

The impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA)

Programme on children in care: Evaluation report

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Executive summary

Questionnaires were sent to trained ELSAs and senior managers (SMT) at schools where there was a CWAC child in care (CIC) on roll. Interviews also took place with two ELSAs and three CIC to explore and share good practice.

- Completed ELSA questionnaires were received from 19 primary and 6 secondary schools. Completed SMT questionnaires were received from 12 primary schools, 2 high schools and 2 specialist schools. In 82% of responding **primary** schools, the ELSA had/ or was working with a CIC. In only 57% of responding **secondary** schools, was an ELSA working with a CIC.
- **Perceived progress for CIC accessing ELSA support:** ELSAs and SMT were asked to rate the extent to which they felt ELSA support had impacted on CIC accessing ELSA sessions. The following shows the percentage of ELSAs and SMT who rated the skills impact for the child as a 4 or 5 (with 5 being 'great impact'):

Skill area	% of ELSAs rating 4 or 5	% of SMT rating 4 or 5
Pupils' relationship with the ELSA	100%	N/a
Gathering and understanding pupils' views, wishes and experiences	76%	92%
Pupils' self-esteem and confidence	82%	83%
Pupils' relationship with staff	75%	92%
Pupils' relationship with other pupils	71%	91%
Pupils' social/ communication skills	69%	80%
Pupils presenting with challenging behaviour	56%	67%
Pupils' friendship skills	59%	75%
Your school as a whole	N/a	83%
Other pupils in school	N/a	91%

More detailed information is included in the full evaluation report (below), including good practice examples for ELSAs supporting CIC, useful ELSA resources to support CIC and qualitative data. The key themes noted to help bring about improved outcomes for CIC accessing ELSA support are listed below (please see page 19 for full conclusions):

- The time and support being available to build **trusting relationships** between ELSA and CIC.

- **Promoting Attachment:** Via therapeutic activities and being flexible/ child-led in ELSA sessions.
- The need for **additional ELSA training** to promote ELSA confidence. This need could partly be met by the Psychology Service offering a top-up training day for existing ELSAs around promoting positive attachment and approaches to support this.
- **Creativity, flexibility and playfulness** were identified as key attributes needed for ELSA work, coupled with a **SMT that understands the building blocks necessary for successful outcomes**. ELSAs contributing to the evaluation focussed on the importance of building trust, providing nurture activities and giving the child time and space to grow and develop.

The full evaluation report: Background to the report

The ELSA programme is made up of initial training and ongoing supervision, delivered by Educational Psychologists, which aims to foster the development of school staff in supporting pupils' social and emotional skills from within their own resources. ELSAs are responsible for planning and delivering interventions within their school, which may involve individual or small group intervention. For further information about the ELSA Programme, please refer to www.elsanetwork.org. The ELSA programme has been running in Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) since September 2014, as part of the Psychology Service's traded offer. Since September 2016, The Virtual School team have funded the cost of initial training, or supervision for ELSAs, if schools have a CWaC child in care (CIC) on their role.

This report aims to evaluate the impact of ELSA training, on CIC within CWaC. It is divided into two sections, initially focussing on questionnaire data followed by three detailed best practice case studies.

Questionnaire data

Questionnaires were sent to the senior management team (SMT; i.e. Head teacher/ SENCo) and the ELSA of **56** schools who had trained or supervised an ELSA via Virtual School funding:

- Completed ELSA questionnaires were received from 19 primary and 6 secondary schools.
- Completed SMT questionnaires were received from 12 primary schools, 2 high schools and 2 specialist schools.

Schools were asked to state whether the ELSA had/ or was working with CIC:

- In 82% of responding **primary** schools, the ELSA had/ or was working with a CIC. Three ELSAs who weren't working with a CIC stated that this was because another ELSA in their school was doing so, and one SENCo did not state why the ELSA wasn't working with CIC. In 50% of **primary** schools where the ELSA was working with a CIC, the ELSA was working with more than one CIC. In some cases, the ELSA had worked with the child whilst in care supporting them into the adoption process. In another school, the ELSA spoke of embedding ELSA strategies into academic skills support she was offering the pupils.

- In only 57% of responding **secondary** schools, was an ELSA working with a CIC. Secondary school ELSAs who weren't working with CIC stated that this was because they hadn't received any referrals from staff for ELSA support, suggesting that CIC are not automatically identified for ELSA support in some secondary schools. One secondary school ELSA who was working with a CIC, stated that she wasn't working with other CIC on roll as it was felt that there could be too many members of staff working with the pupils. One **secondary** school ELSA commented that she was only working with one of the 9 CIC on school roll, with the school counsellor and other learning support staff supporting the other CIC. One secondary school ELSA was working with three CIC, with another ELSA working with only one pupil.
- In both responding **specialist** schools, an ELSA was working with a CIC.
- ELSA support was being provided for pupils from Reception age to Year 11.

ELSAs' feelings of confidence: ELSAs were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how skilled they felt in relation to working with CIC (with 5 being 'very skilled'). The following results were evident for the ELSAs who had / or were working with CIC:

Level of perceived skill	Percentage of ELSAs
3	12%
4	70%
5 (very skilled)	18%

This suggests that some ELSAs could be further supported so that they feel more confident when supporting CIC. Useful comments in relation to this include:

"I don't ask difficult questions as I don't feel I'm trained to do so, but I make sure I'm always available to talk and we work on presenting issues and encourage the child to think why and how we can change the situation".

"I still feel there are more things I could learn to help him".

"I sometimes find that the children can be quite closed and reluctant to discuss how they feel, but I have felt that over a number of weeks I have developed very secure, trusting relationships and they become more open to being supported".

