



Institute of Education

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and
Adolescent Psychology

‘A little pebble in a pond’: A multiple case study
exploring how the Emotional Literacy Support
Assistant (ELSA) project operates in secondary
schools.

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Student Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution and citation is made, the work of this thesis is entirely my own.



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Impact Statement

Utilising a multiple case study design and semi-structured interviews, the current research explored how the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project was implemented in two secondary school cases from a South England Local Authority. The ELSA project aims to support pupils' emotional literacy (EL) skills, and is delivered by teaching assistants who are trained by Educational Psychologists (EPs). Although implemented in both primary and secondary schools, due to a paucity of research related to how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools, this study focused on the ELSA project within these school contexts. This research also sought to gain the views of a broader range of ELSA stakeholders. Therefore, interviews were conducted with ELSAs, SENCOs, pupils, and school staff, including teachers, in two schools .

Findings from this research highlighted that:

- Pupils' intervention length was found to be longer in secondary school ELSA projects than ELSA guidance outlines;
- ELSA-pupil relationships were important, and ELSAs utilised their unique qualities to build attuned and genuine relationships with pupils before targeting EL skills.
- The flexibility of the ELSA project appeared to aid the implementation of pupil-centred interventions, however a difficulty tracking pupil outcomes was raised.
- Whole-school approaches to SEMH support were developing, whilst wider school understanding and prioritisation of SEMH needs appeared to be a challenge for ELSA projects.
- ELSA-teacher and ELSA-parent communication was limited.

- The emotional impact on ELSAs was challenging within the intervention. Support within the school and supervision from EPs helped ELSAs better manage these effects, although additional support was also felt to be needed.
- Negative pupil effects were raised, including, pupil dependency and paranoia and embarrassment within sessions.

These findings lead to the identification of the following implications for secondary school ELSA projects, and EP practice (further implications can be found in Chapter 5):

- As ELSA-pupil relationships and ELSAs' unique qualities were key processes within the intervention, schools with ELSA projects should consider ELSA loss contingency planning.
- Schools need to consider how well the ELSA project fits within their ethos and timetabling structure. Secondary schools will need to ensure that ELSA is not disrupted at busy times of the academic year, and that ELSA timetables are not overly restricted by core subject prioritisation.
- Consideration needs to be given to how ELSAs can be better supported to build their communication with important adults (e.g. parents and teachers).
- As attachment, containment, and attunement appeared to be prominent psychological processes in ELSA sessions, EPs could help ELSAs reflect on the presence of these processes in their sessions with pupils to develop their use further.
- More frequent EP-ELSA supervision is needed, so that ELSAs have more time to reflect on and develop their practice, particularly with novel or

complex cases. This could be provided through individual consultations with ELSAs.

- Secondary school ELSAs may need more therapeutically informed guidance on how to contract the beginning and ending of pupils' interventions, so that ELSA intervention length is more structured and the risk of pupil-ELSA dependency is reduced.
- As issues with tracking pupil outcomes were raised, EPs should consider how impact can be demonstrated. This may include the use of pupil-centred goal-based scaling.

Abstract

This research utilised a qualitative approach to explore how the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operates in secondary schools, and the facilitating factors and challenges relevant to its implementation in these settings. There is a dearth in research relating to the ELSA project in secondary schools and so this research offers useful insight for those involved in the implementation of secondary school ELSA projects, including EPs.

A multiple case study design and semi-structured interviews were utilised in two secondary school cases from one South England Local Authority. Interviews were conducted with seven key secondary school ELSA stakeholders from each school, including ELSAs, Special Educational Needs Coordinators, pupils, and school staff. Thematic analysis of both schools' data was completed, before a cross-case thematic analysis enabled comparison and contrasts to be identified between the two schools' ELSA projects.

Findings indicated that: ELSA work was embedded alongside other Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) interventions; ELSAs applied a range of psychological principles in their work, including attachment and containment principles; pupils' intervention length was longer in secondary school ELSA projects than ELSA guidance outlined. Facilitating factors reported by participants included: ELSAs' unique qualities; ELSA-pupil relationships; flexibility within the intervention enabling a pupil-centred approach; and the support and supervision that ELSAs receive from SENCOs and EPs. Challenges affecting the implementation of ELSA projects in secondary schools, identified by the participants, included: difficulty developing whole-school understanding of pupils' SEMH needs; limited ELSA-teacher and ELSA-parent communication; difficult

emotional effects on ELSAs; and negative effects for pupils, including the risk of pupil dependency on ELSA.

The findings from this research contribute to a better understanding of how ELSA projects operate in secondary schools and has implications for improving the implementation of ELSA projects within secondary school settings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research aims to increase the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project's research base by exploring how it is implemented in secondary school settings. By seeking the views and experiences of key ELSA stakeholders (e.g. pupils, ELSAs, Special Educational Needs Coordinators – SENCOs – and school staff) this research will also explore the challenges and facilitating factors that affect ELSA project implementation.

This chapter will define terms relevant to this research; review relevant national and local contexts; outline how my personal and professional context relates to the current research; summarise the significance of this research to the educational psychology profession; and outline the research questions.

1.1 Research Terms

The ELSA project is a non-manualised school-based intervention, developed and supervised by Educational Psychologists (EPs), that aims to extend schools' capacities to support pupils' emotional needs using their own resources (ELSA Network, 2017). Pupils are supported to understand and manage their emotions by ELSAs that are trained by EPs. Chapter 2 will provide detail on the ELSA project and its current research base in primary and secondary schools.

The term 'ELSA' stands for 'Emotional Literacy Support Assistant' and is used in this research to denote the person trained to directly support pupils' emotional needs. In this research, the term 'the ELSA project' is used to refer to the intervention at the school and Local Authority (LA) level.

The ELSA project uses the term 'Support Assistant' in its title. This role refers to school-based non-teaching paraprofessionals, who are often referred to as

teaching assistants (TAs) (Blatchford, Russell, & Webster, 2012). As the term 'TA' is most frequently used to denote these paraprofessionals within the LA this research takes place, it will be utilised here when referring to the overarching group of school paraprofessionals that includes ELSAs. (See Appendix-1 for a list of acronyms used in this thesis).

1.2 Local Authority context

This research was conducted in a South England LA. Here, guidance for schools and support for pupils' mental health is provided by a range of professionals. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is a four-tiered system. Tier one is described as a universal service, which involves supporting, and training front-line professionals (including school staff) working directly with pupils, in order to identify who may be at risk of poor mental health, and support the development of environments that promote children and young people's (CYP's) mental health. Tier two services provide advice and support for CYP and families through the deployment of community-based Primary Mental Health Workers (PMHWs). LA schools can request a consultation with PMHWs to gain guidance on CYP causing concern. Pupils with higher needs, requiring more specialist support, as either an out-patient or in-patient, are supported by hospital and clinic-based psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, social workers and community nurses at tier three or four.

The LA's CAMHS structure stipulates that some support for pupils' mental health is expected to occur within schools (tier one). However, many factors make this a less straightforward aim. Such factors may include reluctance from some teaching staff to engage in social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) support, possibly due to them feeling inadequately skilled or holding the view that this

support is beyond the remit of education settings (Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell, & Donovan, 2009). Schools based in this study's focus LA typically provide pupils with mental health support from school-based play therapists, EPs, SENCOs, home-school link workers (HSLWs) and TAs. Due to a high demand and difficulties with staff recruitment and retainment, LA schools have found accessing support from PMHWs increasingly inconsistent. These difficulties, along with a perceived reactive approach to mental health support in the LA's schools, led to the LA's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) introducing the ELSA project. The LA's ELSA project began in 2011; piloted first in one quadrant of the LA. In this pilot, 31 primary school ELSAs were trained. After perceived success, the ELSA project was expanded countywide and now includes EP-led training and supervision for both primary and secondary school ELSAs. The quadrant in which the LA's ELSA project was first piloted now has approximately 14 secondary schools with at least one or two trained ELSAs. Previous questionnaires indicated that LA head teachers view the ELSA project as successful and good value for money, but further research into how the ELSA project is operationalised in secondary schools is required.

1.3 Mental health and wellbeing

With reported high prevalence of mental health difficulties amongst the UK's CYP and increasing governmental emphasis on UK schools as sites for the promotion and support of CYP's SEMH (e.g. DfE, 2015, 2018a; DoH, 2015; DoH & DfE, 2017) the need for school-based SEMH interventions and approaches to be researched is imperative.

Some scholars have argued that the increase in school-based SEMH interventions over recent years is the result of a perceived increase in child

wellbeing and mental health difficulties (Humphrey, 2018). However, the acceptance of this perception has been challenged. For some, mental health difficulties in childhood are socially constructed through a discourse of CYP as increasingly emotionally vulnerable and in need of therapeutic support (Furedi, 2004, 2017). Similarly, for others such as Ecclestone, (2012), the prevalence of CYP's mental health difficulties is viewed as the internalisation of social and economic difficulties, where 'normal' responses to stressful social conditions (i.e. poverty and family breakdown) are internalised and diagnosed as within-person 'vulnerabilities'. Therefore, when talking about CYP's mental health, it is important to remain critical of discourses of mental health 'crises' (Humphrey, 2018). Future research is needed to explore why CYP might be reporting high levels of emotional difficulty so that effective and responsive emotional and social support can be developed.

Mental health, mental illness, and emotional wellbeing are broad concepts that are often used interchangeably, or as contrasting constructs (Adi, Killoran, Janmohamed, & Stewart-Brown, 2007). Mental health and emotional wellbeing are sometimes considered to be the absence of mental illness. However, there is now increasing understanding that these concepts, though related, are distinct (Keyes, 2005), and that their difference can be exemplified through differing prevalence throughout the human lifespan (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010). Work by Keyes and colleagues (Keyes, 2005, 2013; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010) has defined the two-continua model of mental illness and mental health. Within this model, mental illness is defined by the presence of psychopathologies such as anxiety or depression (often measured in severity using standardised checklists). Whereas, positive mental health is defined as a subjective overall feeling of flourishing that is comprised of both emotional or hedonic wellbeing (happiness

and life satisfaction), and psychological and social or eudemonic wellbeing (self-realisation, social inclusion and involvement) (Ryff, 1989, 2014). When thinking about CYP, a two-continua model of mental health and illness may be most beneficial, ensuring both strength and risk factors are considered when supporting their overall wellbeing (Dowdy et al., 2015). Furthermore, for schools, emotional, psychological and social 'wellbeings' are fundamental in ensuring pupils are not only 'happy' but socially included and self-actualising.

As this research's focus is on ELSA projects within secondary schools, and as the ELSA project was developed to support pupils' emotional, psychological and social wellbeing at a sub-clinical level (Burton, 2009), the terms SEMH and emotional wellbeing will be the terms most frequently used when discussing mental health and underlying 'wellbeings'.

1.3.1 The SEMH needs of CYP in the UK.

Childhood mental health is a concern globally, as evidenced by the range of surveys frequently published (e.g. UNICEF reports and The Good Childhood reports). UNICEF's (2017) most recent report (utilising data from 2013/2014), comparing the wellbeing of children across countries with the most 'advanced economies', outlined that UK CYP's self-reported life satisfaction (a concept commonly used to measure emotional wellbeing) ranked 20th out of 35 countries. Whilst these rankings are not equal gradients, this indicates that UK CYP's lowest life satisfaction scores are further from the UK's average scores than was found in 19 other countries. Furthermore, 7.4% of UK CYP scored their overall life satisfaction as below or equal to 4 out of 10 (where 10 signifies 'the best possible life'). Comparisons between similarly developed countries suggests that the wellbeing of UK CYP may have greater potential than is currently being achieved.

However, despite their large sample sizes, it is arguable that comparisons between different countries, in studies such as UNICEF's, should be considered with some caution as cultural differences and biases may impact on findings. Divergent cultural life-expectations may lead CYP to rate their level of life-satisfaction differently, as they may have different expectations of happiness as a result of convergent cultural expectations or living-standards within their country. Also, utilising only quantitative data neglects how children understand 'life satisfaction' and different forms of wellbeing. UNICEF's definitions and parameters of the wellbeings included should also be viewed with caution, as they are undoubtedly culturally and politically constructed and framed through adults' interpretations of what childhood wellbeing is (Morrow & Mayall, 2009). By focusing on 'life satisfaction', the UNICEF report also only unveils CYP's level of wellbeing in relation to emotional wellbeing; neglecting the exploration of CYP's psychological and social wellbeing.

Avoiding cross-cultural comparison difficulties by focusing solely on UK CYP's wellbeing, and with measures developed from consultation with CYP, *The Good Childhood Report's* questionnaire (The Children's Society, 2018), indicated that between 2009-2010 and 2015-2016, UK CYP (aged 10-15 years old) reported a significant decrease in feelings of happiness with friends and their life as a whole. This report also highlighted that whilst the majority of CYP report good overall life satisfaction, around 11% of CYP reported being unhappy with their life in general, as indicated by low scores on life satisfaction measures. Furthermore, current UK government commissioned research suggests that 1 in 8 (NHS Digital, 2018) CYP have an emotional or behavioural difficulty that could be diagnosed as a clinical level of mental illness.

Within UK schools, data indicates that 17.5% of CYP receiving special educational needs or disability (SEND) support and 12.8% of CYP with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) have their main area of need identified as SEMH (DfE, 2018c, p. 20). With known risks linked to early mental illness and poor mental health, including poorer academic attainment, later wellbeing and life chances, the current prevalence of mental illness and poor mental health among the UK school population is a continuing concern. Such concern has led to government initiatives, reports and guidance, including: the *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme* (DCSF, 2007; DfES, 2005); *Future in Mind*, (DoH, 2015); *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (DfE, 2018a), and the *Green Paper - Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision* (DoH; DfE, 2017). These initiatives indicate a growing emphasis on schools' roles in improving pupils SEMH, in which schools are increasingly requesting EP support to meet this evolving role. EPs have a key role in recommending interventions and approaches that are research-based, and in researching and developing new approaches that can promote and support CYP's SEMH within schools (Wigelsworth, Humphrey, Kalambouka, & Lendrum, 2010).

1.4 SEMH support in schools

By situating more SEMH prevention and support in schools, it can be argued that a bioecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) understanding of the prevalence and development of CYP's SEMH needs can be obtained. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (also known as the Process-Person-Context-Time [P-P-C-T] model, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) is a developmental theory that aims to explain how interactional processes and systems impact on an individual's development over their lifetime (see Figure 1

for an outline of the P-P-C-T model's key facets). Context systems in P-P-C-T theory range from those that are small and proximal to the individual, to those that are large and distant (moving from the microsystem through to the wider macrosystem, with changes over time being considered through the chronosystem). Interactional processes between these systems are accounted for by the inclusion of the mesosystem and exosystem. Interactions between individuals and people and objects in their microsystem (such as interactions between a pupil and school staff members), are known as proximal processes. Examples of microsystems for CYP would be the family, peer group and school systems. These processes are important to consider, particularly in ensuring the most up-to-date version of the P-P-C-T model is being utilised (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). The processes envisaged by Bronfenbrenner are internal and external reciprocal actions; as it is acknowledged that an individual's characteristics can impact on the function of systems and processes as well as systems and processes altering the development of the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Within-person factors that can influence development, proximal processes and systems, include: demand, resource, and force characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Understanding and supporting CYP's mental health through the P-P-C-T model enables schools and EPs to consider how systems and processes may influence CYP's level of apparent mental health, constructing a less within-child focus. However, applying this model to CYP's mental health is not without its challenges. For example, although named discretely, the four nested systems within the Context element of the model (the microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems) are interrelated and influenced by processes (biological, psychological, relational, cultural and environmental) that occur within and between these systems.

The resulting complexity and scope of possible key factors can make identifying the most salient factors impacting on individuals difficult, and thus knowing where best to situate support or intervention for CYP can be challenging. However, as EPs often apply a systemic approach to their work (Beaver, 2011; Pellegrini, 2009), and as schools and EPs are legislated through the *SEND Code of Practice* (DfE, 2015) to work together to identify and support CYP with SEMH needs that act as a barrier to their learning, it can be hoped that some of this complexity can be carefully unpicked, and intervention for CYP delivered at pertinent levels within their system (Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016).

Therefore, as schools feature within most CYP's microsystem and mesosystem, and CYP spend a large proportion of their time in schools, it is reasonable to expect preventative and ameliorative mental health support to take place within them (Roffey, 2016). Recent government guidance has also asserted that by 2020 all schools will be required to have a member of staff specifically responsible for promoting and improving pupil mental health (DoH, 2015; DoH & DfE, 2017).

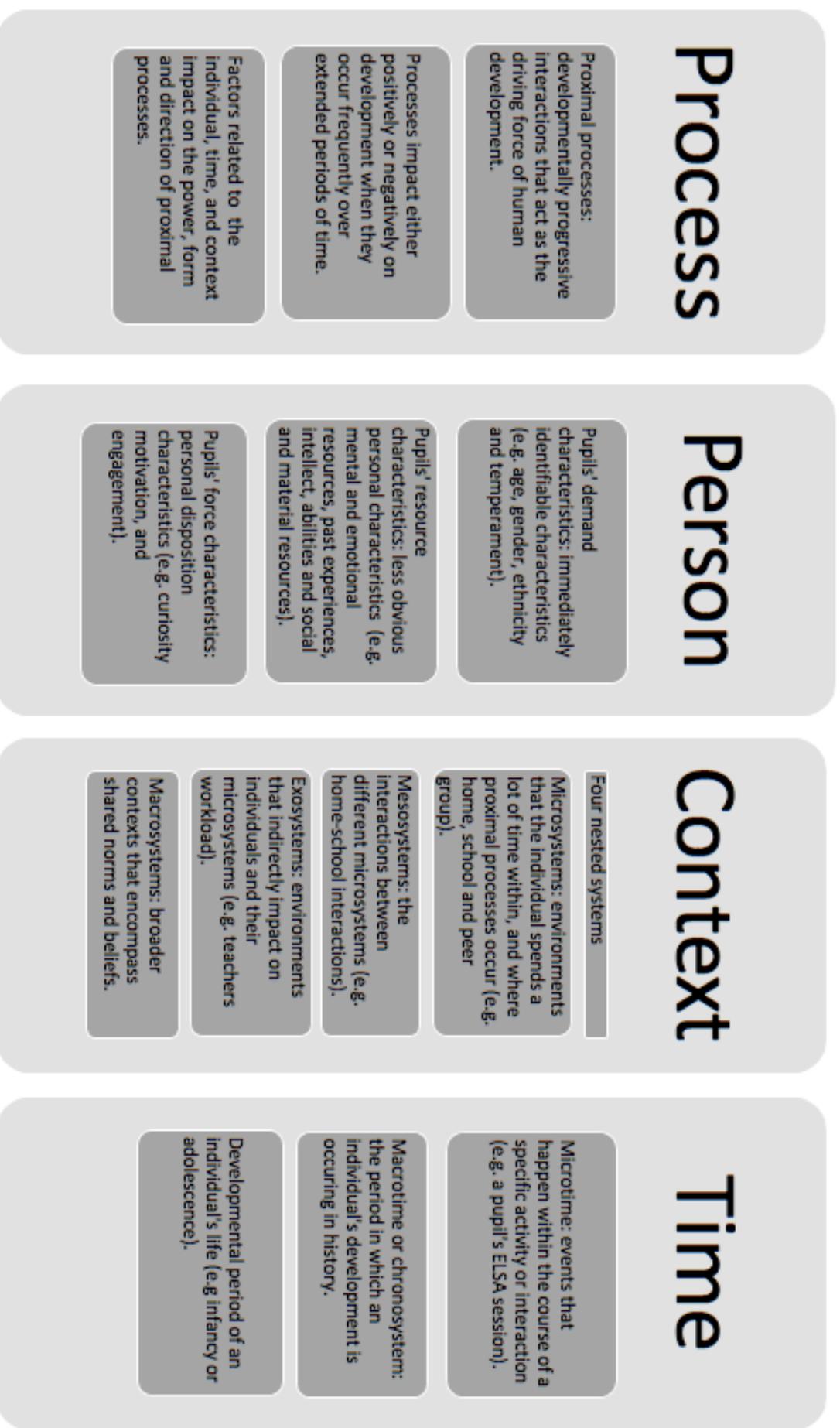


Figure 1. Outline of Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) P-P-C-T model

1.4.1 The impact of school environments on CYP's SEMH.

A school's 'environment' can be defined as comprised of pupils' sense of safety within school (e.g. risk of violence or the likeliness of bullying), the physical ecology (e.g. space, layout, and class size), and the social and cultural ecology (e.g. the approach of teachers, implicit and explicit school values and goal and learning structure) (Bacete, Perrin, Schneider, & Blanchard, 2014). As school staff can be considered a school's most vital resource, it is important to consider how school culture and staff can impact on CYP's SEMH. Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1994, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000) offers a way of considering how environments, such as schools, can support or thwart CYP's motivation, social functioning and wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For SDT, optimal functioning can actualise when people experience a balance of three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. All three of these factors are imperative needs to foster within school environments and within interventions such as the ELSA project. It is therefore worth exploring the extent to which the ELSA project allows for the development of these core psychological needs.

In terms of relatedness, meta-analyses have indicated that pupil-teacher relationships are a key component for CYP's wellbeing (Chu, Saucier, & Hafner, 2010; Cornelius-White, 2007; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003a) and learning motivation (Pianta et al., 2003). Noteworthy for secondary schools – where teacher-pupil relationships may be less intensive as pupils are not taught by just one teacher – is that the association between supportive teacher-pupil relationships and wellbeing appears to increase with age (Chu et al., 2010). This suggests that there may need to be a greater focus on teacher-pupil relatedness

in secondary schools, a concept that also fits with the proximal processes element of the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, it is important to recognise that the effect sizes related to teacher-pupil relationship impact, as outlined above, vary between small (Chu et al., 2010) and medium (Cornelius-White, 2007). Nevertheless, for the relatively low resource and cost output that teacher-pupil relationships may expend, such small-medium effect sizes could indicate worthwhile investment in approaches that foster pupil-teacher relatedness. If embedded alongside specific SEMH interventions, the added impact provided by teacher-pupil relatedness is likely to be of additional benefit.

Furthermore, with SDT in mind, preventative or supportive school-based SEMH interventions should also consider the degree to which they enable pupils to maintain any improved SEMH skill or management across different contexts and post-intervention, as this would demonstrate autonomy and competence. The extent to which autonomy and competence in SEMH skills is achieved through targeted interventions could be investigated by exploring pupils' and school staff's views and experiences and identify how autonomous and generalised pupils' skills appear.

With the concern over high rates of mental health need among CYP and a growing acceptance of the need for more holistic educational approaches, the last two decades have seen the development of many school-based SEMH interventions. However, a large meta-analysis of universal SEMH interventions identified that only 13% of reviewed interventions were based in secondary schools (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). This could indicate that both fewer SEMH interventions are being conducted in secondary

schools, as was reported in Weare and Gray's (2003) review of the SEMH approaches used within Southampton LA's schools, and that fewer secondary school based interventions are researched. Therefore, it is important that future research investigates secondary school SEMH interventions, particularly those that are currently widely used but with a limited research base, such as secondary school-based ELSA projects.

1.4.2 SEMH support in schools delivered by Teaching Assistants.

SEMH support in schools are delivered by a range of staff and professionals, including EPs, counsellors, school nurses, teachers and TAs (Durlak et al., 2011). TA numbers have been increasing over the last 20 years, and between 2011 and 2017 full-time equivalent TA numbers in English schools grew from 220,000 to 262,000 (DfE, 2018b). This increase has occurred against a backdrop of growing concerns related to CYP's SEMH and the raising of school standards. Within this context it is unsurprising that TAs are increasingly expected to fulfil pedagogical and pastoral roles, often predominantly supporting pupils with learning and SEMH needs (Blatchford et al., 2008; Burton & Goodman, 2011).

However, research on effective TA deployment is a mixed picture. For teachers, TA support has been viewed positively, with TA support attributed to reduced teacher workload and stress, despite limited time being available for teachers and TAs to plan and evaluate learning interventions (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Webster, 2009). For pupil outcomes, a negative effect has been identified. Pupils who receive the most TA support make the least academic progress (Blatchford et al., 2009), although pupils report feeling well supported by TAs who were described as friendly, helpful and attentive (Fraser & Meadows, 2008). Receiving regular TA support has also been found to increase pupil dependency, reducing

autonomous learning. However, interestingly, TA support of pupils was found to have a positive effect on year 9 pupils' (ages 13-14) disposition to learning, indicating that TA support may be beneficial for some but not all pupils (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Koutsoubou, et al., 2009).

Research looking more closely at TA-pupil interactions has highlighted that TAs are more likely to ask closed questions to pupils, often giving answers to pupils rather than engaging in discussion that opens up learning (Radford, Blatchford, & Webster, 2011). Findings related to TA deployment and role have led to recommendations that schools need to use evidence to better inform TA deployment and to carefully consider the match between TA skill level and their assigned roles (Webster, Russell, & Blatchford, 2016). With many school-based SEMH programmes (including the ELSA project) relying on TAs to support the needs of pupils, research findings such as those mentioned above are important to consider when designing and supporting TA dependent interventions, such as the ELSA project.

