

An evaluation of the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) project from the perspectives of primary school children

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Aim: *The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project is a targeted professional development intervention for Teaching Assistants, delivered and supervised by Educational Psychologists (EPs). The intervention aims to build the capacity of schools to support the social, emotional and mental health needs of their pupils' using their own resources. This paper reports the evaluation of an ELSA project in one Local Authority.*

Rationale: *There is very limited research on how the ELSA project is experienced by the young participants. This research therefore evaluated the ELSA project from the perspectives of primary school children, in order to explore whether the project was effective and to identify the factors that contributed to the perceived effectiveness.*

Methods: *The research followed a mixed-methods design, with 53 children between the ages of six and eleven years completing quantitative questionnaires and nine children participating in semi-structured interviews.*

Findings: *The research findings indicated that a number of significant factors contributed to the perceived effectiveness of the ELSA project, including the importance of the therapeutic relationship with the ELSA teacher, having a space to talk and think about feelings and building resilience, confidence and self-esteem. The children also identified aspects of the ELSA project that they felt could be improved upon, included feeling prepared before starting and understanding what happens once the project finishes.*

Conclusions: *The findings from this research offer a unique contribution to research into the ELSA project, which can be used by both ELSA teachers and EPs. The findings may also be pertinent to EPs outside of ELSA related work, highlighting the importance of listening to children of all ages and using alternative methods such as drawing to support them in sharing their views.*

Keywords: *ELSA; children's views; emotional literacy; intervention; emotional wellbeing.*

NATIONAL CONCERN about the rising number of young people with mental health problems has contributed to a growing appreciation of the important role of schools in developing emotionally healthy individuals and failure to identify and support emotional problems early has been shown to lead to more serious difficulties that require increased specialist, long-term support (Green et al., 2005). Research indicates that there is clear evidence that children who are emotionally and mentally healthy achieve at school and have a greater chance of being able to successfully participate in school and community life (DCSF, 2008).

Accessibility and availability of mental health services is seen to be a key factor in successfully targeting children's mental health difficulties. The role of schools in both signposting and delivering targeted mental health work is of growing interest, as teachers are recognised as being the first people outside of the family to potentially identify children's mental health problems (Attride-Stirling et al., 2001). Research also suggests that more disadvantaged children and those who may not access specialist services may find help in schools more accessible (Armbruster et al., 1997).

The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project

The ELSA project is a targeted professional development intervention for Teaching Assistants (TAs), delivered and supervised by Educational Psychologists (EPs). The ELSA project was originally developed by Sheila Burton, Educational Psychologist, within Southampton EPS, and was designed to build the capacity of schools to support the needs of pupils using their own resources, recognising that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed (Burton, 2008).

The work of an ELSA teacher is extremely varied, supporting children who are experiencing a wide range of emotional difficulties; from children who might appear withdrawn to those who display more challenging behaviours. Children are identified for ELSA support by their school and the project is delivered over the course of approximately one term, although the frequency and length of the project is tailored to individual need. The ELSA project is designed to be proactive and is adapted to meet children's individual targets that are identified in advance by the ELSA teacher, relevant teaching staff and parents (Burton, 2008).

Research evidence and gap in the literature

Evaluation of emotional literacy interventions

Evidence-based individual, group and whole school interventions are prominent within both primary and secondary schools and have been found to have positive effects on mental health outcomes for children and young people (Shucksmith et al., 2007). There is also a growing evidence base that suggests emotional and social competence and wellbeing can be taught and that programmes can be effective in promoting emotional wellbeing in children (Weare & Gray, 2003). Research into these interventions suggests that the positive outcomes are influenced by a number of factors.

The TaMHS review (DfE, 2011) highlighted that children valued autonomy,

a safe space to talk and the availability of supportive peers and staff. Suggesting that feeling safe, supported and being able to rely on those involved in the intervention is important. Improving relationships was another factor that was highlighted within the research base with Coppock (2007) and Humphrey et al. (2009) concluding that the skills, experience and characteristics of the facilitator were crucial in determining the success of the intervention.

Although the research into emotional literacy interventions is positive, research has found that there is very little evaluation of specific work on emotional and social competence and wellbeing within the UK. From the literature in England, very little evaluation of specific work on emotional and social wellbeing and competence had taken place, making the UK reliant on evidence from the US (Weare & Gray, 2003).