An ELSA's communication with a Play Therapist also working with the child was reported to be helpful: *"He has given me helpful guidance on the key areas of focus on...so we have been able to use the same language and deliver the same message to the child".*

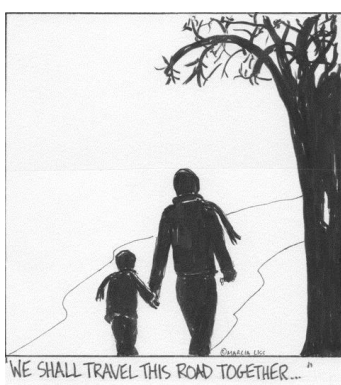
Other comments included that ELSAs were new to the role and so felt less confident, in addition to perceiving some difficulty finding suitable ELSA resources for younger children. However, many ELSAs spoke positively about initial ELSA training, resources and supervision in helping them to feel more confident. In one case, an ELSA rated her confidence level as a 4/5 and described a feeling that more specialist support was needed for the CIC she was working with. Another ELSA commented that she doesn't treat a CIC any differently to other children. One ELSA commented about the importance of having background information about a child to inform intervention: *"I feel that when I have a detailed understanding of the*

child's previous experiences, I can adapt the way I deliver the ELSA Programme and the things we discuss and the activities that we do".

The type of ELSA support offered: ELSAs were asked to comment about the type of support they offered CIC. This was categorised and is displayed on the diagram below, with the size of shape representing the numbers of ELSAs supporting this area (i.e. most ELSAs were offering support regarding 'emotional literacy and managing angry feelings').



Length of intervention with CIC: Two ELSAs commented that they had completed a brief, half term long, intervention with the CIC, whilst two other ELSAs commented that they had completed a few half termly blocks of support with the child, across years. However, the majority of ELSAs who responded to this question (N=9), stated that their involvement with



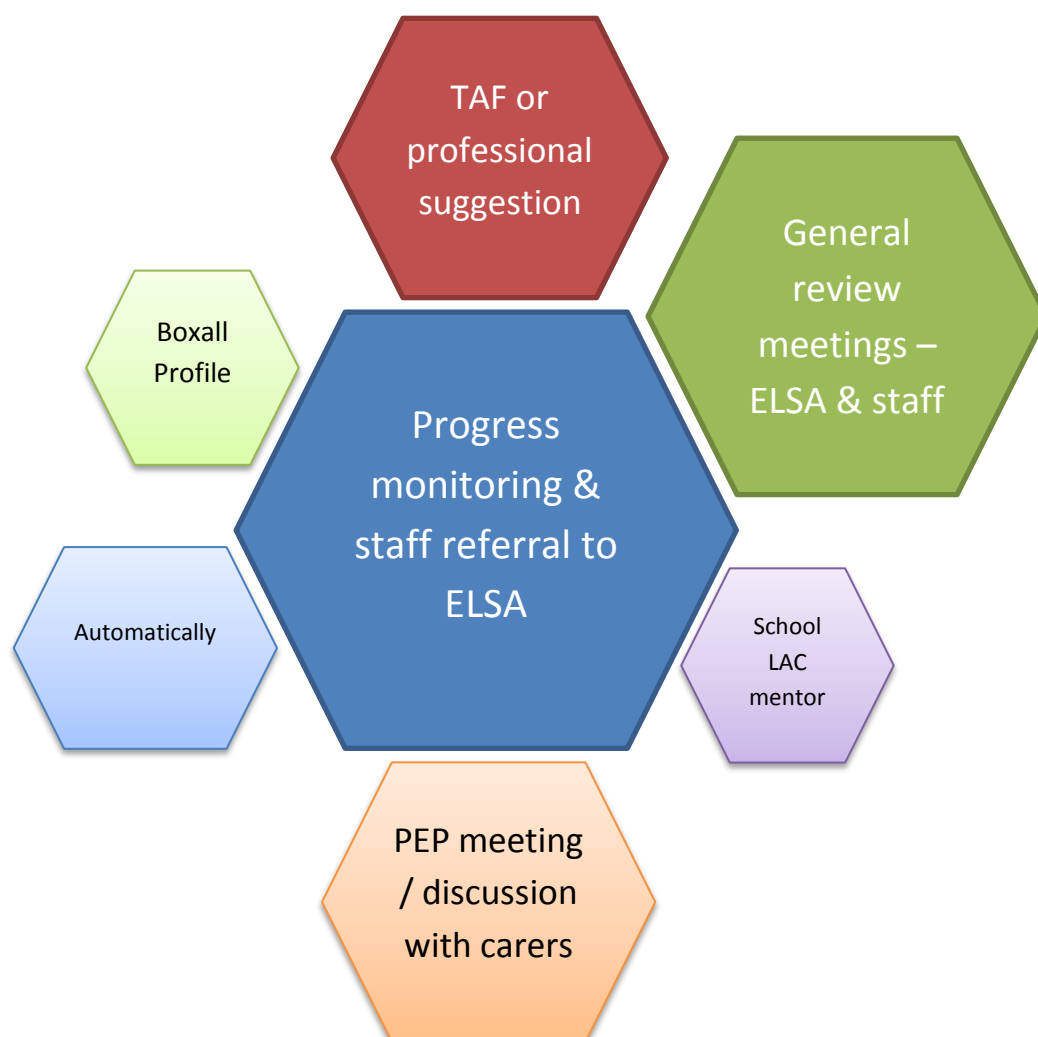
the CIC was ongoing, rather than time-limited. Useful quotes from ELSAs which demonstrate models of good practice include:

“these sessions have provided time for her to talk about how she is feeling, but most importantly, have allowed her the security and consistency of the sessions, with the knowledge that she has someone within school on a weekly basis”.

“I have found when we first start working all emotions feel like one big emotion to them and they are often afraid to express anything except happy, which they use as a mask to say everything is ok leave me alone. It takes slow and careful exploration to grant permission to express other feelings and accept this is ok”.

“With one of the Year 6 boys in particular, the ELSA sessions have been a chance for him to talk to a trusted adult and open up about some of the feelings he has and things that he has experienced in the past. We have also spent a number of sessions dealing with his feelings and attitudes towards proposed contact with his biological mother. I have worked closely with his foster carer in order to come up with strategies and targets to have a positive impact on his emotional outbursts and his ability to regulate his emotions outside of school”.