1.5 Relevance of this research to the Educational Psychology profession

To work ethically and effectively, EPs must critically interrogate their practice and ensure that they deliver and promote psychologically-based approaches that are rigorously designed and informed by appropriate research and theory (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2012). As listed on the ELSA Network website (2017), many LAs run ELSA projects. As such, and given that LA-based EPs will be involved in the training and supervision of ELSAs across the UK, it is imperative that EPs have a good understanding of how ELSA projects operate, particularly those in secondary schools as there is a dearth of research within these contexts. Gaining

a better understanding of how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools will support EPs to adapt and strengthen the training and support given to ELSAs and their secondary schools.

1.6 Research aims

Due to a paucity in the current research literature, this research aims to explore how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools. The views and experiences of secondary school pupils, ELSAs, SENCOs, and wider school staff will be gained in order to meet this aim. The specific research questions (RQs) developed to meet the aim are listed below.

1.6.1 Research questions.

- RQ1: How does the ELSA project operate in secondary schools?
- RQ2: What facilitates the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?
- RQ3: What challenges affect the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The above RQs were developed from a review of the ELSA literature, which is outlined in this chapter. As the ELSA project is based on the concept of EL, this literature review first outlines what EL is, its conceptual development, and its application to school-based SEMH interventions. An overview of the ELSA project will then be provided, followed by an exploration of relevant ELSA related research. Finally, the rationale for this current research project will be outlined based on gaps found within ELSA research literature.

2.1 Literature search approach

To explore the literature related to EL, SEMH, relevant school support and the ELSA project, both systematic and non-systematic search approaches were utilised. Firstly, a systematic search approach was used, deploying key terms in databases and search engines such as EBSCO, ERIC, PsychInfo, Ethos (a thesis database), UCL Explore, and Google Scholar. Details of search strategies can be found in Appendix-2. To identify further relevant literature related to EL, SEMH, and the ELSA project, the reference lists of literature identified in the first search were examined, as well as engagement with LA-based reports published on the ELSA Network website.

2.2 What is Emotional Literacy?

EL is a term prevalent within the UK education system associated with skills that enable a person to manage their emotions and interact well socially. A common definition underlying much UK-based EL work, and one used within the ELSA project literature (Burton, 2009; Shotton & Burton, 2008), is outlined by EP Peter Sharp (2001, p.1) 'as the ability to recognise, understand, handle, and

appropriately express emotions.’ However, the focus of EL work can differ depending on the underlying ideology that it developed from and the organisation aiming to promote the need for emotional development (Weare, 2010). For schools, the focus on improving and fostering greater wellbeing and emotional literacy for their CYP is often cited as being aimed at developing CYP’s understanding and management of theirs and others’ feelings, so as to ensure their educational attainment (DfE, 2018a). This definition is consistent with the view that EL is a skill that can be nurtured, rather than an innate and static ability.

The term EL was brought into the public sphere by psychotherapist Claude Steiner (2003; Steiner & Perry, 1997). As his book *‘Emotional Literacy: Intelligence with a Heart’* (2003) suggests, many people in the fields of psychology and education perceive EL to be a form of intelligence. The terms emotional intelligence (EI) and EL are often used interchangeably and appear to relate to similar capabilities (Wigelsworth et al., 2010). However, some have argued that there are differences between the two concepts, due in part to their differential conception pathways (Weare, 2004; Weare & Gray, 2003).

As popularised by Steiner, EL can be viewed through a psychodynamic lens, where developing EL skills is akin to becoming aware of unconscious emotional drives in order to adapt behaviours and reactions through thoughtful action (Steiner & Perry, 1997). Whereas the concept of EI, as defined and theorised by Salovey and Mayer (1990), is the ability to identify and use information to understand other’s actions and guide one’s behaviour. Salovey and Mayer’s conceptualisation of EI is therefore resonant with the cognitive-behavioural psychology tradition, where it is believed that emotional information is processed to direct our thoughts and behaviours. In-line with traditional theories of

intelligence, measures of EI, such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEITT, Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003) accept that test responses have only right or wrong answers. Although widely used (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2012), considering the complexity and cultural grounding of emotional experience, the efficacy of such an approach to measuring emotionality is arguably questionable (Mesquita, 2001).

After Salovey and Mayer's conceptualisation of EI, Gardner (1993) developed his theory of multiple intelligences, where a person's intelligence is considered to be comprised of a number of 'intelligences', including the classical view of intellect as well as – among others – a form of social intelligence (both interpersonal and intrapersonal). Later, the term EI was popularised by journalist Daniel Goleman's (1996) best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, which marked the institutionalisation of attempts to nurture both adults' and CYPs' emotional skills. In particular, Goleman's conception of EI is cited in the previous UK Government's SEAL (DCSF, 2007; DfES, 2005) curriculums. However, despite its popularity, EI has faced critique, including its lack of conceptual clarity and practical relevance, as programmes designed to target the improvement of EI often tap into other skills or positive gains not specific to EI (Zeidner et al., 2012).

Despite some similarities between the terms EI and EL, EL is preferred within UK education discourse because of its weaker association with the controversial history of intelligence and IQ. EL is also likely considered preferable due to the now common view that emotional competencies can be taught and developed, rather than being fixed entities, as foregoing notions of IQ previously claimed (Weare, 2004). As it is acknowledged as a skill that can be developed, and

adaptive to different contexts, EL has been argued to better fit with relativist philosophical stances (Gillum, 2010). In his exploration of the language of Steiner's, (2003) work, Gillum highlights how, through his reflective approach to the enquiry of EL, he is consistently reluctant to apply quantitative methods, indicating how EL is conceptually predominantly relativist.

It is important to note that there are critiques of EL one of which relates to the view that EL work can appear to problematise people's emotional responses to challenging situations (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009). For example, many CYP live in adverse conditions and face challenging interactions daily as a result of prejudices and inequalities related to socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or other perceivable differences. Therefore, as is suggested by the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), it is important, when working with CYP on their emotionality, to consider the impact of broader socio-political, structural-systemic issues, and interpersonal processes on the emotions and behaviours CYP exhibit. For some CYP, their emotional responses may appear as reasonable reactions or coping mechanisms to wider systemic issues they face (Burman, 2009; Gillies, 2011). Others have also argued that by encouraging talk about mental illness, such as depression and anxiety, through school-based EL programmes, such emotional responses can be primed, creating an increased risk of the very conditions that EL programmes aim to lessen (Craig, 2009). Such thinking comes from research that identified co-rumination (excessive interpersonal talk about problems, Rose, 2002) between adolescent peers, particularly girls, as a risk factor for increased experience of depressive symptoms (Bastin, Bijttebier, Raes, & Vasey, 2014; Rose, Carlson, & Waller, 2007). Therefore, care needs to be taken that perceptions of increased prevalence of poor EL and wellbeing within schools does not lead to excessive

normalisation and discussion of these difficulties. A broader understanding of the wide-ranging factors that may cause lower EL and wellbeing is needed.

Rather than dismissing EL work with CYP completely, a more nuanced approach can be adopted, where CYP's contexts and situations are held in mind within a supportive environment, whilst more effective emotional responses are explored and encouraged.

2.2.1 Implications for further research.

With a different conceptualisation from EI, research utilising the concept of EL needs to carefully consider its philosophical stance. Therefore, it is important that EL research explores the meanings that members of specific contexts make of EL interventions in order that processes aiming to develop EL skills can be better understood (see 3.1 for more detail on this research's philosophical stance). Furthermore, with the critique of EL as neglectful of the impact that systemic factors can play on people's emotional reactions, research should be careful not to reductively conceptualise EL as a within-person ability. Attention should be given to the impact environments and interactions within systems can have on CYP's EL, therefore this research will consider CYP's EL development from a bioecological P-P-C-T perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)

2.3 Developing EL in schools

With the popularisation of EI and EL, alongside evidence suggesting a high prevalence of low emotional and mental health difficulties among CYP (see 1.4), schools have been identified as important sites for improving CYP's emotional development.

Many proponents of EL work, such as Weare (2004), highlight the need for schools to take a holistic approach to EL and argue this work should be embedded throughout the whole-school. Therefore, an emotionally literate school should strive for EL to be evident within the whole-school environment – intrinsic to its community, ethos and structure – and not merely seen as something taught to individual pupils perceived to have emotional difficulties. This view is particularly pertinent when previous research indicates longer-lasting effects when whole-school EL approaches are utilised (Durlak et al., 2011).

Schools are frequently judged on their ability to develop children's academic attainment (Ofsted, 2018), so with the current focus on improving CYP's wellbeing, schools are likely to feel pressure to ensure that implemented EL interventions also have an impact on CYP's learning. USA-based reviews of EL approaches (often referred to as social and emotional learning, SEL, in USA research literature) have indicated that both whole-school SEL interventions (Durlak et al., 2011) and targeted SEL interventions (Payton et al., 2008) can impact positively on pupils' SEL skills, attitudes towards self, pro-social behaviours, level of conduct issues and pupil attainment (Durlak et al., 2011; Payton et al., 2008). However, it should be noted that in Payton et al.'s meta-analysis, although effect sizes were significant, many revealed only small effects, with a large effect ($d = 0.96$) only observed for SEL skills when good programme implementation was reported. SEL skill improvements were found to be the only outcome with medium to high effect sizes in Durlak et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis, with interventions delivered by non-school personnel (such as psychologists) achieving the only high effect size (0.87 effect size). Additionally, whilst still significant, all effect sizes further decreased at follow-up for studies in Durlak et al.'s (2011) review. Follow up data examined in Payton et al.'s (2008) review

found no maintained significant effects for long-term academic improvements. However, findings from Payton et al's (2008) review only included studies focusing on targeted interventions for pupils between the ages of 4 and 14, so no impact is known about targeted SEL interventions for pupils aged 14-16 years.

Of further importance when reviewing the findings from these meta-analyses is the impact that implementation can have on CYP's EL and academic related outcomes. EL related interventions are often developed and trialled in carefully planned research projects, before being implemented more widely across schools and community settings. Though, studies such as those included in Durlak et al. (2011) and Payton et al. (2008) clearly demonstrate that careful consideration is required so that effective implementation approaches can be adopted. For example, considering the school environment, which staff members or professionals are best able to deliver EL interventions and what support and conditions may be required to ensure any positive effects are maintained (Humphrey, 2013). Through researching school-based SEL interventions Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) identified four intervention practices associated with effective SEL skill development: sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE). However, these practices and other factors are often considered when exploring implementation of SEL interventions (e.g. session frequency and duration) (Humphrey, 2013) and can arguably only be usefully considered when interventions are prescriptive and manualised (Lendrum, Humphrey, & Wigelsworth, 2013). For non-manualised and flexible interventions, qualitative explorations of implementation with a focus on school contextual factors may be more insightful (see Chapter 3 for a description and evaluation of this current study's method).

2.3.1 EL support in UK schools and the role of EPs.

In UK schools, EL and wellbeing interventions are commonly delivered in a graduated approach, across three levels or waves: wave one interventions are those delivered at a whole-school level, such as SEAL (DfES, 2005, 2007); wave two interventions are delivered to pupils identified as needing more direct early intervention work for SEMH needs; and wave three includes more targeted and specialised interventions aimed at pupils experiencing the highest level of SEMH difficulty.

UK-based research investigating SEMH and EL interventions in UK schools has identified the implementation of whole-school programmes such as: SEAL (e.g. Humphrey et al., 2010) Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS, e.g. Honess & Hunter, 2014); and Zippy's Friends (e.g. Clarke, Bunting, & Barry, 2014), as well as targeted interventions for groups or individual CYP, such as: small group SEAL (e.g. Humphrey, Kalambouka, Wigelsworth, & Lendrum, 2010a; 2010b); Nurture Groups (e.g. Grantham & Primrose, 2017; Hughes & Schlösser, 2014) and ELSA (e.g. Hills, 2016; Wilding & Claridge, 2016). From the search conducted for this thesis, and outlined in a review of secondary-based whole-school SEMH interventions by Blank et al. (2010), it should be noted that there is very little published research investigating the delivery of secondary school-based SEMH interventions.

2.3.2 Implications for future research.

All UK maintained and academy schools have an assigned EP. Wherever possible, EPs aim to support schools in deciding on interventions that would best suit their community's needs. This support is offered by EPs' in: their consultations with parents and school staff regarding specific individuals or

groups of CYP (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2010; Wagner, 2000); their training and support of school staff; and in their psychological report advice (Buck, 2015). Additionally, EPs also occasionally deliver SEMH interventions to individual CYP or small groups. The limited amount of UK-based research, particularly in secondary schools, is a concern and could call in to question how sure EPs can be about recommending any specific interventions with such a limited research base. As previously mentioned, one school-based intervention that EPs often endorse and support is the ELSA project. This intervention can be classified as a wave two intervention, as it aims to support pupils with either short-term or long-term SEMH needs at a non-clinical level (Burton, 2018). ELSA is delivered in both primary and secondary school settings. For EPs to continue to recommend and support this intervention, a good research base is required so that a clear conceptualisation of the intervention, effective implementation, and positive and long-lasting effects can be achieved. Of particular importance for EPs is that their governing and registration bodies stipulate that only evidence-based interventions should be utilised and recommended by EPs (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative that research focuses on ELSA projects so that real-world implementation, across all school contexts can be thoroughly understood.

2.4 The ELSA project

2.4.1 Aims and purpose of the ELSA project.

The ELSA project has gained popularity in many LAs since its development by EP Sheila Burton in the Southampton LA (Burton, 2008). The ELSA project aims to support primary and secondary school-age pupils who are experiencing

difficulties, either emotionally and/or behaviourally, to develop EL skills and strategies that help them regulate their emotional responses, through individual or small-group sessions. ELSA is not an alternative to more in-depth support from counsellors, psychologists or therapists, and so the suitability of ELSA intervention, and its related goals, need to be carefully considered by the adults most concerned about CYP's SEMH needs (Burton, 2018).

Schools involved in LA-led ELSA projects are expected to identify suitable TAs to receive ELSA training. The 'ELSA person specification' (Burton, 2009) outlines core qualities that a potential ELSA should hold (p. 47). Qualities not dissimilar to those expected within the humanist therapeutic tradition (Rogers, 1957), such as warmth, calmness and attunement, are mentioned as key. Alongside these personal qualities, organisation and resourcefulness skills are also highlighted. Such qualities indicate that a highly skilled TA is required to effectively fulfil the ELSA role. Having a clearly outlined role has been found to be important in the effective deployment of TAs (Blatchford et al., 2009, 2012). As well as key qualities, the role of ELSAs is also outlined. For example, ELSAs are expected to deliver pupil support on at least one day of their weekly timetable, allowing for time to plan their work, liaise with key adults, and carry out their one-to-one or group sessions with CYP outside of the classroom (Burton, 2018). Research on the role of TAs suggests that having time to plan and liaise with other staff is important in ensuring effective outcomes (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Martin, et al., 2009; Webster, Blatchford, & Russell, 2013), and ELSAs are recommended to plan and set goals for their ELSA work alongside school staff and parents (Burton, 2009, 2018). However, the degree to which these practices happen in schools has been found to vary (Grahamslaw, 2010; Wilding & Claridge, 2016).

It is recommended that pupils' ELSA interventions consist of approximately 6-10 weekly, 30-minutes to 1-hour sessions (Burton, 2009, 2018). During this time, ELSAs are expected to track CYP's progress towards specific goals and use this information, and their supervision discussions, to decide an appropriate time for the ELSA intervention to end (Burton, 2009, 2018). Guidance for managing endings is provided in the '*Excellent ELSAs*' book (Burton, 2018), as uncertain or abrupt endings to pupils' ELSA interventions have been reported in previous research (Begley, 2016; Hills, 2016). This new guidance (Burton, 2018) suggests that endings should be managed carefully, giving CYP prior warning that the ELSA intervention will be finishing and that time should be allocated to allow ELSAs to check-in with CYP once their ELSA sessions have ceased.

2.4.2 The training and support of ELSAs.

ELSAs are trained by EPs across 5-6 days over one school term. During the training, a balanced mixture of didactic and experiential learning experiences are provided. Trainee-ELSAs are taught key psychological theories before guidance is given about related strategies and approaches they could utilise. These approaches are then discussed and practiced (Burton, 2008, 2009).

Although LAs delivering ELSA training may adapt and develop ELSA training to best suit their local population, key principles underlying training and subsequent ELSA work include:

- EL theory, related to the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Gardner (1993), with a focus on developing CYP's emotional vocabulary; identification of emotions and self-regulation (Burton, 2008);

- Maslow's Theory of Motivation (1970), which outlines that CYPs' need for safety, security and belonging precedes their development of a positive sense of self and learning potential;
- Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which highlights the significance of relationships in developing emotional wellbeing and the function modelling plays in the acquisition of EL skills;
- Conceptualising and understanding how to support CYP's self-esteem based on Borba's, (1989) Building Blocks of Self-Esteem. With a key focus on supporting CYP to develop security, self-hood and affiliation.
- Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT) and approaches (Beck, 1976, although he is not directly cited) and psychoeducation. These approaches provide a framework to help CYP understand how emotions interplay with thoughts, physiological sensations, and behaviours.

The topics covered in ELSA training within the focus LA can be found in Appendix-3.

At the start of their training, ELSAs are given a training folder with the presentation slides and activity resources. ELSAs are also provided a copy of *'Emotional Wellbeing: An Introductory Handbook'* (Shotton & Burton, 2008), which outlines additional ELSA activities and approaches.

After training, ELSAs are required to attend half-termly group 'clinical' supervision, facilitated by LA-based EPs. These supervision sessions aim to provide a space where ELSAs can reflect on their ELSA work, continue to develop their ELSA practice, experience additional training opportunities, as well as problem-solve any concerns that may arise out of their individual or small-group sessions with CYP (Burton, 2008). Whilst referred to as 'clinical'

supervision in the ELSA literature (e.g. Burton, 2009), in accordance with BPS guidelines on EP-led supervision (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010), in this current research it is understood to mean reflective supervision. Reviews of EP-led ELSA supervision (Burton 2008; Osborne & Burton, 2014) have indicated that ELSAs report satisfaction with both its regularity and usefulness. Although they provide insights into ELSAs' views of supervision, these studies offer only a limited view, particularly with the lack of depth in understanding that Osborne and Burton's (2014) questionnaire data offers, and the potential bias that may ensue due to research being co-conducted by the ELSA project developer. Furthermore, these studies neglected to explore the impact of what is termed 'managerial' supervision (practical support for ELSAs typically provided by school SENCOs) (Burton, 2009).

2.4.3 Implications for future research.

As indicated by the summary provided above, by stating that the ELSA project supports pupils with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, the ELSA project sets out to meet a broad range of pupil needs from an equally broad theoretical and conceptual grounding. Therefore, based on the taxonomy of SEL interventions outlined by Humphrey (2013), the ELSA project can be described as a targeted and flexible intervention. As a result of its non-manualised approach it is possible that different school contexts could conceptualise and operationalise the ELSA project in distinct ways. The conceptualisation of the ELSA project in different school communities (including secondary schools) as well as the challenges and facilitating factors that may arise are, therefore, worth exploring.

2.5 UK-based ELSA Research

Although a widely utilised intervention within UK schools (ELSA Network, 2017; Johnson, Carroll, & Bradley, 2017), the research base for the ELSA project is small. There are only a handful of published studies related to the ELSA project (Hills, 2016; McEwen, 2019; Osborne & Burton, 2014; Wilding & Claridge, 2016), with the majority of ELSA evidence documented in either doctorate theses or LA-commissioned research reports available through the ELSA Network website. Due to the small published research base, literature from non-peer reviewed research was included in this review. It is worth noting that although unpublished, much of this 'grey' literature has been conducted by EPs or Trainee EPs who have studied research methods as a part of their accredited Masters or Doctorate programme, and who also have research standards to uphold within their professional bodies' codes of conduct (BPS, 2002; HCPC, 2015).

2.5.1 ELSA research – quantitative methods.

Predominantly, ELSA research has focused on quantifying its effectiveness (despite EL, in its original conceptualisation, being more aligned to non-positivist philosophies). Some ELSA research has utilised mixed-methods (e.g. Grahamslaw, 2010), however findings from the qualitative elements of these studies will be outlined in section 2.5.2 as the information gleaned from quantitative and qualitative methods are quite distinct. Quantitative methods in ELSA-based research has predominantly looked at CYPs pre- and post-ELSA intervention scores utilising standardised measures of SEMH, such as the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997) and the non-standardised pupil and teacher *Emotional Literacy Checklists* (ELCs) (Faupel, 2003b, 2003a). The SDQ comprises of child self-report (11-17 years) and parent

and teacher questionnaire (4-17 years). It is frequently used in SEMH intervention research, as it enables exploration of: emotional, behavioural, attentional, and peer relational difficulties, as well as pro-social factors. The SDQ has also been found to have good internal consistency (Goodman, 2001) and strong psychometric properties, so it correlates well with other diagnostic scales, for example those used for ADHD diagnoses (Stone, Otten, Engels, Vermulst, & Janssens, 2010). Finally, Faupel's ELCs are often used, as the items fit well with the facets and skills that EL interventions, such as the ELSA project, aim to develop. These facets include: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (CORC, n.d).

Using the SDQ to explore outcomes for CYP from pre- and post-ELSA data, Burton, Traill, and Norgate, (2009) found a significant difference between teachers' pre- and post-total SDQ scores, significant decreases in SDQ ratings of emotional problems, peer problems, conduct issues, and a significant increase in pro-social behaviours. However, despite a relatively large sample (n=107) no significant difference was found for pre- and post-ELSA teacher ratings of hyperactivity. For CYP's parents (n=52), only a significant decrease in total SDQ scores and hyperactivity were identified. Whilst both teachers and parents reported significant perception of overall improvement, the difference in findings, with parents perceiving less change, is considered by Burton et al. (2009) to result from children's improvements not being fully generalised to their home context, a key element of CYP's microsystem. The amount of home-school link between ELSA and parents was not detailed or explored in this study, and so it is not clear to what degree generalisation of ELSA effects to CYP's home settings was attempted. Further, this research does not indicate the number of CYP who were from primary or secondary school settings, so differences in effects between

these two settings cannot be considered. With no comparison group, it also cannot be guaranteed that the ELSA intervention was the main cause of the identified changes over time.

To overcome some of these issues, more rigorous designs have since been conducted, including identifying the age range of ELSA CYP and the use of comparison wait-list groups. Burton et al. (2010), in their evaluation study, found that pupils receiving ELSA were reported by teachers to have significantly greater improvements on total SDQ and ELC scores, compared to those on a wait list. However, pupil self-report ELC scores did not show significant differences. Lack of significance in pupil self-report differences could reflect CYP considering their emotionality across the different settings within their microsystems (school, peer group and home-life), compared to teachers who may only reflect on CYP's class-based behaviour. Again, these findings may indicate insufficient transfer of ELSA related outcomes to non-school systems.

Interestingly, many of the overall post-intervention SDQ and ELC improvements were found for primary-aged pupils rather than secondary-aged pupils. This is explained by the researchers as likely due to their research including a smaller sample of secondary school-aged pupils. However, it is important to consider alternative possibilities as to why this finding may have occurred, not least due to the known organisational and environmental differences between primary and secondary school settings and the possibility that the SDQ and ELC are not sensitive enough to pick-up EL changes for secondary age pupils.

Additionally, more recent studies with primary school pupils have failed to show significant differences between ELSA pupils and a comparison group at post-ELSA intervention, using both the SDQ (Ball, 2014; Mann, 2014) and ELC (Mann,

2014). Again, sample size is given as a possible explanation, but further considerations should be explored, including: the difficulty exploring intervention outcomes across pupils with a diverse range of SEMH needs (Pickering, Lambeth, & Woodcock, 2019); the level of ELSA-teacher contact; and the amount of ELSA planning time available (particularly as these latter two have been identified in research as impactful on other TA roles, (e.g. Blatchford et al., 2008).

As a programme designed to teach CYP how to identify, manage and express their emotions (Burton, 2008), it could be expected that CYP's EL self-efficacy would be improved post-ELSA intervention. Focusing on one facet, EL self-efficacy, and utilising an adapted self-efficacy questionnaire, Grahamslaw (2010) compared primary-aged ELSA pupils' EL self-efficacy pre- and post-ELSA intervention to a comparison group of non-ELSA pupils. At post intervention, the ELSA pupils showed significantly greater improvements in EL self-efficacy than the comparison group. Interestingly, as it has been underexplored in previous ELSA project research, Grahamslaw's (2010) study also identified that ELSAs' EL self-efficacy improved post-ELSA training, and a greater effect was found for ELSAs that had protected time to plan their ELSA work.

Such findings from quantitative studies suggest that, when robust methods and more targeted measures are utilised, some children – predominantly primary pupils – can show post-ELSA improvements in EL-related skills. However, what remains unclear is exactly which type of pupil needs are most improved by ELSA, what effect ELSA has on secondary age pupils' EL needs, and what processes within the ELSA project facilitate any change.

