

Introducing Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs)

“By encouraging better recognition and self-management of emotional states, children will become better able to access the educational opportunities presented to them”.

What is an ELSA?

An Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) is often a TA/LSA equipped to offer individualised or small group support for children/young people who are experiencing temporary or long term additional emotional needs. This provides a safe and supportive relationship within which children can think through challenges.

How can I become an ELSA?

5 full days of training from an Educational Psychologist across 2 terms (usually January/February – May/June), including:

- Emotional Literacy in Schools and Raising Emotional Awareness
- Developing ‘The Self’
- Active listening and communication skills
- Understanding and regulating big emotions
- Supporting through loss and bereavement
- Introduction to Attachment and Trauma
- Social and friendship skill development
- Social tools to develop emotional literacy (social stories, comic strip conversations and therapeutic story writing)

What would I do as an ELSA?

Plan and deliver programmes which would normally last between half to one term, for an individual or small group. A graduated withdrawal of support may then be appropriate, for example through occasional pupil review sessions, or brief observations.

ELSAs are provided with essential and mandatory half termly supervision with an Educational Psychologist and other ELSAs from the area. Psychology support is also available for planning of complex cases.

How will the school support their ELSAs?

Ongoing time and resources must be made available for:

- ELSAs to attend training and supervision sessions.

- ELSAs to plan, deliver and review support to pupils.
- A suitable space for the ELSA to work.
- Developing a bank of resources over time.
- Line management from within their own school, normally by the SENCo.
- Other staff (class teachers, form tutors, heads of year, the SENCo) to be consulted in deciding which pupils would benefit from ELSA support.

Why Use ELSA Support in Our School?

ELSAs are already well embedded in a range of different counties across the UK. Research carried out in local authorities where ELSAs are already established has highlighted the following outcomes of ELSA work:

- Positive impact on pupil attendance
- Reduction of incidents of bullying
- Increase in academic achievement
- Reduction of exclusions
- Improved self-esteem in vulnerable children
- Positive changes in the home environment (e.g. using anger regulation strategies)
- Reduction of difficult and dangerous behaviours
- Improved interactions between peers and adults
- Positive impact on the relationship between school and home
- Raised awareness of emotional literacy at the whole school level
- Increased understanding of how to support children's needs, particularly in the area of social, emotional and mental health
- Increased movement towards child-centred practice in staff
- Significant gains in targeted emotional literacy skills
- Positive impact on TAs personal and professional development, via ELSA training, practising in the ELSA role, and ongoing supervision with EPs
- Children reported that ELSA support had positively enabled them to reframe their thinking about situation and to learn new skills and coping strategies

Costings

The initial cost is £750 for one ELSA, which includes the following:

- Five Days of Training (£500 per ELSA)
- The first year of ELSA Supervision (£200 for six half-termly supervision sessions per ELSA)
- Essential resources that will be given to the ELSA as part of their role (£50)

Please note that, after the first year of ELSA supervision, there will then be an annual cost of £200 per ELSA for ongoing supervision.

Venue: Over Community Centre, 16 The Doles, Cambridge CB24 5NW

2026-27 Dates:

Day 1 – Wednesday 27th January 2027

Day 2 – Wednesday 3rd March 2027

Day 3 – Wednesday 14th April 2027

Day 4 – Wednesday 5th May 2027

Day 5 – Wednesday 9th June 2027

Training times: 9.30 am - 3.30 pm

ELSA supervision will start once the training has been completed the following academic year (e.g., September 2027 for cohorts training this year)

Expression of Interest

Name of School/Setting:	
Name, role, and email of person completing form:	
Number of prospective ELSAs:	
Name(s) and email(s) of prospective ELSA(s), if known:	

Please return to SEND.Training@cambridgeshire.gov.uk and copy in rebecca.farrer@cambridgeshire.gov.uk