

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAS) in Enfield

**Early Intervention for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs:
Training and supporting Emotional Literacy Support Assistants**



Introduction

Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus the essential role that schools play in supporting the social, emotional and mental health needs of all their pupils and families. At a time when emotional needs are heightened, and the complexities of bringing in external services have been myriad, Enfield Educational Psychology Service is delighted to be expanding our Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) programme. This long-standing national initiative is a wonderful way to make the most of the skilled staff already working in our schools, skilling them up to plan and deliver bespoke SEMH interventions. Feedback from our first cohorts shows that ELSAs are a very effective way to build SEMH capacity within schools, and that schools quickly feel the added value from the programme. We look forward to your school joining us.



Suzy Francis
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What is ELSA?

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) is an Educational Psychology-led national programme, which trains TAs, LSAs and learning mentors to work alongside their existing roles to provide SEMH interventions to pupils in their schools.

What do ELSAs do?

ELSAs plan, deliver and evaluate individual and group interventions for children with social, emotional & mental health needs. ELSA interventions are bespoke to the child or group, and focus on developing:

- Emotional literacy skills
- Friendship and play skills
- Emotion regulation skills
- Skills to cope with worries and worries
- Skills to cope with grief and loss

Why use our existing staff?

- Children have early access to support without waiting for external help.
- ELSAs can draw on their existing relationships with children and young people.
- ELSAs can support the child to apply their new skills in the classroom and playground.
- ELSAs can work closely with their teachers and parents in an ongoing way.
- ELSAs pass on their knowledge, skills and confidence to others in school.

What's the impact for children and young people?

- Pupils feel very supported by having 'special time' and being listened to.
- They learn to talk about their difficulties.
- Pupils develop greater self-awareness.
- Pupils' skills and strategies improve.
- They interact more successfully with others.
- They feel better about themselves.

This summary comes from various action research and published studies which have evaluated the impact of ELSA interventions using pre- and post- measures:

<https://www.elsanetwork.org/elsa-network/evaluation-reports/>



Commitment need from the school

- Identify one or more prospective ELSAs who are well suited to the role.
- Release ELSAs for initial training (six days or 12 half day sessions when delivered online).
- Designate time for the ELSA to plan and deliver sessions.
- Provide a suitable space for ELSA work.
- Allocate funds to develop a bank of resources over time.
- Careful line management to identify suitable pupils and support planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Ensure that your ELSAs attend half termly group supervision sessions with the Educational Psychology Service (1.5 hrs, half termly).

The Educational Psychology Service's commitment to you

- We offer six days (or twelve half days if held online) of high quality training which prepares your ELSAs for their new role in school.
- We work collaboratively with your ELSA's line manager to embed your ELSA offer fully within school life.
- We provide ongoing half termly group supervision to support ELSAs with their practice (there is a cost for this).
- We facilitate a termly network which connects your ELSAs with those in other Enfield schools.

Cost to schools

Initial training year:

The exact cost of the training course depends on the take-up from schools. In the summer term 2021, we were able to offer a one-year package for £270 per ELSA, based on 32 trainee ELSAs. This included:

- The six day training course
- Half termly supervision, which begins once the course is complete
- Termly half day network meetings

For ELSAs beginning the training in spring 2022, schools will be invoiced in the 2022/23 financial year.

Ongoing practice membership:

There is an annual fee of £200 per ELSA for each financial year that your ELSAs are practising. This covers the cost of the termly half-day ELSA network meeting, and the half-termly small group supervision provided by the Educational Psychology Service. This is compulsory if you wish to continue to offer ELSA provision in your school.

Feedback from other schools

Your ELSAs will be part of a growing network of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants across Enfield schools.

"I can't believe how fast the course has flown by - it's been so enjoyable."

"Children from ELSA are more able to notice different feelings and behaviours - they have more understanding and are more able to ask for help... I can see that they are changing- their maturity, their way of thinking, their confidence."

"We've had some really good feedback from parents- they are quite emotional talking about the impact it's had for their children."

"Even my own children have benefitted from me being an ELSA! I notice a lot more now, and I respond differently."

- ELSAs at Enfield mainstream schools

"We have all gained a tremendous insight into our new roles. It has not only prepared us for one-to-one sessions, but is also now allowing us to approach our young people's needs with a multitude of different techniques. I can honestly say that this is the only training that I have looked forward to as much as I have! I know that I will be able to carry these skills forward and utilise them wherever my career takes me."

-ELSA for secondary aged pupils at an Enfield special school

To register your interest, please email eps@enfield.gov.uk

We offer regular information sessions for schools who are interested in training ELSAs. We aim to provide the training course twice per year, if there is sufficient interest from schools. The next round of training will take place in January and February 2022. This will be face-to-face, but may be switched to online training if Covid restrictions require this.

Frequently asked questions

How many ELSAs should we train?

Two or more is ideal, since your ELSAs can support each other and work as a team. Some of our schools have started well with one ELSA, with a view to training further ELSAs when they can. ELSA isn't just a training course; it's a weekly provision in school. We therefore suggest that you think about how much ELSA time you can protect each week for planning and delivery.

How much time do ELSAs need in school?

After the initial training course, your ELSAs will be ready to work in their ELSA role for part of the week. The ELSA network recommends a minimum of one day per week per ELSA for planning and delivery. Across our Enfield schools, ELSAs have between one day a week and a full-time ELSA role.

Is the annual membership optional?

The national ELSA network requires that ELSAs have ongoing supervision from a local Educational Psychology Service in order to maintain their registration. Enfield EPS therefore requires that schools subscribe to the annual membership, which includes the half termly group supervision sessions and termly network meetings.

