

ELSA Project

Portsmouth Inclusion
Service



Who are ELSAs?

ELSAs are teaching assistants or learning mentors in schools or colleges who have been trained as Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. They receive 6 days of training from educational psychologists on aspects of emotional literacy including:

- Building relationships
- Social and friendship skills
- Self-esteem
- Emotional regulation
- Anxiety
- Neurodiversity
- Loss and bereavement
- Emotional wellbeing

Through the training ELSAs also learn about specific techniques such as:

- Active listening
- Writing social stories
- Working therapeutically in a creative way

Throughout the course, ELSAs explore resources, practice planning, learn how to set targets and how to evaluate their work, including gaining children and young people's views.



How are ELSA used across Portsmouth?

There are approximately 80 ELSAs in the city who work in more than 41 settings (made up of infant, primary, junior, secondary schools and higher education colleges).



What do ELSAs do?

ELSAs help children and young people learn to understand their emotions and respect the feelings of those around them. They provide the time and space for pupils to think about their personal circumstances and how they manage them.

Sessions are designed to be fun and motivating for pupils. ELSAs choose activities that are matched to the child or young person's interests and needs. Activities can include games, role-play, story writing, puppets, model making, talking and listening. All of the activities are linked to the emotional literacy targets identified for the child or young person by the teacher and ELSA.



How much time is involved?

Most ELSA intervention programmes will last for 6 to 12 weeks. They focus on helping the pupil to learn some specific new skills or coping strategies related to their emotional understanding. Clear programme aims (SMART targets) need to be set early on and each session has an objective - something the ELSA wants to help the pupil understand or achieve.

ELSAs work on the ELSA role for a minimum of 1 day per week (including planning and delivery time). Each setting signs a training contract which outlines commitments made within the project.

How are ELSAs supported?

Following initial training ELSAs can access half termly supervision in small groups of 6-8 ELSAs, facilitated by an educational psychologist. ELSAs continue to access these sessions for as long as they are undertaking the role. Regular psychological supervision is necessary to maintain the title of ELSA. This is to ensure ELSAs have ongoing support that develops their knowledge and understanding and that their involvement is appropriate and not better met by another professional.

The aims of sessions are to:

- Provide casework support through the application of psychological perspectives
- Enable additional training in areas not covered in the initial 6 days
- Disseminate useful resources
- Give access to peer support
- Facilitate shared problem-solving



Training Information

There is a £575 charge for the initial 6 days of training and £285 per ELSA for each year of supervision with a reduction for establishments with 2 or more ELSAs.

You can book onto the course by emailing : Philippa.Wilson@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or through the Traded Services website course code PLG2-1124-T001

Training dates for 2025:

Wednesday 5 February 2025

Wednesday 26 February 2025

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Wednesday 30 April 2025

Wednesday 11 June 2025

Wednesday 25 June 2025 (Managers session 1.30—3 pm)

9.00 am—3.00 pm on all 6 days (lunch and refreshments provided)

Training will take place at The Training & Learning Centre, The Portsmouth Academy, St Mary's Road, Portsmouth

If you wish to discuss the ELSA project further you can contact the Educational Psychology Service directly Tel: 023 9268 8781