2.5.2 ELSA research – qualitative methods.

As ELSA is a non-manualised programme with individualised targeted outcomes, quantitative measures that explore general improvements in wellbeing, EL or behaviour (such as the SDQ and ELCs), may not be sensitive enough to pick up on CYP's specific target progress. Similarly, emotions can be considered complex concepts that are often value-laden, therefore, quantitative measures are unlikely to offer a full picture of people's emotionality (Steiner, 2003). Quantitative studies also do not offer enough explanation as to what aspects of the intervention or school setting enable any measured or perceived change. To enable a deeper exploration of a non-manualised intervention, accounts from key ELSA stakeholders are likely to offer greater insights than generic numerical pre- and post- measures (Humphrey, 2013).

Accounts from qualitative research (Barker, 2017; Hills, 2016; McEwen, 2019) have highlighted that primary-aged pupils perceive the ELSA project as an effective intervention that helped them with peer relationships, confidence and their ability to talk about and manage their feelings. Accounts from primary and secondary school ELSAs (Bravery & Harris, 2009; Leighton, 2015), head teachers (Bravery & Harris, 2009; Burton et al., 2009; Grahamslaw, 2010) and parents of primary school ELSA pupils (Barker, 2017; Wilding & Claridge, 2016) have also indicated that the ELSA project can lead to perceived improvements in CYPs' emotional wellbeing and behaviour at both school and home, including sibling relationships (Barker, 2017). These latter findings indicate some wider-system transfer of ELSA related outcomes. Some of the children in Hills' (2016) study also commented on how the ELSA project helped them open up about their

feelings with their parents, indicating further that the ELSA project may support children to manage their EL related difficulties beyond the school context.

Moving beyond perceived outcomes, qualitative ELSA research has also started to explore both the processes that are believed to enable change within the ELSA project and the barriers and facilitating factors that impact on ELSA projects within schools. The former will be explored first.

Possible processes present within the ELSA-pupil encounter that may facilitate pupil change have been highlighted, predominantly, in thesis research with the exception of three peer-reviewed published research articles. However, only one thesis has focused solely on secondary school ELSA projects (Begley, 2016). Key processes identified within this literature will now be explored and related to relevant theory. These themes will be used to review the current study's findings in Chapter 5.

The importance of the ELSA-pupil relationships was identified by a range of primary and secondary school-based ELSA stakeholders (Begley, 2016; Hills, 2016; McEwen, 2019; Miles, 2015; Wilding & Claridge, 2016). Recognition of the importance of ELSA-pupil relationships could indicate that the ELSA project operates from similar processes outlined in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment theory proposes that when CYP receive responsive support and attention from caregivers, they are more likely to develop a secure and positive view of themselves, others and their environments. CYP who have experienced such principles are also believed to be more able to cope with separation from caregivers and seek comfort from them when heightened emotions arise (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1988). Although not a caregiver in the typical sense, school staff, such as TAs and ELSAs, have been

identified as key people whom CYP can develop secure and responsive relationships with (Bomber, 2015; Bomber & Hughes, 2013). A therapeutic alliance between CYP and CAMHS therapists has also been identified as a key process for enabling therapeutic outcomes amongst clinical populations (Green, 2006). Whilst attached ELSA-pupil relationships may seem a beneficial process, some ELSA research has indicated that ELSA pupils may become dependent on their ELSA (Begley, 2016; Mann, 2014), leading to some pupils not learning independent emotional regulation. With ELSA-pupil check-in at breaktimes encouraged (Burton, 2009, 2018) the above research findings could indicate that the ELSA project is akin to the key adult approach for emotional support outlined by Bomber (2015). Further exploration as to the role and processes involved in the ELSA-pupil relationship is needed. Particularly in secondary schools, where the development of independent emotion regulation is more developmentally appropriate.

In-line with the importance of relationships, ELSA research (Begley, 2016; Hills, 2016; McEwen, 2019) has indicated that ELSAs' unique qualities and skills help develop a space where pupils feel safe to talk about issues. As Steiner and Perry (1997) conceptualised an emotionally literate person as someone able to use their skills to build attuned and dynamic interactions, it is perhaps not surprising that attuned interactions from ELSAs were identified in many ELSA accounts. Communicating with others in an attuned manner involves responsive and harmonious interactions with others, also known as 'intersubjectivity' (Trevarthen, 1979). Through attuned interactions, ELSAs may communicate to pupils that their thoughts and feelings are valued. EL and SEL skills have been considered to be more 'taught' than 'caught' (Humphrey, 2013). However, with its non-manualised approach and a theoretical focus on active listening and social learning theory

(Burton, 2009), the ELSA-project could arguably be a hybrid intervention, including both 'taught' and 'caught' processes. Attuned ELSA interactions may model emotional stability to pupils, which, as well as 'containing' pupils' emotions and concerns (Bion, 1961), may support pupils to develop regulated responses to difficult circumstances. Attunement within therapeutic work with CYP can be considered a primary activating experience – where eye contact, facial expression, voice tone, and timing are seen as key therapeutic tools (Hughes, 2006). Therefore, evidence of ELSAs' unique qualities enabling pupil talk could indicate their use of attunement and containment principles. By accepting and containing pupils' difficult feelings ELSAs also appear to perform the key therapeutic process of unconditional-positive regard (Rogers, 1957). However, as is noted in the ELSA trainer's manual (Burton, 2009), schools need to carefully consider which TAs best demonstrate these skills before ELSA deployment. Therefore, further research is needed in order to explore whether these unique skills and qualities are inherent in the approach of all ELSAs, including those deployed in secondary schools.

As ELSA work is non-manualised, previous ELSA research (Barker, 2017; Begley, 2016; Hills, 2016; McEwen, 2019) offers a useful finding that pupil-centred approaches were felt to support pupils' EL development. There has been a growing increase in pupil-centred approaches since it was raised as a significant approach to supporting pupils with SEND in the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014), and therefore pupil-centred interventions, such as the ELSA project, are likely to be preferred by education professionals. By targeting pupil-centred goals rather than generic broad outcomes, it may be that ELSA interventions again tap into the person-centred therapeutic approaches outlined by Rogers (1957). If pupils feel thought about and noticed within the intervention

then it may be more likely that they participate fully and maintain effects, as they work on targets felt to be of personal importance.

The importance of having a space to talk through issues is the final process identified in previous ELSA research (Barker, 2017; Begley, 2016; Hills, 2016; McEwen, 2019; Wilding & Claridge, 2016). The provision of a safe space to talk indicates that ELSAs facilitate both a consistent environmental space, and purposeful interactions between themselves and the pupil. Encouraging pupils to talk about their concerns and emotions is outlined as a key aim of ELSA work (Burton, 2009). Talk as a key process implies that EL skills can be developed through bringing one's thoughts and feelings into consciousness so that behaviours can be knowingly adapted, a process in-line with Steiner's (2003) theory of EL. Encouraging talk about problems is often viewed as a positive and necessary step in overcoming difficult feelings or situations. However, it is worth holding in mind critiques of encouraging talk and rumination (e.g. Craig, 2009), particularly when encouraged within an intervention led by school staff (TAs) with the lowest levels of expertise requirement. Although, contrary to previous research that indicates that, compared to teachers, TAs are more likely to close-down discussion rather than use questions to open it up (Radford et al., 2011), Begley (2016) identified accounts of ELSAs effectively opening-up discussion. Explanation for these findings were considered as possibly attributable to the ELSA training, as active listening is included within the 5-6 training days. However, many of these accounts are identified in the analysis of just one ELSA, who was reported to be a qualified teacher. Thus, the degree to which non-qualified teacher ELSAs engage in these skilled behaviours needs further exploration.

Given the evidence and links to broader theories outlined above, it is likely that the presence of these processes help facilitate change within ELSA interventions. However, further research is needed to clarify what any processes may look like in secondary school contexts, as only one study specifically explored ELSA processes within these contexts.

Qualitative research methods have also identified facilitating factors and challenges that may impact on the implementation of ELSA projects. Facilitating factors highlighted in ELSA project research can be found in Table 1. Challenges faced by ELSA projects were also highlighted within ELSA project research literature. These challenges are outlined below in Table 2.

Table 1 Facilitating factors identified in ELSA project research literature

Facilitating factors identified	Study
Support from EP supervision and SENCOs	Leighton (2015); McEwen (2019)
Support from school's senior leadership	McEwen (2019)
ELSA training	Mann (2014)
Support from ELSA peers to understand contexts and share resources	Leighton (2015); McEwen (2019)
Ability to work flexibly with pupils, including continued support beyond intervention sessions	Leighton (2015); Mann (2014); Begley (2016); McEwen (2019)
Good relationships between ELSAs and other key adults (e.g. parents and teaching staff)	McEwen (2019); Leighton (2015); Mann (2014); Ball (2014)

Table 2 Challenges highlighted in ELSA project research literature.

Challenges identified	Study
Limited managerial support and supervision from SMT/SENCOs;	Leighton (2015)
Incongruent viewpoints between ELSAs and parents and teaching staff regarding the purpose of the ELSA project and their understanding of pupils' needs	Leighton (2015); Mann (2014)
Time constraints (e.g. managing different TA roles and feeling that six week interventions were too short a time to result in pupil change	Mann (2014)
Abrupt or unclear endings	Hills (2016); Begley (2016); McEwen (2019)
Limited pupil-centred approach (e.g. ELSAs sometimes felt they were doing work <i>to</i> not <i>with</i> pupils)	Mann (2014)
Negative effects for pupils (e.g. Absence from lessons for ELSA can expose pupils to unwanted enquiry from peers; and discussion in ELSA sessions can trigger difficult feelings about past experiences)	Begley (2016)
Difficulty tracking pupil outcomes	Mann (2014)
ELSAs' low confidence in their ability to support pupils	McEwen (2019); Mann (2014); Begley (2016)
The impact of home contexts and wider factors on pupils EL and wellbeing	Mann (2014)

Additionally, qualitative analysis of survey responses from two secondary school head teachers in Grahamslaw's (2010) research indicated that secondary schools can find it hard to adapt the ELSA project to fit this school context. For example, one head teacher reported '*The ELSA has struggled to adapt the learning from the training and the resources to a high school environment*' (p.131). As this was a survey and not interview, it was not possible for Grahamslaw to delve deeper into how the ELSA projects were adapted and what specifically about these contexts impacted on implementation. Along with these head teachers' comments, wider SEMH research has highlighted that less is known about the support and provision available for CYP's SEMH needs in

secondary schools (e.g. Durlak et al., 2011), and with only one study looking at how ELSAs and pupils construe the ELSA project in secondary schools (Begley, 2016), further research investigating how it operates is needed.

It is important to consider why, thus far, fewer research-based interventions have been implemented and investigated in secondary school settings (Durlak et al., 2011). Some reasons for this may include: a lack of adequate adaptation to meet the differing needs of adolescents; as well as less consideration given by intervention creators in how best to situate SEMH and EL support within these larger, more complex and diverse school systems. As a result of this limited research-base, secondary school SEMH support has been found to be variable in both the types of interventions implemented (Kidger et al., 2009), and in the effectiveness of interventions (Wolpert et al., 2015).

2.5.3 Exploring implementation differences in secondary school contexts.

Consideration will now be given as to why differential implementation of the ELSA project may be required in secondary contexts. Firstly, secondary school pupils are within the distinct developmental period of adolescence that is considered to begin at the onset of puberty, between the ages of 9-12 years. It can be defined by hormonal and neurological differences (Crone & Dahl, 2012; Peper & Dahl, 2013), the achievement of specific cognitive milestones (Piaget, 1972), and as a socially constructed phenomena developed by different cultures' social and political influences (Lesko, 2005, 2012). Adolescents are known to experience increased self-awareness (Blakemore, 2018), as well as higher rates of SEMH related difficulties than younger children (Green et al., 2005; NHS Digital, 2018),

including at the most extreme end of the SEMH spectrum – higher incidences of self-harm and suicide (Morgan et al., 2017).

With CYP from different developmental stages, it cannot be assumed that an intervention developed predominantly for use in primary schools can easily be transferred for use in secondary schools. Like the ELSA project, nurture groups (NGs) (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000) are an SEMH-based intervention first developed for primary-aged pupils which has since been implemented within secondary schools (Colley, 2009). However, the extent to which secondary school-based NGs have shown fidelity to the original design and principles of NGs has been questioned (Grantham & Primrose, 2017). With mostly only small effect sizes gleaned from pre- and post- within-group measures for secondary school NG pupils (e.g. Cooke et al., 2008), interviews with school staff stakeholders identified possible barriers that secondary school NGs may face. These include: a lack of whole-staff awareness and understanding of NGs; pupil NG participation as hindered by complex timetabling within secondary schools; lack of parental involvement; and difficulties with endings and reintegration (Grantham & Primrose, 2017). It cannot be assumed that barriers would be similar for secondary school ELSA implementation, however, this research sheds light on possible issues that may need consideration when targeted interventions, such as the ELSA project, are implemented within secondary schools. Therefore, it is imperative that SEMH support for secondary-aged pupils is carefully considered so that appropriate interventions can be provided.

Secondly, beyond the developmental difference of adolescence, the school contexts within which they are educated are also significantly distinctive from primary school contexts. Secondary schools are often larger, and more complex

in social structure – with pupils taught throughout the school day by multiple teachers and alongside different peers. For pupils' EL gains to generalise beyond the ELSA encounter and maintain over time, the presence of facilitative factors within all CYP's microsystems (e.g. the school environment) are likely of importance. Therefore, research should not focus sole attention on the individual or merely within the targeted intervention. With the ELSA project the expectation for change is often focused at the level of CYP, with ELSA activity happening away from CYP's social contexts (classroom, peer group and home). From a P-P-C-T perspective, the degree to which change can be expected in the CYP's wider systems is thus likely reduced. As indicated earlier, research utilising qualitative methods has highlighted the importance of ELSAs' relationships with wider school staff. ELSA-teacher collaboration has also been recognised to support CYP to transfer newly learned skills to classroom and peer group contexts (Ball, 2014; Grahamslaw, 2010; Mann, 2014). However, the level to which this can be achieved was considered to be dependent on the degree to which teachers and school staff understood the ELSA project. School staff were often believed to harbour the view that CYP's emotional needs were now exclusively catered for by the ELSA (Grahamslaw, 2010). ELSAs in Begley's (2016) study identified the difficulty with observing ELSA pupils 'acting out' in classrooms or in the corridors after a 'good' ELSA session. This may highlight the small degree of immediate transferability that the ELSA project can have for certain CYP. Indeed the need for multi-contextual work throughout the school for CYP experiencing difficult emotions is cited in '*Excellent ELSAs*' (Burton, 2018) and is championed by EPs, such as Roffey (2016; 2008). Therefore, the degree to which additional contextual factors impact on CYP who receive the ELSA intervention is worthy of attention.

2.5.4 Implications for future research.

The research presented above indicates that the ELSA project can be effective in reducing EL difficulties for some pupils – predominantly those in primary schools – and that it can increase CYPs’ and ELSAs’ EL-related self-efficacy. The ELSA project has also been perceived as effective in improving pupil behaviour, emotional awareness by key stakeholders, and as enabling CYP to discuss and explore difficult feelings. However, transference across CYP’s systems and long-term gains have been inadequately explored.

From the review of previous ELSA research the need for a deeper exploration of how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools has been identified. Such an exploration could help identify factors that enable effective implementation, as well as factors which may hinder implementation within secondary schools. As most qualitative ELSA research has sought the experiences and views of just one or two key ELSA stakeholders at a time (e.g. Begley, 2016; Hills, 2016) future research would benefit from a broader range of experiences of how ELSA projects operate, by interviewing a number of key ELSA stakeholders within school communities. A wider participant pool would provide a community voice from key stakeholders, providing valuable information about secondary school ELSA project contexts.

2.6 Gap in the current literature

As EL is a term that has mixed conceptions, it is likely that differences exist in the way it is conceptualised in different school contexts, such differences could also impact on the way ELSA is conceptualised. Although indicating some positive trends, the ELSA research base is limited, and there is a dearth of detailed

research exploring the secondary school ELSA experience. When reviewing school-based interventions, it is important that positive gains found for primary schools are not automatically assumed to create similar effects when introduced in secondary schools. The difference between these two school settings can be stark, not least due to the greater organisational complexity of secondary schools and the differing needs that adolescents can present with. Therefore, the current study aims to expand the research base and explore the ELSA project from secondary school contexts.

From a P-P-C-T perspective (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), the influence of any intervention on an individual is mediated by their surrounding environments and the proximal processes within them. Therefore, the success of a programme, such as the ELSA project, may depend on support from wider school contexts. Wider contextual issues, the view of school staff, and the proximal processes that occur in secondary school ELSA projects has received limited research attention. With many recognising the impact CYP's wider contexts, and whole-school EL and wellbeing approaches can have on CYP's SEMH (Roffey, 2016; Weare, 2004), it is concerning how these factors have largely been ignored in ELSA research. Thus, recognising P-P-C-T influences, this research aims to explore how ELSA stakeholders (e.g. pupils, ELSAs and school staff) perceive the implementation of, and the interaction between secondary school ELSA projects and wider school contexts.

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter will outline this research's underlying philosophical stance; the reflexive activities engaged in by the researcher; the research design; the participants of this project; data generation and analysis; research procedure; research quality criteria; and ethical considerations.

3.1 Philosophical Stance

Social constructionism provides an explanation as to the nature of reality (ontology) and is contrary to the ontology of positivism/realism and as such is a relativist ontological position (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thus, understanding reality through social constructionism leads one to accept that no single reality exists and that one's personal view of 'reality' is constructed as a result of interactions with others, culture and lived experiences (Robson, 2016). Researching from this perspective requires one to question sweeping assumptions of how the world appears, and to acknowledge that the concepts we understand are relative to factors like power structures, culture and history (Burr, 2003).

Social constructionism can help us to understand how knowledge is constructed and maintained (epistemology). Like ontology, a shared knowledge is constructed between people through language and interactions, and as people and interactions are dynamic these 'knowledges' change throughout time and location (Burr, 2003).

By focusing the research within one LA, it is acknowledged that participants' experiences are partial and influenced by the research context. It is also accepted that my own interaction with the interview data adds a level of subjectivity that

can influence the knowledge identified by participants. Social constructionism acknowledges these limitations by positing that findings are *one* – important – set of perspectives on the issue under analysis, and not *the* immutable perspective on them (Robson, 2016).

This position provides a suitable framework for the current study as qualitative interview methods, which create first-person accounts, help researchers explore the shared construction of knowledge and experiences held by groups of people.

The philosophical stance of this research also reflects the way I approach my EP role. For example, as a Trainee EP, I utilise a consultation approach to support and problem-solve with children, families and schools. The consultation model in EP practice is heavily influenced by social constructionist thinking (Wagner, 2000), where meaning for a particular phenomenon is understood through the interactions between key people's perspectives. Therefore, as the ELSA project is an intervention encountered within my own EP practice it was appropriate to generalise my social constructionist stance to this research.

3.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is considered an imperative component of good qualitative research (Finlay & Gough, 2008, Braun & Clarke, 2013). When research is undertaken through a social constructionist lens, reflexivity should include the researcher reflecting on the values, beliefs and experiences that impact on the knowledge constructed from the research data (Willig, 2013). Reflexivity should not be static; instead, it involves a dynamic, continual self-awareness about one's own subjectivity (Finlay & Gough, 2008). Throughout this research process I have engaged in both 'functional' and 'personal' reflexivity (Wilkinson, 1988). Functional reflexivity relates to the exploration of how the tools and methods

utilised within the research process may influence the knowledge that is constructed by the research. Evidence of my engagement in functional reflexivity will be detailed throughout this chapter, as well as in Chapter 5. Personal reflexivity relates to how visible the researcher is within the research process. To exemplify my engagement in personal reflexivity my values, beliefs and experiences that relate to, and likely impact on this research study are outlined here:

- Having worked in schools and now studying to become an EP, I believe that schools can be supportive sites for pupils experiencing SEMH difficulties. Therefore, with the right level of training and support, school staff should be able to facilitate and maintain positive improvements in pupil's levels of SEMH need. As a result of this belief, I have sought to identify interventions and approaches that can be adopted by schools to support their pupils' SEMH needs. This interest led me to discover the ELSA project.
- As part of my DEdPsy training placement within this research's focus LA, I have been involved in the training of new ELSAs and have also delivered half-termly supervision to a group of primary school ELSAs. This work led to my identification of a gap in the research literature relating to secondary school ELSA projects.
- From my previous experience as a primary school teacher and my current role as a trainee EP, I have identified that there are many differences between the ethos and structure of primary and secondary schools. These differences led me to consider how the ELSA project, which was originally developed for use in primary schools, may be differentially conceptualised and implemented within secondary school contexts.

- Since my undergraduate study of psychology through to my current studies on the DEdPsy, I have held the belief that CYP's development is not solely influenced by biological factors but that wider systemic factors and interactional processes also make a huge contribution, a belief in-line with Bronfenbrenner's (2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) P-P-C-T model. As a result of this view, in my work with CYP I have endeavoured to explore, acknowledge and develop support within the wider systems and processes present in CYP's lives.

To further ensure criticality and reflexivity during this research process, I kept a research diary, recording my thoughts and feelings at different timepoints in the research. Key decisions and their rationale, as well as thoughts from discussions held with supervisors and EP colleagues were also recorded. As a result of this continued reflexivity changes to my research included: broadening my participant pool to include a wider range of school staff, and considering the order in which I analysed participant data – in order to gain the broadest understanding of the ELSA project in each school context.

3.3 Research Design

This research was designed to best address the RQs and develop findings that can improve EPs' ELSA related practice. It is also acknowledged that elements of this study's design were influenced by the limits and timeframes imposed on the research by its role in the completion of my DEdPsy course.

This research utilised a multiple case study design within a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is described by Mertens (2010, p225) as research that aims 'to make sense of, or to interpret, a phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.' A qualitative research approach was

appropriate as this project's RQs relate to an exploration of how a non-manualised intervention, the ELSA project, operates in secondary schools. Therefore, it is imperative that the viewpoints of participants who have experienced the ELSA project within these school settings are gained (Lendrum et al., 2013). Thus, with previous research offering limited theory as to how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools, a qualitative design was utilised in this study to help develop related theories and understanding through the exploration of school community members' – who have experienced the ELSA project – accounts (Willig, 2013).

To further facilitate participant voice, an inductive approach to qualitative data analysis was adopted at the data coding level. Inductive data analysis attempts to avoid predetermined theories or assumptions being imposed upon the data, allowing for themes to be identified from within the data (Mertens, 2010). However, it is accepted that inductive research is difficult to conduct as my own experiences and previous knowledge will have narrowed the topics explored, not least by the questions I asked during data collection. Therefore, it was imperative that I remained open to following any alternative topics or issues that arose from the participants, that help answer the RQs. My approach will be explored further in the data generation and analysis section below.

A multiple case study design was deemed appropriate for this research as the current study meets the prerequisites outlined by Yin (2014):

- Case study research should explore how and why questions

The key question in this research study aimed to explore *how* the ELSA project operates in secondary schools;

- The behaviour of the participants or the phenomena of interest cannot be manipulated

The ELSA project is a pre-existing intervention running in LA schools, and therefore the researcher cannot manipulate and adapt the intervention;

- The contextual conditions are perceived to be important to the phenomena

Schools' contextual factors are known to impact on the implementation of different interventions (Humphrey, 2013) and so it is important to explore the unique contexts of secondary schools who run ELSA projects.

Multiple case study designs can be critiqued for their inability to produce sample to population generalisations (Yin, 2013). However, such generalisations are arguably not the aim of case study designs and instead analytical generalisations, where theories that explain the particular phenomena are generated from the study of the case(s). These theories can then be generalised to help explain other, similar cases (Yin, 2013). The use of a multiple case study design further enables similarities and differences of theories identified between and within the cases to be explored. Any replication of theory across cases can aid the development of analytical generalisations.

To ensure meaningful analytical generalisations could be made and an in-depth exploration of real-world cases was possible (Yin, 2014), all the participants were situated in school cases within one LA where a social phenomenon – secondary school ELSA projects – was taking place. See Figure 2 for an outline of the case boundaries and units of analysis.

3.4 Multiple case study sampling and recruitment

Selecting cases for multiple case study research requires careful attention as cases need to either predict similar findings or predict theoretically anticipated contrary findings (Yin, 2014). To ensure similarities and differences could be meaningfully considered between the cases, a case was defined as ‘a secondary school within the focus LA where the ELSA project had been running for at least one year’. This case criteria was chosen as previous ELSA research has indicated that after one year of implementation, head teachers were more likely to perceive their school’s ELSA project to be running effectively (Bravery & Harris, 2009). Therefore, this case definition helped ensure that the greatest amount of detail and most coherent picture of the ELSA project could be obtained.

To ensure some homogeneity between the secondary schools, cases were recruited from one LA, as the ELSAs would have received similar ELSA training from the LA EPS. Due to the known time-consuming nature of completing multiple case study designs (Yin, 2014) it was decided that two cases would be recruited (see Figure 2 for multiple case study design).