Evaluation of the ELSA project

Research evaluating ELSA has also highlighted the positive impact the project can have upon primary school children's emotional literacy, behaviour, emotional wellbeing and peer relationships (Bravery & Harris, 2009). Research has also highlighted that ELSA can support children to develop a sense of self, build their personal skills and improve their emotional wellbeing and resilience (Bravery & Harris, 2009).

When highlighting the factors that are deemed important in the ELSA project, Hill, O'Hare and Weidberg (2013) concluded that children valued specific strategies and practical activities in the sessions. The research also indicated that the children valued involvement and transparency and found it helpful to understand the reason why they were attending ELSA. Hill et al. (2013) also highlighted that building a strong trusting relationship between the child and the ELSA teacher is important when determining the success of the project.

Despite the increased interest and implementation of the ELSA project the evidence base is limited and has a number of significant weaknesses. Much of the research has been conducted by stakeholders, increasing the possibility of the evidence being subject to researcher bias. Many of the studies evaluating the effectiveness of the ELSA project also have considerable methodological weaknesses, impacting on the reliability and validity of the results. Small sample sizes, lack of control groups and poor sample selections used in the majority of studies indicates the need for research with strong consistency, reliability and validity.

There is also very little formal evaluation into the effects of the ELSA project, particularly for children. The research also suggests that there is an apparent dearth in the literature when evaluating what children themselves feel makes the interventions effective, particularly for younger children.

Children's perceptions of emotional literacy interventions

Research has established that the voice of the child is often inadequately represented in documentation concerning children and it has been suggested that the involvement of children in the planning and reviewing of processes that concern them can increase independence, motivation and meta-cognitive skills (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). Research also highlights the importance of consulting with children when evaluating the effectiveness of interventions designed for their own wellbeing and how pertinent their views can be when thinking about areas for improvement (Griffiths et al., 2014).

There are a limited number of studies that have included children's perceptions about the ELSA project. A number of studies have included the children's thoughts from the perspectives of teachers and ELSA teachers not from the children themselves (Bravery & Harris, 2009). The research conducted by Hill et al. (2013) interviewed four children from two schools, however this is an

extremely small data set. The researcher is not aware of any published study that has specifically evaluated the ELSA project from the perceptions of the children. A number of studies have recommended that the children's perspectives could be explored as an avenue of future research (Bravery & Harris, 2009; Burton et al., 2010; Garwood, 2010), supporting the rationale and unique contribution of this research.

This research aimed to address the limited evidence base and the lack of children's views in previous research and explore whether the factors highlighted in previous research are consistent with those identified by children as contributing to the perceived effectiveness of the ELSA project.

Methodology

This research adopted a two-phase, sequential mixed methods approach, using questionnaires in the first phase and semi-structured interviews in the second phase. The rationale for using quantitative methods for the first phase of this study was to gather an overview of whether primary school children felt the ELSA project was effective and provide an initial investigation of the factors that contributed to the perceived effectiveness. For this reason, the quantitative phase was considered the complementary stage of the research and the qualitative phase was the principle method of data collection.

Quantitative methods

The children were asked to complete the questionnaires in small groups of three to five children during school time, administered by the researcher. To the researcher's knowledge, there is no established measure to explore the effectiveness of the ELSA project from the perspective of children, therefore it was necessary for the researcher to design the questionnaire (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was comprised of three sections; demographic variables, a Likert scale and three open-ended questions (Likert, 1932).

Qualitative methods

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken for the qualitative phase of the research. Open-ended questions were asked in order to explore the factors leading to the effectiveness of the ELSA project and the researcher used an interview schedule to prepare for the likely content of the interview (Smith et al., 2009) (Appendix 2).

The researcher was mindful that the children might find it difficult to articulate their views about the ELSA project and to assist them in expressing their thoughts, they had the option to express their views visually through drawing. These techniques were used as a prompt to elicit the children's thoughts about the project and although only the data from the audio-tapes was used during the data analysis, selections of drawings have been included in the results section to support the children's quotes.

Pilot study

The questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions were piloted with a group of ten children from two primary schools who had been involved with the ELSA project over six months previously. The aim of the pilot was to ensure that the children were able to understand and complete the questionnaire with ease and to ensure the interview questions were suitable and accessible. Following the children's responses from the pilot study the questionnaire was altered to include instructions for completing the Likert scale and more space for the children to write their responses to the three open ended questions.