Identification of CIC for ELSA support: SMT and ELSAs were also asked how they identify CIC in their school for ELSA support. This is displayed on the diagram below with the larger shapes representing more responses in this area.



Interestingly, only **two** schools commented that they automatically identify CIC for ELSA support:

"We always use ELSA support with our looked after children for a period of time to ensure we are meeting their social and emotional needs. If they no longer need ELSA and start to present with any difficulties they would be referred in by a teacher using our referral forms".

"CIC are automatically identified for ELSA support since we appreciate that although they may not be presenting with difficulties, they have someone to talk to if they have, and may have underlying background issues which have not been addressed. We ensure that the relationship is established as a protective factor. ELSA support is tailored to the child, rather than being generically applied".

Monitoring and evaluating pupil progress: ELSAs and SMT were asked how they monitor the progress of CIC accessing ELSA sessions. The following responses were given:

- Using the *ELSA referral sheet*, given to ELSAs on day 1 of initial training – this was the most used monitoring tool and it was discussed how this is used at the pre and post intervention point to monitor progress (please see the assessment and monitoring tools pack, provided by the Psychology Service/ on the ELSA Sharepoint site for a copy).
- *Communication with teachers and carers regarding pupil progress* – this was again frequently mentioned and was often mentioned as taking place alongside completion of the above checklist.
- *Using standardised tools* - such as the Boxall Profile, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire or checklists within resources such as the Talkabout series – such tools are used in five responding schools.
- In four cases, *qualitative ways* were also mentioned as a way to monitor progress such as reviewing pupil scrapbooks completed during intervention or from observations of the child's progress in developing coping strategies.
- *Pupil questionnaires* were also mentioned in three cases, with discussions about pupils completing checklists at the pre and post stage or completing five point scales.
- Individual ELSAs also commented on using methods such as *session planning sheets* (please see the assessment and monitoring tools pack, provided by the Psychology Service/ on the ELSA Sharepoint site for copies) and *monitoring impact on academic progress*. One ELSA reported using PEP meetings to monitor progress.

Progress noted for CIC accessing ELSA support: ELSAs were asked to rate the extent to which they felt ELSA support had impacted on individual pupils accessing ELSA sessions. This was rated on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 indicating 'great impact'). A mean score was then taken of impact in each area:

Skill area	Average overall rating
Pupils' relationship with the ELSA	4.63
Gather and understand pupils' views, wishes and experiences	4.18
Pupils' self-esteem and confidence	4.06
Pupils' relationship with staff	4
Pupils' relationship with other pupils	3.89
Pupils' social/ communication skills	3.82
Pupils' presenting with challenging behaviour	3.6
Pupils' friendship skills	3.53

As can be seen above, the most impact is noted in terms of the pupil-ELSA relationship, which highlights the importance of building this via ELSA sessions to allow CIC to gain feelings of security from a trusted adult in school. For example: *"I feel that they trust me and can confide in me, but at the same time I feel that as they gain trust in me that helps them to gain trust with other adults in school"*. Good gains were also reported in terms of the pupil-staff relationship, gathering and understanding pupil views and experiences and self-esteem and confidence. However, these ratings should be treated with caution as some ELSAs commented that the child concerned wasn't showing needs in some of the areas identified.

Some ELSA responses indicate both setbacks and progress:

"the child has a negative attitude when talking to adults and peers. We have done a lot of work on this and whilst she can be kind and thoughtful, the lack of respect remains".

"I feel that having an impact on the children's self-esteem and confidence has been the most challenging area to have a great impact on, because with the children I have worked with, it has been very low to begin with".

Others celebrate successes:

"the pupil in question has significantly matured as a result of the ELSA process. She is more willing to talk about her anxieties and this is transferring across her school day and at home. We have been....even more pleased that she is requesting to see the ELSA without prompting as she sees the value".

Several ELSAs commented about positive progress not only being the result of ELSA sessions but of the strategies being embedded both in the classroom and at home, via joint communication with teachers and carers: *"building good relationships with carers is vital in order to understand things that are going on at home"*.

A few ELSAs mentioned progress in relation to longer term impact:

"we have to journey with them and accept it [feelings and behaviour] needs expressing. It's this acceptance which helps them to overcome their extreme feelings and leads to

understanding and managing their emotions....Gathering their views has had the greatest impact for me. They find they have a voice, people listen to what they have to say, and they have a safe space to express themselves”.

“of course everything happened in tiny steps but the direction was the main focus. No magic switch, I’m afraid it will take time”.

Such positive attitudes are vitally important when supporting CIC via ELSA support.

Useful resources: ELSAs were also asked to comment about resources that they’d found useful when supporting CIC. A full list of these resources, and where they can be found, is included in Appendix 1. Some examples are also displayed below:



However, it should be noted that several ELSAs described the benefit of **nurturing** activities, rather than formal resources, which allow the child to feel special, and have special time, as well as creating something they own.

For example, *“I have found practical, hands on activities the most beneficial because I have found that some of the CiC that I have worked with have been reluctant to write or draw”;* *“often just time to talk without being rushed and being able to listen”* and *“time is the greatest resource. Finding out what interests the student has and what they are willing to talk about”*. Puppets were also mentioned by several ELSAs as being an effective way to

help CIC to externalise difficult feelings and situations without it being about them or to discuss family histories and dynamics.

A few ELSAs also mentioned the benefits of ELSA supervision (offered by the Psychology Service) in helping them to meet and share practice with other ELSAs.

