



Abstract

The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) evaluation project investigated the impact of ELSA intervention on the wellbeing of children and young people (CYP). ELSAs completed a 6-week intervention with a referred CYP. Wellbeing measures were collected prior to intervention (baseline), at the end of the 6 weeks intervention (time 1) and 10 weeks after the intervention had ended (time 2). Both CYP and class teacher (CT) and ELSA perspectives were gathered. The results showed a significant positive increase in the CYP's wellbeing following the 6-week intervention. This improvement in wellbeing was maintained in the CYP 10-weeks following the end of intervention. Therefore, providing robust evidence emphasising the value of ELSAs in improving and maintaining CYP's wellbeing.

Introduction

Promoting good mental health and wellbeing in CYP is a key factor to pupils feeling happy, healthy and supported. Therefore, empowering them to reach their full potential. The COVID-19 pandemic and school closures has been linked to a negative impact on pupil wellbeing (Kim, Dundas & Asbury, 2021; Bray et al., 2021), highlighting the importance of providing wellbeing support to pupils in school. Qualitative research studies have shown that ELSAs have a positive impact on CYP's wellbeing (Krus, Blackwell & Claridge, 2020). This anecdotal evidence has been gathered from parental perceptions (Wilding & Claridge, 2016) and pupil perspectives (Wong et al., 2020). However, there is a lack of quantitative evidence to evaluate the impact of ELSA intervention on pupil wellbeing. The aim of this project was to answer the questions: 1. Does ELSA intervention have any measurable impact on CYP's wellbeing after a 6-week intervention? 2. Is wellbeing maintained 10 weeks after the intervention has ended, thus demonstrating the lasting impact of ELSA?

Method

- 18 fully trained ELSAs agreed to participate in the project. ELSAs were based in a variety of settings such as, mainstream education, specialist provisions/school and through-schools.
- ELSAs selected two CYP that would likely benefit from ELSA intervention. One CYP would receive the intervention (intervention group) and the other would not (control group). The CYP ages ranged from 3-14 years old.
- Quantitative evidence was provided from pre and post intervention questionnaires. The responses utilised a Likert scale to gather perspectives from both the pupils and the CT and ELSA.
- Case studies and pupil feedback forms provided qualitative evidence.
- Data was collected prior to intervention, at the end of the 6 weeks intervention and 10 weeks after the intervention ended. Control group data was collected at baseline and time one only.

Results

The data collected from the questionnaires was statistically analysed using a paired sample t-test. The results showed that there is a significant positive increase in CYP's wellbeing following the 6-week ELSA intervention from CYP perspective $t(17) = -5.94, p < .001$, as well as the class teacher and ELSA perspective, $T(17) = -6.74, p < .001$ (Figure1). In contrast, there was no significant difference in the wellbeing of the control group from baseline to time 1 after receiving no ELSA intervention, from CYP perspective $T(17) = .69, p = .50$, and CT and ELSA perspective, $T(16) = -.37, p = .72$. Therefore, highlighting no change in wellbeing scores following a lack of ELSA support (Figure1).

10 weeks post intervention data (no ELSA intervention) was compared with the baseline data and showed a significant improvement in wellbeing from the CYP perspective $T(17) = -4.73, p < .001$, and the CT and ELSA, $T(17) = -10.07, p < .001$. Overall illustrating maintained wellbeing 10 weeks post intervention (Figure1).

Conclusions

To conclude, the findings provide quantitative evidence that ELSA intervention has a positive impact on CYP wellbeing, even following a short 6-week intervention. Moreover, ELSA has a lasting positive impact on CYP even after the intervention has ended, displaying a maintained improvement. Thus highlighting the value and importance of vulnerable CYP having access to ELSA support when needed, to promote and maintain positive wellbeing.

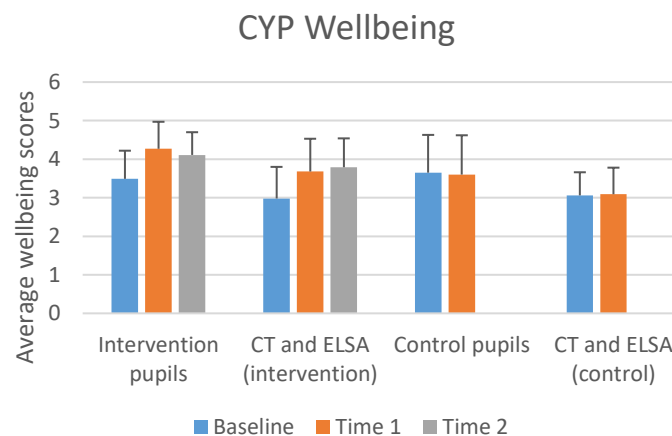


Figure 1 illustrates the average wellbeing scores for the intervention pupils, collected across three time points, and control pupils collected at baseline and time 1, from the CYP and the class teacher (CT) and ELSA perspectives. Error bars display the standard deviations.