



London Borough
of Hounslow

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA)

Five Day Initial ELSA training

26th January 2016

3rd February 2016

9th February 2016

1st March 2016

14th March 2016

Five Day Initial ELSA Training Evaluation Report

What is Emotional Literacy?

Steiner and Perry (1997) state that *emotional literacy* is made up of three key abilities:

- the ability to understand your emotions;
- the ability to listen to others and empathise with their emotions;
- the ability to express emotions productively.

Emotional literacy fosters the development of the school community. It is a valuable part of the school curriculum. Like any other area of the curriculum, it is vital to differentiate the emotional literacy curriculum and it is important to enable schools to provide such differentiation. All children benefit from nurture in accordance with their individual needs. Just as with learning, some will require greater support to increase their emotional literacy than others.

What are ELSAs?

Schools have different needs and priorities and ELSA work will develop within individual schools to meet local need. Trained ELSAs support pupils in recognising, understanding and managing their emotions appropriately.

The intention is that ELSAs will work in schools where there is a whole school ethos of supporting the concept of emotional literacy. Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) intervention is an individualised (or sometimes group) programme for children with significant social and emotional difficulties. The work is planned around the needs of the individual child. Centrally-run ELSA training has been offered to primary and secondary schools by Educational Psychologists across the UK since 2007.

The ELSA programme

The ELSA project has been implemented in various Local Authorities across the UK (including: Hampshire, Windsor, Maidenhead, Southampton, Wandsworth) and there has been consistent positive feedback from schools. The introduction of ELSAs has been found to make a significant positive impact on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in a number of areas related to personal, social and emotional development which can in effect impact positively on academic achievement. In addition, accumulating research indicates that the majority of students have found working with ELSAs a positive experience.

ELSA in Hounslow

Twenty Five Teaching Assistants from eight primary schools in Hounslow participated in a five day training programme during the Spring Term 2016. This was facilitated by two Educational Psychologists (EP) from Hounslow Psychology Service. The training materials were based on the Southampton Psychology Service ELSA training materials. The five day programme covered the following areas:

- Day 1 - What is Emotional Literacy? The Four Roles of the ELSA;
- Day 2 - Anxiety. Self-esteem. Active listening;
- Day 3 – Session with ELSAs from Southampton. Gratitude diaries;

- Day 4 – Attachment. Impulsive Learners. Social Communication Difficulties;
- Day 5 - Bereavement & Separation; Anger Management; Group work

The project will also include future half termly supervision sessions for the ELSAs during the Summer Term 2016. It is expected that future supervision sessions will be offered to the ELSAs in the Autumn Term 2016. Supervision sessions will be offered by the EPs.

Evaluation of the training

ELSA trainees completed a pre and post training questionnaire exploring their self-reported levels of understanding and confidence in implementing Emotional Literacy interventions. The aim of the pre and post questionnaires was to gather information specifically on the impact of the training content for ELSA trainees with a view to develop the current ELSA training materials in Hounslow.

ELSA trainees were asked to rate a series of statements on a Likert Scale (1-strongly disagree 5-strongly agree). These statements were devised to capture trainees understanding and confidence in delivering some aspects of the ELSA role. In total 17 pre and post questionnaires were completed.

The pre and post ratings are shown in **Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5** below.

Figure 1.

