

Targeted Mental Health in Schools

Being an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant is good for you own emotional wellbeing as well as that of the pupils you support.

Between January and May 2010 we trained 72 members of staff from schools and learning centres to work as Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) through the Dorset TaMHS project. On day one of the training the ELSAs are asked to complete the Fenman EQ questionnaire to help them reflect on their own strengths and skills. This questionnaire is designed to challenge how we think about emotional intelligence. It is not a standardised psychometric instrument; the measure is for personal use only and is not collected.

Responses are categorised in terms of 5 dimensions:

- **Creative tension** – managing the tension between dealing with the present and creating the future
- **Active choice** – being proactive and not procrastinating or worrying about choices you have made
- **Resilience under pressure** – managing pressure positively
- **Empathetic relationships** – building relationships of trust and credibility
- **Self awareness and self control** – knowing what you are feeling and moderating your internal responses

We thought it would be interesting to see whether ELSAs scores had changed six months after training and taking up this work. At supervision sessions we asked them to complete the questionnaire again and asked if they would let us know of any changes in their scores, either up or down. 41 ELSAs gave us this feedback. The graph below shows the changes for each individual. 88% have gained higher scores after training and the average has been an improvement of more than 10 points (out of a possible maximum score of 120).

Only 5 had lower scores on the second assessment and all 5 were able to recognise the circumstances that had led to them currently feeling less positive.

The greatest improvements are in active choice and creative tension, showing that our ELSAs are able to deal proactively with difficulties in order to gain the outcomes they want for the future.