3.4.1 Recruitment of case study schools.

With cases of interest defined as ‘a secondary school within one LA where the ELSA project has been running for at least one year’, a list of all the secondary schools in one quadrant of the LA (original area chosen due to its proximity to the researcher) with trained ELSAs was obtained from the EP responsible for coordinating the LA’s ELSA project. Headteachers and SENCOs from these listed schools were contacted twice via email with a brief description of the research. These attempts were unsuccessful with only one school SENCO

contacting the researcher with an apology regarding their inability to participate due to time constraints. Due to lack of response, three EPs, who were known to have links with secondary schools with ELSA projects, within two of the quadrants of the LA closest in location to the researcher were contacted and asked to help identify appropriate secondary schools they had worked with (either as a link EP or through ELSA supervision). As a result of this approach, two secondary schools were identified. The two EPs that identified these schools then agreed to contact the schools' ELSAs, informing them of the research and check that they would be happy for their details to be passed on for research purposes. Additional information about the research was then given to the ELSAs and the schools' SENCOs via email and telephone. Schools' participation consent was also obtained by the schools' SENCOs from a member of the schools' senior leadership team (Head Teacher or Assistant Head Teacher).

Contextual information for each school will now be outlined. School-1 was an all-boys secondary academy with a co-educational 6th form and 1770 pupils on roll. Pupil attainment was within the average range and the school's most recent Ofsted inspection grading was 'Outstanding'. The number of pupils with special educational needs or an EHCP, the level of pupil deprivation, and the number of pupils with English as an additional language were lower than national averages. The ELSA project had been running for two years and three trained ELSAs were currently working in the school. However, when the SENCO was interviewed in July 2018, there were four ELSAs in role but in September 2018 one ELSA had left the school.

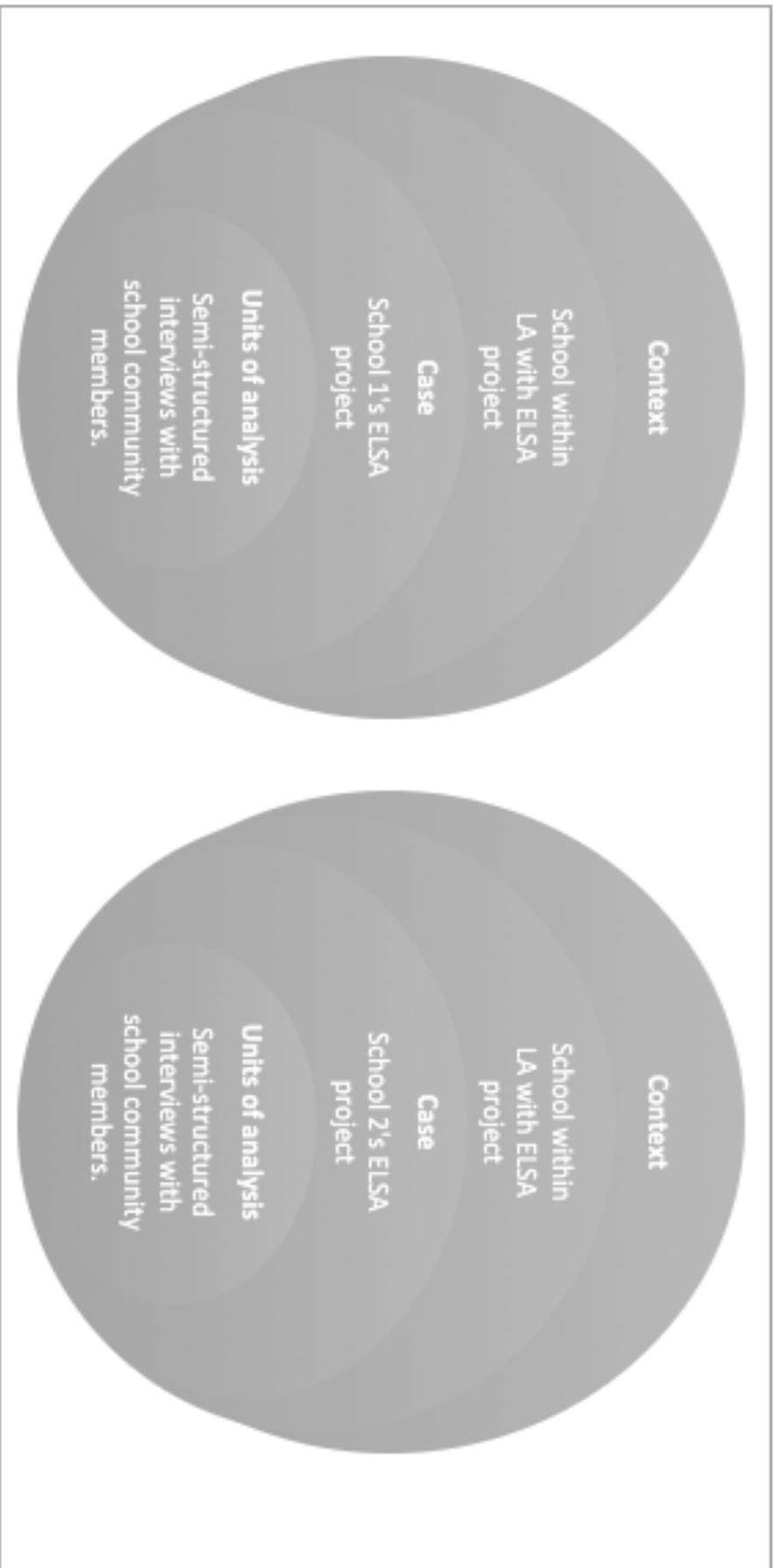


Figure 2. Multiple case study design

School case study 2 (School-2) was a mixed-gender community secondary school with 520 pupils on roll. Pupil attainment was below average and the school's most recent Ofsted inspection grading was 'Good'. The school had a specialist centre for children with identified communication and interaction needs, and therefore the number of pupils with special educational needs or an EHCP was above national average. Figures for pupil deprivation and pupils with English as an additional language were lower than national averages. The ELSA project had been running in the school for four years, however the school's current ELSA had only been in post for one year.

3.4.2 Participant inclusion criteria.

From the two secondary schools recruited, the school-based participants included: SENCOs; ELSAs who had received ELSA project training from the LA's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) (no less than one year prior to data collection) and who had delivered ELSA support to pupils within the last academic year; pupils who had received support from the school's ELSA within the last academic year; and secondary school staff, including teachers, who had worked with pupils who had received ELSA support over the academic year.

3.4.3 Participant recruitment.

In order to gain coherence across participant experiences, participants were recruited from two secondary schools within one LA (see Figures 3 and 4 for participant details). Recruiting from one LA meant that both schools received a similar training programme from the LA's EPS, ensuring a level of homogeneity between the ELSA projects delivered in both schools. Participant sampling and recruitment within these schools utilised a purposive sampling procedure.

Purposive sampling was utilised as there was a need to satisfy particular sample characteristics linked to the study's topic of interest (Robson, 2016) – knowledge of and experience with the ELSA project. As ELSAs and SENCOs were considered to have the most understanding about how ELSA projects operated within their schools they were recruited first. After information was given about the research and their role within it, their consent was gained (see Appendix-4 for all participant information and consent forms).

In each school, both SENCOs had held their positions for at least one academic year. Additionally, all three participating ELSAs (two ELSAs from School-1 and one ELSA from School-2) had worked in their respective schools for at least two years, and were educated to school or college level. All three ELSAs also had Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status.

After ELSA and SENCO recruitment, meetings were held in each school and the ELSAs and SENCOs were asked to consider which staff members would best be able to talk about the ELSA project. During school staff recruitment, it became apparent that the request to ensure that participating school staff had a good level of knowledge about the ELSA project had narrowed the choice of possible school staff participants. As a result, the school staff identified to participate were those who worked closely with either the SEND or pastoral teams in each school. For example, Teacher-2a was a teacher within School-2's communication and interaction specialist base, and therefore they shared a line-manager with ELSA-2 – SENCO-2. Although the specification in ensuring that the ELSAs and SENCOs recruited school staff who would feel comfortable discussing the ELSA project may have restricted the sample, it felt inappropriate and unhelpful to ask staff with little knowledge of the ELSA project to comment on it. Once identified,

school staff participants were given research information sheets and their consent was gained.

As well as identifying relevant school staff, purposive sampling was also used to recruit pupil participants. Again, the ELSAs and SENCOs from both schools were asked to identify pupils that had received ELSA within the last year and that they felt would feel comfortable being interviewed for the purposes of this research. As a result, four pupils were identified, two from each school. Of these four pupils, two had received their ELSA support from ELSA-1a, and two had received ELSA support from ELSA-2 (See Figures 3 and 4 for participant overview, and Table 3 for pupil pen profiles). As can be seen from the pen profiles outlined in Table 3, three out of four pupil participants had an autism spectrum disorder. Despite social communication issues associated with this diagnosis, all pupils were identified as appropriate participant candidates for this research by the ELSA and SENCO as they were articulate and confident in talking to others. During the interviews all pupils appeared comfortable and capable of expressing their views.

After pupil identification, the ELSAs and SENCOs sent out information sheets and consent forms to the pupils' parents. Pupils with consenting parents were then given pupil information sheets and their informed assent gained. As this research project can be defined as a medium-scale project (Braun and Clarke, 2013), a sample of seven participants from each case study school (n=14) was considered an appropriate participant size. For details of the participants recruited from each school please see Figures 3 and 4.

Whilst it may have led to the sample only including male pupil participants (particularly with School-1 only having male students), purposive sampling was an appropriate sampling method for this research as it allowed for the recruitment

of participants who have the most ‘insight and in-depth understanding’ (Patton, 2002, p.230) of the ELSA project, and therefore be more likely to offer data that is ‘information rich’ (Patton, 2002, p.230). Although it is acknowledged that this sampling method can be critiqued for creating less generalisable findings due to sampling bias (Henry, 1990), working within a case study methodology and a social constructionist paradigm leads this research to focus less on generalisable truths related to how the ELSA project operates in secondary school settings and more towards developing a broader understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) of how the project operates in these secondary school contexts. Thus, theories can be developed that can help bring understanding to the phenomena of how secondary school ELSA projects operate more generally.

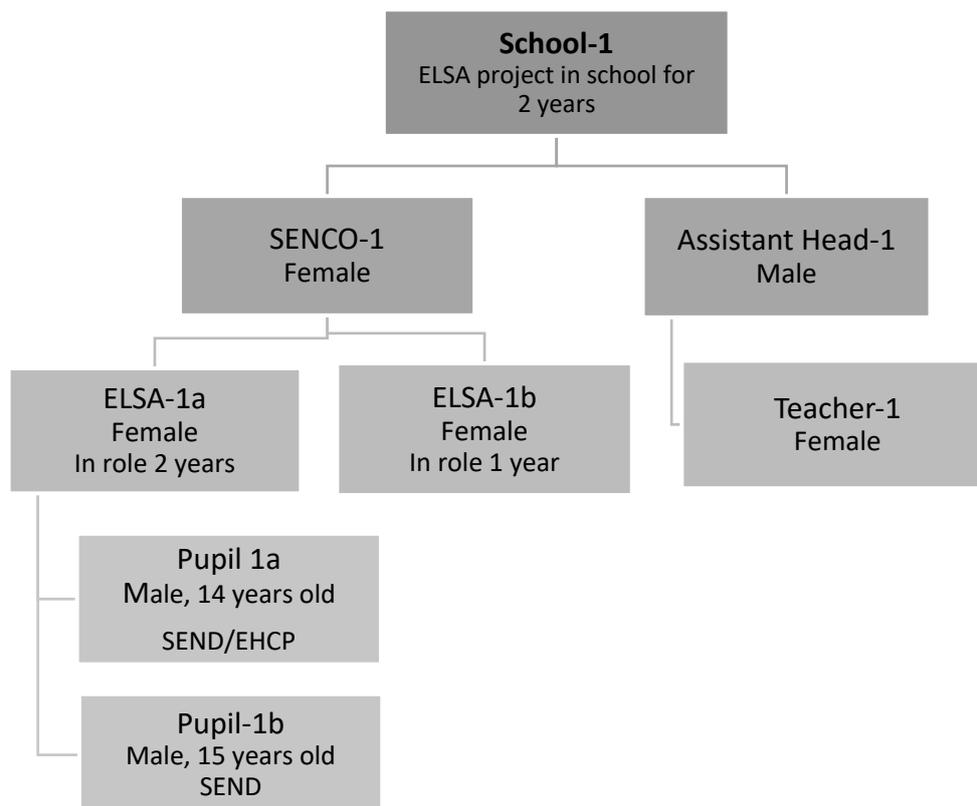


Figure 3. School-1 participant overview

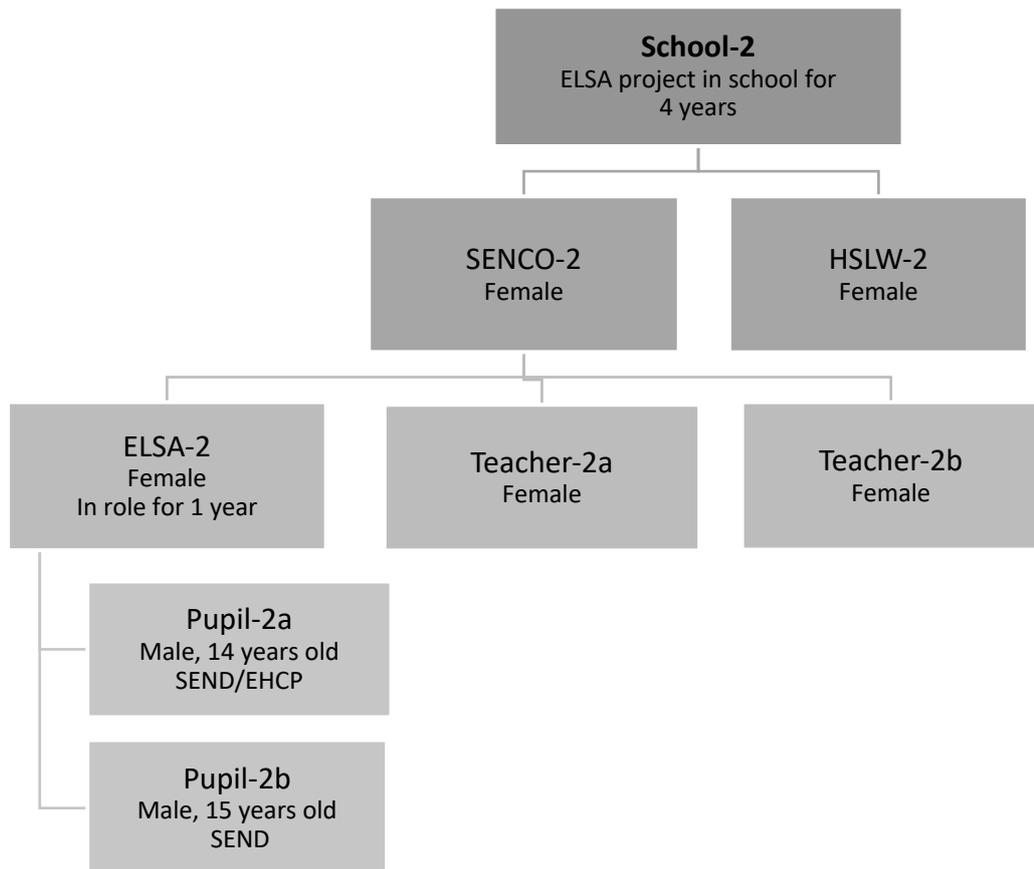


Figure 4. School-2 participant overview

Table 3. Pupil pen profiles

Pupil	Pen profile of pupil
Pupil-1a	Pupil-1a is a 14 year old male who attends year 9 in School-1. Pupil-1a has SEN related to autism, anxiety, dyspraxia, hypermobility, and he receives TA support in his Physical Education lessons. Additionally, Pupil-1a had an EHCP. Pupil-1a was referred in to the ELSA project to support him to better manage his anxiety in school.
Pupil-1b	Pupil-1b is a 15 year old male who attends year 10 in School-1. ELSA-1a informed me that Pupil-1b has literacy difficulties and was on the school's SEND register. Pupil-1b was referred in to the ELSA project due to him experiencing difficulties regulating his anger amongst his peers.
Pupil-2a	Pupil-2a is a 14 year old male who attends year 9 in School-2. Pupil-2a has an autism spectrum disorder and sensory sensitivities. Pupil-2a is on the school's SEND register and has an EHCP. Pupil-2a was referred in to the ELSA project to support him to manage social interactions and identify strategies to help him regulate his emotional responses to sensory sensitivities.
Pupil-2b	Pupil-2b is a 15 year old male who attends year 10 in School-2. Pupil-2b has an autism spectrum disorder and is on the school's SEN register. Pupil-2b was referred in to the ELSA project to support him to manage anxieties related to examinations and to support him in planning his plans for further education.

3.5 Data generation

3.5.1 Interviews.

A qualitative methodology was adopted for this research so that inductive and rich descriptions of how the ELSA project operates, as well as the facilitating factors and challenges could be obtained. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were utilised with all the participants outlined in Figures 3 and 4.

From a theoretical stance, semi-structured interviews are flexible and encourage interviewees to provide in-depth information about a specific topic, allowing for a rich understanding of the participants' views and experiences to be gained

(Howitt, 2010). Therefore, their use is in-line with the social constructionist approach adopted by this research, as the discourse between interviewer and interviewee can be viewed as illuminating people's constructions of their individual understanding (Burr, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews were utilised as they allow for similar themes to be explored across interviews, suiting the needs of a multiple case study approach. However, they also allow participants' individual rich viewpoints to be explored (Howitt, 2010), allowing contrasts between interviews to be identified.

All interview schedules aimed to answer the RQs, and thus interview questions were developed from gaps identified in the literature review and were informed by themes from previous research and theory on school SEMH support, EL and the ELSA project. Once the interview schedules were drafted they were compared to an example interview schedule provided in the published ELSA project article by Wilding and Claridge (2016). Comparison with this interview schedule was considered a useful step as it allowed for the current study's questions to be compared to an ELSA study where elements of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) P-P-C-T model was used. In addition, Wilding and Claridge's (2016) study had been published in a peer reviewed journal so the quality of this research and its interview technique was considered to be rigorous. This process revealed there was a good degree of coverage on issues pertinent to the implementation of ELSA projects within the current research's interview schedules (see Appendix-5 for participant interview schedules).

Final interview questions were open ended and included prompts to encourage participants to offer their views without restraint. As the interviews were semi-structured, questions in each interview could be asked in a different order,

skipped or additional prompts included, allowing for a flexible, natural and open discussion. This interview approach enabled rapport to be built and maintained throughout the interviews. The interview schedules for each participant type (SENCO/senior staff, ELSAs, pupils and school staff) all differed slightly. Interview schedules were differentiated to ensure that the questions were both most pertinent to each participant's role and would enable them to best consider their views on the implementation of their ELSA project. For example, the ELSA interview schedules began with an opening question about how long they had been working as an ELSA, whereas the first question for school staff was 'How familiar are you with the ELSA project?'

Limitations with the use of a semi-structured interview approach were considered, and include: the length of time data gathering and interview transcription can impose, and the risk of participant response desirability effects. With regards to timing, this effect was mediated by the relatively small sample (n=14) and by the participants being available within just two school sites, so the interviews could happen over just 4 days. Although it can be considered preferable to space out participant interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013), due to the time restrictions of completing this thesis, this was not feasible. Secondly, participant desirability effects were considered and reflected on during the analysis process (see 5.2.1). When utilising interviews in research, bias is hard to avoid (Robson, 2016). However, to minimise the risk of biases – such as participant desirability effects and power imbalance effects – interviews started with an explanation to the participants that their individual views and opinions were valued and that no right or wrong answers exist. To ensure the interviewees felt relaxed and free to offer their experiences and views, my interview approach included: more researcher listening than speech; straightforward questions and summaries; and as much of

the participants' own phrasing as possible (Robson, 2016). Power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee are also important to consider (Braun & Clark, 2013). Prior to interviews and during my analysis I was aware of the impact my status as a LA Trainee EP may have on the interviewee's responses. During the interview process I was conscious not to take an expert role and demonstrate this through questions that implied curiosity about the participants' views. An interviewer requires many skills, including interpersonal and communication skills (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As a Trainee EP, such skills are developed and assessed throughout the course and therefore, interviewing is an appropriate method for educational psychology professionals.

3.5.1.1 Pupil interviews.

Acquiring and hearing the voice of CYP is widely considered appropriate and vital when considering issues that affect them (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). In order to ensure the most detailed and insightful information is gained from CYP, a range of methods should be made available to suit the needs of different children (Pascal & Bertram, 2009). As well as questions linked to their ELSA encounter, drawing materials were prepared and offered to the pupil participants and they were asked if they felt it would assist their communication. Pascal and Bertram (2009) argue that researchers need to listen to what, and consider how, CYP communicate to them and then be ready to adapt their approach so that CYP can meaningfully engage in the research process. However, in this research, none of the pupils felt that drawing would help them communicate their ideas, and so this approach was not pushed. Acknowledging their choice to not engage in drawing was believed to communicate to the pupils

that their views and choices were respected and helped maintain pupil-researcher rapport.

Although typically aligned with quantitative measures, scaling was also used during pupil interviews as it was believed to enable the pupils to first explore their more concrete feelings about their experience of the ELSA project. After this scaling activity, further clarifying questions were asked and these allowed for a more detailed exploration of the pupils' views about the implementation of the ELSA project. The numerical ratings gained from the scaling were not quantitatively analysed, only the qualitative comments were included in the data analysis.

3.5.2 Pilot.

Draft ELSA and school staff interview schedules were piloted with an ELSA and head of house/maths teacher in a secondary school within the research's focus LA. For the pupil interview, a pilot was conducted with a Trainee EP colleague, as consent for a pilot pupil participant was difficult to obtain in time. Piloting allowed for the interview schedules to be checked for clarity and any issues identified and amendments made to the final interview schedules (Howitt, 2010). Post-pilot interview schedules were also reflected on with my research supervisors and amendments were agreed. Amendments post-piloting included: changing question order, as some questions posed at the beginning of the original interview schedules appeared too confrontational for staff members to experience early on in the interview process; and a scaling activity was included within the pupil interviews to assist pupils in exploring their perception of the ELSA project within their school.

3.5.3 *The Interview process.*

Participant interviews were conducted between July 2018 and October 2018. In each school, interviews were conducted within the participants' schools, over two days. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 1 hour 20 minutes, with pupil interviews being the shortest in duration. The ELSA interviews lasted the longest, this was perceived to be due to them having the most to say about the ELSA project.

Participant interviews were conducted sequentially, with secondary school SENCOs and ELSAs being interviewed before the pupil and school staff participants in each school. By interviewing the ELSAs and SENCOs first, it was hoped that the context of the ELSA project in each school could be better understood so that later interviews could be as pertinent to the schools' contexts as possible. All interviews took place in quiet confidential spaces within the schools and pupils were interviewed in the allocated ELSA room, so that reference points within the room could help them consider their responses. At the beginning of all interviews, participants were reminded of the research's aims and approach, their consent was gained, and they were reminded of their right to cease the interview or withdraw from the research. At the end of the interviews, participants were asked if they wanted to add anything they felt was missed during the interview, they were then thanked for their time and debriefed. Debriefing was particularly useful where sensitive or emotion-laden information was given and ensure participants were feeling ready to leave the interview room.

3.6 Data analysis

The interview data was analysed using the thematic analysis process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). Thematic Analysis was utilised in this research due to its theoretical flexibility, therefore it can be used alongside this research's social constructionist stance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Also, as this research aimed to explore how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools, thematic analysis allows for patterns across case and participant data sets to be reported (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Despite the benefits that this form of analysis provides for the current research, critiques of thematic analysis should also be considered. Such critiques include: it possessing low interpretative power, and a difficulty in identifying convergence and contradiction between participants' voices (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, the current research has aimed to overcome these critiques in two ways. Firstly, by exploring and reflecting on relevant theory and research in Chapters 1 and 2, this research has identified key theories which will guide later parts of the analysis (see 3.6.1 for explanation of the analysis approaches adopted), namely EL theory, the P-P-C-T model, and theories of attachment and attunement. By outlining these theories the reader can understand the theoretical lens through which themes were identified. Secondly, although this research aims to gain a community voice elucidated from the patterns found across the data set, contradiction and convergence between participants' views and experiences will be carefully considered, and where contrast occurs themes will be defined so that contrast can be explored in Chapters 4 and 5. Contrast will also be included through themes created from only a few participants, where convergence across the data set is not a prerequisite condition for theme production. Furthermore, by following and

outlining the systematic nature of theme production, clarity and transparency as to the data analysis process, is provided.

3.6.1 Thematic analysis process.

The following processes were engaged in during the analysis of the interview data. Although presented here in a linear fashion, it should be noted that the thematic analysis process was cyclical and phases 2-6 were revisited multiple times.

Also, worth noting is that in this research an inductive approach to data analysis was used to identify codes within the data. Inductive analysis is a bottom-up approach that allows codes to be generated that are not shaped by existing theory (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Once coding had been completed, a deductive exploration (top-down) was adopted to identify whether: themes helped answer the RQs, theory could help understand codes and themes identified, and if there were any miscellaneous codes that added further depth to the exploration of secondary school ELSA projects. This analysis process is akin to a hybrid approach of thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

3.6.1.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data.

