

Empowering learning support assistants to enhance the emotional wellbeing of children in school

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Abstract

This article is practice based in that its main emphasis is on how psychological theory into behavioural, emotional and social development can be used to empower learning support assistants (LSAs) to increase children's skills in the area of emotional literacy. For the past two decades, since the introduction of a national curriculum, the educational focus in the United Kingdom has been principally on raising academic attainment within schools. Yet in recent years there has been a growing appreciation by Government that to raise standards it is not sufficient to focus solely upon the content of the curriculum and the way in which it is delivered. Schools need to be concerned with the all round development of children and young people, as shown by the introduction of the Every Child Matters (2005) programme with its broader and enduring outcome measures. This paper describes how an educational psychology service has developed training and support that aims to increase the success of pupils by empowering LSAs to address pupils' emotional needs. It explores the rationale for investing significant time and effort into such work and describes how a small pilot project has been extended to become a county-wide initiative across primary and secondary phases of education. Consideration is given to the partnership with schools and the practical aspects to be considered in an initiative of this kind. Early evaluation results are reported and areas for development are considered, including further in-depth evaluation of individual outcomes for pupils.

Introduction

In the UK there has been considerable emphasis for some years on raising academic attainment within schools. Teacher training focuses almost exclusively on the national curriculum at the expense of a holistic view of child development. Yet in recent years there has been a growing appreciation by Government that standards cannot be raised through addressing the quality of teaching alone. The Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) invested in the development of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiatives introduced into primary schools and now extended into the secondary sector. This work recognises that education is more than a knowledge based curriculum. Staff in schools need to be concerned with the all round development of children and young people, as shown by the outcome measures of Every Child Matters: Change for children in schools (2004).

The importance of emotional literacy as an integral component within education is being recognised across the globe. In the US, Kassem (2002) argues that with the current focus on violence, bullying, substance abuse, and distress in schools, the time is ripe for a stronger focus on emotion in education. While many approaches to developing social and emotional competencies have emerged, Kassem makes the case for teacher training courses to reflect this increased awareness of the role of emotion in education. She asserts that since the limbic system (regulating emotional response) is much quicker to react than the frontal lobe (mediating rational processing), it is important for school staff to generate a positive classroom atmosphere. In a negative climate there is an increased risk of a 'fight or flight' response being invoked over a rational response in students who are anxious, stressed and have inadequate coping strategies. Yet, most teachers or teaching assistants have no train-

ing in the area of emotional literacy. In a study of Malaysian secondary school students, Liau (2003) found that lower levels of emotional literacy were linked with higher levels of internalising problem behaviours (stress, depression, somatic complaints) and higher levels of externalising problem behaviours (aggression, delinquency). He asserted the need to develop emotional literacy programmes to combat a rise in emotional illiteracy among youth in the Asia-Pacific region.

In the UK, in August 2006, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) was asked by the Department of Health to develop guidance for schools aimed at promoting good mental health among children. Studies of targeted interventions were largely from the US and many involved the use of imported clinical staff to deliver small-scale interventions to small samples of children. Their applicability to general school settings in another culture may therefore be limited. In terms of whole school programmes, the highest quality evidence comes from programmes such as Kusché and Greenberg's (1994) PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) curriculum, delivered by teachers who have had a significant degree of training and access to ongoing supervision.

PATHS is a preventative intervention designed to be delivered on a regular basis and incorporates daily activities to promote generalisation of learning. In a study by Kelly et al. (2004), positive emotional, social and behavioural changes at a class and individual level were attributed to the effect of PATHS. Kusché (2002) summarises three controlled studies in which the PATHS curriculum was followed over the course of a year. As a result, children showed improvements in emotional understanding, self control, ability to tolerate frustration, and use of effective conflict resolution strategies.

Carnwell and Baker (2007) refer to 'considerable evidence that school-based programmes directed toward enhancing social competence or emotional literacy improve

academic performance and behaviour, and reduce rates of drug and tobacco use, delinquency and violence' (p.34). Increasingly local authorities within the UK are developing initiatives aimed at developing the emotional literacy of pupils in their schools. Carnwell and Baker (2007) report an evaluation study of a student assistance programme in Wrexham involving group work in primary and secondary schools. A key feature of the groups from a student perspective was the creation of a safe place to share feelings, knowing that what was shared would be treated confidentially. Both staff and students referred to the development of trust, relationships, and changes in behaviour. Facilitators spoke of students developing social skills and becoming friendlier and happier. Challenges reported in the study included coping with group size and mix. Some students who were challenging in class were also challenging in the group. Some students found it difficult to relate to teachers as facilitators because of their dual roles. Adequate support for facilitators was also an issue for consideration.