Participants

Twenty-two primary schools within an outer London borough that ran established ELSA projects were invited to take part in the research. Of this initial sample 16 primary schools agreed to take part. The children were recruited for the study using a criterion based purposive sampling strategy. From these 16 schools, children between the ages of four and eleven years who had been involved

in the ELSA project in the last six months were included in the sample. Consent forms were sent to the schools for the head teachers, parents and children to read and sign.

In total, 53 children agreed to take part in the research. The final sample included 32 males and 21 females, aged between six and eleven years of age. A sequential purposive sampling strategy was used for the second phase of the research and the children were selected purposively to ensure the data was as rich and as informative as possible. A total of nine children were invited to participate in the qualitative phase of the research and this sample included five females and four males, aged between seven and ten years of age.

Ethical considerations

Children and their parents were informed that they had the right to withdraw their participation and data at any point prior to the data analysis and the researcher explained to the children that the information given would be kept anonymous. Child protection policies were adhered to at all times.

The researcher was mindful that some children would find it difficult to talk about the topics they covered during the ELSA project and a list of support agencies were made available for children and parents if required. The children were also debriefed and given the opportunity to discuss the findings on completion of the study with the researcher.

Results

Quantitative findings

The findings from the analysis of the children's questionnaires indicated that all of the children rated the ELSA project as effective and 42 per cent scored the maximum perceived effectiveness score. An independent samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference between gender and age for perceived effectiveness scores ($p < .097$ for gender) ($p < .286$ for age).

The open-ended questions from the questionnaire were analysed qualitatively, using