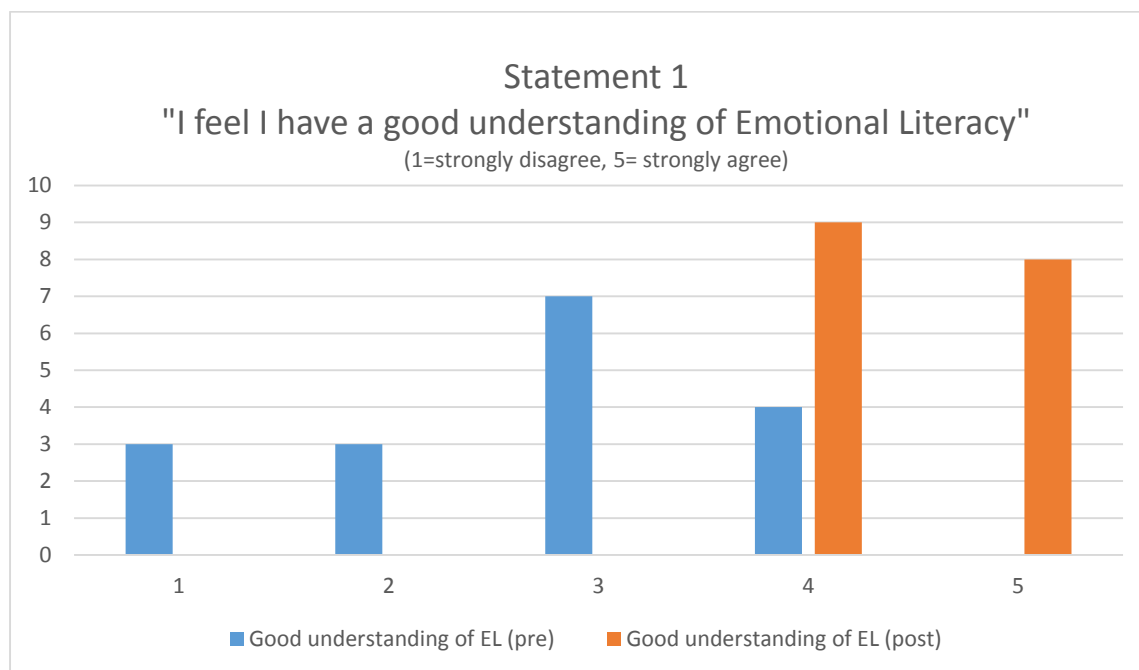


Figure 1. indicates that prior to the training, ELSA trainees reports of understanding of Emotional Literacy varied, with no trainee reporting that they strongly agreed with the above statement. After the training, all ELSA trainees agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of Emotional Literacy.

Figure 2.

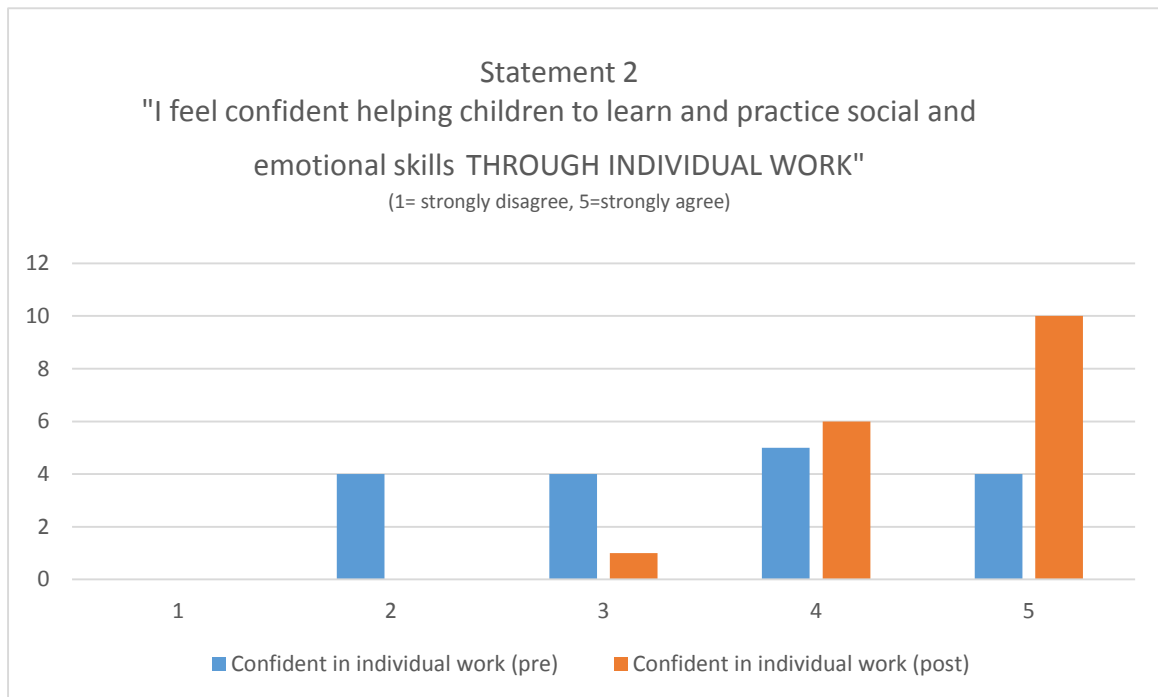


Figure 2. indicates that following the training a higher number of ELSA trainees either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident with supporting children on an individual basis with regards to Emotional Literacy.

