Somerset Council
County Hall, Taunton
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Children and young people's feedback on their experiences of ELSA within Somerset

Aim:

To understand the experience of children and young people (CYP) who have taken part in ELSA sessions within Somerset.

Method:

Children and young people were asked a series of closed and open-ended questions exploring their experiences of ELSA. In total, there were 12 questions. The survey was sent to school staff who could support the child or young person to complete the survey. An information sheet was also sent to school and parent carers so they knew what the survey would entail.

Demographics:

72 CYP completed the survey. The mode (most common) year group was Year 5. However, 8 students did not answer their year group; rather they put their school's name, which has been removed from this document to anonymise data. 34 students identified as female, 37 as male, and 1 as non-binary.

Summary of the Findings/ Results:

Quantitative:

- 94% of children and young people felt more confident in managing their feelings after ELSA sessions.
- 69% of respondents found the activities in ELSA sessions helpful in understanding their emotions; 31% found them somewhat helpful.
- All respondents felt comfortable talking to their ELSA at least some of the time: 38.89% always, 31.94% usually, 19.44% often, 9.72% sometimes.
- 70.83% of children and young people learned new ways to cope with difficult emotions during ELSA sessions, while 25% found the sessions somewhat helpful.

Qualitative:

- **Resources and activities, games and toys, connection, and arts and crafts** were identified as CYPs' favourite activities or parts of their ELSA sessions.
- **Emotions (with particular reference made to Zones of Regulation), playtime and peer relationships, and family dynamics** were recalled as specific times when respondents had found ELSA sessions helpful in understanding and managing their emotions.
- **Nothing**, **more time, and more games and activities** were discussed as being what could be different or improved about ELSA sessions.
- **Managing emotions, helped me, and confidence and self-esteem** were identified as ways that ELSA sessions had helped CYP in their daily life or in school.

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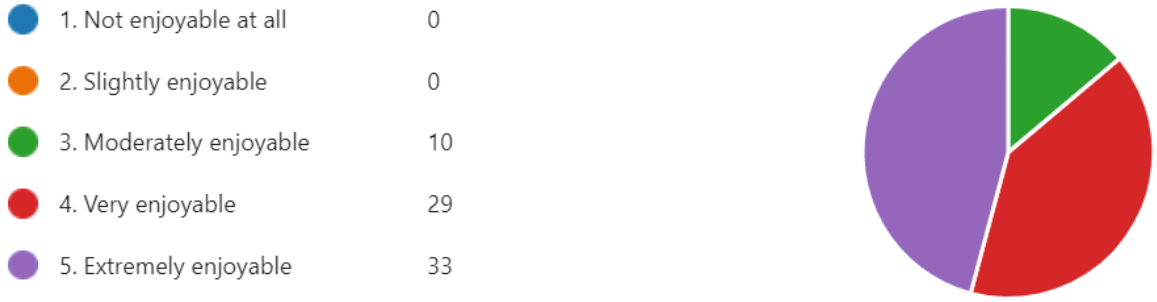
- **Fun and enjoyable** was the only theme generated when CYP were asked whether they would like to share anything additional about their experience of ELSA.

Full Analysis of the Findings/ Results:

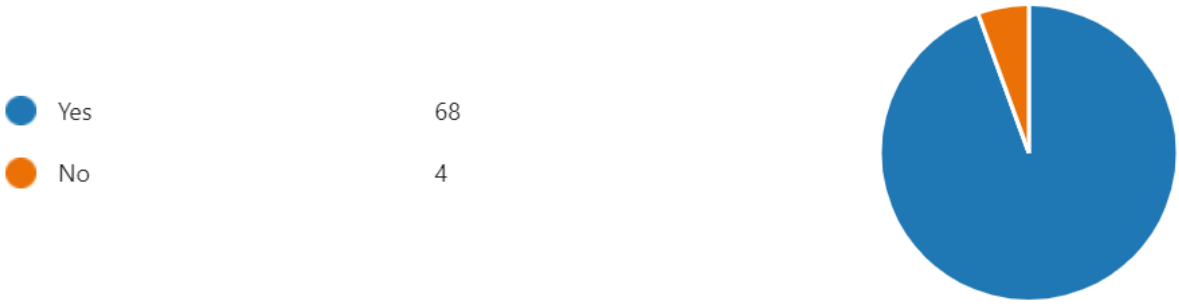
Quantitative Findings:

Chart 1: On a scale of 1-5, how much did you enjoy your ELSA sessions?



All respondents reported that they found their ELSA sessions enjoyable to varying degrees. Specifically, 45.83% found them extremely enjoyable, 40.27% very enjoyable, and 13.89% moderately enjoyable.

Chart 2: Do you feel more confident about handling your feelings after attending ELSA sessions?