In the North & East Devon School Nurse Innovation Project (Buckland et al., 2005), new ways of working for school nurses were developed and piloted with the aim of reducing the incidence of school exclusion in the primary phase of education. The nurses worked with individual children at risk of exclusion or who had already been excluded, and with their families. They also worked with whole classes to promote emotional literacy. The school nurses were trained in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and interventions for anger management, basic counselling and parenting. The project was positively evaluated by the school staff, children and parents interviewed in the evaluation study, (Kelly et al., 2005). Key features identified as contributing to success were the school nurses being approachable and nurturing, providing continuity of care, being non-threatening, offering confidentiality, having local knowledge (familiarity with the school and com-

munity), providing a link between home and school, and providing a link to other services. There was a reservation however, from some teachers, that the school nurses had too high an expectation of the teacher's role in supporting interventions, perhaps arising from lack of understanding of all that teachers have to do.

When working as an educational psychologist (EP) in a small unitary authority in southern England the author had responsibility for recruiting and managing five peripatetic emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs) working within the psychology service. They visited individual children in local primary schools who were referred to the service with a variety of social and emotional needs, delivering bespoke programmes of support. During the course of their work, the skills the ELSAs developed were cascaded to other school-based LSAs. The support was so enthusiastically received by schools that it led to schools designating one or two of their own LSAs to offer similar support to other children in need. Upon moving to a large county the author was keen to replicate this work but, because of the size of the local authority, a school-based approach was the most practical way forward. A pilot project was negotiated in one small area of the county, as reported by Burton and Shotton (2004). They developed a five day training package delivered two to three weeks apart over the course of approximately one term, which was followed by regular, ongoing group supervision sessions. The evaluation (Burton, 2004) revealed a positive response from school staff and pupils alike, leading to a graduated roll-out of the initiative across the whole county, and this continues to date. The initiative was also extended to include secondary and some special schools (for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties).

The ELSA training and supervision approach

A cascade model of training was adopted within the county educational psychology service, which is organised into community teams. The author, in the role of ELSA co-ordinator, led the ELSA training in each community team area in turn, assisted by EPs from the local team. Following training, the ELSAs were allocated to supervision groups facilitated by local EPs. These were organised geographically except that ELSAs from secondary schools were grouped together rather than placed with colleagues from their local primary schools. This was in recognition of the larger, more complex structure of secondary schools that creates specific organisational challenges, and the need for a shared focus on approaches suited to pre-adolescent and adolescent pupils. In some cases, EPs, working in pairs, choose to offer group supervision.

The training modules include a combination of background psychological theory and practical guidance. A rationale is offered for addressing emotional literacy within the school context, which includes brief consideration of some key areas of psychology. Maslow's theory of motivation (Maslow, 1970) is a useful formulation of the need for safety, security and a sense of belonging in order to develop positive self-recognition, which in turn contributes to the capacity to enjoy and achieve. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) draws attention to the impact of social relationships on emotional development, and underscores the notion that emotional literacy is modelled more than it is taught. Work on multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) has broadened understanding of the multi-faceted nature of ability. His attention on the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions links strongly with the concept of emotional intelligence, presented first by Salovey and Mayer (1990) then popularised by Goleman (1995). Implicit in developing children's emotional literacy is raising their awareness of emotions and the close link that exists between thoughts and feelings. Many children have a limited

emotional vocabulary. Extending this assists self expression in a way that reduces the need for problematic behaviours, and is often a useful starting point for ELSA intervention.

The trainee ELSAs are helped to a broader understanding of what is meant by self-esteem through consideration of the building block approach of Borba (1989). The three areas of security, selfhood and affiliation are key foundations that allow a child to develop personal goals and a sense of competence. Those children and young people suggested for ELSA support often need assistance to enhance their sense of self worth, and identifying different aspects of need is helpful to ELSAs in devising the most appropriate programmes of support.