The audio-recorded interviews were listened to and transcribed into written text. Completing the interviews and transcribing them myself enabled me to gain a good level of data familiarity during the early stage of data analysis. Further data familiarity was obtained through reading each participant's transcript three times: once with the interview audio playing so that any transcription errors could be checked. Active reading of transcripts included noting thoughts and salient points

that could be reviewed during later phases and aid theme development and refinement.

3.6.1.2 Phase 2: Coding.

To ensure contradictions within and between individual accounts were not disregarded (Braun & Clarke, 2013) each participant's data was coded separately. Complete coding was utilised so that all information relevant to answering the RQs were identified. Within each school case, interviews were coded in the following order: ELSA, SENCO, pupils, and school staff. By coding interviews of participants perceived to have the most knowledge about the ELSA project first, an overall picture of the ELSA project was gained early in the analysis process. Initial coding of the transcripts was done by hand, using printed transcripts and pen. Codes were then reviewed and collated onto the data analysis software, NVIVO-11. NVIVO-11 software was used as the interview data and codes could be organised in a manner that enabled the codes and data extracts to be reviewed and later pattern finding to be done systematically, with a clear audit trail.

Semantic codes were developed, using as much of the participants' language as possible, as this reduced the level of interpretation during early stages of analysis. In-line with this research's social constructionist approach, latent codes were also used, so that underlying meaning from quotes could be identified (Boyatzis, 1998).

During this phase, a Trainee EP peer was asked to code three pages of a transcript. This activity allowed for a shared reflection on how complete and valid my coding was, providing further credibility to my analysis. After my peer had

coded the transcript excerpt, we met to reflect on the codes. Any discrepancies were discussed and codes were amended as needed. During this process very few discrepancies between codes were identified. However, some codes were amended. For example, it was noted from the peer-review coding that the code 'ELSA pupils are complex' had not been accounted for, so it was added. Other changes related to preferred wordings (e.g. changing 'difficult lives' to 'complex lives'). Engagement in this activity reassured me of the validity of my coding approach. Examples of coding and peer-review coding can be found in Appendix-6.

3.6.1.3 Phase 3: Searching for themes.

Codes from each school case study were collated separately, reviewed and grouped depending on the research question they helped answer. Miscellaneous codes that failed to answer any research question were also collated, and reviewed during later stages to check for missed patterns. For each school, subthemes were developed where patterns between codes were identified and where important content within the data was captured. Patterns between subthemes were collated into themes that conveyed broader concepts.

3.6.1.4 Phase 4: Reviewing themes.

Reviewing themes relates to 'quality control' (Braun & Clarke, p. 233, 2013), where themes are compared to the coded data to check that themes at each level translate well to the original data. As themes were developed from my own interpretations of the data, it was important that possible missing interpretations were checked for. Therefore, themes were shared and discussed during research supervisions and in Trainee EP peer research review meetings.

In this phase, theme prevalence was also considered. Participant-theme correspondence was reviewed to explore how themes spread across the data set (See Appendix-8). However, in keeping with the research's social constructionist framework, themes comprising of only one or two participants' data were included because all participant viewpoints were believed to offer insightful responses to the RQs.

Once themes were established, thematic maps were developed for each school case. After case study specific thematic maps were established, a cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2014) thematic map was identified. This process involved returning to phases 3-4 of the thematic analysis process and triangulating themes between the two school case studies. (see Chapter 4 for final thematic map and Appendix-9 and 10 for schools' thematic maps).

3.6.1.5 Phase 5: Defining and naming themes.

Theme definitions were written for each theme so that interpretations of the data were clear. Quotations from transcripts that supported each theme's definition were collated for use within the thesis report (Appendix-7 for examples of codes to theme development and Appendix-8 for theme definitions). Theme names and definitions need to be unique and exclusive (Braun & Clarke, 2013), so themes were reviewed independently and during discussions with my research supervisors.

3.7 Quality and validity of the research

Yardley's (2008) four validity principles of qualitative research were applied to ensure the trustworthiness of this current research, these include: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; impact and

importance. Firstly, information is provided as to the context of the LA this research was conducted within. Details of the schools included as case studies are given, and both LA and school contexts were considered throughout the research process. Secondly, for rigour, a multiple case study design was implemented with a range of participants interviewed in each of the two case study schools to ensure a broad scope of information and themes were obtained. Triangulation of participant themes allowed over-arching responses to the RQs to be identified, allowing convergence and contrast between the data sets to be considered (Howitt, 2010). For transparency, an outline of the methods used for both data collection and analysis have been provided and direct quotations are included to support the themes outlined in Chapter Four. Finally, the intention of this research is to build upon current minimal literature to provide a better understanding of the implementation of secondary school-based ELSA projects in the hope of informing their effective implementation and development.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Prior to participant recruitment, ethical approval was sought through the Institute of Education, UCL Psychology and Human Development Department's ethics process. In-line with Data Protection legislation, a Data Registration Number was obtained. The ethical guidelines outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2017), the Health Care Professional Council (HCPC, 2015) and the Data Protection Act (UK Parliament, 1998) guided the research process. These guidelines specify the need for researchers to ensure that participants: can give informed consent; can withdraw for any reason; are debriefed at the end of involvement; and are given post-research feedback. Participant information sheets and consent forms can be viewed in Appendix-4. Additionally, participant information and data was stored confidentially and securely, their anonymity

respected, and risk of harm controlled and avoided. On completion of the thesis process, the LA EPS, and staff from both participating schools will receive a presentation of this research's findings. A brief research summary will also be shared with all the participants, including the pupils' parents. For an overview of the current research's timeline please see Appendix-13.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter outlines the findings developed from the thematic analysis of the interview data from the two case study schools. A brief summary of the findings from each case study school will be given, before a more in-depth outline of the findings from the cross-case thematic analysis is provided.

4.1 Overview of findings from School-1

The interviews highlighted that the ELSA project was one part of the school's tiered SEMH offer. In terms of level of SEMH need supported, ELSA work sat below counselling and above ad-hoc pastoral support. SEND and pastoral staff had a clear referral pathway and referral form. Communication between ELSAs and parents and wider school staff was predominantly bridged by the SENCO and pastoral team. ELSA-parent communication was less frequent and indirect compared to ELSA-staff communication pathways. System related challenges were noted (e.g. difficulty in bringing about change for pupils with complex lives, and working within a school system that does not fully reflect the ELSA project's belief systems).

ELSA interventions operated through the deployment of three uniquely skilled ELSAs working mostly one-to-one with pupils. Having multiple ELSAs was felt to be of benefit as pupils could be carefully matched to ELSAs that suited them. ELSA-pupil relationships were viewed as a key catalyst, supporting pupils to open up and develop their EL. ELSAs were described to deliver pre-planned weekly sessions to support Key Stage 3 (11-14 years) pupils to understand and manage difficult emotions, talk about issues and build self-esteem or resilience. Support was adapted to meet each pupils' needs, and the duration of the intervention was flexible and pupil-centred, often lasting more than 6-10 weeks. Pupils were able

to drop-in and see ELSAs at breaktimes, providing ongoing support for pupils, even after their ELSA intervention had finished. As a proactive approach, the ELSA project was also reported to serve the wider school environment (e.g. creating a more emotionally stable space, helping pupils settle to learn). Although ELSA had clear outcomes, concerns were raised with the perceived subjectivity of ELSA impact measures, which risk a lack of confidence in the impact of the ELSA project and therefore, ELSA funding being deprioritised by the school.

The application of psychological theory and approaches within ELSA interventions were noted within all of the interviews. Prominent psychological theories were attachment and containment theory, and their importance to ELSA work was clear. However, other psychological theories, positive psychology and CBT approaches, were also applied.

Three layers of support and supervision ensured the ELSAs were not isolated and provided space for reflection on a fortnightly and termly basis. Fortnightly group supervision was given to the ELSAs by the school's counsellor, and termly supervision was provided by an LA EP. Although support was provided within the parameters of the ELSA literature guidelines, it was raised that more frequent supervision from the LA EP would be helpful. ELSAs had been proactive in the early phase of role development and spoke of the time it took in the beginning to build their confidence. Extending the training folder's resources and developing resource packs seemed imperative to this process, but time intensive.

Interviewees identified that difficult responses can surface for both ELSAs and pupils during ELSA work. For ELSAs, the emotional intensity of working with pupils with emotional needs and challenging lives was noted, as well as a lack of confidence in their abilities, particularly at the beginning of role development. For pupils, it was noted that some can experience paranoia and embarrassment as

a result of opening-up in ELSA sessions. Additionally, interviews indicated that some pupils can struggle to engage in ELSA sessions as it requires them to talk about and reflect on their difficulties.

4.2 Overview of findings from School-2

The interviews highlighted how the ELSA project was one visible part of a broad provision of both structured and informal SEMH support for SEND pupils in this school. A whole-school pastoral service was available for all pupils and youthwork support for non-SEND pupils sat alongside the ELSA project. School-2's single ELSA was described as dynamic and flexible in her approach to communication with school-staff. This communication was led by ELSA-2 and focused on information gathering, and information sharing, predominantly at the beginning of pupils' interventions. ELSA-school staff communication appeared to happen with more ease when staff were from the SEND or pastoral departments, highlighting less communication with more general teaching staff. ELSA-parent communication was described to complicate ELSA work, but indirect communication was also noted to aid the planning of ELSA work for pupils with more complex SEMH or SEND needs.

The ELSA project sat within the SEND department and this enabled easier communication with SEND colleagues. However, connections between the SEND department and the wider school was limited. This disconnect also resulted in a difficulty with ensuring SEMH support remained a priority within the school and SENCO-2 reported this to be a constant tension.

Pupil referrals for ELSA support happened via the school's SEND department. ELSA sessions were planned, but flexible to the needs of the pupils. Flexibility was felt to be important, however, it was not without challenges (e.g. difficulty

ensuring the variety of resources and activities were available when needed). ELSA interventions were run on 12-weekly cycles, offering weekly or fortnightly sessions, dependent on pupil need. Beginnings were considered important in developing ELSA-pupil relationships and ensuring pupil engagement. Pupil-centeredness and a focus on beginnings led to the pupils' ELSA intervention often exceeding 12-weeks. Interviews indicated that the ELSA project was implemented to meet the SEMH needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils' progress towards targets were tracked. However, concerns were raised as to the arbitrary nature of some EL assessments, so personal targets were also tracked through scaling. The deployment of a uniquely skilled and attuned adult who was available to pupils at breaktimes and during a lunchtime club was also believed to help stabilise the school environment, as pupils' emotional needs were managed proactively.

Psychological principles and theory were noticeably embedded throughout ELSA work, and although mostly implicit, they appeared to be active catalysts for pupils' SEMH development. The most predominant of these embedded psychological principles were attachment and containment. Further psychological approaches that were described as present were: CBT, mindfulness and narrative based activities.

The ELSA received support within the school from SENCO-2 and they met every 12 weeks with other SEND staff to review ELSA cases and referrals. Outside of school ELSA-2 felt their ELSA peers were a helpful source of support and valued sharing resources between them. ELSA training was raised as an issue where Home-School Link Worker-2 (HSLW-2) felt that more specific support and materials could be developed for secondary school-based ELSAs. As it was early

in ELSA-2's career, she had not yet attended her first EP-led group ELSA supervision.

Challenges to both the ELSA and the pupils were also raised in the interviews. Firstly, ELSA work stirred up difficult emotions for ELSA-2, including emotional fatigue, and guilt when she had to be away from pupils. Secondly, there was evidence that pupils could become dependent on their ELSA, and thus this was believed by HSLW-2 to risk them not developing independent emotion regulation skills.

4.3 Overview of key ELSA features' presence in each case study school

From the school community members' interview accounts it was possible to identify how each ELSA project matched implementation features recommended in the ELSA project literature (Burton, 2009, 2018; ELSA Network, 2017) and the LA's ELSA guidance. The presence of these key features can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of schools with key features of ELSA projects

Key features of ELSA projects	Present in School-1?	Present in School-2?
Part of wider school SEMH offer	Yes	Yes
Support pupils with specific EL/SEMH needs	Yes, but mostly pupils with SEND	Yes, but mostly pupils with SEND
Bespoke and flexible approach	Yes	Yes
Referral process	Yes	Yes
6-12 week interventions	No	No
Weekly sessions	Yes	Yes, and fortnightly dependent on pupil
KS3 and KS4	Yes, but called 'mentoring' in KS4	Yes
Contact with school staff	Yes, but limited	Yes, but not universal
Contact with parents	Yes, but limited	Yes, but often indirect
'Managerial' and 'clinical' supervision accessed	Yes	Yes
Tracking outcomes	Yes	Yes

4.4 Cross-case analysis findings

After thematic analysis of each schools' data, a cross-case thematic analysis was conducted. The themes identified for each school can be seen in Appendix-9 and 10, and the cross-case thematic map can be seen in Figure 5. As a reminder when reading the findings, the questions being asked in this research were:

- RQ1: How does the ELSA project operate in secondary schools?

- RQ2: What facilitates the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?
- RQ3: What challenges affect the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?

The cross-case thematic analysis identified six overarching themes, these were: 'Links-with-and-impact-of-wider-systems'; 'Structured-and-flexible'; 'Core-ELSA-skills-and-qualities'; 'Applied-psychology'; 'Aims-and-outcomes'; and 'Challenges-for-ELSAs-and-pupils'. Each of these overarching themes had subthemes. Overarching themes will be outlined before subthemes are discussed in more detail. Exemplar quotations will be provided to aid the reader's understanding of theme production (see Appendix-8 for theme summaries).

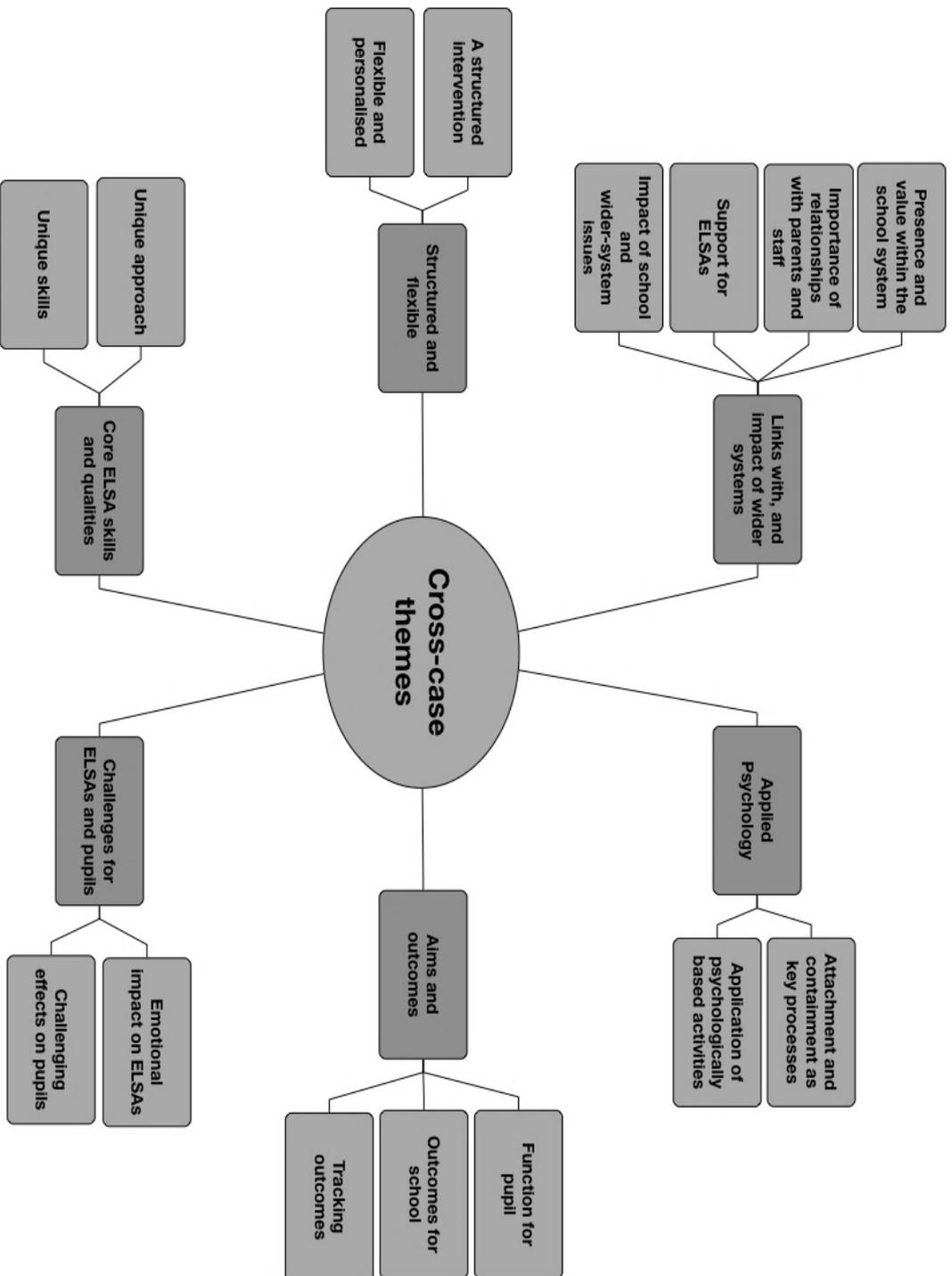


Figure 5 Cross-case thematic map

4.4.1 Links-with-and-to-wider-systems.

The interviews indicated that the ELSA projects had links to wider systems within the schools' communities and externally to the LA EPS. However, these links differed within each school. Supportive and challenging factors related to these links were highlighted, particularly the challenges of running the intervention within and alongside the complex systems of schools' and pupils' home lives.

4.4.1.1 Presence-and-value-within-school.

This subtheme explores where the ELSA projects sat amongst the two schools' SEMH provision and their degree of presence within their broader school system. In both schools, the ELSA project was one part of the schools' SEMH provision. For School-1, the ELSA project was part of a whole-school tiered offer, with pastoral support below the ELSA project and counselling above. Entry into either levels of support was decided based on the pupil's level of SEMH need.

"...teachers would communicate with heads of house if there was a known problem and you were trying the strategies in the first instance...to see if it works and then ELSA if you're kinda not getting anywhere."

[Teacher-1]

"...counselling is a lot more deeper than what an ELSA would do..."

[ELSA-1b]

In School-2, ELSA provision was described as predominantly available for all pupils who were on the school's SEND register. Pupils without a recognised SEND were referred by the pastoral team to the school's charity-funded youth worker or the school's social science lead (Teacher-2b) for wellbeing sessions.

“...it depends what kind of issue...so if it’s an emerging need then I’ll just go to [HSLW-2]. If it was a pupil who already had SEND...then I would go to the [SENCO] she would then refer it on to [ELSA-2] and I work pretty close with [youth worker] so I could then say to [youth worker] ‘Can we check with [HSLW-2] to see if she’s got space...?’...” [Teacher-2b]

In School-2, alongside these structured out-of-class interventions, informal SEMH support for SEND pupils was also provided, these included: key workers for all SEND pupils, and the SEND department’s breaktime club. For ELSA pupils, ELSAs were also available for support beyond their sessions. This included: morning transition support, and one-to-one pupil drop-ins at breaktimes.

“...I see her at lunchtimes and stuff like that in case I just want to talk about a small little thing at lunch I can just do that quickly and then it’s done.” [Pupil-1a]

From School-2’s interviews it was clear that the availability of the ELSA outside of sessions acted as an additional form of containment, allowing the pupils to offload difficult feelings, regulate and be ready to continue the school day.

ELSA drop-in time was also available for ELSA pupils in School-1.

“Yeah I can...still speak to Miss [ELSA] but I just don’t have arranged sessions...she’s in that room there and whenever she’s in.” [Pupil-1b]

However, School-1 pupil interviews indicated a mixed perception of how sufficient the schools’ SEMH support was. For example, Pupil-1b reported that having finished his ELSA support he felt that talking to teachers was an adequate amount of support for him now.

“I would just speak to a teacher” [Pupil-1b]

Whereas Pupil-1a felt that, apart from ELSA, there was not enough other support for him in the school.

“I think I’d like an LSA [Learning Support Assistant] with me in a few more lessons because I think I sometimes need more emotional help within a lesson and to make me feel more confident” [Pupil-1a]

In-line with Pupil-1a’s comments the level of understanding and support for SEMH needs was described by School-1 staff as developing.

“...we’ve just introduced this year...a mental health working group because...I don’t know if it’s every school or if it’s just [School-1], it’s becoming a bigger thing and a need that we haven’t addressed in the past or haven’t seen as a thing and...we have a working group to see what we can do to support students across the school with their mental wellbeing and mental health.” [Teacher-1]

Interestingly, the ELSA project starting in School-1 was considered to have helped strengthen the school’s awareness of emotional wellbeing and support.

“I think there has always been a focus on mental health like we’ve done Mind charity weeks and things like that but in terms of...emotional literacy [it] only came into place once we had trained ELSAs in school...” [SENCO-1]

In both schools the ELSA project was viewed as well valued, and this was believed to benefit its function and continuation. In particular, for School-1 the ELSA project was positively viewed by pupils and there were reports that attending ELSA had no stigma, particularly in comparison to counselling.

“I’ve seen more of the students wanting to engage in an ELSA rather than...a counsellor, we have a counsellor here as well and I think it might

be I don't know there's less stigma around going to see someone to do ELSA than there is to see a counsellor..." [Assistant Head-1]

"There's a classmate when Miss [ELSA] came to the lesson and gave them a note to say that they had ELSA they said 'Yes ELSA' and I'd just heard other students saying similar things and being excited about ELSA." [Pupil-1a]

For School-2, the value of the ELSA project was also evident in the pupils' and school staff's praise and perceived status of the intervention.

"...I don't think I've actually seen everything of it. So it's not fair of me really putting [ELSA] as a ten [out of ten] despite it being one of the best things I've ever had." [Pupil-2b]

"...there's nothing better [than ELSA]." [Pupil-2a]

For both SENCOs the intervention was also deemed credible by other school staff due to its support from the LA EPS.

"...'well the ELSA is supported by the EP you know and she has supervision from the EP and stuff' they...go 'Oh phew it's all legit' and they do rest assured." [SENCO-2]

Additionally, School-2's ELSA project was overseen by the headteacher, through her line management of SENCO-2. This oversight appeared important to SENCO-2 and ELSA-2 as it was believed to ensure the intervention was viewed as an effective approach within the school.

"My line management has always been the head... and they have been very trusting and good which is...very supportive...I think if they thought it wasn't of value themselves they probably wouldn't have supported it." [SENCO-2]

4.4.1.2 Importance-of-relationships-with-parents-and staff.

The schools' ELSA projects were not isolated interventions, as links to wider systems within the schools and LA were evident. However, there were contrasts in how interactions with different wider systems happened, both within schools and between the two schools. For School-1, interactions with pastoral staff, teachers and parents were described as happening through pathways bridged by SENCO-1 and Assistant Head-1.

"I don't know if it's out there for the teaching staff, I mean we do get some emails that go around about certain students 'Use this, use that anxiety scale' those kind of things...it's actually probably only the SENCO, unless it goes through the head of house but it comes from the SENCO..."

[Teacher-1]

Whereas in School-2, the ELSA project's communication with SEND, pastoral and teaching staff was fulfilled by ELSA-2 and SENCO-2 and was described as proactive and predominantly direct. All School-2 interviewees spoke about contact they had noticed ELSA-2 make with school staff. Pupil-2a was aware of ELSA-school staff communication as he noted how some teachers would ask if he would like information about a difficult lesson shared with the ELSA.

"...some of the teachers have gone straight into saying 'Do you want me to let Miss [ELSA] know?'..." [Pupil-2a]

ELSA-2's frequent contact enabled the ELSA and SEND or pastoral staff to consider safeguarding issues and share key strategies that could support pupils in class.

"...I know [ELSA] recently has been working with a student and she has given strategies to staff...and that's really important that she's linked

because...it's looking after his emotions and how he manages them in class and how, if he's struggling, it's strategies for the staff as well."

[HSLW-2]

"There was a safeguarding issue...but I think she trusts that if I know there is a pupil on ELSA she knows that I'll deal with it how I deal with it and she'll deal with it and if there's any crossover we'll just have a conversation about it. Yeah but because of our relationship it's easier."

[Teacher-2b]

The last part of the above quotation from Teacher-2 '*Yeah but because of our relationship it's easier*' highlights that established relationships between ELSA-2 and some school staff supported their communication pathways. In contrast, other ELSA-teaching staff communication appeared to occur predominantly via email or through ELSA-2 or SENCO-2 actively seeking teaching staff out.

"...if something came up...that they were struggling with at school then I would usually email either the teacher or if it's was something...personal that maybe affects them in school I would email the tutor...if I felt that I needed to talk to the teacher face to face then I'd just ask if I could pop down at break so...I'd find time to actually go and have that chat with them." *[ELSA-2]*

However, despite relatively active ELSA-school staff links, more communication between ELSA and teaching staff was raised as an area where further effort was required.

"...to be able to do something that ties up better with the teachers and utilises that you know kind of teacher-ELSA link which hasn't really been forged yet or forged well enough." *[SENCO-2]*

In both schools, ELSA-parent communication was described to happen via other school staff (e.g. tutors, heads of houses, and the SENCOs), who were usually parents' first point of contact. Direct ELSA-parent communication focused mostly on information sharing at the beginning of the intervention.