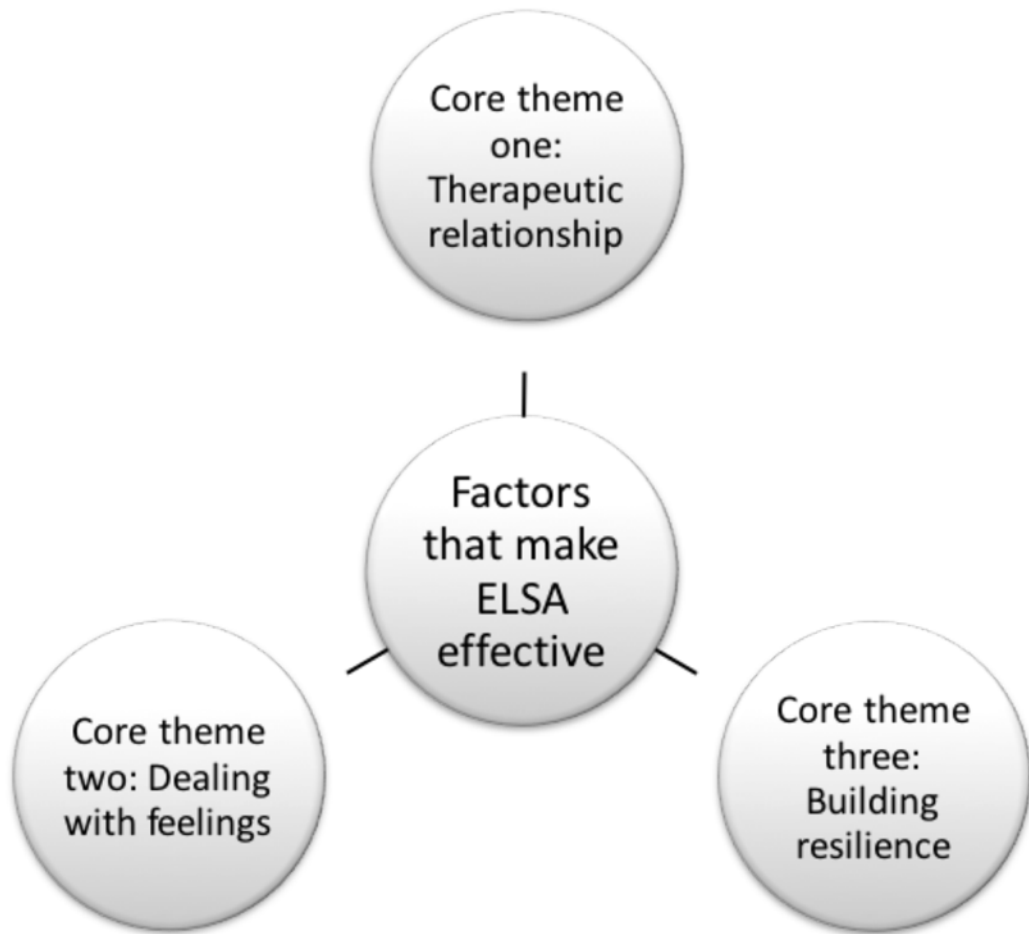


Figure 1: A thematic map showing the three core themes

content analysis. The three largest response categories for the first question ‘how do you think ELSA helped you?’ were talking (32 per cent), friendships (26 per cent) and improving confidence (15 per cent). For the second question ‘what did you like most about ELSA?’ the most common answers related to games (34 per cent), talking (22 per cent) and activities (20 per cent). Lastly, when thinking about factors that would make ELSA better the children’s responses indicated that it was already good (34 per cent), nothing would make it better (30 per cent) and they would like more ELSA (13 per cent). All of the children’s responses from the three open ended questions are shown in Appendix 3.

Qualitative findings

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. To ensure a consistent approach was employed the researcher followed the six stages and the 15-point checklist outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The semi-structured interviews aimed to answer two research questions; what factors do children think make the ELSA project effective and what factors do children think would make the ELSA project more effective?

Factors contributing to the perceived effectiveness of ELSA

In relation to the first research question, the codes from the analysis were organ-

ised into three core themes; Therapeutic relationship, Dealing with feelings and Building resilience; each with additional subthemes and subordinate subthemes (Figure 1).

Core Theme 1: 'Therapeutic relationship'

Core Theme 1 relates to the therapeutic relationship the children felt they had with their ELSA teacher. The children highlighted the importance of the ELSA teacher and how the relationship with this person was a key aspect relating to the effectiveness of the project.

Within this core theme, three subthemes were identified; personal characteristics, communication and therapeutic alliance. In relation to the ELSA teacher's personal characteristics, the children spoke about the importance of their ELSA teachers being kind and showing them unconditional positive regard. The children also discussed the importance of being able to talk to their ELSA teacher, allowing the children to share their problems with a trusted adult. Lastly, the children spoke about the importance of working together with their ELSA teacher to share the responsibility of a problem or a worry. Developing a relationship with their ELSA teacher also helped the children to feel like they had an advocate within school.



Daniel: I liked talking about problems, because then, usually when I just kept it all to myself I felt really unhappy about it, so yeah.



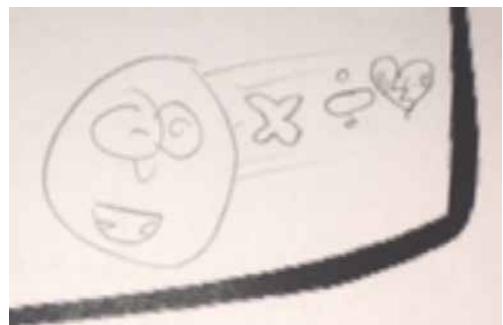
Rachel: She talked to me and she's really nice and kind.

Core Theme 2: 'Dealing with feelings'

Core Theme 2 presents data from the children's interviews relating to the importance of dealing with feelings. Three subthemes were identified under this core theme; exploring feelings, managing feelings and changing feelings.

The children talked about the importance of being able to talk about, discuss and understand their feelings during and after the ELSA project as well as the importance of being able to talk as a way of managing their feelings. Although the ELSA project was in school, for some of the children this extended to their home life and they explained how they were now able to share their feelings with their parents.

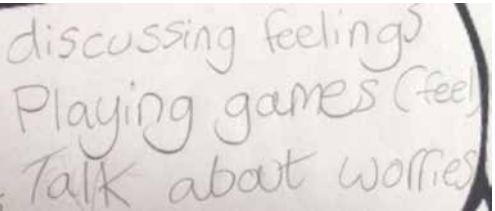
Lastly, the children talked about being able to alter their feelings to help them to feel better. Some of the children explained how exploring and being able to express their feelings had made them feel happier after the ELSA project.



Lauren: I felt better emotionally and physically as well. Mmm like I said it like stopped me from bottling up my feelings and trouble and I could just like say what I felt really yeah... my body, I felt a lot better within myself and my, like expressions

from myself were a little bit more happy instead of like (pulled a sad face).