Self-regulation is another key aspect of emotional literacy, and ELSA training includes a module on anger management. The work of Sharp, Herrick and Faupel (1998) is particularly helpful as they have developed a practical guide for addressing this area of need in children. It adopts a staged approach to building understanding of how and why angry behaviour is sustained and suggests a range of calming strategies suitable to different contexts. In training school staff to work in this area it is important to help them differentiate between genuine emotional reactions and similar learned behaviours that achieve a desired outcome for a child.

Many youngsters are referred to ELSAs for help in developing social skills. The training course includes a module looking at the purpose of social communication and its constituent skill requirements, as outlined by Hutchings, Comins and Offiler (1991). Participants are able to devise together experiential learning activities that reinforce some of these basic skills. Since, however, there is an increase in the number of children being identified with autistic spectrum disorder who are likely to be supported by ELSAs to develop improved social skills, it is important to help trainees understand the different thinking patterns of such children. Awareness of the triad of impairments (Wing &

Gould, 1979) and theory of mind (Frith, 1989) are therefore included in an introduction to autism, and trainees are inducted into the use of social stories (Gray & Garand, 1993) as a way of teaching children new behaviours.

Allied to social skills is the area of friendship, so ELSA training looks at approaches for supporting young people in developing the skills they need to initiate and maintain friendships. One approach is Circles of Friends, first developed in Canada by Pearpoint and Forest (1992) and subsequently introduced in the UK (see Newton, Taylor & Wilson, 1996) where it has been widely used in schools. Group work is also explored and support given in devising session plans for friendship groups. Included also within this module is an introduction to therapeutic story writing (Brett, 1986), a technique that allows children to consider personally challenging issues from a more objective perspective. By focusing initially outside of themselves they can gradually be helped to generalise their learning to their own hot issues.

The content of the initial training is not considered exhaustive, and subsequent topics have been covered during supervision (e.g. loss and bereavement) and ELSA conferences (e.g. attachment). Over time it is likely that development training days will be introduced periodically to provide continuing professional development for ELSAs. The two-hour supervision sessions that are scheduled during each half term provide opportunity for group problem solving concerning casework, sharing of ideas and resources, and further exploration of psychological approaches (e.g. techniques from solution-focused brief therapy, ideas from cognitive behaviour therapy). Shotton and Burton (2008) have written a handbook to complement this training. This gives some background psychology to topic areas and incorporates many practical suggestions for ELSA work. In addition to the training and group supervision sessions, EPs are encouraged to liaise with the ELSAs in their schools to offer consultation, if necessary,

about specific casework, and to offer appropriate assistance with any operational issues that arise.

ELSA intervention

Identifying children for ELSA support is an internal school matter. In practice ELSAs work with a wide variety of emotional needs, ranging from children who are withdrawn to those with more challenging behaviour. Examples of the kind of difficulties for which ELSAs have offered support include parental separation, bereavement, selective mutism, school refusal, frequent angry outbursts, friendship difficulties and general anxiety. Some of the youngsters they work with have long-term needs and others are facing short term difficulties. It is recommended that ELSAs become involved over a minimum of half a term, generally offering weekly sessions, although the length and frequency of these sessions depends upon the age and individual circumstances. Many interventions continue for a longer period. It is intended, however, that the work be proactive and planned, rather than reactive to specific incidents. It is most helpful when clear and achievable outcome targets are identified in advance, which allow an ELSA to know that a specific intervention can be drawn to a close. In their supervising role, EPs receive frequent anecdotal feedback of successful outcomes, of which the following are just a few examples that give a flavour of the variety of work being undertaken by ELSAs in all key stages of education.

An ELSA worked with a boy in year 4 who had both friendship and anger issues. He decided for himself he would like to work on his anger management as he thought his temper was one of the main reasons other children did not like him. The ELSA used ideas from *A Volcano in my Tummy* (Whitehouse & Pudney, 1996) and solution-focussed brief therapy. The boy was committed to the work and ideas discussed. His manner (body language, self-confidence and smile) has changed and been noticed by many staff. His parent is also very pleased but,

most importantly, he feels very different about himself. He manages friendships and his anger much better, and is able to put calming strategies into practice.