"...we write to parents saying 'We've just had a discussion and this is what we're going to do, if you want to have any discussion...phone me up.'...." [SENCO-2]

It was highlighted that this underdeveloped approach to working with parents could restrict the amount of change that the ELSA project can bring about.

"But I think engaging parents more whichever way that we look at it...and explaining to them what ELSA is, because I don't think parents really have much of an idea about what it is really. But I think better links there could be forged going forward..." [SENCO-1]

For Assistant Head-1, limited ELSA-parent contact was deemed beyond the scope of an ELSA's role.

"I don't know...the link with families at home... could potentially be more with an ELSA but then you're extending the ELSAs' job to work with the family..." [Assistant Head-1]

Interestingly, ELSA-2 spoke of how ELSA-parent contact was limited and that apart from when there are concerns about pupils' behaviours at home, contact with parents '*can complicate things*'.

4.4.1.3 Support-for-ELSA.

The interviews highlighted that support from, and links with, school staff and external ELSA project colleagues (other ELSAs and the EPS) were recognised

as vital in ensuring the ELSAs felt supported in carrying-out their role in both schools.

“Support wise...it was just fantastic because we [ELSA on LA training course] all got on really well so now we’ve got a WhatsApp group so we all contact each other and...ask for different resources ‘What have you used for this?’...it was really, really good.” [ELSA-2]

In both schools, ELSA support included regular meetings with their SENCOs; a form of support akin to what the ELSA project literature defines as ‘managerial supervision’ from ELSAs’ line managers.

“So I meet with the ELSAs once every two weeks formally and then informally I speak to them every day about how things are going...” [SENCO-1]

In addition to this, external supervision was also provided every term by an LA EP. In the ELSA project literature this second form of supervision is referred to as ‘clinical supervision’. However, aside from these two forms of support and supervision, School-1’s ELSAs also received additional fortnightly supervision from their school counsellor.

“...so...every other week...the HLTAs [ELSA] and the SENCO I think and the counsellor...would all sit there and it’s a way of my colleague and the counsellor obviously offering us support because we have another ELSA lady as well...” [ELSA-1b]

This second supervision level in School-1 also appeared similar to what the ELSA project refers to as ‘clinical’ supervision, as the ELSAs and school counsellor reflected on and problem solved issues relating to pupil cases. However, the ELSA project outlines this type of supervision as delivered solely by an EP.

Interestingly, SENCO-1 referred to their additional level of school-based supervision as 'loose term supervision.' This statement was interpreted to be a disclaimer to indicate that supervision from an LA EP was viewed to offer a 'deeper' level of reflection.

However, additional supervision from School-1's counsellor could have felt necessary as ELSA-1b's and SENCO-1's interviews identified that more frequent, short supervisory contact from the LA EPS was needed in order to provide ELSAs with more reflection time. More supervisory contact was mentioned as particularly useful in the early phase of ELSAs' role development in order to allay doubts and increase confidence, particularly when working with children with more multifaceted difficulties.

"In an ideal world maybe it would be nice to have a hotline to an Ed Psych who I could run something by...I feel that I'm doing this with gut feel...so it would be nice to touch base with someone and say 'Well this is what I'm thinking and feeling is that right?' [ELSA-1b]

In addition to supervision, the ELSA initial training and continued professional development were also believed to be important in ensuring the effective implementation of the ELSA project.

"I think one of the things with ELSA that is really good in terms of the training was, and I knew about it anyway, but I thought it was really good to be reminded of...Maslow's...hierarchy of needs..." [ELSA-1a]

"...and they have been recommended the book [by the EPS] that I've bought for them all, the 'Excellent ELSAs', so they've all got that." [SENCO-1]

However, whilst ELSA-2 felt that further training was important for her role development, she shared that being away from school can make it harder to fit in pupils' sessions. To overcome this, ELSA-2 felt that online training, that she could complete when pupils were not in school, would be helpful.

"...what would be really, really good is if there were more online courses that we could do through [the LA] and maybe specific to ELSA so...maybe online courses on...how to build pupils' self-esteem..."
[ELSA-2]

However, based on her knowledge of School-2's previous ELSA's experiences, HSLW-2 felt that it was important that more time was given for just secondary school ELSAs within the LA-based ELSA training. A view based on the recognition that some issues ELSA pupils face can be more secondary-age specific.

"I think it's just more around how ELSA works in secondary schools...and the training is primary and secondary, does there need to be a divide off in a training...[where] there is time allowed...to have just secondary school ELSAs together because...if you really want to make that a valuable time then there needs to be just secondary school ELSAs talking together..." [HSLW-2]

4.4.1.4 Impact-of-school-and-wider-system-issues.

The interviews highlighted that within both schools there were wider system issues, either in the school or externally that inhibited the ELSA project. Firstly, whilst both schools had interventions that supported SEMH needs alongside ELSA, their whole-school approach and understanding of these needs was still developing. In School-2 a key indicator of the developing approach to SEMH

support was that the SEND department, where the ELSA project operated from, appeared to function quite separately from other systems in the school. Both teachers spoke of how rarely teachers and the SEND department got together to share knowledge and learn together. For example, Teacher-2 spoke of how learning support assistants, who are based in the SEND department, were more likely to get training on ELSA type approaches than teachers were.

“Yeah our INSET [training] days tend to be separated into teaching staff, support staff and then the office staff and admin staff so...teaching staff we get teaching, and learning support staff they would get more ELSA type training.” [Teacher-2b]

During the interview, SENCO-2 raised that mainstream staff’s awareness of SEND and ELSA approaches could be greater. Despite previous attempts to illuminate these needs and strategies to teaching staff, she planned to do more to raise school staff’s awareness, as priorities in schools shift so quickly.

“...we have not done anything for about a year or so and...you know what it’s like, if you don’t keep beating the drum about something then...something else takes its place, fills the gap.” [SENCO-2]

The impact of shifting priorities and continually raising the status of ELSA and SEMH support in schools was also highlighted in the data through the recognition that competing demands within schools can deprioritise ELSA work. Such demands included: timetabling around core and GCSE subjects; teacher workload reducing ELSA-staff communication; and ELSAs balancing their role when other demands arise, such as meetings and providing exam access arrangement support.

“We had a lot of students who need access arrangements which at the moment is scribing and reading and...quiet rooms you know which we need to be in so....from May all the way through to July I had to be in exams along with doing the ELSA training, so to be honest you know it had a massive, massive impact on the provision and on the students.”

[ELSA-2]

In-line with the competing demands identified in School-2, School-1 interviews also highlighted that factors within the school system – such as the behaviour policy and sanctions – appeared at times, to conflict with the ELSA project’s approach. Similarly, teachers’ lack of understanding about the ELSA project and pupil needs were also believed to have an impact on ELSA pupils’ progress. These factors were particularly evident within the pupils’ and the ELSAs’ interviews.

“I feel it is a very fine line between trying to be the supportive ELSA...but I’m not a head of house so it’s not for me to discipline him...so I’m kind of coming at it from a different angle to a head of house and I don’t think she [Head of House] understood that...” [ELSA-1b]

External to the school system, ELSA-1a shared how pupils’ basic needs not being met at home can lead their ELSA work to first focus on meeting those needs, before work can begin on supporting emotional needs.

“...so sleep,....heat, just being able to find that space in your home where there is some quiet...and lots of the children that I work with...do not have that and then you’re...looking at a different starting point again which you know in my ELSA sessions we can look at...” [ELSA-1a]

Both School-1’s ELSAs spoke of how working with pupils who have lived in challenging circumstances can feel daunting, as their school-based work can

sometimes only lead to small changes for the pupil. ELSA-1a noted '*You're a little pebble in a pond*', and ELSA-1b stated:

"...you have to look at some of the backgrounds that students come from...you know you're a little drop in a very big pond and I think sometimes you have to take that on board... and...I think it is helpful but maybe the frustration comes from...knowing that you're not going to be able to solve their problems for everything."

4.4.2 Structured-and-flexible.

Interviews revealed that from beginning to end, each pupils' ELSA intervention was both structured and flexible. However, the difficulty of resourcing and planning a flexible intervention was also highlighted.

4.4.2.1 A-structured-intervention.

Structure within ELSA projects was evident in both schools through sessions being pre-planned, goal-led and timetabled.

"...it [ELSA sessions] will either be once a week...and the sessions last for an hour each...or it will be every fortnight...sometimes." [ELSA-2]

"...I do want it to be all planned yes" [ELSA-1b]

Beginnings were managed through clear referral processes in both schools. For School-1, paper-based referrals were made predominantly through pupils' emotional needs being raised as a concern to either the SENCO or head of house teams. For School-2, referrals were either made at the school's 12-weekly SEND review panels; or by pupils indicating a need through their attendance at a SEND breaktime club drop-in.

“...[the] head of house will always refer or tutor will notice and then speak to head of house and then refer...on our ELSA referral form...” [ELSA-1a]

“...the way it works...here is they have panels every 12 weeks, so very much [ELSA] runs a 12 week programme so if I want to refer I know it’s not going to happen next week it’s gonna happen at a very prescribed time...the ELSA work is very structured...” [HSLW-2]

In School-1, pupils also talked about being asked to start ELSA. Pupil-1b spoke about having the ELSA intervention explained to him so that he could make an informed choice.

“...my head of house and then Miss [ELSA]...they just said I wouldn’t have to do much I’d just have to like just deal with my anger basically, it wouldn’t be writing down a lot of stuff it would just be talking.” [Pupil-1b]

4.4.2.2 Flexible-and-personalised.

Although the sessions were described as pre-planned, the interviews indicated that the ELSA project was facilitated by a personalised and flexible approach. This flexibility is in-line with the non-manualised nature of the ELSA project. Flexibility in the way the ELSAs used resources was reported, and pre-planned activities were often adapted during the sessions to ensure a pupil-centred approach. Session adaptations included: experiential sessions, taught sessions and sessions to discuss current issues pupils had. These session adaptations were considered to be important in order to meet different pupils’ needs.

“...me and Miss [ELSA] sometimes do like a gym session” [Pupil-2a]

“She sometimes scales things and does charts and sometimes gives me a wheel of different adjectives that could describe different emotions and sometimes she gives me strategies to deal with the anxiety.” [Pupil-1a]

“...it’s just that he doesn’t wanna do it on a sheet so that’s fine by me we might watch little videos, we might use cartoon characters...” [ELSA-1a]

However, flexibility was not just demonstrated with the adaptation of session activities but also through the varied lengths of pupils’ interventions. Despite the recommendations from the LA EPS training that ELSA should aim to run for 6-8 weeks, the interviews revealed that sessions often ran far longer. Explanations given for differing intervention length included: pupil absence; the time it can take to build trusting relationships with pupils; pupils’ readiness to end their ELSA time; further needs being identified; and time needed to support pupils with complex difficulties and SENDs (including Autism).

“...actually that’s quite difficult to do a six week intervention because sometimes they’re sick, sometimes you’re not here... so sometimes you can end up missing some and then it carries on” [ELSA-1a]

“Yeah at first it was only going to be something temporary but...I recently had to say goodbye to someone important in my life so...my dad and Miss [ELSA] decided that it would probably be best for me to continue.” [Pupil-1a]

“...the first few sessions it’s so important to build that relationship with the student so you know, sometimes I find two-three sessions they may not be structured it may just be us playing a game, chatting, really getting to know each other...” [ELSA-2]

For School-2, intervention length was described to be based on cycles of 12 weeks, where ELSA pupils' progress was discussed at 12-weekly SEND review panels and decisions to continue or cease ELSA were made. In respect of this formalised review process, flexibility and personalisation within School-2's ELSA project appeared, to some degree, more organised.

A further hybrid between structure and personalisation was identified through the process of joint ELSA-pupil target setting in both schools. Individualised targets appeared to give structure, through having clear goals to work towards whilst still within a personalised framework.

"..we were talking about trust and I said 'So is that something that you want to have as a goal?...How do we make people trust us?' And he said 'I think that's too big a goal...I want it to be smaller'..." [ELSA-1b]

Although, for Pupil-1a agreeing on a target with his ELSA was deemed to impose too much structure on his intervention, as he explained that he preferred to use the time to express his worries and emotions.

"Well Miss [ELSA] has tried to see if I'd like doing any targets but I don't really want to I just prefer to have that session to talk about what's bothering me." [Pupil-1a]

Contrary to the benefits of a flexible approach, all the ELSAs' and Pupil-1a's interviews highlighted difficulties with running a non-manualised and flexible intervention. Key difficulties were associated with planning sessions alongside busy secondary school timetables; providing a wide enough range of resources and activities; and being able to develop understanding of additional approaches through training. Issues raised about timing focused on timetabling enough time to give pupils a flexible intervention and pupils' sessions not interfering with enjoyable lessons, core subjects or GCSE preparation.

“...it’s just the timetabling really, Miss [ELSA] can’t really change how the timetables work because she’s not in charge of timetables but I would like the sessions once a week on different times and days so I’m not missing one particular lesson or event all of the time.” [Pupil-1a]

“...what was lacking for me was that it wasn’t a programme. So there was a programme for...understanding anger, however, when you pick up some of these students they’ll have low self-esteem...so then you have to go through the folder and trying to find out ‘What is the programme I am looking for?’ and put your own programme together...” [ELSA-1b]

“I think maybe people [in ELSA] could do something that they find relaxing or therapeutic. For example some people like playing with Lego, whereas some people like drawing....” [Pupil-1a]

4.4.3 Core-ELSA-skills-and-qualities.

Interviews with stakeholders highlighted that the ELSA project was perceived to operate through the deployment of uniquely able and skilled TAs. It was apparent from the interviews that the ELSAs’ unique personal qualities and their specific skillsets were viewed as a key factor that enabled them to build effective relationships with pupils, which supported their EL development.

4.4.3.1 Unique-approach.

The uniqueness of the ELSAs appeared to centre on them being distinctively supportive members of school staff whose approach and personal qualities aided the development of attuned interactions. These unique approaches involved a more relaxed way of being with pupils, through genuine relationships built on

attuned ELSA-pupil interaction and the communication of unconditional positive regard.

"I think for him it was the fact there was probably that one person in the school that didn't do that when he walked in the room that greeted him and said 'Oh, how are you? What's happening?' That would make a huge difference to him..." [ELSA-2]

"[The ELSA is] fun, easy to talk to, relatable...kind, she pretty much will try and sort of solve any issue if she can she'll do like the most amount that she can possibly do to help me." [Pupil-2a]

For Pupil-1a the attuned interaction from his ELSA was received as non-patronising, which helped him to open up in his sessions.

"She's [ELSA] not patronising in our sessions and she doesn't try to dismiss what I say because if I try to explain how I feel to some people they try and rationalise things..." [Pupil-1a]

SENCO-2 described the importance of ELSAs being someone who 'looks like they like children'. The quote below indicated that this quality may be absent in other TAs' interactions with pupils. Again signifying a uniqueness in the ELSAs' approach.

"...you can advertise as much as you like...it's got to be someone who walks through the door that looks like they like children, you'd be surprised at how many people don't seem to like children" [SENCO-2]

In School-1, interviewees mentioned that pupil engagement was ensured through the careful matching of ELSAs to pupils, which further ensured that they could develop attuned and containing interactions with their pupils.

“...they all work very differently so I’d look at the four [ELSAs, now three] and look at the student and think which student would kind of marry up best with which ELSA...which relationship is going to be the best?”
[SENCO-1]

Alternatively, a statement by Pupil-1b indicated that not knowing your ELSA before sessions wasn’t a problem as you get to know each other through the sessions.

“Well I didn’t really speak to her I’d just seen her around...But it doesn’t really make a difference [if you know her already].” [Pupil-1b]

4.4.3.2 Unique-skills.

The ELSAs were all identified as having unique skills that enabled them to support pupils and deliver the ELSA project effectively. However, how these skills were believed to have been developed did differ between the two schools and the ELSAs. For example, ELSA-1b, believed her unique skills developed as a result of her experiences of being a mother to teenage boys.

“I hate that word ‘banter’ but I actually think for teenage boys you do need it and because I’m a mum of teenage boys I...can talk about stuff and then we get that over with and then we talk about business but it...is an opening isn’t it?” [ELSA-1b]

Whereas School-2 staff spoke about how ELSA-2 had developed her skills from her previous roles in the school and that her professional development journey meant that she was effective in supporting the emotional needs of SEND pupils.

“I think our ELSA is quite good that not only she used to be a TA as well so she kind of knows the education side so she sees that something’s

going on and then the strategy to support that as well as the learning...”

[Teacher-2a]

As a result of ELSA-2's particular and personal skill development, SENCO-2 felt that the success of the intervention could be at risk without her. Interestingly, there was no mention of contingency planning for ELSA departure in either school.

“...you know if she left, you know if she decided she wanted to go on and do something [else] and I do worry [that the ELSA project would be at risk].” [SENCO-2]

4.4.4 Applied-psychology.

Although psychological theory and processes were often not explicitly named in the interviews, elements were threaded throughout all of the interviewee's accounts. This implies that a tacit but active application of psychology was utilised to support pupils' emotional growth.

Processes related to attachment and containment appeared frequently throughout the interviews and it became apparent that these psychological processes were a core part of the intervention. The interviews also highlighted that as a result of the attached ELSA-pupil relationships the ELSAs were able to utilise a range of psychological activities.

4.4.4.1 Attachment-and-containment-as-key-processes.

In-line with attachment theory, the ELSAs in both schools were described as key-adults for ELSA pupils. In their interviews the pupils mentioned the importance of relational elements between themselves and their ELSA. The ELSA-pupil relationship was described to develop through trust, attuned reciprocity and empathic listening.

“...it’s done by a person I can trust.” [Pupil-2b]

“She sort of did notice [my sensitivities] because whenever there is like a zip that goes off she could sort of see like a little twitch with me, maybe it’s like my face will go a little bit red...” [Pupil-2a]

“...but actually we have grown on each other and he likes to come to see me, he looks very relaxed. We chat about him scootering, I have no idea about scootering but he’s teaching me and again that’s the way of building a relationship.” [ELSA-1b]

These attuned relationships appeared to allow the ELSAs to provide emotional containment to the pupils, and was recognised as a key function of the ELSA role.

“...more about letting things out and...promoting ‘You should speak about this, if you’re feeling this...’ so it’s less kind of you keep it in, particularly within a boys school...” [Assistant Head-1]

“...it feels easier to get emotions and thoughts that I have been bottling up out, to get this weight off my shoulders.” [Pupil-1a]

The key-adult ELSA role was also described by interviewees to function through the provision of a safe space in which to talk. Providing structural containment through a predictable time and place for pupils to be heard and understood.

“...if we need something we can just wander into another room, not with [the] ELSA room...if you need something... it was made really clear that that was a safe place for those kids...” [Teacher-2b]

4.4.4.2 Application-of-psychologically-based-activities.

From the interviews it was clear that activities utilised within the sessions were based on psychological theory and approaches. Key psychological approaches included: psychoeducation and CBT; mindfulness; positive and strengths-based psychology; and narrative approaches.

Psychoeducation and CBT approaches were used to help pupils identify possible triggers to their feelings and behaviours, as well as helping them to identify connections between triggers and how their thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and behaviours interact.

“...I had started talking to Miss about certain sounds that sort of set me like off...either I'll just get a little bit annoyed or it's either my face will go bright red and most of me will go bright red and it's like a pain rushing through my head and it will just get my blood going and if I get sort of angry enough then I will just sort of lose my temper with it.” [Pupil-2a]

“...cos' I just know when I get angry that there's no point of actually getting angry and know when to stop and when not to say things” [Pupil 1b]

In School-1 positive and strengths-based psychology appeared to be a prominent approach adopted. Key concepts of resilience and self-esteem were developed through exploring pupils' strengths.

“...you know fall down seven times get up eight...it's that what I'm teaching, that's what I'm talking about...and I try to unpick some of the language for them and help them to have a different maybe mindset about maybe failure or not getting it right...” [ELSA-1a]

“...usually I just tell Miss [ELSA] about what’s worrying me every week and sometimes I tell her about more positive things that have happened or things that I am excited to do.” [Pupil-1a]

For School-2, narrative approaches appeared to be pertinent to ELSA-2’s practice and an area that she was developing further. Narrative style activities were described to support the collaborative development of new stories to help pupils understand their feelings and reenvision preferred futures.

“...we started writing stories together as well...based around feelings...and...we do a lot of work about when I grow up so you know we write little comic strips and stories and things together.” [ELSA-2]

4.4.5 Aims-and-outcomes.

The interview data indicated that the ELSA project in both schools was operating towards clear aims and outcomes: firstly, an aim to understand and meet individual pupils’ specific SEMH needs; and secondly, to help create a more settled wider-school environment. Interviews from both schools highlighted how a triangulation of measures helped assess outcomes. However, School-1 data indicated that these assessments can feel subjective and that a lack of firm outcome data can put the ELSA project at risk of discontinued school financial investment.

4.4.5.1 Function-for-pupils.

Broadly, stakeholders described the key function of the ELSA project as a space to support pupils who struggle with emotional regulation to understand and manage their emotions at home and school.

“...I think it’s about managing emotions I think...[pupil] was very angry wasn’t he and now at school he’s much calmer and he’s got techniques on how to calm himself down and that is now slowly being mirrored at home isn’t it, I think it’s getting there, I think home was worse initially.”
[SENCO-1]

Within this broad understanding there was evidence that the ELSA project supports pupils with a defined set of low-level SEMH needs, including developing: emotional understanding and emotional regulation; life skills; self-esteem and self-concept; and managing the emotional and social impact of having a SEND.

“So my typical ELSA is friendship issues, anxieties, low self-esteem...not really thriving in this environment really, bit sad...” [ELSA-1a]

“...it hasn’t always been about CVs that was the...last three weeks we’ve been in here...it has been about emotional control especially about the exams.” [Pupil-2b]

Providing a space for pupils to talk through issues and release emotions was also mentioned by the participants as being a key function of ELSA support.

“...to talk through things...I think we all need that don’t we? Sometimes I know that if there is something bothering me but to talk it out they can kinda see what’s going on...” [Teacher-2a]

The release of emotions appeared to be part of a process, whereby the ELSA demonstrates within a humanistic and attuned approach (see overarching theme 4.4.3) that the session is a safe place and that the pupil’s emotions can be tolerated and contained by the ELSA.

4.4.5.2 Outcomes-for-school.

By providing containment and supporting pupils' emotional development, the school staff interviews identified that the ELSA project also facilitated a calmer school environment. ELSA sessions, were deemed to improve pupils' ability to manage their emotional reactions in classrooms and promote better behaviour for learning and interactions within peer groups.

"I think inevitably if it works then it will have an impact within the classroom and those that can then handle their emotions better will have been more successful at school so they're happy and there's less on their mind." [Assistant Head-1]

The ELSA project's function within School-2 was also cited to be a response to the increasing awareness of pupils' SEMH needs, alongside the decline in external agency support, such as CAMHs. Indicating that School-2 had recognised their responsibility to meeting SEMH needs.

"...we've got a huge amount of kids who are looked after, in foster care...or their parents are just at work constantly so I think we as a school have got quite vulnerable pupils here...and we have a massive SEND cohort because of the centre so yeah it's [ELSA] needed." [Teacher-2b]

4.4.5.3 Tracking-outcomes.

In both schools the tracking of ELSA pupils' outcomes was triangulated with use of different measures. These included: ELSA-pupil target scaling; pre- and post-intervention emotional literacy checklists; behaviour and attendance record data; and discussion of pupil behavioural changes with SEND and pastoral team colleagues.

“...it is a scale of one to ten and...you’ll agree with them what the goal will be and asking them ‘So on a scale of one to ten where do you think you are now?’...and they might say ‘A three’ and I would say to them ‘Where do you want to be?’ and they might say ‘An eight.’” [ELSA-1b]

However, deciding what would equal positive change on numerical measures appeared to be based on an arbitrarily decided increment gains in School-2 by SENCO-2. This indicates that despite data triangulation, positive outcome identification within the ELSA project can remain somewhat subjective.

“...we’d like...to see...something like a 10 percent [increase], which was just a random figure that you pick out of the air ‘What do we want to see?’ you know if you’ve got 27 out of 60 then you’re hoping to see something like...2.7 so...you’re looking at 3 so...30 out of 60 didn’t feel like it was too much.” [SENCO-2]

School-1 staff interviews highlighted a difficulty with measuring the ELSA project’s hoped for outcomes. Two issues with measuring impact were highlighted in the data. Firstly, due to the bespoke nature of each pupils’ intervention, change is not easily monitored using standardised measures. Therefore, there appears to be a degree of subjective ELSA impact interpretation.

“...you can’t measure it really...it’s not like teaching English where you can look at the grades at the end so I guess it’s only by doing that scaling and actually ok they’re saying that they feel better about it that’s the only way you can measure it...” [ELSA-1b]

In School-2, both HSLW-2 and Teacher-2b mentioned how pupil outcomes can be hard to notice. For Teacher-2b this was explained as due to the fast-paced nature of her classroom which meant there was little time to notice small changes in pupils’ wellbeing.