Perceived barriers to ELSA support for CIC: Respondents were also asked to state whether



they felt there had been any barriers when putting in place ELSA support in their school with CinC. For the ELSAs who were/ had recently worked with CinC, 73% felt that they had not experienced any barriers. For the remaining 27%, barriers were



perceived in terms of finding time to facilitate ELSA sessions due to other commitments in school, staff not prioritising ELSA support in favour of academic progress, pupil dynamics in groups and some CIC not engaging fully in the sessions. One ELSA also commented that too many staff members working with a CIC could



pose a barrier, describing experiences where other CIC had ‘shut down’ due to being asked to ‘open up’ too many times with too many people. This is an important point which is in line with the fact that many of the resources recommended and activities used by ELSAs with CIC were nurture based, creative or involved simply giving the child time to talk with a familiar adult. It also highlights the importance of CIC being given the opportunity to form trusting relationships with consistent key members of staff. ELSAs are well placed to offer this support but may not always necessarily be the best person to work with a CIC, in the case that the pupil already has an established relationship with another staff member; in this circumstance, it may be that ELSAs could take on an advisory role within school, sharing useful resources and techniques with other staff members.

Future plans within schools for further ELSA support for CIC: ELSAs were also asked if they had any further plans to work with CIC in their school.

Encouragingly, 94% of ELSAs currently working with CIC stated that they had plans to continue such work, therefore highlighting the perceived value of ELSA work and the positive impact on CIC. The following was discussed:



Continuation of current ELSA sessions with CIC: Many ELSAs commented that their ELSA support to the child on care would be ongoing and not limited to a certain timeframe, for example, “the sessions offer her the security that she needs at the moment” and “we came a long way but still a lot to focus on, especially before another transition”.



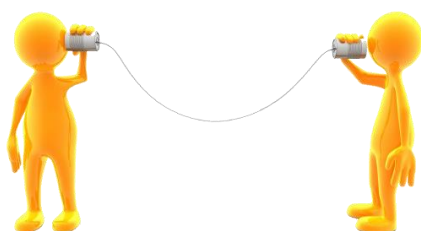
Continuing to liaise with staff and carers about CIC was also mentioned.

ELSA support being provided for all CIC within school. For example: *“we will continue to work with every looked after child, both whilst they have looked after status and once placed. From experience, good practice is just as important after the placed if not more so. Children continue to have emotional needs, and worries and fears well into secure placements often testing the security and boundaries around them”.* Other ELSAs talked about CIC being provided with ELSA support if the need arises for them. ELSAs also discussed SMT plans to put further ELSA support in place for CIC next academic year with Virtual School funding.

Two secondary school ELSAs had future plans to offer ELSA support to CIC next academic year. This included support to a new Year 7 group of CIC, continuing the ELSA support they had accessed at primary school, and a new ELSA support referral system being in place in the school.

Examples of good practice: SMT and ELSAs were lastly asked to comment on any further examples of good practice with ELSA support for CIC:

- School plans to train more ELSAs next academic year to allow further support for CIC.
- Holistic support within school for CIC, which includes ELSA support, therapist support and access to Passion for Learning sessions.
- The ELSA also working with children in academic groupings, meaning that the ELSA can apply emotional support skills through all work completed with the children.
- Joint discussions with another ELSA in school.
- Having a room dedicated for ELSA support.
- The ELSA also being the child’s key worker, meaning that strategies could be embedded in the classroom.
- Cool bags (containing emotion regulation tools) being distributed to all classrooms.
- Providing regular sessions throughout the school year, sometimes on a more informal catch up basis, as well as offering 6-8 week programmes of work.
- Using transitional objects (i.e. an object that the child looks after for the ELSA).
- More communication with carers.
- Flexibility in working with CIC: *“groups and sessions can be altered quickly if a need is identified, individual sessions can be accommodated for, or group dynamics can be changed.*



- Joint creation of a sensory room in school by the ELSA and CIC.
- Both a member of school staff and a family support worker at a specialist school being ELSA

trained and jointly working with a pupil to help embed ELSA strategies at home and at school.

- A positive and supportive approach for CIC, as demonstrated by one ELSA, *“I believe you have a similar approach just like any other child who takes part in the ELSA sessions, but LAC often experienced more serious drama and can, unfortunately, be more scared, more challenging, open our trusting. May need more understanding, extra time, patience, support”*.
- The ELSA role also seems to be positively perceived from the SMT point of view, as a specialist school SENCo comments, *“the role of the ELSA is essential in offering focussed and intensive support for these vulnerable pupils. It cannot be more highly valued”*.

Case Study Data

Next, this report will look at three case studies. The schools that the three children are part of have been committed to developing ELSA interventions for over three years. One school has two ELSAs with a full-time commitment to delivering ELSA activities with vulnerable children. The second school employs two ELSAs who working mostly as class based Teaching Assistants, but also support vulnerable children with regular ELSA sessions. It is hoped that these good practice case studies will offer ideas of how ELSA could be implemented in different schools.



School 1: Background to the school and ELSA role in school

School 1 is situated in an urban area with a higher than average percentage of students eligible for FSM. ELSA1 emphasised it takes time and commitment to develop effective practice in individual schools. School 1 trialled a number of approaches with ELSA over two years before staff were happy with what worked for them. In School 1 there are 2 ELSAs; ELSA1 offers individual support and ELSA 2 offers small group interventions. If students find group participation a challenge 1:1 support is negotiated.

ELSA 1 is employed for 32.5 hours a week and in this time she meets carers, students and teachers. Students and their carers need consistency and stability to develop trust in the ELSA, the process and school. School has developed a colour coded system identifying:

- Levels of concern
- Number of sessions accessed
- Progress ratings
- Academic tracking data/ current levels of achievement
- SMART targets

The SMT value the work of school's two ELSAs. Since initiating the ELSA programme in 2013–14 there has been a significant increase in disclosures leading to Social Care involvement, resulting in the active protection of vulnerable students through CP and CHIN protocols. School has funded the ELSA initiative both in terms of personnel, time and technology investment in iPads etc.