A secondary ELSA has run a successful social skills course for a group of year 7 pupils. The pupils chosen were finding the transition quite difficult and one of them had previously been a selective mute. The sessions went from being very quiet and strained to chatty and relaxed. These pupils are now more confident and happy in class and able to respond to adults around school.

Another secondary ELSA worked for over a year with an upper school pupil who was not attending regularly. She met with her every two weeks in order to discuss her lack of self-esteem and other problems she was facing. The girl would also seek her out at other times when she was not coping. Over a period of time her attendance increased dramatically. On her last day at school she thanked the ELSA for her support and asked to keep in touch by e-mail. She achieved excellent GCSE results.

A primary ELSA worked with a boy in year 5 who worried about everything, especially supply teachers, new subjects, and change of any kind. He missed much school as it made him feel ill. The ELSA introduced him to some coping strategies enabling him to realise that he comes through challenges unharmed. During a school holiday break, he had to have a blood test. He was feeling very nervous but used the coping strategies discussed at school. He felt they helped him get through the situation and he said he now uses the strategies for everything. His teacher has noticed a great improvement.

Another ELSA was asked to work with a year 2 child whose parents had separated and he had found this very difficult to understand. He regularly spends time with both parents after school and during weekends. The child was angry and unsure what his parents expected of him as they both seemed to be compensating for their separation. The ELSA and pupil played therapeutic games and made a personal fact file/diary together.

In this way the boy was able to communicate his feelings of loss, anger and confusion. After several weeks he shared his diary with his parents and they were surprised by his emotional awareness. The child now regularly completes a feelings diary, opening up better communication between him and his parents.

Outcomes of the ELSA initiative

This work is subject to qualitative and quantitative evaluation, which is still in progress. In terms of its appeal it has already enjoyed considerable success, as shown by the sharp growth in the number of participating schools and the number of ELSAs that have completed training. Once they have had one member of staff doing this work, many schools have asked to have additional staff trained as ELSAs. (Secondary schools were offered the opportunity to have two people trained from the outset because of their size and organisational complexity, although not all took up both places initially.) Figure 1 shows the cumulative increase in the number of participating schools in the county and the growth in the number of ELSAs over the four years from the inception of the project to the end of the 2006/7 academic year.

In 2005, a similar evaluation was undertaken to that of the initial pilot project (Burton 2004). Twenty-two schools were sent a set of

questionnaires (see Appendix 1) to be completed by ELSAs, line managers of ELSAs (head teachers or SENCOs), pupils and teachers. Completed questionnaires were returned from 13 ELSAs, 58 pupils (10 of whom were at secondary school), and 14 line managers. Teacher questionnaires were completed about 54 pupils, seven of whom were at secondary school.

All ELSAs reported that being part of the project had helped them to support vulnerable pupils. They were asked to rate the quality of the training on a scale of one to five, where five was high. The mean response was 4.4. They were similarly asked to rate the quality of support provided by the EP-led supervision sessions, and for this the mean response was 4.2. The ELSAs commented on how empowering the training and supervision had been and how much more valued they felt in their new role in school.

Pupils were asked to indicate whether they felt happy, OK or sad about working with the ELSA. Of primary pupils, 85 per cent said they felt happy, as did 60 per cent of secondary pupils, with the remainder saying they felt OK. Of primary pupils, 83 per cent felt they were improving in relation to the things they were working on with the ELSA, as did 50 per cent of secondary pupils. The remainder thought they were sometimes getting better. Their comments