“...I rarely get to see it which is really sad because it’s a fast paced lesson most of the time I’m doing GCSE English stuff and it’s just me talking and working if there is five-mins of down time or they’re doing group work...then I can see that things have improved but it’s not as obvious to me in the short term.” [Teacher-2b]

To counteract some of the difficulties with identifying ELSA outcomes, changes in pupils’ academic and behavioural school data were also utilised. However, it was raised that measuring the impact in this way can feel crude, as other factors that could affect pupils’ engagement and emotional wellbeing cannot be controlled for.

“...now whether they’d have made that journey themselves I don’t know and that’s subjective isn’t it, would they have figured that out themselves?” [ELSA-1b]

The difficulty with quantifying ELSA outcomes was described by ELSA-1a and SENCO-1 as a concern often raised by School-1’s senior leadership. Not being able to clearly demonstrate its impact to senior leaders was believed to put the ELSA project at risk of not being funded by the school in the future.

“...lack of data in a way that might flag concerns for like the senior leaders...its having a senior leader that is...aware of the holistic impact it has and not all senior leaders have...come from that angle...” [SENCO-1]

4.4.6 Challenges-for-ELSAs-and-pupils.

The interviews indicated that the ELSA project can produce challenging effects for both ELSAs and pupils, and that these challenges could impact on how the ELSA project operates.

4.4.6.1 Emotional-impact-on-ELSAs.

All the ELSAs, SENCOs and HSLW-2's interviews highlighted that the ELSA role can be emotionally intense and could cause emotional exhaustion. These emotional effects were believed to be the result of the high-level of empathy and the containment of pupils' feelings that the role requires.

"...if you have empathy...you do give something of yourself and...I have a student whose dad has been very aggressive to him and his dad left him so he clearly has these feelings of abandonment and I'm not saying that my dad, but he did leave us you know and therefore that is going to trigger something in me..." [ELSA-1b]

"...I've...dealt with some quite tricky situations and everyone's been busy and then you internalise that for quite a long time and then it's not until you go and cry in the toilets you think actually I need to really go and talk to someone but... it's finding that time to go and talk to someone and offload it." [ELSA-2]

Both SENCO-1 and SENCO-2 spoke of how important it is, that due to the emotional labour required for the role, ELSAs can struggle to find time to reflect on and regulate their own emotions.

"Yeah so...it's important to...make sure that they get their emotional break from it, it's pretty intense I would imagine, listening to it all day in and day out." [SENCO-2]

SENCO-1's comments highlighted how the ELSAs in School-1 found time for emotion regulation by shortening their sessions, allowing more time for themselves between ELSA sessions. However, in School-2 the ELSA appeared to struggle to take time away from her pupils and allow reflection and regulation.

Therefore, SENCO-2 felt that she had to be more directive and create informal SEND team time where ELSA-2 could share her feelings with colleagues and offload.

“...give her [ELSA-2] time and sort of force her to come down here and...I’ve put things out like a crisp buffet so that they come in here 'cos otherwise, they’re really dedicated they’re gonna go and work with a kid somewhere through breaktime and through lunchtime and not have that down time...” [SENCO-2]

This sense of a lack of time also appeared to lead ELSA-2 to feel guilty about times when she had to prioritise other things above ELSA sessions, such as attending trainings or meetings.

“...I’m always conscious of that that’s a morning out and students are always saying to me ‘Oh you are around you’re not training or anything?’ and ‘You’re not in a meeting are you?’ and I know that that’s life and that’s daily school-life...you can’t be here 24/7 but it does always make me feel really guilty when I’m not here...” [ELSA-2]

In School-1 the ELSAs and SENCO-1 interviews also identified that ELSAs can lack confidence in their role. This was noted particularly when ELSAs first begin their role as it can take time for them to feel secure and not overly doubt their work.

“..because obviously my background wasn’t...in SEND whereas in the other people you’ve interviewed might have had more experience so I am very much learning and it’s a steep learning curve, it was last year I felt anyway...” [ELSA-1b]

This lack of confidence appeared to relate to data from the subtheme 'Support-for-ELSAs' (see section 4.4.1.3), where more frequent support and supervision was mentioned to be needed. In particular, when the ELSAs felt uncertain or stuck with pupil cases.

4.4.6.2 Challenging-effects-on-pupils.

Across both schools, challenging effects on pupils were identified, however these differed between the schools. In School-1 two key challenging effects for pupils were raised. Firstly, difficult emotional responses, such as paranoia and embarrassment, were noted to occur for some pupils after they had opened up to their ELSA. These emotions had to be carefully managed to ensure that ELSA work can be supportive.

"[He] has found...a little bit of paranoia actually about the fact that he's opened up to me and he's told me stuff that he's never told anybody else and so...I think you have to be really careful ..." [ELSA-1a]

"...he's getting really embarrassed because he's saying what I really want is a girlfriend..." [ELSA-1b]

The second challenging pupil effect in School-1 related to pupils' readiness to open up and talk with their ELSA. This factor was described as one reason why ELSA interventions may be longer for some pupils, or even be a reason why pupils' interventions may be paused.

"At first I think I was a bit hesitant because there was a lot of emotions that I was bottling up inside of me for more than a year so it took me some time to get things out." [Pupil-1a]

Interestingly, these same challenges were not raised in School-2 interviews, instead HSLW-2 and the pupils' interviews indicated that there can be a reluctance for pupils to want to end their ELSA sessions. For HSLW-2 this reluctance related to her concerns that pupils can become too dependent on their ELSA.

"...the other thing obviously is that they're not dependent on it I think it's very important that they learn resilience and then transition you know going up to college and everything else." [HSLW-2]

"...I know I'll be continuing for a lot more time, it should continue like probably year 10 and maybe passed hopefully." [Pupil-2a]

"...end of ELSA itself or...I don't particularly like to think about the end of things... I just prefer to have the happy times whilst I still can really." [Pupil-2b]

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter summarises the main findings of this research with reference to how they help answer the RQs. The findings will be linked to key theories and previous research, and this study's strengths and limitations will then be explored. The unique contribution to knowledge that this thesis offers will also be outlined, before the implications of this research to EP and secondary school contexts is reviewed. Finally, consideration will be given to future directions needed for ELSA and school-based SEMH research.

5.1 Key findings

As a reminder before the findings are discussed, this current research's questions were:

- RQ1: How does the ELSA project operate in secondary schools?
- RQ2: What facilitates the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?
- RQ3: What challenges affect the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?

The cross-case findings from the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews will now be outlined in relation to each RQ and related to key theories and research, including Bronfenbrenner's P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) (For a brief outline of how the findings relate to the P-P-C-T model, please see Appendix-11).

5.1.1 RQ1: How does the ELSA project operate in secondary schools?

Table 4 (p88) demonstrated that the degree to which both schools' ELSA projects corresponded to ELSA guidance was good. However, there were notable

differences between the schools and the level to which certain core elements were present within each school. Therefore, a more nuanced and detailed look at the findings is needed in order to answer RQ1.

5.1.1.1 Presence within the school system.

Firstly, data from both schools indicated that ELSA was part of wider-SEMH provisions and highlighted the presence of ELSA projects within the secondary schools' systems (see 4.4.1). There was evidence of a range of targeted provisions offered alongside ELSA, including drop-in time for ELSA pupils. However, contrary to recommendations (Roffey, 2016; Weare & Nind, 2011) these targeted supports were not embedded alongside structured whole-school SEMH approaches. In-line with governmental guidelines (DfE, 2018a; DoH, 2015), the level of whole-school SEMH support across both schools was considered to be developing, as examples of a growing awareness and acknowledgement of the need to support CYP's SEMH needs were demonstrated in the pupil and school staff interviews. Operating in school environments where limited whole-school approaches are utilised may lead to the ELSA project being less effective than it has potential for. This finding links to the Context and Process elements of Bronfenbrenner's (e.g. Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) P-P-C-T model. Minimal SEMH provision embedded throughout the school system, and thus less whole-staff understanding of SEMH needs, can result in fewer supportive interactional processes between pupils and wider school staff, as was indicated by some comments made by ELSA pupils in this research (see 4.4.1). Therefore, generalisation and maintenance of EL skills developed through ELSA could also be considered less likely to happen in school settings where whole-staff SEMH awareness is lacking. As secondary schools are usually larger and more complex social environments, predominantly offering

SEMH support that is reliant on the SEMH awareness and skills of just a specific number of staff, such as ELSAs, could arguably limit CYP's emotional development and wellbeing. Therefore, in light of this finding, it is important that schools and EPs involved in the ELSA project consider how ELSA work can be complemented by whole-school approaches in order to ensure school environments encourage as many supportive proximal processes between pupils and school staff as possible.

5.1.1.2 Relationships with parents and staff.

Although noted as present in both schools (see Table 4), the level of ELSA-school staff and ELSA-parent interaction was found to be variable, reliant on ELSAs' own drive, and often indirect (see 4.4.1.2). Although pupils believed some teachers were aware of their ELSA intervention, due to them missing lessons for ELSA sessions, ELSA-school staff communication appeared to happen best with pastoral and SEND staff, and more indirectly between ELSAs and teachers. Communication with teachers was predominantly described to happen through emails or messages passed on by SENCOs and pastoral leads. Whilst parents were informed that their child was being offered ELSA support, communication was reported to occur predominantly via email or letter and rarely past the beginning of the intervention. From a P-P-C-T perspective, where interactive proximal processes are limited, it is held that that they are unlikely to lead to change (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Where ELSA-school staff communication was more apparent in School-2, there appeared to be benefits to pupils, including Teacher-2a noting how discussion with ELSA-2 had led to a better understanding of pupils' needs. Therefore, where ELSA-school staff communication is reduced, it is likely that wider support for pupils' EL development will be less available. As a result, pupils' EL development may also

be less well actualised and generalised beyond the ELSA encounter into pupils' broader microsystems – their classroom and home contexts.

Whilst the ELSA literature suggests contact with parents and school staff is core to its approach (e.g. ELSA Network, 2017), no concrete guidance as to what this should entail is given, beyond letters and leaflets for parents and school staff. With evidence from primary-based ELSA research suggesting that good ELSA-parent and/or ELSA-school staff communication can happen, and that it is believed to enable greater benefits to pupils' EL development (e.g. McEwen, 2019; Leighton, 2015), consideration should be given to how such communication can be better forged in secondary school contexts. Interestingly, participants in this research also raised better communication between key adults as a wanted next step for how ELSA projects could improve.

However, it is worth noting that there is mixed evidence for the effectiveness of whole-school interventions that seek to include parents and/or teachers, with Durlak, et al's (2011) meta-analysis indicating worse effects and Weare and Nind's (2011) review indicating that multi-modal approaches to SEMH support yielded stronger effects. Effects from Durlak et al's study could help explain these results, as the multi-modal interventions in their analysis were found to encounter more implementation issues, such as a difficulty coordinating intervention activities across school and home contexts. This effect could relate to ELSA-2's comment that ELSA-parent communication '*can complicate things*'. Therefore, it could be the case that by adding additional processes to interventions, such as ELSA communication with key adults, workload demands increase, which may lead to weaker implementation. Thus, secondary schools and EPs involved in ELSA projects will need to consider reviewing ELSAs' time allocations to allow for communication with key adults, whilst maintaining time for session

implementation. Additional communication processes could include termly ELSA-parent and ELSA-teacher feedback sessions.

5.1.1.3 Extended length of ELSA interventions.

A notable divergence from the core elements of the ELSA project was identified in the length of pupils' interventions. Data from both schools indicated that pupils' intervention lengths usually far exceeded the 6-12 weeks recommended by the ELSA literature (Burton, 2009; ELSA Network, 2017). Interventions appeared to continue for some pupils throughout the academic school year. As a non-manualised intervention it is perhaps no surprise that flexibility within the delivery of ELSA sessions has been identified in previous research (e.g. Begley, 2016; McEwen, 2019). However, to my knowledge, extended flexibility in intervention length is a finding that has not been directly signposted in prior ELSA research. With only one prior study focusing solely on secondary school-based ELSA projects, it is important to consider why this may have occurred in both schools. Descriptions within the data indicated multiple reasons why ELSA work often extended beyond 6-12 weeks (pupil absence; school event timetabling; spending time building relationships with pupils prior to more formalised ELSA work; pupils' readiness to end their ELSA intervention; and the need for extended time when supporting pupils with more complex SEMH needs or home lives). These explanations highlight how aspects of the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) are present within the ELSA intervention and impact on pupils' intervention length and thus the perceived development of their EL skills over time. Firstly, within-person characteristics of ELSA pupils could be impacting on the intervention length, where resource characteristics – such as pupils' level of SEND or social deprivation – lead to activity adaptations or a greater level of support, which prolongs the progress of the intervention. Furthermore, force

characteristics, such as pupil readiness, could also impact on an ELSAs' willingness to cease a pupil's ELSA intervention.

Secondly, the reasons for lengthier ELSA interventions identified from the interviews also correspond to the context element of the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), where events occurring within the microsystem of the school were considered to impact on the length of pupils' ELSA interventions. Secondary schools are large and complex social systems. Therefore, it is understandable that ELSA interventions will likely come across difficulties with both: events within the setting that disrupt ELSA operation, and the wide range of subjects may make it more likely that curriculum events clash with ELSA sessions. Further exploration of the impact of the complex contexts of secondary school settings will be outlined when discussing findings related to RQ3.

The final point to consider related to extended intervention length is that the data suggests that it can take a few sessions to establish trusting ELSA-pupil relationships. ELSA-pupil relationships are recognised within the ELSA literature as being key to the intervention, and the handbook provided at the start of ELSAs' training (Shotton & Burton, 2008, p.16) states that '*The greatest secret of success within the ELSA programme is probably the time and skills invested in building a relationship of trust.*' With the known importance of school staff-pupil relationships for developing and sustaining pupil wellbeing (Bomber, 2015; Bomber & Hughes, 2013) as well as the awareness that these relationships can be most impactful for secondary aged pupils (Chu, et al., 2010), it is unsurprising that, in-line with the ELSA literature, the ELSAs in this research felt it vital to ensure effective and genuine relationships were developed before targeted ELSA work began. However, as a result of these findings it is vital that those involved in secondary

school ELSA projects are made aware that although building relationships with pupils can extend the length of pupils' ELSA interventions, this time is crucial in ensuring successful ELSA interventions. Further consideration of the role ELSA-pupil relationships play in ELSA interventions will be discussed alongside findings that answer RQ2.

5.1.1.4 Applied psychology.

ELSA sessions can be understood as micro-time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) within the P-P-C-T model, and therefore interest should be given to the activities and processes that happen within sessions, as, through consistent occurrence, ELSA plays a vital part in the development of pupils' emotional wellbeing. Interviewee accounts highlighted that a range of psychologically-based approaches were applied by the ELSAs within their sessions (see 4.4.4.2) and that these matched to the approaches outlined in ELSA project literature (Burton, 2009; Shotton & Burton, 2008) and the LA's ELSA training. The most predominant reference to psychology found across both schools related to attachment (Bowlby, 1969) and containment (Bion, 1961) principles. Application of these principles appeared to occur through ELSA-pupil interactions, and as such they can be understood as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). These proximal processes involved pupils' emotional wellbeing being supported through regular contact with their ELSA who was described by pupils to listen, contain, and respond carefully to their emotional needs and concerns. The presence of ELSA-pupil relational processes within ELSA interventions has been recognised in previous primary school-based research (e.g. Hills, 2016) and in secondary school-based ELSA research (Begley, 2016). Thus, this current research provides further evidence for the presence of relational processes within

secondary school ELSA contexts. Further exploration as to how relational interactions may support ELSA interventions is provided in 5.1.2.1.

Beyond relational approaches, psychologically-based activities within sessions were also noted to link to CBT, narrative, mindfulness, and positive and strengths-based approaches. However, the degree to which these activities were utilised appeared to vary dependent on ELSA style and pupil need. For example, where pupils' needs were understood as anxiety, CBT approaches were used. Such findings highlight that secondary school ELSA interventions are not merely a space to talk about issues. Active and experiential activities were also found to occur, such as Pupil-2a's account of psychoeducation via gym routines. Whilst both previous ELSA research (Begley, 2016), and this current research have identified that ELSA interventions provide a place for pupils to discuss worries, in light of research that suggests that co-rumination talk can increase some CYP's experiences of low-mood (Bastin, et al., 2014; Rose, et al., 2007), it is important to acknowledge that psychological processes beyond talk are also utilised. Thus, importantly this current research has highlighted that ELSA sessions do not rely solely on talk, but that psychologically informed activities are also used to aid pupils' emotional wellbeing (see 4.4.4) Therefore, with sessions including both relational and activity-led elements, secondary school-based ELSA projects can be understood to offer 'caught' and 'taught' processes, in-line with theory of EL development suggested by Weare (2004).

5.1.2 RQ2: What facilitates the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?

Exploration of the interview data indicated that there were factors related to both the schools' ELSA projects and wider systems that were believed to support

implementation within secondary schools. Key findings were: the deployment of skilled and attuned ELSAs; support and respect for ELSA; and flexibility within a structured intervention. These findings will now be discussed in turn.

5.1.2.1 Deployment of skilled and attuned ELSAs.

ELSAs were identified as holding unique skills and qualities that appeared to be key to the success of the ELSA project. Interviews highlighted key ELSA qualities, akin to humanistic therapeutic principles (Rogers, 1957), including: being caring, showing genuine interest, and unconditional positive regard towards pupils. Interestingly, these qualities were noted to be the result of ELSAs' own prior experiences and personal attributes, and not something the ELSA training necessarily developed. The training appeared to reaffirm and provide psychological grounding to approaches that ELSAs already thought were beneficial for pupils' emotional wellbeing.

This finding indicates that schools need to carefully consider who they deploy as ELSAs, ensuring they have these fundamental attributes. Both SENCOs and Pupil-1a and Pupil-2a highlighted that if the schools were absent of their current ELSAs the project may not function at its best. It is noteworthy that the *ELSA Trainer's Manual* (Burton, 2009, p. 47) outlines key person specifications to guide schools in selecting appropriate staff to deploy as ELSAs.

The presence of these qualities within the ELSAs appeared to enable them to build attuned and trusting relationships with their pupils, a recognised factor for mental health and wellbeing support for CYP (Green, 2006). These were also identified as a facilitating process in previous ELSA research (Begley, 2016; Hills, 2016; McEwen, 2019). Attunement is a psychological concept, underpinned by attachment theory, that relates to an adult's ability to respond positively and

thoughtfully to CYP (Kennedy et al., 2011). An attuned relationship is said to develop through a series of six interactional levels in which the adult demonstrates their attention and care towards the child (See Appendix-12 for an overview of Kennedy et al.'s [2011] six attunement principles). By interacting with pupils from the lowest level of attunement – attentiveness – to the highest – deepening discussion – it is likely that ELSAs demonstrate their care for pupils and promote the development of a secondary attachment or key-adult relationship (Bomber, 2015; Bomber & Hughes, 2013), indicating ELSA-pupil relationships as a key proximal process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) that supports pupils' emotional wellbeing and development (as highlighted in 5.1.1.4).

Descriptions of ELSA-pupil interactions within the interviews indicated that ELSAs utilised approaches within all six of Kennedy et al.'s (2011) attunement principles and that the ELSAs had developed a key-adult relationship with pupils. This provides counter evidence to past research that found that TAs were more likely to close-down discussion rather than use questions that open-up discussion (Radford et al., 2011). It may be that when TAs are carefully selected by SENCOs and trained to recognise their attuned interaction skills within a specific programme, as is the case for ELSAs, that they are able to demonstrate higher level interactions with pupils, which enables positive relationships to develop.

5.1.2.2 Supervision for, and value of ELSA projects.

In accordance with the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), factors that do not directly interact with CYP (e.g. factors in their mesosystems and exosystems) can still influence their development if the processes within these systems occur regularly. Therefore, it is important to recognise that this current research identified that the process of ELSA support and supervision from both

EPs and the school community were believed to benefit ELSA projects, as they helped ELSAs reflect on and develop their work with pupils. This is a finding that supports previous research that has identified supervision as facilitative of ELSA projects (e.g. McEwen, 2019; Osborne & Burton 2014).

As recommended in the ELSA literature (Burton, 2009, 2018), school-based SENCO-led 'managerial' and EP-led 'clinical' supervision processes were identified as happening in both schools. Additionally, School-1 provided ELSAs with fortnightly supervision from the school's counsellor. Although reported as beneficial and useful for these ELSAs in problem-solving and exploring pupil cases, the capacity of the school counsellor to provide adequate 'clinical' supervision to the ELSAs is unknown. This uncertainty was further highlighted by SENCO-1 describing this supervision as a lighter form of supervision, indicating that there was less space for reflection in counsellor-led supervision compared to EP-led supervision. However, as supervision was not the sole focus of this current research further exploration of ELSA supervision processes within secondary schools is needed. EPs offering supervision to other professionals is common practice (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010), and as such there are clear guidelines outlined by the BPS (2017) in order to ensure that ethical and effective supervision is offered. Therefore, EP attention should be given to any additional supervision that ELSAs receive in order to ensure that it is in-line with best-practice. EPs involved in ELSA projects could also explore schools' understanding of ELSA supervision, so that suitable supervision is provided.

ELSA projects were also reported as valued within both schools, with school staff and pupils holding the intervention in high esteem. Related to its perceived value, interviews also highlighted that ELSA attendance held no stigma for pupils. A finding incongruent to Begley's (2016) research, where ELSA attendance was

reported to elicit embarrassment for some secondary-aged pupils among their peers.

Additionally, the support and training that ELSAs receive from LA-based EPs was viewed by both SENCOs to give the intervention a heightened status above other school-based interventions. Although noted as an intervention valued by key stakeholders in previous ELSA research (e.g. Grahamslaw, 2010; Wilding & Claridge, 2016), the finding that, as well as the perception of positive pupil outcomes, the support and supervision from LA-based EPs led to a greater perception of the ELSA project is of importance for ELSA projects and other EP-led interventions.

With both positive accounts of ELSA supervision and its high status, these findings can be linked to previous research that highlights that with the presence of support and supervision, interventions are better implemented, including more frequent and higher quality sessions (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2010).

5.1.2.3 Flexibility within a structured intervention.

The flexibility of ELSA interventions within the structured boundaries of the ELSA project were believed to facilitate successful intervention processes. In particular the freedom of ELSAs to adapt both their approach and the intervention length enabled the intervention to be as pupil-centred as possible. The ELSAs and pupils in both schools shared accounts of ELSAs thoughtfully adapting sessions in response to pupils' needs. Whilst, as already noted, extended intervention length has not previously been identified in ELSA research, flexibility as a general facilitating factor has been (e.g. Begley, 2016; McEwen, 2019). With TAs deployed in the ELSA project as ELSAs, these research findings counteract

evidence that has indicated that TAs, due to their apparent lower skill level, can be less adept at working flexibly to meet pupils' needs (Giangreco, 2010). However, it may be that, unlike TAs in Giangreco's (2010) research who received minimal training, ELSA training and supervision helps build TAs' capacities to work flexibly. This is a process that would support Grahamslaw's (2010) findings that ELSAs, compared to TAs without ELSA training, reported greater self-efficacy in their ability to support pupils' EL post-training. As the ELSA project is non-manualised, ELSA training covers broad areas and guides ELSAs towards a range of useful activities and approaches, enhancing their ability to consider which approaches suit each pupil.

5.1.3 RQ3: What challenges affect the implementation of the ELSA project in secondary schools?

As well as the presence of facilitating factors, challenges that impacted on ELSA project implementation within secondary school contexts were also identified in the interviewees' accounts. Key findings were: the emotional impact on ELSAs; negative effects on pupils; and the difficulty of working with pupils in complex systems. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

5.1.3.1 The emotional impact on ELSAs.

Interview accounts from school staff and ELSAs indicated that supporting pupils' EL needs can provoke difficult emotional responses for ELSAs. Emotional responses related to the ELSA role require a high level of empathy and containment towards pupils. For example, ELSA-2 spoke of how she had noticed herself crying in the toilet due to the emotional load of the work, and that until this moment she had not considered seeking emotional support from colleagues. Whilst all of the ELSAs talked about the importance of seeking support from

others, there is the concern that ELSAs' extended experience of emotionally-charged work with pupils could lead to emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is a state where one experiences a decreased ability to give oneself to others at a psychological and emotional level, and can lead to burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It is important that ELSAs are able to be emotionally available to their pupils, not least due to the level of EL modelling that their role requires, but also due to the importance of attuned ELSA-pupil relationships that this, and previous ELSA research has highlighted as essential. The experience of difficult emotions by ELSAs has received little attention in previous research, with only one out of the three secondary school ELSAs in Begley's (2016) study indicating negative effects of being emotionally involved in pupils' lives.

An area related to ELSAs' emotional responses that has been highlighted in previous research is ELSAs' lack of confidence in their work (e.g. Begley, 2016; McEwen, 2019). ELSAs in School-1 highlighted this as a key area of challenge for their work. Such a finding throws some doubt on Grahamslaw's (2010) findings of increased ELSA self-efficacy post training. Whilst increases may have occurred, there is no assurance that new levels of self-efficacy are sufficient for ELSAs. Working in a non-manualised intervention requires intuition and planning in order to deliver pupil-centred support, therefore ELSA self-efficacy may not be stable, as each pupil may raise different challenges and threaten ELSAs' feelings of competence. For example, a key area where the ELSAs in this research felt further guidance and support would be beneficial was developing pupil self-esteem. These findings indicate that whilst ELSAs' self-efficacy may rise post-training, continued support and guidance is needed in order to ensure their self-efficacy remains elevated, so that they can effectively respond to the broad and complex range of ELSA pupils' needs.