Multi- Agency Liaison: Liaison with professional and carers supporting CIC is an essential part of ELSA1's role: *Family support Workers, Social Workers, Catch 22, Core Assets, etc.*

ELSA 1 attends a range of meetings: *TAF, CHIN, CP, PEPs and Family Group Conferences*. Rather than prepare a standardised report, ELSA1 shares the **Student's ELSA Record Book**; a child friendly and engaging, accessible record of activities that the student is happy to share. Confidentiality is respected when appropriate. Please see Appendix 2 for an example Record Book. As can be seen, the book presents a broader, richer picture and details layers of progress for the child.

Record Keeping: ELSA1 maintains an ongoing record of all completed activities; this may be in the form of a printed resource from the **ELSA SharePoint site** (an online resource provided by the Psychology Service) or a photographic record of a sensory play session (e.g. sand tray work, making of a friendship bracelet). Pupil engagement in the activity is captured by photographs and this reinforces success and enjoyable experiences. Often CIC have vivid memories of negative experiences and ELSA1 commented: *"it is important to provide visual evidence of positive experiences with a trusted adult"*. Photographic records are honest and if the child is angry it can be productive to have these feelings accepted. ELSA1 emphasises to students that all feelings have value.

Organisation of sessions: In School 1, sessions usually last 40 minutes and most students enjoy their time on a 1:1 basis for 6-8 weeks. Following a break from sessions and, if thought desirable, the student is offered a further 6-8 week block. The two students in School 1 who have a care background access weekly support as this is considered important for their emotional development and wellbeing. In total, ELSA 1 allocates one hour per child which includes: *preparation time, record keeping and photo-journaling (which takes approx. 20 minutes)*.

Child/ Young Person (CYP1): CYP1 is a Y5 student who lives with her adoptive parent and has been supported since she transitioned from a successful foster placement to her adoptive parent. CYP1 was placed into care in 2013 in her Reception Year; she attended another local school and moved to School 1 in February 2016 under fostering to adopt protocols.

CYP1 accesses 25 hours of Top Up funding and was recently assessed for an EHC plan. CYP1 is at Child Protection though she is due to be managed at Child in Need for the next transitional phase. CYP1 has at least average cognitive abilities



but struggles to achieve in literacy and numeracy. CYP1 is highly distractible and has significant attachment needs which make emotional self-regulation demanding. An Adoption support team practitioner hypothesized CYP1 felt comfortable when angry and “found it difficult to express her feelings in a regulated manner”. CYP1 can often veer between extremes of affection and aggression.

CYP1 experienced a chaotic and abusive early childhood and, in 2016, experienced an adoption disruption which reduced her capacity to trust adults further. ELSA1 has worked regularly with CYP1 since she joined school in February 2016. Early sessions were focussed on building a relationship with CYP1. ELSA1 worked closely with CYP 1’s: *prospective adopter; class teacher; SENCO; Social Worker and Post Adoption Support Team personnel.*

Initial ELSA activities involved:

- Breathing games
- Identifying feelings & calm down strategies
- Sensory play
- Recognising and managing worries

In June 2017, with adoptive parent consent, I observed one of her regular ELSA sessions and then returned to elicit CYP1’s perspective. CYP1 felt settled and happy in school; using the **ELSA Pupil Evaluation Template** (from the ELSA Monitoring and Assessment tools booklet) she reported:

- *The sessions we’ve done have made me feel happy (5 on the Likert Scale)*
- *I am sometimes better with the things we’ve worked on in ELSA sessions.*

In ELSA I like:

- *Playing with the doll’s house*
- *Playing with the trolls*
- *Playing with the foam in Sensory Time*
- *Having a pretend tea party*
- *Using the puppets with different feelings.*



How has it helped you?

- *I can spot my anger*
- *Calm down quicker*

I would like to get better at: *Catching my anger*

CYP 1 used a ten point rating scale to rate a range of topics, with most activities/experiences being rated positively:

☹️ 1	2	3	4	😊 5	6	7	8	9	😊 10
				Noise in class		Homework		Lessons	Feeling happy; Enjoying food; Break- time; Teachers; Fitting in

ELSA1 has learned that CYP1 can be guarded when ELSA activities appear formal or intrusive. CYP1 is significantly more comfortable when participating in activities and sharing conversation in a more relaxed way. CYP1 shares more readily when she can externalise her feelings through play etc. For example Introducing Doll's house activities resulted in CYP1 sharing she often *stomps up the stairs* and this initiated a conversation about how feelings can be shown through body language etc.

Example ELSA activities completed with CYP1:

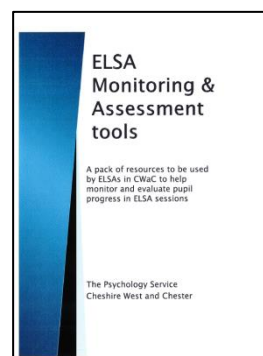
- **Relaxation strategies:** Take 5 Breathing strategies; Feather Blowing to practise breathing; Guided Positive Visualisation; Relaxing Sensory Play with foam.
- **Worries work:** Worry Bubble; Creating a Worry Warrior to use with the Therapeutic story The Huge Bag of Worries by V. Ironside; Making a Worry Eater and working with the Worry Monster Poem by Debbie Palphreyman; Creating a Social Story about managing worry.
- **Self-esteem focussed work:** My good thoughts about myself protect me.
- **Sensory and therapeutic activities:** Creating a *Play Doh* birthday cake for CYP1; Hand painting and decorating each finger with a positive compliment; Activities on gentle, sharing hands; Sharing thoughts through Blob tree template and colouring in; Pet therapy – using gentle touch to care for school animals and visiting dog; Relaxing using *Theraputty* – benefitting from proprioceptive feedback; Sharing a snack with ELSA1; Free play with toys from the Sensory Bag; Role play with a tea set.
- **Emotion recognition activities:** Bottle of Pop – managing your anger exercise; Mirror work – using How do you feel today; Creating paper plate faces.
- **Therapeutic activities focussed around care experiences:** Using the doll's house to talk about Tummy Mummies and Mummies.