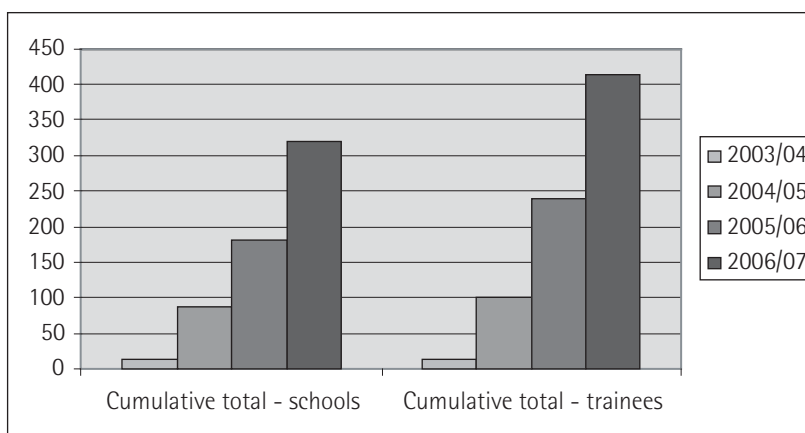


Figure 1: Cumulative totals of participating schools and ELSAs trained

reflected their appreciation of having someone to talk to, who listened to them without criticising, and who kept confidences. They also referred to specific ways in which they had been helped, e.g. managing their feelings, developing friendships, and improving relationships at home and school.

Attendance was reported to have been of concern for nine of the 54 pupils about whom teacher questionnaires were completed. Seven of these nine pupils were said to have improved their attendance (five primary and two secondary). For 44 out of the 47 primary pupils, the teachers said progress had been made in relation to the targets identified prior to ELSA involvement. Progress on identified targets was indicated for four out of the seven secondary pupils. All but one of the 54 pupils teachers felt the ELSA input had been beneficial. For the remaining one, it was said to be too soon to tell. Comments from primary teachers referred to improved emotional understanding and management, improved social and friendship skills, increased self-esteem and confidence, and improved behaviour. Secondary teachers commented on how pupils had benefited from time to talk about feelings, relationships and coping strategies. Some specific examples of teacher comments are included in Appendix 2. Fourteen questionnaires were returned from line managers of ELSAs and their comments about the project, some of which are also reproduced in Appendix 2, were overwhelmingly positive with respect both to staff development of the ELSAs and their impact on the pupils they had worked with.

Having established that the ELSA initiative was receiving an all round positive response, the author wanted to look in greater depth at outcomes for individual pupils. It was decided to trial the use of the Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS, 2005) rating scale to look for changes in individual pupils following ELSA intervention. PASS is a computerised measurement tool that assesses nine core dimensions

based upon learner self worth, curricular and general motivation, pupil perceptions of their learning environment, task persistence and attendance attitudes. It was administered pre- and post-intervention by a psychology undergraduate to five pupils in one junior school aged 7 to 8 years who received group intervention on social skills and one anxious 11-year-old boy who had low self-esteem. Through playing games, discussion and craft activities the group focused on listening and turn-taking skills and on awareness of each other's feelings. They became more attentive, learned how to work together and share equipment. The 11-year-old had difficulty coping with his older brother being more able than him. He chewed his fingers until they were raw and had written that he wanted to kill himself. The ELSA completed cognitive behavioural work with him on his automatic thoughts and his anxiety. They considered his personal strengths and, as his confidence grew, he began to take pride in his work, achieving much better results in his end of key stage 2 tests than he had expected.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the distribution of pupils' scores across the category bands for each dimension. For all dimensions there was an overall movement in a positive direction. Table 3 is included as an example of individual scores for one pupil.

Discussion

The sharp growth in the take-up of ELSA training over a four-year period is an indication of the efficacy of this initiative with schools. There is a financial implication for them in allocating significant amounts of individual support time to promote the emotional development of pupils but the qualitative comments reported from an early evaluation study indicate the benefits that are being noticed as a result of this support. Similar comments to these are often repeated informally and there is a regular flow of enquiries about the next available cohort of training.

Risk	Factors									
	Feelings about school	Perceived learning capability	Self-regard as a learner	Approach to learning situations	Attitude to teachers	General work ethic	Confidence in learning	Attitude to attendance	Attitude to work demands	
High cause for concern		4	1	2	1	3	3	2	4	
Concern	5	1	5	2	3	3		3	1	
Positive				2	1		3	1	1	
Very Positive	1	1			1					

Table 1: Self-ratings on core dimensions of PASS for six pupils prior to ELSA intervention.

Risk	Factors									
	Feelings about school	Perceived learning capability	Self-regard as a learner	Approach to learning situations	Attitude to teachers	General work ethic	Confidence in learning	Attitude to attendance	Attitude to work demands	
High cause for concern	1	2	1	2			1	1	1	
Concern	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	
Positive	1		1	1	1	2		1	2	
Very Positive	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	2		

Table 2: Self-ratings on core dimensions of PASS for six pupils following ELSA intervention.