Lauren: I'm going to draw this as a head with all the troubles just flying out.



Archie: Because I weren't really sure how to express my feelings in a kind of way to my parents and things...It made me feel quite grumpy because I wanted like I wanted to tell them how I feel, but I felt I can't.

Archie: I felt quite angry I did, well not angry but I felt quite up like grumpy with myself but after ELSA it had actually helped me.

Core Theme 3: 'Building resilience'

The third core theme presents data from the children's interviews relating to the importance of them being able to build resilience during and after the ELSA project. Within this core theme, three subthemes were identified; reframing the situation, improving confidence and developing coping strategies.

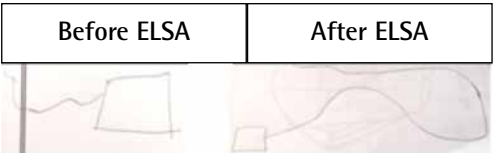
When talking about reframing situations, the children spoke about being able to look at a situation differently, which had helped them to manage their feelings and behaviour. A number of children also said that they felt more confident after the ELSA project which had helped them to feel happier in school and feel like they could participate in activities.

Molly: It helped me to get my confidence back cause I kept feeling worried about my confidence so I wrote down that the worry was about confidence and like and she kinda helped me like to boost it up a little bit.

Molly: Because I've got more friends now, I can do my work better, I'm not so scared about what

is going happen, I can just go in there and do it, I don't need to ask for help much, I can put up my hand and ask for help now, she also made me a help card so I can just turn it over so gets me used to putting up my hand.

Lastly, the children spoke about developing coping strategies to help them cope with difficult situations, such as using the firework model which is described below.



Archie: There's like the firework, there's the fuse, how short your fuse is, to say it's that short then you light it and then it lights the fuse very quick and you explode with anger, and we had to make the fuse the longest, if we thought we get angry after quite a long time, if you see what I mean...I thought about how to make my fuse longer (laughs). When I started ELSA it wasn't very, it was quite short but now I see that it's quite long.

Factors that could make ELSA more effective

When analysing the data in relation to the second question, the children identified ways in which the ELSA project could be made more effective, relating to the different stages in the intervention (Figure 2). Some of the children also said that the ELSA project was good enough already and there wasn't anything that they thought would make it better.

Subtheme 1: 'Beginnings'

Some of the children spoke about needing more clarity at the beginning of the ELSA project to ensure they understood the reason for them going and to know what times they would be meeting with their ELSA teacher. Very few children seemed clear about the reason for their referral to the ELSA project or the targets they had been set for the sessions. For some of the children this was a cause of concern and they explained how not understanding about the reason for referral had made them feel worried or scared:

Daniel: Mmm at first I felt really kind of scared and then after that, after the first session I just felt a bit better about everything, yeah... I didn't really know what was going to happen.

When asked if there was anything they didn't like about the ELSA project, one of the children explained that the timings of the sessions had meant they missed their favourite lesson and they said that another time in the day would have been better for them.

Subtheme 2: 'Middle'

Within the interviews, some children spoke about altering aspects of the ELSA session to make the project more effective. Within this subtheme, the children spoke about having different activities and having more space.

Rachel: Mmm a bit more different activities... Like erm drawing stuff like like how someone like feels... like instead of writing it draw it.

Subtheme 3: 'Endings'

The children also spoke about the endings for the ELSA project and that having a little more time or support would help make the project more effective. The children also explained that the support from ELSA doesn't really end and seemed unclear about how the project comes to a close.

Molly: Well I would like to take Mrs B with me (laughs)

