 

**ELSA Network Quality Mark Standards**

1. **Name of provider**

The ELSA Network only recognises qualified educational psychologists (EPs) as legitimate providers of ELSA training and supervision. This is in recognition that ELSA is a psychological intervention focussed in the educational domain. It requires applied psychological knowledge and skills together with a professional understanding of the education system.

1. **Are you currently registered with the ELSA Network?**

The ELSA Network exists to promote fidelity to the ELSA model and support those involved in delivering this intervention. The website hosts a closed forum to enable dissemination of information, resources and guidance between EPs. There also exist some regional support meetings for those registered with the Network. Registration with the Network is essential for keeping abreast of developments and ensuring standards of responsible professional practice.

1. **How long is your initial ELSA training?**

The initial published training model was five days and most areas have since extended this, in the light of experience, to six days. LSAs are not required to have any pre-existing qualifications before attending ELSA training, so less than five days is not considered adequate time for delivery of essential content, i.e. underlying psychology in key areas of intervention and core practice skills.

1. **Do you offer initial ELSA Training online?**

A key part of ELSA training is the establishing of supportive relationship between EPs and ELSAs as well as between the trainee ELSAs within a cohort. Hitherto, ELSA training has always been centre-based face to face training. The Coronavirus pandemic has pushed many into new ways of working and the steering group has considered the benefits and challenges of this. We have concluded that there is a place for incorporating online training, while maintaining certain caveats reflected below. After the pandemic passes, some services may wish to go on using an online element, but we would hope that this extends the course rather than replaces the face-to-face opportunities e.g., by ELSAs watching modules in advance and trainers devoting more of the day to practical follow-up activities such as programme planning, discussions, session planning, story-writing and counselling skills practise. Where modules are watched independently, some feedback activities need to be incorporated to allow trainers to ascertain level of understanding of ELSAs.

1. **If delivering online, are you complementing this with some face-to-face delivery?**

Online training during the pandemic needs to be complemented at a later date, once this is possible, with some additional face-t-face sessions that cover those aspects of the training deemed unsuitable for online input alone. Some services are planning to hold a series of face-to-face opportunities, once circumstances allow, to complement their online delivery. These will afford opportunity to check ELSAs’ understanding and cover interactive activities that did not lend themselves well to virtual training. Post-pandemic, it is desirable to re-instate face-to-face learning opportunities for each module, even if an online element is retained.

1. **What elements of initial training will NOT be delivered virtually and only delivered face-to-face?**

One element of the training that cannot adequately be delivered online is active listening and reflective conversation skills. These skills need to be demonstrated and practised in person rather than on screen. It is also very difficult to model use of practical resources in reflective conversations over video. Another module to carefully consider is loss and bereavement, since this topic often has personal resonance for ELSAs, so if delivered online, trainers need to think how to be aware of and manage personal impact among ELSAs.

1. **How much time are you allocating for face-to-face sessions following completion of virtual training?**

The steering group considers one day, or 5 hours, to be the minimum acceptable time that needs to be allocated to this.

1. **Do you evaluate your ELSA training, gathering ELSA feedback?**

It is considered vital for effective training to receive regular feedback from ELSAs on the clarity and quality of training delivered, and on their confidence in being able to deliver bespoke programmes of intervention within the areas of emotional literacy covered by training. Such feedback allows adjustments to be made to the content in the light of ELSAs’ responses.

1. **Does your initial content include opportunities for ELSAs to practise planning sessions and identifying how to set SMART programme aims?**

Because they will not normally have had any experience in developing support programmes or setting SMART targets, it has been found essential to offer support to ELSAs in how to plan sessions and set focussed aims for their interventions. Good sessions require clear objectives addressed via the means of engaging activities and games. These should include recap of previous learning within the programme to match programme pace to pupil understanding. Sessions should be progressive in working towards clearly defined pupil targets. Aims therefore need to be evaluated by measuring outcomes in some way; at the simplest level this would be by noting the achievement or non-achievement of pre-stated programme aims.

