

Hampshire Educational Psychology Service

Supervision of ELSAs

ELSA recognition

In Hampshire, the title of ELSA is only recognised to legitimately apply to those who have undertaken the designated training with Hampshire Educational Psychology Service and continue to receive regular supervision from educational psychologists.

Who should supervise ELSAs?

As ELSAs are employed directly by schools, they should receive management supervision from a nominated member of staff. This may be the SENCo or another manager within the school. The line manager is responsible for supporting ELSAs in their day-to-day work by ensuring that they have designated time for planning and delivery, a suitable space in which to work with children, and a budget for purchasing resources appropriate to their work. The line manager will also liaise with the ELSA about children in need of support, and help other staff to be aware of the role of the ELSA within school. It is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure that ELSAs are released from other responsibilities to attend training and supervision.

In addition, because of the nature of their work, ELSAs also need regular access to professional supervision with educational psychologists. EPs are responsible not only for initial training but also the ongoing professional development and support of ELSAs. The principal means of providing continuing support is through local supervision groups facilitated by EPs. These meet for two hours twice a term to:

- provide casework support through the application of psychological perspectives
- enable additional training in areas not covered in the initial five days
- disseminate information about useful resources
- give access to peer support
- facilitate shared problem-solving.

ELSAs are working with some of the most vulnerable and sometimes challenging young people in our schools. For their own safety and that of the young people they are supporting, it is essential that ELSAs continue to receive specialised professional support that enables them to reflect on the quality and appropriateness of the assistance they are offering. Schools need to have due regard to the skills and competence of the ELSA and not be asking them to work beyond their competence. EPs may also advise further discussion with line manager when a young person's

needs seem to be beyond the skills and competence of an ELSA and require more specialist support.

In addition to group supervision twice a term, ELSAs are encouraged to seek individual consultation with the school's link EP if they are uncertain of how to proceed in a particular case or with respect to a specific issue that ought not to be left until the group next meets. Since ELSAs are known to be supporting youngsters with complex emotional needs, best practice is for link EPs to have some regular contact with ELSAs in the course of school visits.

What will happen if an ELSA does not attend supervision?

Receiving a certificate of training is contingent upon ELSAs attending all five days of initial training and participating in four supervision sessions following completion of training. Once they have received their ELSA certificate, they are required to continue accessing regular supervision.

The EPs facilitating the groups are expected to keep a register of attendance. ELSA attendance is then recorded centrally to ensure that they are receiving adequate professional support. Inevitably there will be occasions when, for reasons beyond their control, an ELSA is unable to attend a group supervision session. In such circumstances, apologies should be sent to the facilitating EP. If non-attendance is noticed to be a regular occurrence, the link EP will be asked to make enquiries of the school and attempt to rectify the situation.

Where there is more than one ELSA in a school and releasing two or more people at the same time creates difficulties for the school, the EP service will be happy to allocate the ELSAs concerned to different groups.

If an ELSA chooses to discontinue attending supervision meetings or is prevented by the school from doing so, they will be assumed to be no longer functioning in an ELSA role and their name will be removed from the register of county approved ELSAs. They will no longer be eligible for places at further ELSA training events.

This is to ensure that ELSAs are given the necessary professional and ethical guidance to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities to children and young people to an appropriate standard. The educational psychology service recognises its responsibility in this area and consequently prioritises its support to ELSAs.