Factor	Pre Score	Post Score
Feelings about school	Concern	Very Positive
Perceived learning capability	Very Positive	Very Positive (identical score)
Self-regard as a learner	Concern	Very Positive
Approach to learning situations	Concern	Very Positive
Attitudes to Teachers	Very Positive	Very Positive (identical score)
General Work Ethic	Concern	Positive
Confidence in Learning	Positive	Very Positive
Attitude to Attendance	Concern	Very Positive
Attitude to Work Demands	High Concern	Positive

Table 3: PASS categories for one pupil pre- and post-intervention.

The quality of creative work being carried out by ELSAs has resulted in considerable enthusiasm by EPs within the psychological service about their role as facilitators of supervision groups. They also report the benefits of knowing that there are skilled staff in schools that can carry out recommendations with regard to specific pupils. The advantage of this approach, as with PATHS, is that support is delivered within school by members of staff employed by the school. This gives greater accessibility to support for larger numbers of young people.

As found by Carnwell and Baker (2007) and Kelly et al. (2005), pupils receiving ELSA support have highlighted the importance of being able to share their feelings safely and confidentially with adults who have time to listen to them. Support over time leads to the development of relationships of trust in which the possibility of behavioural change can be explored in a non-threatening context. Because they are on site, ELSAs are readily accessible to the children they have worked with, and can be approached by them for informal support beyond the duration of the intervention programme they receive. Additionally, because the majority of ELSAs spend part of their working week as general classroom assistants, they are able to assist pupils in generalising new skills to classroom and playground contexts.

The author has worked extensively on emotional literacy and behavioural change with groups of pupils (Burton, 2004 & 2006) and concurs with the findings of Carnwell and Baker (2007) that some pupils who are disruptive in class continue to be disruptive in a group. Such pupils are likely to require individual support before they are ready to work in a group of peers. The ELSA initiative is designed primarily to be an individualised intervention and may be more suited to such pupils, where a secure relationship with an adult can be encouraged without competition for attention. That ELSAs are learning support assistants rather than teachers may also more easily facilitate the development of a relationship of trust for those pupils who find it difficult to cope with the dual role of a teacher as classroom authority figure and pastoral support worker.

For ELSAs, the difficulty identified by Carnwell and Baker (2007) of adequate support for group facilitators is overcome by regular group supervision led by EPs and by the possibility of individual support from the school's link EP. ELSAs are encouraged to contact their link EP by phone or e-mail in the event of any additional need. Feedback suggests they feel well supported by this direct access to psychologists.

Kassem (2002) explained the need for teachers to take emotional responses into consideration in their teaching. The ELSA initiative extends Kassem's view, in that it is an example of how a psychological service can make a large-scale contribution to increasing the awareness of staff in schools about the importance of emotional literacy to the success of their pupils. This work, while focusing on the professional development of LSAs, has led to schools requesting some general staff training from EPs in the area of emotional literacy.

Since extensive resources have been directed into this work it is important that its impact be thoroughly evaluated. While the PASS evaluation reported in this article involved a limited number of pupils, there is sufficient indication that it would be a useful measurement tool for investigating in greater depth the impact of direct support on the emotional wellbeing of individual pupils. Factors that appear to have been most influenced in this small group were general work ethic, which improved for all, confidence in learning, which also improved for all, and attitude to attendance, which improved slightly in three pupils and more significantly in the other three. While it would be desirable to use PASS on a much wider scale, there was a practical difficulty in that the local schools did not have this tool themselves. It meant that a student on placement with the psychological service had to visit and administer it himself, pre and post intervention. This is not feasible on a large scale, and therefore the author has initiated a further study of individual outcomes using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997). The results of this study will be published internally, and available on request from July, 2008.

Since the ELSA initiative is predicated on the view that time for this work is legitimately taken from that which is available for school and community work, very little cost needs to be passed directly on to the schools. This has proved very attractive to schools who view the training and supervision as excellent

value. It is viewed by the psychology service as building the capacity of schools to manage a greater proportion of pupil needs from within, without the need for recourse to external agencies. It is not suggested that the support of such agencies will never be needed but that earlier intervention could reduce the extent to which direct external support for pupils is needed. By skilling staff within schools to support children facing emotional challenges, EPs are enabled to focus on those more complex cases that require a greater degree of psychological input. Colleagues of the author have commented that ELSAs in their schools are now supporting pupils who previously would have been raised with them for advice, reducing the number of requests for consultations for individual pupils.