For visual examples of some of these activities, as displayed in the pupil's ELSA record book, please see appendix 2.

Embedding ELSA: ELSA1 ensures that easily accessible ELSA strategies are shared on the school's website which can then be used by relevant teaching and support staff.

Liaison with teaching staff: ELSA1 and teaching staff negotiate SMART goals for ELSA students which are regularly reviewed. It is important that teachers are on board with the **My ELSA plan** and reinforce the student's efforts to grow. Referral to ELSA1 come via the teachers who complete **The Teacher ELSA referral form** (available in the ELSA assessment and monitoring tools pack provided by the Psychology Service/ on the ELSA Sharepoint site).



ELSA1 and teaching staff identify high frequency concerning behaviours for students they work with (e.g. externalising aggression through hitting, friendship fall outs). ELSA1 then helps students trial strategies to practice. Sometimes a student may bring a friend they may have fallen out with for a joint session, so all parties can agree ways forward.

My ELSA Plan: School 1 uses their bespoke **My ELSA Plan** (See Appendix 2) to identify describe identified needs etc. ELSA1 and teachers regularly review the plan and teachers share the plan with parents/carers at an extended meeting. School 1 feel it is important the class teacher take ownership of the plan.

Rating Scales: Each session starts and concludes with a bespoke **Emotional Checker** (where the ELSA records the child's feelings each session and records this in their pupil record book – please see the right hand corner of pictures within appendix 2). All sessions have an early relaxation activity to maximise student capacity to benefit from the session.

Well-being sessions: ELSA1 finds the CIC respond positively to aromatherapy sessions and enjoy identifying helpful aromas. Aromatherapy and Relaxation sessions are held in the ELSA room or in the student's safe place which might be nearer to class.

Student's Toolbox: Each student creates a toolbox (customised shoebox) which contains activities and strategies which they have successfully trialled and found helpful. E.g. *google eyes, Theraputty, aromatherapy oils*.

Safe Place: School ensures students have a safe place they can access in class or close by for when they feel overwhelmed, this could be a discrete corner, a spot in the library or a *black out pop up tent*.



CYP2: is a Y5 student at School 1. CYP2 was placed into care in September 2015 following an early childhood characterised by neglect; she is now subject to a Special Guardianship order and lives with her grandparents. CYP2 found it difficult to express her feelings and was reluctant to open up. ELSA 1 is pleased with progress made as she now expresses her emotions

well and uses her Toolbox to regulate her feelings. CYP2 accesses the school's *Forest School* and has benefited from developing her organisational skills in sessions. ELSA1 has worked with CYP2 for two and a half years.

CYP2 is described as: loving, friendly, helpful, funny and artistic. One of CYP2's main anxieties concerns breaking up with friends. When CYP2 first attended ELSA sessions her needs were managed at Child In Need level; her welfare is now managed through TAF protocols.

CYP2 loves to play and finds this the best way to relax. CYP2 prefers playful approaches and disliked it when I asked for too much feedback through questionnaires etc. responding with "*shall we do something else?*". Child led interaction is essential for CYP2.

CYP2 did not want to engage in talking directly about feelings with me, eye contact became erratic when uncomfortable and she scanned the room for distractions. ELSA1 finds asking explicit questions counter-productive and it is more effective to steer conversations combined with activities.

CYP2 completed the **ELSA Pupil Evaluation Questionnaire:**

- *The sessions we've done made me feel 5 (5 point Likert scale) and added 'right at the top'*
- *I feel I am getting better at things we have worked on in ELSA sessions – 100% especially with the IPad and lap top.*

I like:

- *Staying calm*
- *It's fun, amazing and colourful*
- *I'd like to get better at a range of things mainly friendships*



Goals we have been working on:

- Understanding feelings
- Calming Relationships
- Worries



CYP2 reports feeling safe in the ELSA room: *I love the sand play and IPad*. She also responded positively to dog therapy which helps students understand the importance of gentle touch.

CYP2 used a ten point rating scale to rate a range of topics:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		Homework			Work	Size of school; Teachers	Feelings in school	Fitting into school; break-time	Home; Home-time'; the ELSA; lunchtime; ELSA sessions

ELSA Project Pupil Questionnaire: CYP2 shared that she likes the following about ELSA sessions:

- *Being with ELSA 1, she has lovely games to play*
- *It's stopped me falling out with others*
- *Making worry dolls*
- *Having the Toolbox*
- *It's easy to say something kind*
- *Feather blowing and bendy man*
- *Making things for people I care about*
- *Drawing Stories*
- *Blowing bubbles when I'm sad*



CYP 1 and 2 have made progress in key areas of the curriculum relating to: Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing and Maths

School 2

School 2 is located in an urban location with 250 students on roll and 2 CIC.

ELSA2

ELSA2 works on a full time basis as a Teaching Assistant and has six hours on Fridays for her ELSA interventions which are either on a 1:1 basis or as part of a small group. Sessions last for 30 minutes.

The SMT are supportive of the ELSA initiative and have recently trained a second ELSA to support the well-being of students I school.

Record Keeping: ELSA2 maintains an ongoing record of all completed activities; this may be in the form of a printed resource from the Elsa SharePoint

Referrals are taken from teaching staff using the ELSA referral forms and ELSA 2 regularly liaises with teaching staff and school's SENCO and Safeguarding lead.

CYP3: is a Year 2 student at School 2. CYP3 moved to live with his foster carers when he was 7 years old. CYP3 lives in a family of foster children, one of which has SEN needs.