94% of children and young people responded that they felt more confident in managing their feelings after their ELSA sessions.

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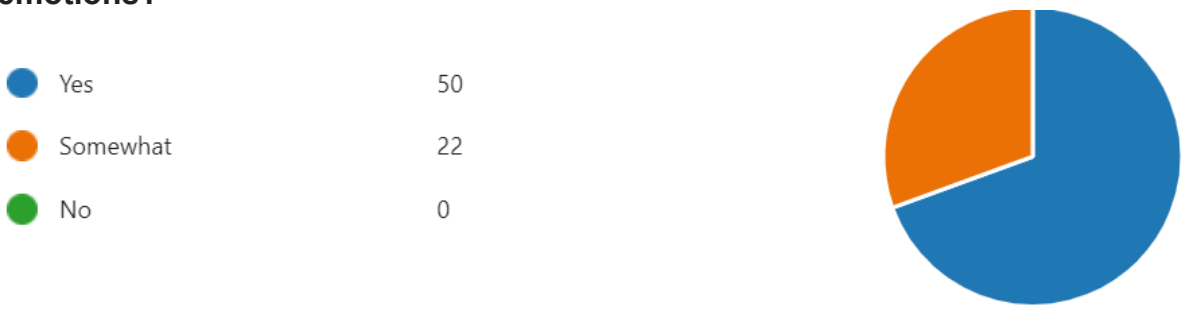
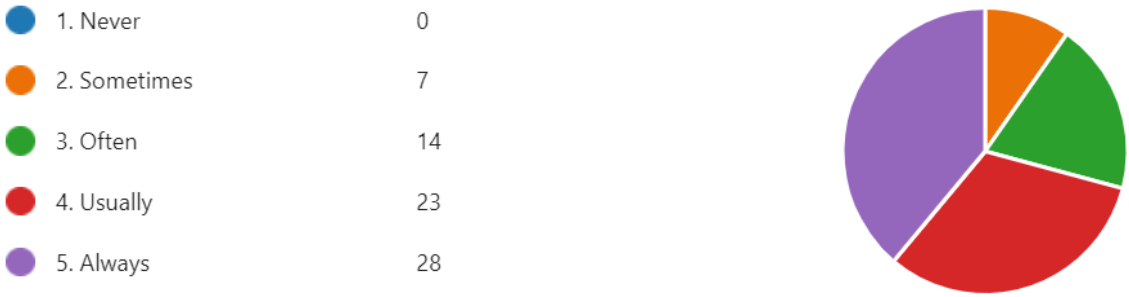
Chart 3: Did you find the activities in the sessions helpful in understanding your emotions?



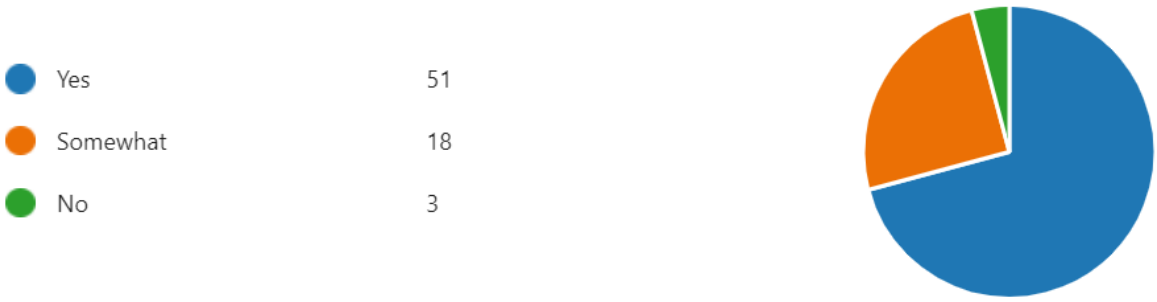
69% of children and young people reported that the activities in ELSA sessions were helpful in understanding their emotions. The remaining 31% found these activities somewhat helpful.

Chart 4: On a scale of 1-5, how often did you feel comfortable talking to your ELSA?



All respondents reported feeling comfortable talking to their ELSA at least some of the time. Specifically, 38.89% always felt comfortable, 31.94% usually, 19.44% often, and 9.72% sometimes.

Chart 5: Did you learn new ways to cope with difficult emotions during ELSA sessions?



Across participants, 70.83% of children and young people reported learning new ways to cope with difficult emotions during ELSA sessions. Additionally, 25% found the sessions somewhat helpful, while 4.17% did not learn new coping strategies.

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Summary of quantitative data:
The findings from the above quantitative responses suggested the experiences of CYP who have taken part in ELSA sessions are overwhelmingly positive.

