

Guidance for Educational Psychology Services introducing ELSA

Who may deliver ELSA training?

ELSA has been expressly developed as an intervention led by educational psychologists, comprising training and on-going supervision. As EPs would have the pre-requisite skills from their training and experience, there is no training for trainers required. Any training run by professionals other than EPs is not recognised as meeting the requirements of this intervention and should not be described as ELSA. Neither should any training that does not include on-going supervision of practitioners by EPs thereafter.

Resources for trainers and practitioners

Burton S. (2009) **ELSA Trainers' Manual**. London: Optimus Education [ISBN 978-1-905517-84-7]

This contains useful information about the ELSA intervention and how to implement it. It contains the original training resources. Within the manual is a CD Rom of resources plus a DVD of an ELSA training session on the use of puppets. It is useful for EP services to have one copy. Taylor & Francis is the publishing company that now distributes this publication.

Shotton G. & Burton S. (2018) **Emotional Wellbeing: An Introductory Handbook for Schools** [2nd Edition]. London: Routledge. [ISBN 978-1-138-29870-5]

This is an essential resource for EP services and all ELSAs. It reflects the underlying psychology content of ELSA training and contains practical ideas for intervention. It is recommended that the cost be built into training charges to ensure each delegate on the course receives a copy. It is available at a 25% discount if ordered directly from the publisher (Taylor & Francis) via louise.perrier@tandf.co.uk

Burton S. (2018) **Excellent ELSAs**. Poole: Inspiration Books. [ISBN 978-1-9999528-0-8]

This best practice guide is an essential book for EP services and all ELSAs. It addresses the wide range of practice issues that are raised perennially during ELSA training and in supervision meetings. It is recommended that the cost be built into training charges to ensure each delegate on the course receives a copy. This book is available exclusively from the author via the products page of the ELSA Network website.

ELSAs in Action (digital download of original DVD)

This film shows extracts of some individual and group ELSA sessions at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. There are comments from school managers about the importance of ELSA in their schools. The founder of ELSA explains some key principles and ELSAs talk about their role. A digital download of the original DVD is available via the products page of the ELSA Network website. Its purpose is to promote the ELSA intervention, explaining underlying principles, and to support ELSA training. This resource is

useful to EP services when recruiting schools to participate in the ELSA intervention. It is also useful for school in-service training to help teachers understand how ELSAs work, and for ELSA themselves.

ELSA Network

The ELSA Network is run by a steering group of educational psychologists drawn from across the UK, all of whom have experience in delivering ELSA training and supervision in their own localities. It exists to:

- promote ELSA as an evidence-based intervention for building schools' capacity to support children and young people's emotional development and wellbeing;
- support educational psychologists involved in delivering ELSA training and supervision;
- promote fidelity of practice to the ELSA model;
- provide useful information to practising ELSAs.

An area directory is maintained on the website, listing by geographical area the educational psychology services that are offering ELSA training and supervision locally. Each entry provides contact details of trainers. Schools enquiring about ELSA intervention are directed here.

Educational psychology services are invited to register with the ELSA Network annually for a charge of £100 per calendar year, renewable each January. Registered services are indicated in the area directory. The contact EPs of those services (up to a maximum of 5 per service) are issued with logins to the closed EP forum. The forum is the means of communication with participating services. It contains free resources that support ELSA intervention, including training updates. Where there are regional network groups established, members of registered services are invited to attend area meetings, usually held twice a year. Members of registered services are also eligible to book places on ELSA Network national conferences, likely to run biennially.

A Quality Mark has been created to help maintain fidelity to the full ELSA model of training and supervision. Registered services may apply for the quality mark, renewable each year, by submitting the completed quality mark questionnaire (details available in the forum). The quality mark addresses length of training, frequency of supervision and size of groups, who delivers the supervision and the maintaining of active local ELSA registers.

Introducing ELSA locally

The ELSA Trainers' Manual includes a launch presentation for local school managers explaining the intervention. All presentation materials may be updated freely by local services. The training content has always been considered flexible, to be adapted to suite the preferences and context of local EP services. What is not negotiable is the underlying intervention model of at least 5 (usually 6) days of training reflecting key psychological theory and good practice, followed by small group supervision meetings (maximum 8 ELSAs) of 2 hours duration every half-term, led by qualified EPs.

EPs within the ELSA Network experienced in delivering ELSA are happy to guide and support those planning to introduce ELSA for the first time.

Integral to the project is good line management support. Training should ideally include an element where line managers join the training to learn about the expectations of their role

in supporting and promoting ELSA in their school. School managers are expected to sign a pre-training agreement agreeing to release those they delegate to train as ELSAs for all the training days and for the half-termly supervision thereafter. They also agree to provide a budget for resources and suitable space in school for delivery of individual and small group programmes of support. Part of the agreement is an expectation that ELSAs will have the equivalent of one day per week (approximately 5 hours) ring-fenced to fulfil the ELSA role. The exception to this would be small village schools of only 100 pupils or less, which may allocate half a day per week to the role. This allocation applies to each ELSA they train and should not be subdivided across two or more ELSAs. This is to ensure that ELSAs have adequate opportunity to apply their learning and develop their skills.

Who may work as an ELSA?

The ELSA Network does not support the training of practitioners to work independently as ELSAs. This is in recognition of the limited nature of ELSA training and the duty of care to both practitioners and children receiving ELSA intervention. It is important for schools to have overall responsibility for interventions delivered on their behalf. The ELSA Network recognises the importance to ELSAs of good support and effective line management from within their school. Sometimes practitioners working within other organisations supporting children may be eligible for training, provided they are in a position to deliver bespoke programmes of support over a period of time to children and young people, and provided they have the full support and backing of their employing organisation. Colleges of Further Education are eligible to access the ELSA intervention in the same way as schools. Some ELSA training providers are also delivering Early Years ELSA training. A group of EPs under the auspices of the ELSA Network has developed an initial training package for special schools serving the needs of pupils with severe and complex learning needs. This is available within the closed forum.

ELSAs are generally teaching assistants who undertake this role for part of their contracted hours. The reason for focussing this work for implementation by teaching assistants is that they are the best placed members of staff to take on this responsibility since they are already in a pupil support role. Schools would rarely be able to release qualified teachers to work individually with children. Very occasionally there are special needs teachers who ask to be trained. Provided they can be guaranteed time to fulfil the role requirements this is an option. We advise, however, a conversation with them in advance to ensure they understand the need to blend well with TAs, not adopting a more senior position in relation to their other ELSA colleagues during training and supervision. It would require careful management. In selecting TAs to train as ELSAs, schools should be mindful of the person specification and job description developed for this specialist role. Good rapport with a wide range of pupils and the ability to plan independently are both essential.