Figure 3.

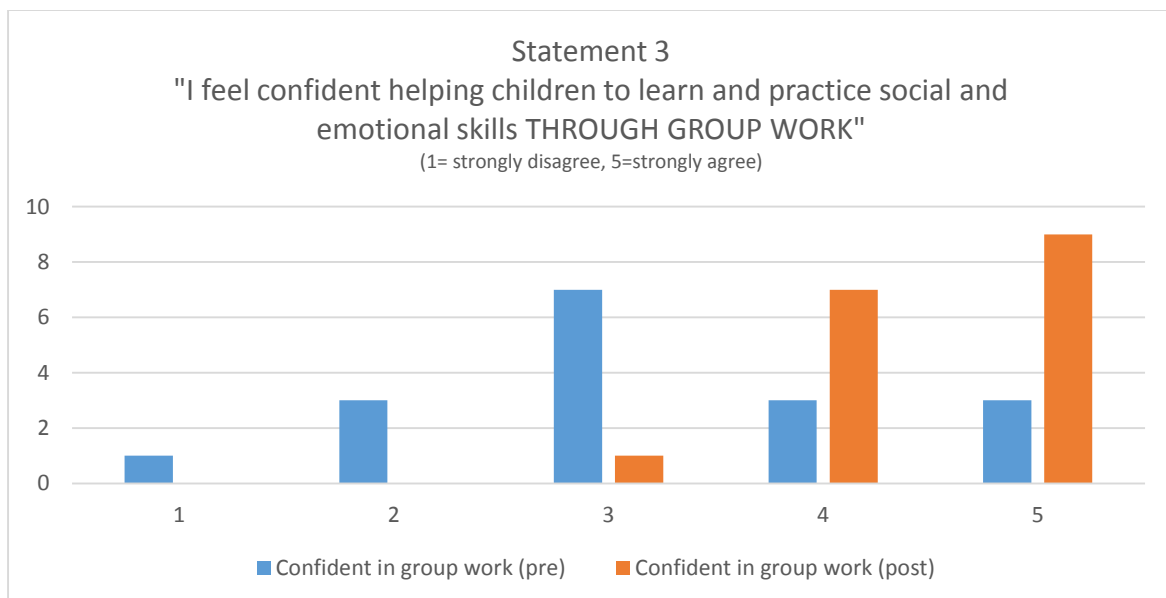


Figure 3. indicates that prior to the training, reports of confidence varied amongst trainees on facilitating group work with children. However, on Day 5 of the ELSA programme there was input on group intervention and group work. The findings from the questionnaires suggest that this teaching enabled trainees to feel more confident in delivering group work.

Figure 4.

