA intervention, with the greatest perceived progress being evident in pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Line Managers also rated that having a trained ELSA has impacted on their school as a whole, particularly evident was a positive impact on peers and earlier identification of need and within-school intervention.

However, 64% of ELSAs stated that they had experienced barriers in providing ELSA support within their school, this was in terms of availability of time, resources and an area in which to facilitate ELSA sessions. This is in line with previous research regarding ELSA in other areas of the UK (Bradley, 2010; Bravery & Harris, 2009). Frustrations regarding a lack of understanding of the ELSA role/programme were also noted by some ELSAs. Line Managers also commented on the need to further embed ELSA support within their school, noting the need to increase staff awareness of the programme and to share more information between ELSA and class staff. It should be noted that this report offers a short-term evaluation of impact, with only a five month gap between ELSAs completing initial training and Head Teachers/ SENCos completing evaluation forms.

In line with the above, the following recommendations are made:

- Initial training was rated overwhelmingly positively by ELSAs, suggesting that few amendments need to be made to training delivery. It will be beneficial to provide opportunities for Secondary School ELSAs to meet with each other during training and to also provide a greater range of Secondary-specific resources. Adaptations have already been made to Day Five of training to ensure that training content is relevant to Secondary School ELSAs.
- Supervision is rated overwhelmingly positively by attending ELSAs suggesting that Supervision should continue to be provided by the Psychology Service in its current format. Holding Supervision groups within ELSAs' local area and providing Secondary-specific Supervision groups appears to be effective.
- It may be beneficial for the Psychology Service to offer ELSAs further information regarding strategies to support specific areas of need and greater opportunities to share resources with other ELSAs. One format in which this could be offered is by the Psychology Service providing 'top-up' training to trained ELSAs; for example, on themes such as '*Loss and bereavement*', '*Using solution-focussed approaches in your work as an ELSA*', '*Supporting young people experiencing Domestic Abuse*', or '*Attachment*'.
- The Psychology Service clearly has an ongoing role in continuing to promote and help embed the ELSA role in schools, thereby ensuring that both new and trained ELSAs continue to be appropriately supported in their school. The following is suggested:
 - Providing further information to schools regarding how to best support ELSAs, with particular reference to the need to allocate time, resources and an area for ELSA sessions. It may be helpful to provide an

- opportunity for Line Managers to attend a pre-training session where they can learn more about ELSA before beginning training.
- Providing schools with further information regarding the ELSA role and the function of ELSA support. It may be helpful to invite a line manager to attend a training day to allow him/her to gain further information regarding the programme. In some schools, it may be relevant for the link CEP to deliver whole school training regarding the ELSA programme (a presentation which is available within the ELSA Trainer's Manual). Alternatively, a useful outcome of Supervision may be skilling up ELSAs to deliver an information session regarding ELSA support to staff within their school.
 - Providing further opportunity for Line Managers to share ideas with each other as to how to promote ELSA in their school.
 - Sending schools the document 'ELSA guidance for schools' when nominating a member of staff to be trained as an ELSA. This document is routinely provided to ELSAs during Day One of initial training.
 - The Psychology Service may consider facilitating an online area in which ELSAs can share resources with each other. Consideration will need to be paid to the Psychology Service's role in maintaining such an area.
 - It will be helpful to seek the views of ELSAs and school staff at a later date regarding the programme to evaluate impact following a longer period of implementation. It will also be helpful to seek the views of children and young people accessing ELSA intervention.

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Appendix documents

1. Pre-programme evaluation form.
2. End of year evaluation form – For completion by ELSAs.
3. End of year evaluation form – For completion by Head Teachers/ SENCOs.
4. ELSA Supervision evaluation form.

Appendix 1: ELSA Pre-Programme Evaluation Form

Date: _____ School: _____

Name: _____

Before starting ELSA training, please rate your confidence in relation to:

(with 1 being 'not very confident' and 5 being 'very confident')

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Identifying pupils that may benefit from support with emotional literacy skills and knowing what programmes of support may benefit them					
2 Supporting pupils' self-esteem					
3 Supporting pupils presenting with challenging behaviour					
4 Supporting pupils' social / friendship skills					
5 Supporting pupils with social communication needs/ Autism Spectrum Conditions					
6 Supporting other staff in your school (e.g. class teachers) to support pupils' social and emotional needs					

By training as an ELSA, I am hoping that I will be able to.....

(e.g. please give examples of the skills/ information you are hoping to gain or what you hope ELSA will help you to implement in your school)

1.

2.

3.

Please give any additional comments

.....

.....

Please give details of what the ELSA programme has helped you to do so far in your school (e.g. please give examples of the skills/ information you have gained and used, the support put in place or the tools/resources used to help identify and support pupils)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Has working as an ELSA helped bring about improved outcomes for pupils accessing sessions?

Yes No

Please describe further:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Have you experienced any barriers when beginning to put ELSA support in place in your school? If so, please describe further:

Yes No

.....
.....
.....

Is there anything The Psychology Service could do differently to improve ELSA Training/ ongoing support offered to ELSAs and schools?

.....
.....
.....

Thinking about your school as a whole, to what extent has having a trained ELSA in school impacted upon:
(with 1 being 'no impact' and 5 being 'great impact')

	1	2	3	4	5
School's ability to identify pupils that may benefit from support with emotional literacy skills and knowing what support may benefit them					
Other children in school					
Other staff members in school					
Your school as a whole					

Please describe your above responses further

Is there anything that The Psychology Service could do differently to improve the support we offer ELSAs/ Schools as part of the programme?

.....

.....

Are you planning to buy half-termly ELSA supervision sessions from our service for the school's trained ELSA during 2015-16*?

Yes **No**

** Please note that it is anticipated that this will be at a cost of £150 for the year. You will not be under any obligation to purchase supervision from your response on this questionnaire.*

Please give any additional comments

.....

.....

Appendix 4: ELSA Supervision Evaluation Form

Date:

ELSA locality group:

In general, how helpful was today's supervision session?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all		completely		

In what ways was it helpful?

On a scale of 1-5, how empowered do you feel about undertaking ELSA work in your school after today's session?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all		completely		

Is there anything that would be helpful in our next ELSA supervision session? Is there anything we could do differently next time?