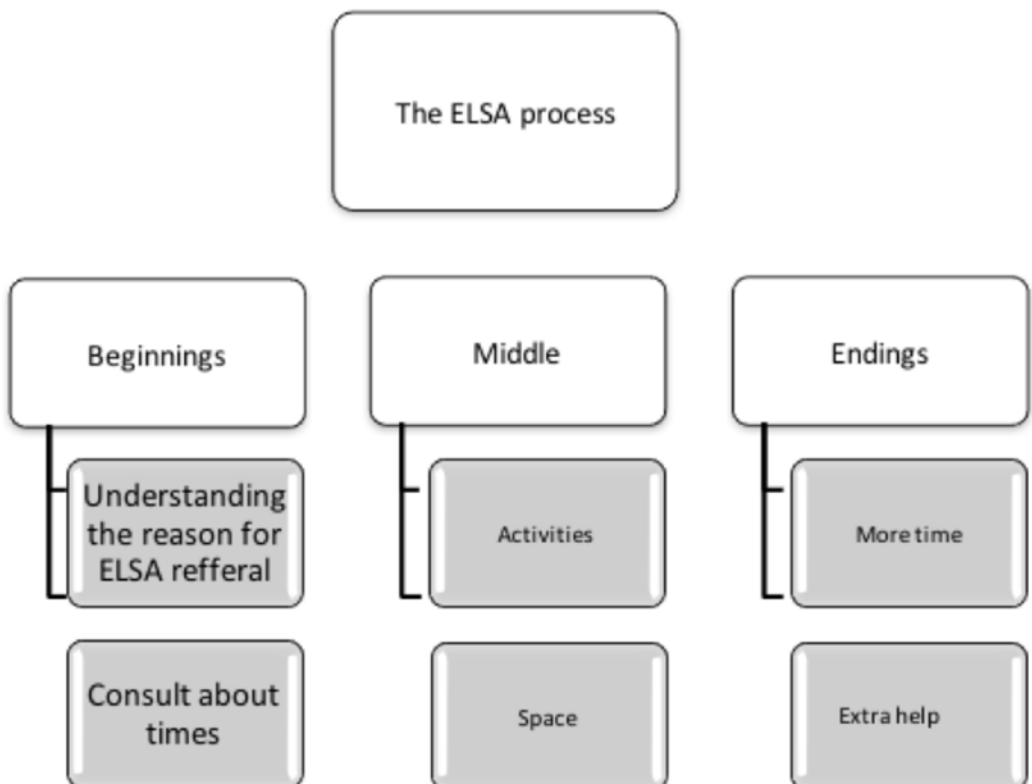
Discussion

This research found there were three main factors which children felt made the ELSA project effective; the therapeutic relationship, dealing with feelings and building resilience.

The therapeutic relationship

The findings indicate that all of the children felt that their relationship with their

Figure 2: Thematic map for core theme The ELSA process



ELSA teacher was an important factor contributing to the perceived effectiveness of the ELSA project. Interestingly, when asked what they liked about ELSA, many of the children immediately referred to their ELSA teacher, highlighting the importance of the individual and the child-ELSA teacher relationship within the project. When talking about this relationship the children spoke about the ELSA teacher's personal characteristics and the importance of them being kind and showing unconditional positive regard. The importance of the ELSA teacher's characteristics is in line with previous literature which highlights the significance of the intervention facilitator, the facilitators' characteristics and their ability to build a positive relationship with the children (Griffiths et al., 2014; Humphrey et al., 2009).

Communication was another factor that was considered important by the children, allowing them to share their problems and talk about their worries. The importance of communication within emotional literacy interventions is also evident within the literature (DfE, 2011). Humphrey et al. (2009) noted that the children's emotional vocabulary had developed during the intervention sessions and highlighted the importance of the children being able to verbalise their emotional experience. Such findings can also be understood in relation to Egan's (1990) work on communication in therapy. Egan (1990) indicates that the therapist's skills of attending, listening and understanding what clients are saying about themselves are essential components for therapy.

The children also expressed the importance of working together with their ELSA teacher to share the responsibility for a problem and to have an advocate within school. Such findings also relate back to previous literature which indicates the importance of trusting relationships as well as feeling as though the facilitator is available, trustworthy and supportive (DfE, 2011; Hill et al., 2013; Humphrey et al., 2009). The importance of the therapeutic alliance is also

acknowledged by Egan (1990) who highlight the significance of the helper and client working collaboratively to solve problems or reach goals.

Dealing with feelings

The second factor that was deemed important by the children was being able to deal with their feelings. When talking about this, the children explained the importance of exploring, managing and changing feelings. The children commented on the importance of being able to explore and talk about their feelings within the ELSA sessions and discuss the things that were worrying them. Some children also mentioned the importance of strategies to help them share their worries such as using a 'worry box' or exploring feelings using worksheets and activities.