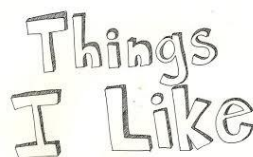


CYP 3's request for ELSA support highlighted:

- Limited turn taking skills
- Sharing is difficult
- He finds it hard to recognise and manage his anger
- Listening

ELSA pupil Questionnaire: CYP3 is happy to do activities with ELSA2; he feels he sometimes makes progress. The main things he likes about his ELSA sessions are:

- *Cartoons*
- *Being in the quiet room*
- *Chat time*
- *Finishing at 12.00 and going straight for lunch.*



CYP3's **goals** include: *Not to be angry and stop being mean to my brother*

CYP3 discussed that he likes to have bits in the day and the week to look forward to:

- *I like Wednesdays because I learn something new at pony riding.*
- *Thursday is my best day because I go to A's house.*
- *CYP3 likes to be with ELSA2.*
- *He would like to be better at calming down and does not like getting angry*

Using **Lincolnshire County Council's Wizard wishes** activity CYP 3 shared some of his worries:

- *Sometimes I feel like I'm going to get told off*
- *Getting Angry*
- *My brother winds me up, he's always under the table*
- *Not listening*

If my worries were gone I would feel:

- *Happy*
- *Dad would notice when we were good or who was causing trouble*



Strengths:

- *I am good at maths*
- *Asking for help*
- *Being very funny*



Feedback given to the ELSA by CYP3 using the evaluation form is positive and appreciative of ELSA time. He likes ELSA *Because I am not as angry*. CYP3 shared he gets angry at home but is fine when in school; playing with his toys calms him down.

Organisation of ELSA sessions: CYP3 meets with ELSA2 for 20-25 minutes once a week on Thursdays. The sessions are on a 1:1 basis. CYP3 can find it hard to focus and needs concepts/activities to be multi-sensory and play based. ELSA2 liaises regularly with home and foster parents appreciate being kept in touch with issues discussed within confidentiality guidelines.

CYP3 used a ten point rating scale to rate a range of topics:

☹️ 1	2	3	4	😊 5	6	7	8	9	😊 10
				Homework	Work	Size of school	Home; Feelings in school; Fitting into school; Teachers	Home-time	The ELSA; Lunchtime

Conclusions to the evaluation report

The feedback from ELSAs and SMT regarding the impact on CIC was overwhelmingly positive. However, it should be noted that fewer responding secondary school ELSAs were putting in place ELSA support for CIC, in comparison to primary schools. This seems partly to be due to less readily accessible support systems within secondaries and that other staff within school were working with the CIC. Only two out of all responding schools were automatically offering initial ELSA support to CIC.

Building Trusting Relationships: The findings of this report show that successful working with CIC is dependent on ensuring students are able to form a positive relationship with ELSAs. A relationship built on trust is essential and informed by the student's childhood experiences and level of emotional development. All the students in the case studies benefited from consistent 1:1 sessions delivered weekly and consistently by the same ELSA. The ELSAs in the good practice case studies working with CIC are mindful that their student's

capacity to trust is limited and approaches are play based and child led. Some ELSAs responding to the questionnaire reported that they had struggled to engage CIC in ELSA sessions/ to form a relationship of trust, and several commented that they had found nurture based, rather than formal activities, more successful. For schools responding to the questionnaires, the most positive impact in terms of progress was in the ELSA-child relationship, noting it is essential to allow CIC to develop trust in adult relationships. CIC frequently experience limited play opportunities in their early lives and demonstrate an overwhelming appetite to experience multi-sensory play and fun times with *their* ELSA. Through play and building relationships of trust they begin to explore how they feel and reflect on their feelings. Attempting to deliver ELSA sessions without taking time out to build a relationship through creative and playful activities is counterproductive.

Promoting Attachment: This report suggests that creating a workable level of attachment is critical to successfully supporting the emotional development of a CIC or children previously in care. The ELSAs in this report suggest that approaches which seek to explore issues and behaviours before the CIC feels ready may be met with resistance and reluctance to engage. Several responding ELSAs also suggest that the support they provide to CIC is not time-limited and is instead flexible, based on the needs of the child. In some cases supporting CIC's thoughts and feelings surrounding adoption processes was mentioned as being an aspect addressed in ELSA sessions.

Additional Training: Some of the ELSAs responding to the questionnaire reported feelings of not being skilled enough when supporting CIC and how to best build a sense of trust. This need could partly be met by the Psychology Service offering a top-up training day for existing ELSAs around promoting positive attachment and approaches to support this.

Key attributes of successful ELSA interventions: This report suggests that creativity, flexibility and playfulness are key attributes needed for ELSA work, coupled with a SMT that understands the building blocks necessary for successful outcomes. ELSAs contributing to the evaluation focussed on the importance of building trust, providing nurture activities and giving the child time and space to grow and develop. Examples of good practice can be summarised in terms of:

- Seeking the right person for the ELSA role (see Appendix 4 for person specification)
- Ring-fencing time a CIC has with *their* ELSA
- Enabling time to allow ELSAs to attend key meetings (e.g. PEPS, CIN , TAFs etc.) or time for the ELSA to learn more about the child's background and how best to support him/her.
- Respecting that CIC benefit from having a confidential, intimate space for their ELSA sessions where they feel respected and valued
- Time for ELSAs to liaise with teachers and carers

- Using multisensory, visual, kinaesthetic, therapeutic and play-based approaches where the CIC and ELSA can develop their attachment and the child can begin to trust the ELSA. There were examples of a child being more able and willing to externalise their feelings via play, as opposed to formal activities.
- Visually recording activities and the child's progress in a book/ space that they can take ownership of and reflect on their experiences and progress.
- Ongoing ELSA support within schools from when a student is a CIC through to adoption.
- ELSA support being automatically provided in school for CIC which is flexible and responsive to the child's needs and not time-limited.
- A willingness to initially allow the sessions to be child-led, as necessary, to allow the child to develop feelings of trust with the ELSA and activities. An avoidance of formal or intrusive questions / activities was also noted.
- Use of the ELSA assessment and monitoring tools booklet, provided by the Psychology Service. These tools can both help identify and monitor progress for pupils as well as providing evidence for senior management and OfSTED inspection teams around the benefits of ELSA.