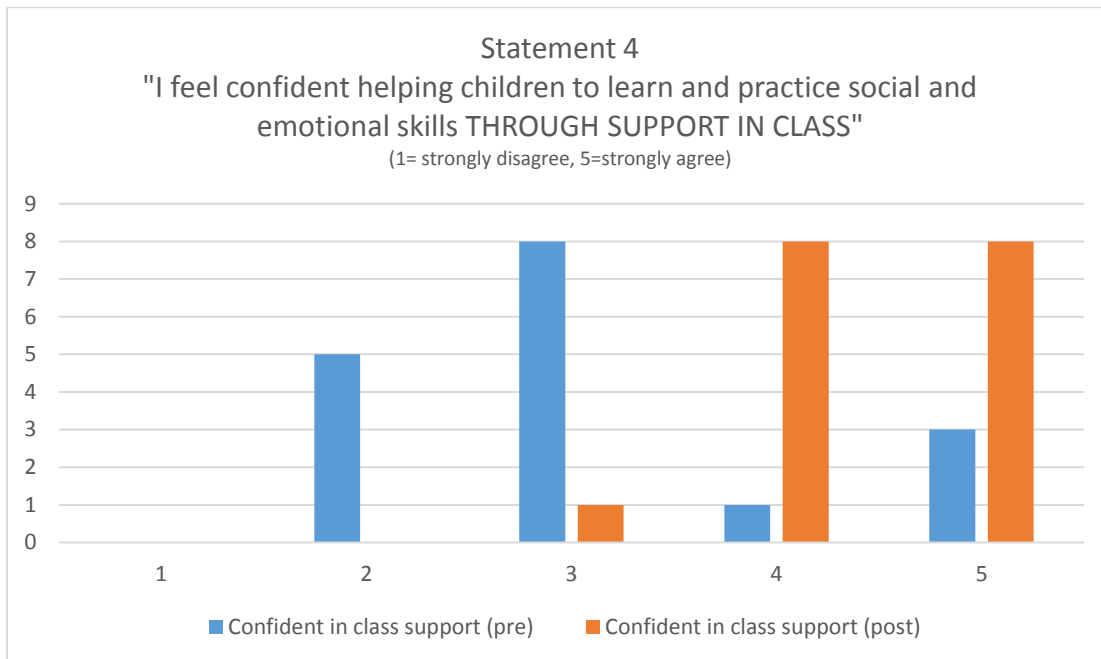


Figure 4. indicates that there was a general trend with ELSA trainees reporting increased levels of self-reported confidence when working with children in class to develop their emotional literacy skills.

Figure 5.

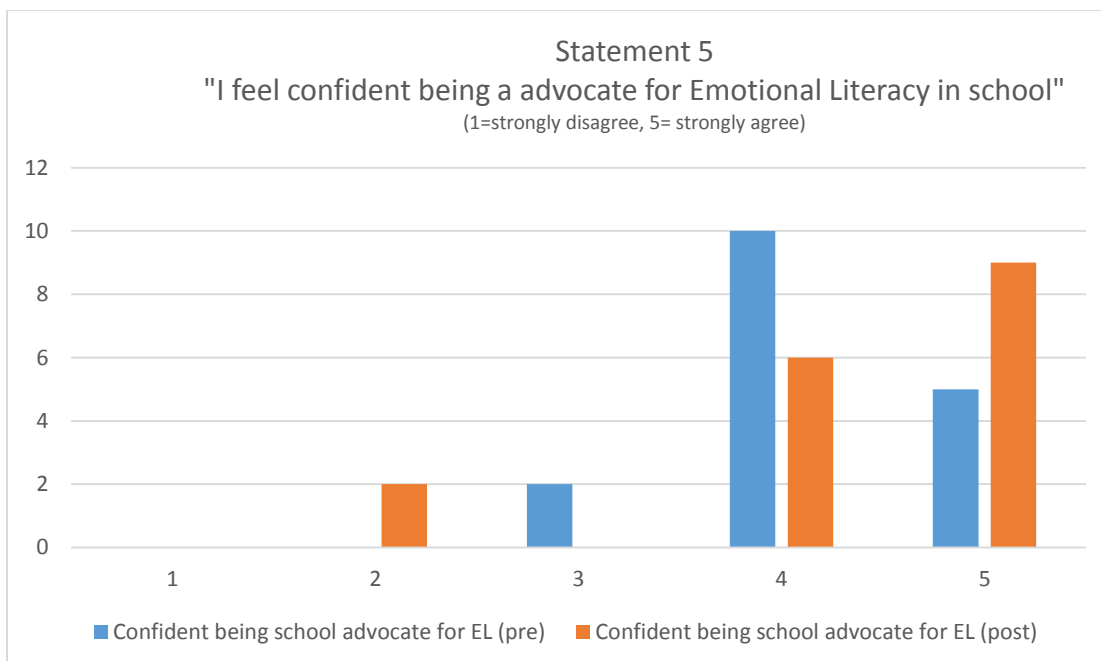


Figure 5. suggests that ELSA trainees in general reported the same levels of confidence in being an Emotional Literacy Advocate for children prior to the training and post the training. However, there was a small number of ELSA trainees whose who disagreed with the statement after the training.