The children also spoke about being able to manage their feelings more effectively after the ELSA project, which related to being able to use effective strategies and being able to share their feelings. When talking about strategies, the children mentioned writing their worries down and thinking about different situations with their ELSA teacher. Learning to talk to their parents was another important factor for the children with some explaining how being able to share their feelings and have people listen to them has helped them to feel better.

Building resilience

The third factor that was deemed important by the children was building resilience and learning to reframe situations, develop coping strategies and increase their confidence. The children spoke about being able to look at particular situations more positively, which helped them to feel happier about school and to be able to think about change in the future. The researcher is not aware of any previous literature which has highlighted the importance of reframing for children in emotional literacy interventions. These findings therefore offer a unique contribution to the research area, suggesting the importance of supporting children to alter their thinking about situ-

ations to enable them to think more positively about ways forward.

Within this theme, the children also spoke about the importance of different strategies they had learnt in the ELSA project that helped them to cope with difficult situations. Developing these coping strategies appeared to have a direct impact on how happy and resilient the children felt after the ELSA project. Such findings are supported by the previous literature which highlighted that specific individualised strategies are important within emotional literacy interventions (Hill, et al., 2013).

The children also spoke about feeling more confident after the ELSA project and the impact this has had on their feelings, behaviour and friendships. Some of the children explained that feeling more confident had helped them to be able to participate in activities and talk to their family about their problems. Increasing confidence is a common theme throughout the previous literature. Ohl et al. (2013) reported that the children explained following the Pyramid Club intervention that they felt more confident and less scared, shy and nervous. It was also highlighted that the children reported their friends and family had noticed their confidence had improved following the intervention (Ohl et al., 2013).

What factors do children think would make the ELSA project more effective?

When thinking about factors that could improve the ELSA project, the children highlighted aspects relating to the beginning, middle and end. For the beginning, the children identified the importance of understanding the reason for referral and being made aware of what would happen and when. The children spoke about feeling nervous or anxious when these factors had not been explained to them and some felt it was important for them to be consulted about the timing of the sessions. Within the reviewed literature, these factors have been highlighted in a number of studies and Hill et al. (2013) reported that the children explained that

‘involvement and transparency’ were important for an effective intervention.

The children also spoke about altering some aspects of the ELSA sessions to make it more effective, which related to having more activities and more space. The children emphasised the importance of having fun, non-academic activities within their sessions such as drawing instead of writing. Research by Humphrey et al. (2009) also found that engendering a sense of fun was an important factor for an effective intervention.

Lastly, the children referred to the endings of the ELSA project and explained that having more time or support would help to make the project more effective. The children also referred to the importance of having more time for each session, having more weeks and having support from their ELSA teacher in class.

Implications for Educational Psychology Practice and the ELSA Project

Within Educational Psychology, evidence-based practice is essential and the need to use robust, evidence-based interventions, particularly in relation to early intervention is advocated (Allen, 2011). The evidence base for the ELSA project is limited, particularly when exploring the views of children. Therefore, this research offers a unique contribution to this area, which can be used by ELSA teachers and EPs who are involved in the training and supervision of ELSA teachers.

The factors identified by the children as contributing to the ELSA project may be important for EPs to consider when thinking about EP practice as well as their role within the ELSA project. The importance of the therapeutic relationship, exploring and understanding feelings, building resilience and teaching children to reframe situations are all identified as key factors. These factors also suggest that for the children the ELSA project is not necessarily about fixing a problem, but more importantly it is about being listened to and given an outlet to share and explore problems or worries.

The importance of the therapeutic relationship within the ELSA project may be a key consideration when selecting individu-

als to train as ELSA teachers, as the personal characteristics appear to play a key role in children's perceptions of the effectiveness of the project.

The factors identified by the children in relation to developing the ELSA project will also be important for EPs to consider when training and supervising ELSA teachers. The importance of involving children in the referral, explaining the project to them and consulting with them about times could be introduced to the ELSA teachers during their training, to ensure that this is common practice when delivering the project. The use of evaluation forms could also be introduced to ELSA teachers during the training, to encourage user feedback following an intervention from children, parents/ carers and teachers. The ending of the project is also a factor that could be considered by EPs when training ELSA teachers. It may be that it would be helpful to explore the possibility of continued work with children during the ELSA training or supervision sessions, so that ELSA teachers are equipped to work with children who require continued support.