Qualitative Findings

In this section, a content analysis of the questions asked of each participant was analysed and discussed. This involved identifying patterns (themes) across participants' responses and drawing conclusions based on the findings. The themes highlighted in orange are the main themes that were most prevalent across the questions.

Table 1: What was your favourite activity or part of the ELSA sessions?

Themes	Number of times mentioned
Resources and activities	23
Games and toys	19
Connection	18
Arts and crafts	8
'Everything is great'	4

Four main themes were identified as CYPs' favourite activities or parts of their ELSA sessions. These were **resources and activities, games and toys, connection, and arts and crafts.** Below are direct quotes from questionnaires:

"I really liked the dandelion wishes activity".

"Chatting and playing games with my ELSA".

"Craft activity- making a memory jar".

"Doing crafts and talking about things as we did it".

Table 2: Tell us about a specific time when the ELSA sessions helped you understand and manage your emotions better?

Themes	Number of times mentioned
Emotions (Including 'Zones of Regulation')	36 (3)
Playtime and peer relationships	8
Family dynamics	6
Confidence and self-esteem	4
Bereavement	3
Don't know / can't remember	3

When asked to recall a specific time when respondents had found ELSA sessions helpful in understanding and managing their emotions, three key themes were

generated. These were **emotions (with particular reference made to Zones of Regulation), playtime and peer relationships, and family dynamics.** Below are direct quotes from questionnaires:

"When we talked about strategies to manage my feelings and emotions".

"I remember not to push and shove people when they make me angry".

"When I was learning about the zones of regulations and learning about the tools to use".

"I felt more connected to my Grandad during bereavement work in ELSA".

Table 3: What could be different or improved about the ELSA sessions?

Themes	Number of times mentioned
Nothing	33
More time	13
More games and activities	8

When asked what could be different or improved about ELSA sessions, the primary theme generated was **nothing**. Other key themes were **more time, and more games and activities.** Below are direct quotes from questionnaires:

"Nothing, ELSA sessions are great!".

"They last longer and they last forever".

"I think if the first sessions were more about talking and doing activities and games and crafts together. Some people might just want a safe space and it would make them feel more comfortable talking about stuff".

Table 4: How do you feel ELSA sessions have helped you in your daily life or at school?

Themes	Number of times mentioned
Managing emotions	32
Helped me	32
Confidence and self-esteem	8

Three themes were developed for ways that ELSA sessions had helped CYP in their daily life or in school. These were **managing emotions, helped me, and confidence and self-esteem.** Below are direct quotes from questionnaires:

"I now know how to shrink my worries and that is very useful and the catch it bin it and replace it".

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"They have helped me a lot. I get less angry. I use some calming strategies I have learnt to help me calm".

"It's helped me be ok with getting things wrong".
"I made a shield of all my strengths and I have read it 73 times and I feel more confident".

Table 5: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences with ELSA sessions?

Themes	Number of times mentioned
Fun and enjoyable	35

When asked whether CYP would like to share anything additional about their experience of ELSA, one theme was generated, illustrating that CYP found their experiences to be **fun and enjoyable**. Below are direct quotes from questionnaires:

"Maybe I would like more sessions in the future. Some of my friends would benefit from ELSA sessions too.
"ELSA sessions makes me happy".

"They have been fun and I know how to cope better when I am finding thing tricky".

Summary:

The findings from the ELSA sessions reveal that CYP generally found the sessions enjoyable and beneficial. The majority of participants felt more confident in managing their feelings after attending the sessions. The activities were largely seen as helpful in understanding emotions, though some found them only somewhat helpful. Comfort levels in talking to their ELSA varied, but all respondents felt comfortable at least some of the time. Many participants learned new ways to cope with difficult emotions, though a small percentage did not.

Qualitative analysis highlighted favourite activities such as resources and activities, games and toys, connection, and arts and crafts. Suggestions for improvement included more time and additional games and activities. Overall, the sessions were noted to help with managing emotions, boosting confidence, and self-esteem.

Next Steps:

- Communicate this evaluation to SENCos and ELSAs.
- Communicate this evaluation to ELSA Supervisors so they know what is working well and also areas where even further development could be made.
- Share this evaluation with ELSA trainers to consider adaptations to the ELSA training.
- Create / update ELSA training resources / materials that align with the identified favourite activities and effective strategies, to include in the ELSA training to share with future ELSAs.

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- Add ELSA evaluations to the Somerset EP ELSA website.
- Share ELSA evaluations to the wider EP community (potentially via County Day).

Report and data analysis completed by Emily Cobb (Trainee Educational Psychologist), Christopher Cottrell (Assistant Educational Psychologist), and Dr Duncan Henderson (Educational Psychologist and ELSA Coordinator) on behalf of Somerset Educational Psychology Service.