For any further information about the points raised in this evaluation report, please feel free to contact the Psychology Service on 0151 337 6836 or speak to your link Child and Educational Psychologist

Appendix 1: Useful resources suggested by ELSAs responding to the evaluation questionnaire (please click on link to access resources)

- [Starving the anger gremlin](#): – child and young people versions are available, as well as versions on managing anxiety and body image
- Games such as Chess, Ipad games
- Relaxation activities including breathing techniques and mindfulness
- Stress bucket (images available online)
- Creative activities such as colouring, drawing different phases of anger, use of lego
- Role play
- Social stories (covered in initial ELSA training/ resources available on ELSA Sharepoint Site)
- [Think good –Feel good](#): Suitable for pupils KS2 and up
- [Let's Talk](#): Cards provide discussion points and activities to focus on several different areas including resilience, social skills and assertiveness. Very suitable for secondary school pupils
- Sensory toys and play using tools such as bubbles, sand play
- www.elsa-support.co.uk activities and resources
- Activities which can be personalised to the child's likes or interests
- [The Bear Cards](#) to discuss feelings with younger pupils
- [Transporters DVD](#): Particularly suitable for younger children with Autism
- Mr Men books
- Books to understand attachment disorder such as *Inside I'm hurting* by Louise Bomber and *The boy who was raised as a dog* by Bruce Perry
- Circle of Friends resource – Given during initial ELSA training. Available from the Psychology Service/ on the ELSA Sharepoint site
- [Talkabout series](#): A series of books which covers topics including Teenagers, Relationships and Social skills
- The Retracking Programme, suitable for KS2 and above: available from the Psychology Service/ on the ELSA Sharepoint site
- [Draw on your emotions](#): More suitable for pupils KS2 and up, although adaptations could be made to the activities for younger pupils.
- [Self-esteem workbook for teens](#): Other workbooks are available in this series, such as for anxiety, anger, social anxiety, body image and negative thinking.
- [The wheel of emotions](#) from www.therapistaid.com.
- Give me 5, as a start or end of session activity
- [The learning adventure](#) by Eva Hoffman
- Drawing the ideal self by Heather Moran – Suitable for upper primary and secondary age. [Information pack](#) and [step-by-step facilitation guide](#) available for free
- Using handprints to identify different people who can support them.

- Cognitive behavioural therapy resources, e.g. www.therapistaid.com and www.psychologytools.com

Appendix 2: Examples taken from CYP1's anonymised record book

23/3/16 *can I spot my anger growing?*

Recognising angry feelings
To begin to control your anger the first thing you must do is be able to 'RECOGNISE' your anger.
What happens to your body when you are feeling angry? What are the warning signs that you are becoming angry?
In each bubble write about something that happens to you.

24/3/16 *My worries look like aliens?*

20/12/16 *the toolbox turtle.*

20/12/16 *Today I feel angry because I keep getting in trouble.*

1/16 *Today I feel happy because I have had a good day.*

Making a worry eater.

What do worry monsters look like?
We researched to see we found these ideas

The Worry Monster Poem
I'm your little worry monster
I am always here
When worries pop into your head
Don't let them turn to fear
Take a piece of paper
Make sure you write your name
Explain your worry
Write it clear and plain
Put the worry into my mouth
And let me eat the fear
Put a smile upon your face
Then give a great big cheer!
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www.elisa-support.co.uk

Being told off **its not fair.** **Hat** **you** **Being bossed about.**

Write down all the thoughts and feelings you have that make you angry in the bottle.

How can you let those thoughts and feelings out without the cork blowing?

Use your words.

find a way to let it out slowly.

Being told off **its not fair.** **Hat** **you** **Being bossed about.**

My worry eater

I am so proud of it!

Appendix 3

Semi- structured Interview used with ELSAs in this evaluation report

How long have you been involved with ELSA delivery?

How are CYP referred to the ELSA programme?

What pre and post data do you gather?

How do you monitor and evaluate the progress of CIC?

How do you choose what to focus on in ELSA sessions?

Could you outline a typical session?

What organisational factors do new ELSAs need to consider?

How do you manage your own emotional responses when working with CIC?

How does school measure the impact of ELSA interventions on Academic performance?

Appendix 4: ELSA Person Specification and Job Description



The ideal potential ELSA:

- Has a warm personality.
- Is able to stay calm under pressure.
- Demonstrates good interpersonal skills with children and adults.
- Is able to gain the confidence of children who present with behaviour challenges or appear socially withdrawn.
- Enjoys learning.
- Is able to work independently and show initiative.
- Has good time management and organisational skills.
- Is able to plan programmes of support that incorporate variety, interest and pace.
- Is able to keep succinct records of involvement.

The role requires the ELSA to:

- Attend training days and half termly group supervision sessions led by the Child and Educational Psychology team.
- Plan and deliver individualised programmes of support for children to develop their emotional literacy, this may include:
 - awareness of own and other people's emotions,
 - development of an increased range of words to describe feelings,
 - management of stress, grief, anger and conflict,
 - development of social interaction skills,
 - development of the ability to make and maintain friendships,
 - promotion of a realistic self-concept and good self-esteem,
 - planning and delivering programmes of support to small groups of children to develop social and friendship skills.
- Write succinct session plans and add evaluative comments.
- Liaise with teachers and other support assistants/ mentors about the needs and progress of children receiving support.
- Share knowledge and ideas from training/supervision sessions with other school staff, as appropriate.
- Meet regularly with line manager (usually SENCo/ Pastoral Lead) to review ELSA work.
- Work within own competencies and level of development, under the guidance of the line manager.
- Liaise with parents in line with school policy.

To support the ELSA in their role, the school will:

- Release the ELSA on a half termly basis to attend supervision sessions with the Child and Educational Psychology team.
- Provide regular supervision for the ELSA within school (with SENCo/ line manager).
- Allocate the ELSA resources and regular time to undertake ELSA sessions within school.