These findings also have a wider implication for EPs when thinking about their direct work with children to ensure children are prepared to work with them, understand the reason for referral and are being taken out of lessons at a time that is convenient for them. This research has also highlighted the importance of listening to children and involving them in the process of psychological assessment to consider what they think and what they would like to happen. The current research has indicated that when appropriately supported and given the chance to express their views in alternative ways, such as through drawing, young children are able to reflect on their experiences and offer insightful thoughts and suggest areas of improvement.

Implications for future research

In light of the above discussion, there are a number of further areas of interest stemming from this research. It may be interesting to explore other methodological designs when gathering the views of children within

further research. Using focus groups when gathering children's views may generate more ideas as the children would have the opportunity to discuss their ideas and opinions. Involving children as active researchers may also be another methodological alternative, empowering children and supporting them to engage in their own research.

Within future research it will be important to ensure that children of all ages are able to participate and that they are supported appropriately to express their views. The findings from this research indicate that children as young as six years of age are able to offer their thoughts when supported to do so.

Conclusion

This research evaluated the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project from the perspectives of primary school children, in order to identify whether they felt the project was effective and to identify the factors that contributed to the perceived effectiveness. The research has contributed to the existing body of literature regarding the ELSA project, offering unique findings in relation to perceived effectiveness for children of different ages as well as factors that are considered to be important.

It is also believed that one of the most effective and significant factors associated with this research, is that the children were consulted about their experiences and that their voices were heard. It is perhaps the child's voice which offers the most salient concluding remarks to summarise this study about the perceived effectiveness of the ELSA project:

Lucy: 'I would say thaaat... ELSA was fabdabbydosey.'

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Appendix 1: Quantitative questionnaire

All About Me

Name:.....

Age:..... years old

I am a:  girl  boy

I am in year.....

Did you see your ELSA:  on your own    with other children

	Yes	A little bit	Not really	No
ELSA has helped me to make friends				
I feel happier in school after ELSA				
I enjoyed going to ELSA				
I would like to go to ELSA again				
I enjoyed the activities in ELSA				
I liked my ELSA teacher				
I think my friends would like ELSA				
I think ELSA has helped me				
I liked going to ELSA				
How did ELSA help you?				

What did you think about ELSA?

- ☺ How did ELSA help you?
- ☺ What did you like most about ELSA?
- ☺ What do you think would make ELSA even better?

Thank you ☺

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview schedule

Introduction

- Introduce myself
- Explain purpose of the interview
- Assure confidentiality
- Ask permission to tape the interview

Warm up

- Settle the children in

Main body of the interview

Explain the ELSA bag and the drawing we are going to do:

1. What was it like when you went to ELSA?
 - (a) What was your room like?
 - (b) Did you go with other children?
 - (c) What kind of things did you do?
4. What did you really like about ELSA?
 - (a) ELSA bag – draw the things you really liked about ELSA inside the bag
 - (b) Which were your three favourite things?
 - (c) Why did you really like doing that?
4. Was there anything you didn't like about ELSA?
 - (a) Draw the things you didn't like outside of the ELSA bag
 - (b) Why did you not like these things
3. If we were in charge of making ELSA the best it could be what would you change?
 - (a) Draw the things you would change in the star
 - (b) Why would you change those things?
 - (c) How would they make ELSA better?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your ELSA?

Cool off

- Straight forward questions- what are you doing in class next? Are you doing anything nice after school?

Closure

- Explain what will happen next- write it up and come into school and tell everybody what I have found.
- And I will write them a letter to tell them personally.
- Take them back to their classroom

Appendix 3: Responses to open-ended questions

Responses for how the ELSA project helped children

Response category	Number of children	Percentage
Talking	17	32
Friendships	14	26
Improving confidence	8	15
Anger management	5	9
Family problems	2	4
Bullying	2	4
Difficulties in school	2	4
Having fun	2	4
To stop worrying	1	2

Responses for what the children liked most about the ELSA project

Response category	Number of children	Percentage
Games	18	34
Talking	12	22
Activities	11	20
Helping me	4	8
Everything	3	6
Having fun	2	4
Food and drink	2	4
ELSA teacher	1	2

Responses for how the children thought the ELSA project could improve

Response category	Number of children	Percentage
Already good	18	34
Nothing would make it better	16	30
More ELSA	7	13
More games and activities	8	15
Bigger room	3	6
More children	1	2

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