1. **Do you run supervision sessions for all trained ELSAs every half term?**

It is considered essential to be providing small group supervision every half term to promote and enhance appropriate ELSA skills. In supervision, EPs are expected to keep referring ELSAs back to the training content, to help them identify reasonable programme aims, to consider children’s needs from a psychological perspective, and provide continuing professional development through supervision discussions. They also have a responsibility to oversee safe practice, empowering ELSAs to resist inappropriate requests by parents, school staff or other professionals, and to ensure ELSAs are receiving suitable support for their role within school. Where ELSAs are not being given time to fulfil the ELSA role or are not being released regularly to attend supervision meetings, EPs are expected to help ELSAs rectify the situation or, ultimately, to ensure they are de-registered until they are in a position to fulfil all the role requirements. Without an appropriate level of supervision, intervention in school cannot be legitimately recognised as ELSA.

1. **Are your supervision sessions run by a qualified EP or appropriately experienced and supported Year 3 TEPs?**

Supervision of ELSAs is a role for qualified EPs, (see also note under point 1). It is not considered admissible to ask Year 1 or Year 2 TEPs to lead ELSA supervision. They are welcome to participate in supervision to develop experience, so they may potentially lead a supervision group in their final year of training. If a Year 3 TEP has had a supporting role in providing ELSA supervision with an EP and has demonstrated, during observation by an EP familiar with supervising ELSAs, the appropriate supervision skills to lead a group, this is admissible. They would nevertheless be expected to discuss their supervision on a regular basis with an EP familiar with ELSA.

1. **Do all EPs delivering supervision have a working knowledge of the training content?**

All training is known to have a washout effect. The Network recognises that settings often expect ELSAs to support children with complex emotional needs. It is important, therefore, that all EPs providing ELSA supervision should be familiar with the training content and be able to refer back to this during supervision in order to maintain and enhance ELSA understanding of the relevant psychological models related to their work. Adequate continuing professional development requires a knowledge of initial professional input to reinforce and build upon this.

1. **Are your supervision groups within recommended guidelines of a maximum of 8 ELSAs?**

Groups are expected to be kept within a maximum of eight ELSAs to ensure there is time for all members of the group to contribute. All members should be expected to bring an item to supervision, whether it be a request for ideas or support, a reflection on a piece of casework, a success story, or information about a useful resource they have discovered or developed. There needs to be time within meetings to check where everyone is at, as there is an expectation that EPs also support ELSAs by recognising and responding appropriately to professional or personal pressures they may be experiencing. If groups are allowed to grow larger, they become support rather than supervision groups, which is not considered sufficient within the ELSA model.

1. **Are ELSAs that do not attend supervision regularly followed up and de-registered as necessary?**

All ELSAs are expected to attend their group supervision meeting each half term. If settings are not enabling their ELSA to attend supervision, this needs to be addressed with the ELSA’s line manager. If there is a legitimate reason for non-attendance (illness, family funeral, hospital appointment) ELSAs should be expected to notify apologies for absence in advance to their supervisor. In these circumstances the supervising EP can offer alternative supervision, e.g. a phone call. Reasons for absence that are not legitimate, e.g. ELSAs being asked to cover other duties or staff absence in the setting, should be followed up with the ELSA and /or setting as appropriate. If an ELSA misses two consecutive meetings, supervisors are advised to arrange some individual telephone supervision. This reinforces the value put upon supervision by the ELSA provider and their duty of care. Should an ELSA need to be de-registered, the setting needs to be advised that the member of staff should not be used in this capacity and may no longer use the role title of ELSA. If this leaves the setting without a registered ELSA, they may no longer claim to use the ELSA intervention and need to remove any reference to ELSA from their website. The ELSA provider may reinstate their ELSA status once the role requirements are able to be met, i.e. half-termly supervision attendance and ring-fenced time in the setting to deliver bespoke programmes of support.

1. **Are supervision sessions a minimum of 2 hours duration?**

To provide an adequate supervision experience for all members of the group, two hours is deemed necessary. Less than this restricts items that can be included and limits ELSA contributions to discussions.

1. **Do you have regular ‘supervision for supervisors’ meetings within your service, at least twice a year?**

It is important for EPs within a service to support each other to reflect on their experiences of ELSA supervision. Independent EPs can link with others in a similar situation to do this. There are often common challenges to consider and it is also a way of enhancing personal supervision practice. The supervision should be led by an EP familiar with the training content and experienced in supervision.

**If you realise your service does not yet meet the quality mark standards, please check that you are at least meeting the ELSA Network minimum standards to justify use of the term ‘ELSA’ to describe your work.**