Conclusion

This paper has explored a role that has been developed for LSAs in supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils within their schools. A training programme has been described that develops their capacity to help youngsters address the wide variety of emotional challenges that they face. The rapid growth of this programme in a large county, as well as early evaluation results, suggest that ELSAs are making a significant contribution to enhancing the ability of children and young people to engage more effectively with education.

In that it is both time and cost effective, there is scope for this approach to be adopted much more widely across local authority educational psychology services. It is already known to be spreading to other county and unitary local authorities within the UK. While the Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning and the PATHS curriculum are intended for school-wide application, the ELSA initiative provides individualised and small group support for those pupils who need more intensive input to overcome the emotional challenges before them, and develop the kind of resilience that will lead to better personal outcomes.

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Appendix 1 – ELSA project evaluation forms



Evaluation of the ELSA project **ELSA Questionnaire**

Name _____

1. Has being part of the ELSA project helped you to support vulnerable pupils?

Yes / No

2. Please rate the quality of training provided by the psychology service to prepare you for your work as an ELSA.

1 2 3 4 5

Very poor Very good

3. Please rate the quality of support provided to you by the EP supervision sessions.

1 2 3 4 5

Very poor Very good

4. Any other comments:

Please continue overleaf if necessary



Evaluation of the ELSA project
Head Teacher/SENCo Response Sheet

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It will help us to evaluate the effectiveness of the ELSA project and the benefits it has had.

Name of school _____

Has the ELSA shown increased competency in supporting pupils' emotional development? Please comment.

Any other comments about this project.

Please continue overleaf if necessary

ELSA Project – Pupil Questionnaire



Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. An adult can help you by writing or reading words for you. Please circle your answers.

My name is _____

When I go to work with _____ I feel



happy



ok



sad

I know what _____ has helped me to do.
yes *sometimes* *no*

I feel I am getting better with this work.
yes *sometimes* *no*

What I have liked about working with _____
is



ELSA Project – Pupil Questionnaire

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Please circle your answers.

My name is _____

When I go to work with _____ I feel
happy *ok* *sad*

I know what _____ has helped me to do.
yes *sometimes* *no*

I feel I am getting better with this work.
yes *sometimes* *no*

What I have liked about working with _____
is



Evaluation of the ELSA project

Teacher/SENCo/Head Teacher Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It will help us to evaluate the effectiveness of the ELSA project and the benefits it has had.

Name of pupil _____

1. Was attendance an issue for this pupil prior to ELSA support?

Yes / No

If attendance was an issue has it improved since receiving ELSA support?

Yes / No

2. Do you feel this pupil has made progress with the targets identified prior to ELSA support?

Yes / No

3. Has the ELSA input been beneficial?

Yes / No

Please provide specific examples.

4. Any other comments.

Please continue overleaf if necessary.

Appendix 2 – Evaluation comments by teachers and line managers of ELSAs

Primary teachers:

He seems more settled – less prone to outbursts.

A therapeutic story has helped him relate to his feelings and difficulties.

He has made huge progress in considering other people.

She is now building some good relationships.

She has gained self-confidence, is far happier and more motivated.

He has developed his concentration and completes work independently.

Secondary teachers:

Her general demeanour improved whilst receiving support.

He has made progress with his targets and benefits from the opportunity to discuss his feelings and relationships within school.

Now much happier although still needs some input from the ELSA.

Benefited from opportunity to talk about feelings and discuss possible strategies which might be useful.

ELSA support has been vital in the re-integration of an emotionally vulnerable Year 7 pupil to school.

Line managers of ELSAs:

This project has been a great success for us – just what we were looking for.

Outstanding impact from Year R through to Year 6. Children showed improved confidence, self-esteem and overall a more positive persona.

She has been able to use her training immediately with a significant impact and as a valuable support to the teaching staff.

A highly professional intervention that addresses a variety of behavioural issues. The LSA had excellent common sense and practical skills but lacked confidence to support pupils' emotional development. Following the training she now feels more secure and is doing a very good job, much valued within the school.