What did the ELSAs expect from the training?

The following is a brief list summarising the most popular comments from trainees:

“Strategies to use”

“How to support individuals and groups within class”

“Ideas for activities”

“More understanding of ways to help and support children”

“To help children understand their emotions and how to manage them comfortably”

“Good understanding of the role”

What did the ELSAs learn?

The following is a list highlighting the range of trainee’s comments:

“I feel I have more understanding. More confident to start groups”

“I will look at the children I work with daily with a 'new set of eyes'. I absolutely cannot wait to begin my role”

“Being more aware of children's behaviour and why they are displaying certain behaviours. Giving children time to express their feelings. Liaising with the SENCo to identify children who need support”

“Tried new ideas in sessions already, such as feeling games and approaching the children in different ways”

“Continue to support as before, but with greater confidence and knowledge that I have a support network”

What did the ELSAs plan to implement from their training?

The following is a list of trainee’s comments:

“Through referrals from SENCo to implement structured, planned programmes 1:1 or groups. I only work mornings, so I hope ELSA work can be arranged around my areas”

“By having an ELSA room and new resources to help children struggling with expressing their emotions on a day to day basis”

“Currently awaiting direction from ELSA co-ordinator. However, already planned on using some of the ideas & resources on my current role”

Evaluation of ELSA training material and facilitators

The ELSA trainees rated the training as follows:

Table 1.

	Yes	No
Learning aims clear	100%	0%

Table 2.

	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/R
Learning aims met	71%	18%	0%	11%

Table 3.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Overall rating of training	29%	65%	6%	0%	0%

The findings from the post training questionnaires would suggest that the majority of ELSA trainees found that their learning needs were met and they rated the training as 'Very Good'.

The ELSA trainee's also made the following comments about the content, organisation and delivery:

"Informative & thought provoking. Well delivered"

"Sessions very professionally delivered. Some fun elements in activities, which made them enjoyable"

"Very useful and informative. I enjoyed a lot"

"SENCo: Attended first & last sessions only. No obvious benefit to SENCos attending last session in particular, as content was not specifically relevant compared to sessions 2, 3, 4"

"I've really enjoyed the ELSA course. I liked meeting ELSAs who go into school, but I did feel confined with elements of their session such as the grading of children etc"

"Interesting, supporting, confident building"

SUMMARY

The results of this evaluation indicated that ELSA trainees reported increased levels of confidence in understanding the concept of Emotional Literacy at the end of the training course. Following the training course, a higher number of ELSA trainees either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident with supporting children on an individual basis with regards to Emotional Literacy. The results of this evaluation suggest that the course material, which provided a session on group work and intervention, enabled trainees to feel more confident in delivering group work. The results of this evaluation indicated that after the course delivery there were increased levels of confidence amongst the ELSA trainees when working with children in class to develop their emotional literacy skills. There were mixed findings when it came to increased levels of confidence amongst ELSA trainees in becoming an Emotional Literacy Advocate for children. This may be one area of the training course materials which needs to be explored further.

Overall, the evaluation of course material, content and delivery indicated that all ELSA trainees felt the learning aims of the course were clear and 71% of trainee felt they were fully met by the end of the course. The course had an overall rating of 'Very Good'. Comments from the ELSA trainees indicated that most found it informative, interesting and an enjoyable course. Feedback from SENCOs who attended the course indicated that consideration needs to be given to which days of the training and/or sessions they attend.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To explore how the course material can better prepare ELSA trainees for an Emotional Literacy Advocate Role. Possible suggestions are further workshops for ELSA trainees and their school SENCO/Senior Leadership member on how to set up the role in the school environment through policies, procedures and job roles;
- Structure the course so that information on the role and how to implement it is delivered on both the first and last day;
- Consider which sessions SENCOs need/should attend;
- Gain feedback from C8 Head Teachers;
- Gain further feedback from ELSA trainees after the supervision session have been delivered.

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(Educational Psychologists)

Evaluation report written by Dr Hannah Green

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