

ELSA Implementation Resource for Schools

Implementation Stage	What Stage of ELSA implementation are we in?	What should we be doing to ensure best ELSA implementation practice?
Stage 1 - The exploration and adoption stage	You are either considering signing up for the ELSA project or you have recently signed up to the ELSA project. The identified ELSA(s) haven't yet started the 6 days of EP-led Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Familiarise yourself with the core components of the ELSA project ● Who is best to train to as an ELSA in our school? Remember it is essential a highly skilled TA is selected, see The ELSA Person Specification. ● Can more than one ELSA be trained? This will support peer supervision practices ● Ensure wider staff (e.g. teachers, TAs) are aware of this new programme being implemented in the school context and what will be involved. You might use email or staff meetings. It is important that staff have opportunities to raise any concerns at this stage about feasibility of the project in the school system. ● Consider how you will financially account for the resources and time required for the ELSA intervention. ● Consider who will best act as the ELSA Line Manager? This could be the SENCO but doesn't have to be. This person will provide both practical and emotional support for the ELSA. Their level of knowledge and experience is important.



<p>Stage 2 – Installation stage</p>	<p>You have decided to adopt the ELSA programme, and the ELSA is in the process of completing or has recently finished their 6 days of ELSA training.</p>	<p><i>This is perhaps the most important stage of implementation. The pre-planning and foundations before you start running the sessions are essential.</i></p> <p>ELSAs and their Line Managers will have reviewed the Line Manager Planning Activity on Day 6 of ELSA training, which include questions about ELSA time, referrals and resources. The following considerations will also be important at this stage of implementation:</p> <p><i>Leadership Support and Transparent Communication:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership support is essential to maintain focus on implementing the intervention with quality. It will be important to maintain regular transparent communication between those who know the most about what is needed to implement the intervention with quality (ELSA and ELSA Line Manager) and more senior members of the school (e.g. Deputy or Head Teacher). <p><i>Defining ELSA’s Place in your Existing SEMH Provision:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to stage 3 (where pupils access the ELSA intervention), it will be important Senior Leadership, with the ELSA and ELSA Line Manager, consider how the ELSA project fits into the school’s wider SEMH provision. For example, within a tiered system, the ELSA project might sit between lower levels of provisions in school (e.g. quality first teaching, a ‘worry box’ in class) and higher levels of provision (e.g. in-school counselling or CAMHS referral). The ELSA project needs to be distinguished from other forms of support in school, and must be distinguished from behaviour management responsibilities. • Does the ELSA’s existing role in school also involve SEMH support in some way? It will be important to take extra time to really consider the boundaries between these roles. <p><i>School Ethos and Shared Responsibility for Mental Health:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how does the ELSA project fit into your whole-school ethos? This intervention will work best when you can make direct links between the aims of the ELSA project (to promote emotional literacy skills of pupils) and your wider school aims and values, and communicate this clearly to staff. The intervention works best where there is wider
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shared responsibility for mental health across all staff members, how can this be fostered further?

Referrals:

- ELSA supports pupils with a wide range of needs, including those with friendship difficulties, anxiety, behavioural difficulties and bereavement, to name a few. Your referral procedures should ensure pupils with a range of need access ELSA support.
- Foster wider staff awareness and understanding about their role in making appropriate referrals.

Staffing

- Staffing considerations will need to be made at this stage. For example, if the ELSA is conducting their sessions on Monday afternoons, what duties did they previously have during this time? How can we ensure these duties are covered and they are not interrupted during the ELSA intervention sessions?

Reacquainting wider-staff with ELSA aims

- Prior to pupils accessing this intervention in stage 3, steps should be taken to restate the nature and aims of the ELSA project to all staff, including what is needed from them to achieve the aims of the intervention (e.g. uninterrupted sessions, their role in the referral process), as well as opportunities for them to voice concerns about feasibility. This might be completed through a staff meeting, with an email sent around beforehand so staff have ample opportunities to consider this change in the school system and what it means for them.
- Restating how ELSA fits into the whole-school ethos will be beneficial at this stage.

I'm encountering difficulties at this stage, what should I do?

It's completely natural if you are experiencing challenges and barriers at this stage. This may well be a time of wider-staff anxiety due to the range of considerations, change of duties and level of change within the school system. This may be an opportune time to have a meeting between the school Link Educational Psychologist (EP), ELSA, Line Manager and Member of Senior Leadership. The Link EP can use consultation skills to problem-solve and provide support in integrating this intervention into existing school structures, while maintaining the integrity of the ELSA intervention (i.e. proactive not reactive, short-term structured block interventions with SMART targets).

<p>Stage 3 – The initial implementation stage</p>	<p>You have started running ELSA sessions with pupils</p>	<p>You are ready to begin running ELSA intervention sessions, what will be important during this stage?</p> <p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly ELSA Line Management meetings will be set up, but you may also want to consider ad hoc support for the ELSA when needed at this time of change and vulnerability. Line Managers may expect to deliver higher levels of support in comparison to later stages of the implementation at this time. • Remember the ELSA will not be able to adequately support pupils unless they feel supported themselves! <p>Endings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider what will your practices be in ELSA intervention endings? • Best practice in endings considers the close attachment relationship between the ELSA and pupil. You might consider using a countdown, handing over work in a folder, ongoing informal contact, as well as wider staff playing a role in acting as alternative attachment figures in the school setting. • There are risks with pupil overdependence if ELSA intervention sessions are run for a prolonged period of time, i.e. longer than 6-10 weeks. <p>Fidelity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this stage, it is important you follow the ELSA model as designed (i.e. proactive not reactive, 6-10 week structured block intervention with SMART targets). <p><i>I'm encountering difficulties at this stage, what should I do?</i></p> <p>It may be beneficial to return back to the considerations at Stage 1 and 2 – have you fully addressed the pre-planning and foundations stages?</p> <p>A joint meeting with the Link EP (as stated above) may be a valuable option if these challenges persist.</p>
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<p>Stage 4 – Full implementation</p>	<p>You have been delivering ELSA sessions for some time now, and ELSA feels part of 'business as usual'</p>	<p><i>At this point, you may feel ELSA is well-integrated in the school structure, but what other considerations are especially important at this stage?</i></p> <p>Ongoing Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring ongoing awareness and understanding of the ELSA intervention across school staff, including new staff. Staff induction days at the start of the academic year may be a good time to introduce the ELSA project to new staff members. <p>Re-Visiting Pre-Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is significant teacher/staff turnover, then the issues and activities related to initial implementation will remerge and need attention. • Considerations around ongoing financial sustainability of ELSA. <p>School Ethos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You might further consider integrating ELSA principles into the wider school ethos. Attachment is a key process in the ELSA intervention, could your school access training about attachment to help cement these principles at a school-wide level? <p>Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be encountering certain challenges with the intervention, and want to adapt certain aspects of the ELSA project to suit your needs as a school. It is important these adaptations are informed and based on your professional experience. It may be beneficial for the ELSA to discuss these planned adaptations with their EP supervisor at half-termly supervision.
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Developed as part of Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent Psychology Thesis

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