With emotional exhaustion a possibility, and ELSA confidence at risk, supervision and support should be a fundamental focus for those involved in ELSA projects. Findings also highlighted that more frequent support from EPs was wanted, particularly when ELSAs felt stuck or unsure. It may be that working as an ELSA in a secondary school is more difficult due to secondary pupil characteristics (including higher levels of mental health difficulty [NHS Digital, 2018]) and therefore greater levels of support are needed. With supervisory processes occurring in pupils' mesosystem between ELSAs and EPs, and the theorised impact that more frequent processes can have on CYPs' development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), the most successful ELSA interventions may be realised when ELSAs receive frequent EP support. Therefore, EPs may consider offering phone catch-ups to ELSAs when needed, in addition to their half-termly group supervision. As the interviews revealed, finding time in a busy school timetable to reflect can be difficult, and ELSAs experienced feelings of guilt when time was spent away from direct pupil support. Any additional ELSA support will need to communicate its importance and be easily and formally accessible.

5.1.3.2 Negative effects on pupils.

Although the possibility that SEL interventions may lead to unintentional negative effects has been highlighted (e.g. Ecclestone's [2007] theory of SEL as creating a narrative of a diminished and vulnerable self), little ELSA research has found such effects. However, where negative effects for pupils have been found these have been for secondary school pupils and have included fear of peer stigmatisation (Begley, 2016). Interestingly, in the current research this effect was not found and pupils indicated that ELSA support carried no stigma and was

viewed positively across both schools. However, other negative effects on pupils were noted.

Pupils' dependency on their ELSA to regulate their emotions would indicate that ELSA interventions do not consistently enable autonomous emotional regulation – a core process needed for self-actualisation, identified in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Pupil-ELSA dependency was also highlighted as a factor for one of Begley's (2016) secondary school pupils, and it was suggested that some pupils may need 'weaning off' ELSA. Dependency on the ELSA-pupil relationship may also explain why in the current research ELSA interventions extended beyond the length recommended in the ELSA literature.

If pupils struggle to develop strategies that enable competent and autonomous emotion regulation, then schools may extend pupils' ELSA interventions. Additionally, regular support, with an attuned adult, may be the cause of any perceived reduction in pupils' emotional difficulties. However, Grahamslaw's (2010) findings, of increased pupil EL self-efficacy post-ELSA intervention, may refute this, as pupils in that study would have developed autonomous EL strategies in order for their EL self-efficacy score to increase. Nevertheless, further investigation into secondary school pupils' EL self-efficacy and related autonomy is needed in order to clarify these processes. Therefore, in-line with self-determination theory, interventions such as ELSA should consider to what degree they enable the production of the core psychological concepts of self-driven motivation (autonomy, relatedness and competence). Whilst secondary school-based ELSA projects can be said to develop relatedness, through the attached ELSA-pupil relationship, this current research provides conflicting evidence as to whether pupils are able to develop autonomous and competent EL skills. Therefore, those involved in the implementation of ELSA projects,

should consider whether ELSA projects develop pupils' 'identified regulation', where emotion regulation skills are adopted because they are viewed as useful and valued by pupils (Deci & Ryan, 1994, p. 6).

Linked to 'identified regulation', and in accordance with the force characteristic processes outlined in the Person element of the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), is pupil motivation to engage in the ELSA project. SENCO-1 and ELSA-1b spoke of how some pupils referred into ELSA are not ready, and that this is perceived through pupils' reluctance to engage or disruptiveness in sessions. This may reflect some pupils lack of, or refusal to recognise any difficulty with their emotionality. For some pupils, perhaps the identification of low EL competence may not seem relevant to their view of useful skills.

Paranoia, embarrassment and reluctance to engage were all reported as difficult emotional responses that affected pupils' engagement during ELSA sessions; embarrassment within sessions was however not related to feelings of attendance stigma, as reported above. Paranoia and embarrassment were reported to have occurred in sessions after pupils had disclosed thoughts and feelings. Issues related to disclosure appeared frequently in Begley's (2016) research, but this has not been identified in research conducted with primary school ELSA pupils (e.g. Hills, 2016). Therefore, it may be the case that due to adolescence being a developmental stage where greater self-awareness develops (Blakemore, 2018), secondary school pupils may be more likely to experience feelings of paranoia and embarrassment in ELSA sessions. Age appeared to be a factor for one pupil, described as being embarrassed by ELSA-1b, when they talked about him wanting a girlfriend. Personal relationships and related embarrassment may also play more of a role in secondary school ELSA sessions due to an increased motivation for romantic relationships amongst

adolescents (Peper & Dahl, 2013). However, these negative effects did not appear to be long lasting, and the non-judgemental and sensitive approach of the ELSAs was described to enable disclosure within a safe environment, where feelings of embarrassment or paranoia were overcome and session attendance maintained.

5.1.3.3 The difficulty of working with pupils in complex contexts.

Interviews across both schools indicated the challenges of working with pupils from complex contexts, namely the microsystem contexts of home and secondary schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As ELSA interventions happen independent of pupils' wider microsystems and with limited and bridged communication happening between ELSAs and these systems, it appeared that generalisation of any newly learnt EL skills beyond the ELSA encounter was predominantly dependent on pupils' actions. For pupils who were described to have challenging home contexts, including family loss or deprivation, ELSA was described similarly by both ELSA-1a and ELSA-1b, with ELSA-1a stating an ELSA is 'a little pebble in a pond'. This quote indicates a recognition that ELSA work does not happen in a vacuum, and by working solely with pupils, only small changes for pupils with challenging home contexts are possible. However, despite ELSA-parent communication being limited in both schools, SENCO-1 and Assistant Head-1 appeared to recognise that greater connections between ELSA projects and pupils' home contexts could be improved. The challenge of working with pupils from more complex home environments was also raised in Mann's (2014) research, indicating that it is an issue for both primary and secondary school ELSA projects.

Similarly, whilst there was evidence that ELSA-2 was proactive in her communication of ELSA pupils' needs to school staff (see 4.4.1.2), SENCO-2 noted that further understanding and communication with school staff about the ELSA project was needed. From my understanding of School-2's context, the difficulty in bridging communication and understanding of ELSA to school staff was harder as the SEND department functioned quite separately from the rest of the school, with only SEND pupils being offered ELSA support. This way of operating referrals in School-2, along with limited ELSA-school staff communication across both schools, may portray to school staff that EL and emotional wellbeing are predominantly the duty of SEND departments and ELSAs, and not a wider school initiative. SENCO-2 spoke of how keeping SEMH needs as one of School-2's key priorities was a challenge, due to frequent competing demands. For School-1, there was a sense that SEMH awareness was developing and that the school's approach to behaviour management was not fully aligned with the ELSA project's approach, which appeared to cause some tensions. These findings support those of Mann (2014) and Leighton (2015), as some school staff and parents in their studies, were found to have different conceptions of what ELSA was, and this was believed to impact on effective ELSA implementation.

Spreading whole-school awareness of and support for EL and emotional wellbeing has been acknowledged to be harder in secondary schools (compared to primary schools) due to the more complex teaching structure and greater weighting on core curriculum outcomes (Lendrum et al., 2013). For the ELSA project to be most beneficial, EPs may need to support schools to extend EL support beyond ELSA sessions, so that a shift occurs from the notion of 'a little pebble in a pond', towards approaches that consider connections with school

staff and parents as fundamental. The application of the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) to the implementation of ELSA projects could support this, and time could be given to support ELSA project schools to consider how to include pupils' wider contexts and enhance the processes between key adults and pupils, so that more emotionally attuned school environments can be developed. Focusing on ELSA sessions and wider factors, such as including parents, also shifts the focus from pupils changing to one that encourages adults in pupils' lives to consider how their interactions affect pupils' ability to demonstrate EL, arguably reducing the likelihood of the adoption of a diminished self-narrative by pupils (Ecclestone, 2007).

Included in the challenges with working with pupils in complex systems is the difficulty of tracking outcomes within the ELSA project (see 4.4.5.3). Difficulties centred around: showing growth with the use of non-specific EL and SEMH measures when working in a pupil-centred way, and concerns over the use of subjective measures of EL to communicate the effectiveness of the ELSA project to school leaders.

The measures used by both schools to evaluate the effectiveness of pupils' ELSA interventions included the SDQ (Goodman, 1997) and the EL checklist (Faupel, 2003b). The difficulties noted with the use of these measures to demonstrate pre to post-ELSA change for pupils is not surprising, as previous ELSA research has failed to find significant pre- and post-ELSA difference for both primary school pupils (Ball, 2014; Mann, 2014) and secondary school pupils (Burton, et al., 2010). To counteract the difficulty with identifying any improvement from such general measures, both schools utilised behavioural (e.g. attendance) and achievement (academic progress) measures. However, these measures were also said to be too non-specific. It is therefore difficult to attribute change directly

to the ELSA project, as wider context factors cannot be isolated. A difficulty with both general EL and SEMH measures, as well as behavioural and achievement measures, is that they do not necessarily link to pupils' ELSA targets. As each pupils' ELSA intervention targets unique difficulties, utilising broad measures is not likely to identify specific areas of change. As Steiner (2003) conceptualised EL as inherently value-laden, perception of what may constitute good EL skills is likely to differ between individuals, contexts and communities. Therefore, impact measures may work best when customised for each pupil. This could include the use of pre and post scaling measures based on pupils' specific targets, an individualised measure that is often used in EP practice (Beaver, 2011), and pupil case study write-ups with qualitative pupil accounts of how useful they found their ELSA intervention. Though, with outcomes across schools now so closely monitored, it is understandable that schools would choose to use seemingly robust measures (e.g. the SDQ and ELCs) to provide an indication of ELSA project effectiveness. However, with limited effects noted by these measures in previous ELSA research there is a concern that if effectiveness is not demonstrated for ELSA then it could risk being decommissioned by schools, a fear that was present within both case study schools. With austerity policies causing known funding issues across education, alongside the high level of pupil SEMH needs, it is important that interventions can prove a positive impact in order to justify their implementation and use of schools' already limited resources. EPs are arguably well placed to help schools consider which measures to triangulate in order to gain the most meaningful and useful intervention outcome data.

5.2 Limitations and strengths of the current research

Despite the findings of the current study providing novel insight into how ELSA projects operate in secondary schools, it is important to reflect on the limitations and strengths of this research so that readers can consider the weighting of any theories developed, before generalisation occurs. Limitations of this study will be discussed first.

5.2.1 Limitations.

Firstly, as with much of the previous ELSA research, and qualitative research in general (Mertens, 2010), this research had a relatively small sample of seven participants from each case study school (n=14). However, issues with sample size usually relate to how generalisable the findings are. Therefore, as this research utilised an exploratory multiple case study design, generalisability was not the key aim (Yin, 2014). Instead, the focus was on generating theories of how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools, so that similar themes can be considered when implementation occurs in other similar secondary school settings.

Time also played a big factor in participant recruitment. Recruitment of schools was harder than anticipated and once two case study schools were recruited, interview data needed to be gathered. Therefore, given the time constraints for the completion of this professional doctoral thesis, and the depth of codes and themes provided by the participants' interviews, this sample size can be considered sufficient. Furthermore, findings were also found to link to previous ELSA research, indicating that the sample size was big enough to produce replicated, as well as original, findings.

Secondly, ELSA research can be critiqued for its inclusion of either only school staff or parental voice alongside pupil voices: rarely are all three voices triangulated. This could also be a critique of the current study, as only school staff members' and pupils' voices were included, and not parents. However, the decision to not include parents was based on the conception that parents are less involved in the implementation of the ELSA project and so their insight may be limited. To obtain rich qualitative data, it is arguably best and most ethical to include only those that have good insight into the phenomena being researched (Patton, 2002). The findings indicated that this assumption was accurate, as ELSAs were reported to have limited contact with parents, indicating that parental knowledge of the ELSA project may have been limited. However, it cannot be ruled out that parental voice may have offered further insight into why parental engagement was low, and the perceived effects of this.

Furthermore, with the difficulty experienced with school recruitment, it could also be considered that the participants were more likely from schools where ELSA projects were well implemented and valued by the school community, given that the SENCO and senior staff were happy for staff and pupil time to be given to the research process. This may have biased the findings obtained, with a more positive view of ELSA projects being offered than perhaps is typical. However, arguably it can be useful to explore cases where implementation is going well in order to consider what factors within these school contexts support implementation as well as any challenges, so that theories about effective implementation can be developed and generalised to other secondary school ELSA contexts.

Additional limitations of the current research can be considered. The use of semi-structured interviews may have restricted the degree to which participants felt

able to discuss issues they felt were most pertinent to their experience of the ELSA project, limiting the degree to which a shared construction of the ELSA project between myself and the participants was obtained. However, this was considered during the research process and participants' shifts from the interview schedule were accepted and explored when pertinent to the RQs. Some pupils' interviews were notably shorter than others, and this may reflect a difference in their ease with the interview process and comfort in talking about their ELSA experience. Further pilot work utilising pupils would have enabled further consideration of the pupils' interview schedules. With the tight time schedule of the interview process in each school, further time to build rapport with participants would also have been beneficial. However, school staff availability was already limited.

5.2.2 Strengths.

Despite the limitations outlined above, there are strengths to this research that should be acknowledged. Firstly, a clear outline of the research process and the decisions that guided the research design are justified in Chapter 3. Transparency and clarity are imperative elements of ensuring validity within qualitative research (Yardley, 2008, see 3.7). Additional to the common elements of research validity, this research also achieved a level of catalytic validity (Lather, 1986). Catalytic validity is present when research aims to "reorient, focus, and energise" research participants so that they can consider the researched phenomena from their own point of view and become motivated to enact change (Lather, 1986, p. 67). There was evidence of catalytic validity within the SENCOs', ELSAs' and school staff's interviews as they noted issues that they felt they could enact positive change within their ELSA projects. For example, SENCO-2 noted

how the interview process had enabled her to reflect on the degree of ELSA-teacher communication and consider ways to improve it.

“...it’s not just like answering questions it’s like reflection which is really good that it has come at the end of term...to be able to do something that ties up better with the teachers and utilises that...kind of teacher-ELSA link...”

The presence of catalytic validity can be argued to provide evidence for the validity of this research, as the research focus appeared pertinent to the participants, and thus was an area worthy of investigation.

Working with the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and from a social constructionist stance, this research obtained the views of a broad range of school community members, which allowed for the identification of themes that link to many of the processes and contexts that interact with pupils’ ELSA interventions. Also, this research aimed to explore secondary school ELSA projects from all four elements of the most up-to-date version of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), something that much research utilising this model has neglected to do (Tudge, et al., 2009) (see Figure 1).

Lastly, through the inclusion of a broad range of participant voices relevant to the phenomena of ELSA projects in secondary schools, this research has extended the current ELSA project research base and provides theories that help explain how it operates within these contexts.

5.3 Implications for future practice

This research identified the need to explore how secondary school ELSA projects operate, and gain the views of the wider secondary school community. Previous secondary school ELSA research has only focused on the views of pupils and ELSAs and does not offer a full conception of how the ELSA project operates. Through qualitative interviews with secondary school community members (ELSAs, SENCOs, pupils, and school staff) who have experienced the ELSA project in some way, this research provides theories as to how the ELSA project operates in secondary schools. It also highlights both challenges and facilitating factors that can impact on its implementation within secondary school contexts. Therefore, the findings from this research have implications for both how secondary schools implement the ELSA project, and the training and support that EPs offer secondary schools and their ELSAs. The findings have also impacted on my own educational psychology practice and how I support both ELSAs and schools with ELSA projects, and these implications will also be outlined. For an overview of how these implications map onto the P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) see Figure 6 below.

5.3.1 Implications for school ELSA projects.

As this research highlighted that ELSA-pupil relationships and the qualities and skills of the ELSAs were a core element of ELSA project implementation, secondary schools will need to consider contingency plans in case ELSAs leave their role. Although not directly explored, there was little mention of contingency planning in the ELSAs' or SENCOs' interviews in both schools. However, change in ELSA staffing had occurred in both schools during their ELSA projects' life-span. For School-1 this happened during the process of this research, with their

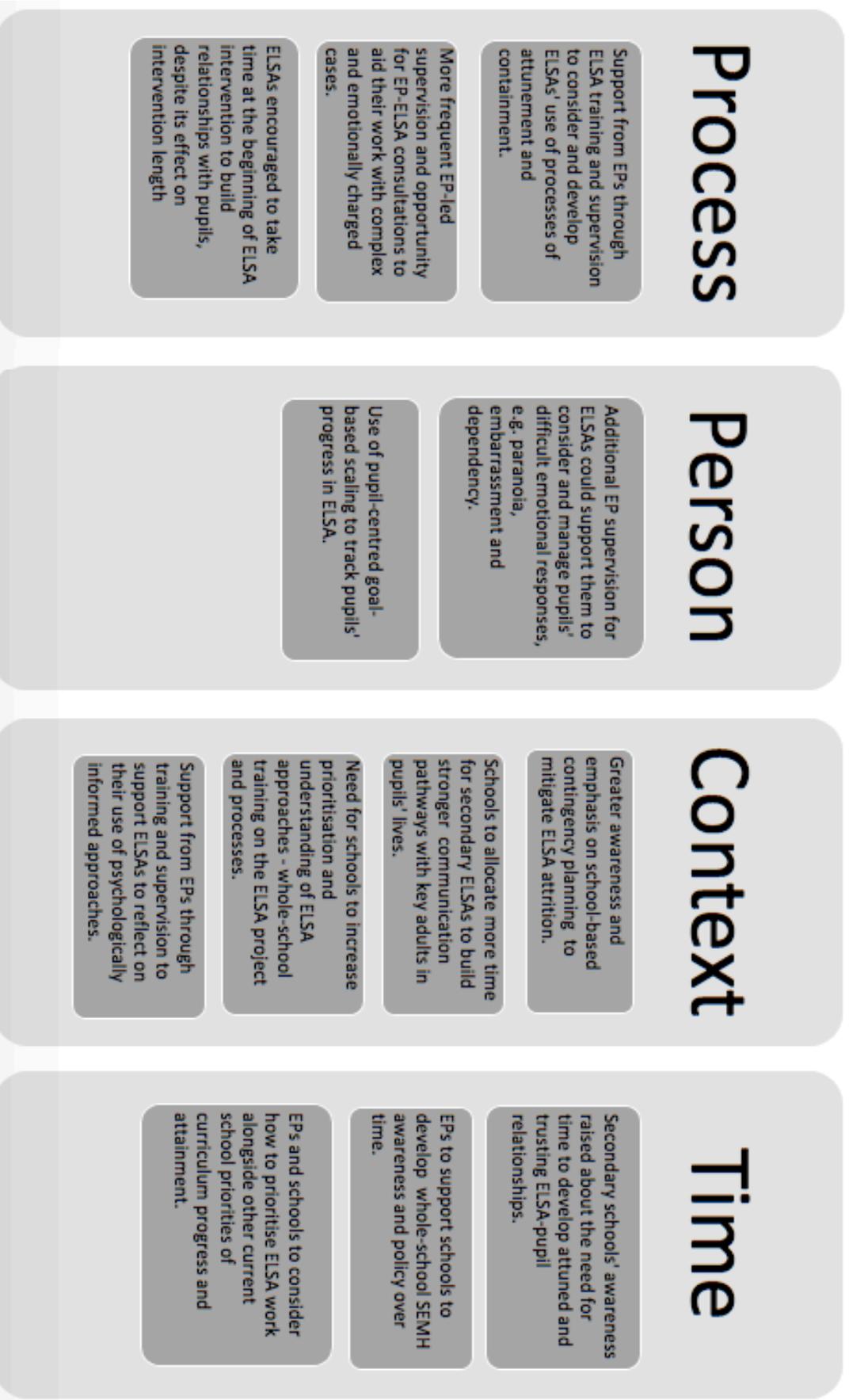


Figure 6 Research implications mapped onto P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)

ELSA staffing changing from four to three. For School-1 this did not appear a huge problem and pupil caseload handover had happened. However if this were to happen in School-2, where there was only one ELSA, it could lead to a considerable pause in the running of the ELSA project. Therefore, schools with ELSA projects should consider ELSA loss contingency planning. This could include: having more than one ELSA trained within a school, as well as ensuring school staff are well informed of the ELSA project so that interested staff can volunteer to be trained.

Challenges with the implementation of ELSA projects in secondary schools were found to relate to complex school structures, as well as limited, but developing, whole-school understanding and prioritisation of EL and emotional wellbeing. Thus, schools may need to consider how well the ELSA project fits with their ethos and timetabling structure. ELSAs spoke about the need for time to resource, plan, and deliver their ELSA sessions. Therefore, secondary schools, with their multiple priorities (including curriculum examinations), will need to ensure that ELSA is not disrupted at busy times of the academic year, and that ELSA timetables are not overly restricted by core subject prioritisation, particularly as ELSA intervention was believed by school staff in both case study schools to improve pupils' access to academic learning.

Due to the limited degree of ELSA-teacher and ELSA-parent communication in both schools, with most communication occurring at the beginning of interventions and through bridged communication pathways, schools will need to consider how they can support ELSAs' communication with adults within pupils' ecosystems. Utilising a P-P-C-T model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) approach to ELSA may support schools to act on the importance of communication between different members of pupils' ecosystems and allocate

additional time so that ELSAs can action this. There is a need for those involved in ELSA projects to take a more active approach to their understanding that CYP's EL development does not happen in a vacuum and that wider system factors are impactful.

5.3.2 Implications for EPs in supporting whole-school ELSA projects.

As well as supporting ELSA schools to adapt their ELSA practice in-line with the implications raised above, this research also raises implications directly for EP practice. Firstly, as a range of psychological approaches were found to be utilised by secondary school ELSA projects, it is important that EPs continue to support ELSAs to consider which psychological approaches are most appropriate to utilise with pupils. Experience of a broader range of approaches was raised by Pupil-1a, who shared that he would like access to relaxation approaches in his sessions. EP support for this could happen during EP-ELSA group supervision sessions. EPs may need to restate the psychological foundations of ELSA approaches so that ELSAs have a more overt understanding of the psychological processes utilised in ELSA. For example, as attachment, containment, and attunement appeared to be prominent psychological processes in ELSA sessions, EPs could help ELSAs reflect on the presence of these processes in their sessions with pupils. More awareness of the theories that guide behaviour is believed to increase the effective use of such theories (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Secondly, whilst EP involvement appeared to signal that the ELSA project was a quality intervention to school community members, further EP involvement was viewed as needed. Notably, more frequent EP-ELSA supervision would be advisable, so that ELSAs have more time to reflect on and develop their practice, particularly with novel or complex cases. Additional support may be most

beneficially provided by EPs through individual ELSA consultations, something that reportedly has been offered to ELSAs in other LAs (Burton, 2008). Whilst group supervision is helpful in providing a space for ELSAs to share their practice and learn from one another's experiences (Osborne & Burton, 2014), EP-ELSA consultation would allow for a deeper exploration of complex cases (Wagner, 2000). To ensure that ideas and reflections generated within EP-ELSA consultations reached beyond the ELSA intervention, SENCOs or key adults could also be invited to attend alongside ELSAs. Providing additional time for ELSAs to reflect on difficult cases may also support their management of the emotional effects of delivering ELSA interventions. Bookable consultations are already offered to SENCOs and teaching staff in this research's focus LA, therefore it may not be difficult to replicate these for ELSAs.

With the findings from this study highlighting that the length of secondary school ELSA pupils' interventions lasted longer than the recommended 6-10 weeks, EPs may need to reconsider the guidance given in ELSA training, particularly to secondary school ELSAs. As intervention length appeared to relate to the need for ELSAs to build rapport and genuine relationships with pupils, it may be that ELSA-pupil relationships are harder to develop with adolescents in secondary school contexts. Therefore, secondary school ELSAs may need additional guidance on rapport building within the ELSA training. Rapport building with CYP is a crucial element of EPs' role (Beaver, 2011) and therefore they are well placed to support ELSAs in developing skills in this area. Developing rapport building skills may help ELSAs reduce the length of their interventions and also reduce the risk of pupil dependency on ELSA.

Finally, as issues with tracking pupil outcomes were raised, EPs involved in ELSA projects will need to consider how tracking is carried out. With the use of general

measures of SEMH and EL (Burton et al., 2010) indicating limited effects of ELSA on secondary school pupils, EPs should consider how impact can be demonstrated. This may include the use of scaling based on pupils' specific ELSA targets and case study examples. Despite secondary school pupils' positive accounts of ELSA, without evidence of positive ELSA impact on secondary school pupils' EL, ELSA projects could be at risk of funding cuts within schools and LAs.

5.3.3 Implications for my own practice.

As I completed this doctoral research during my EP training, I have been able to consider and reflect on the implications and put many of them into immediate practice. Firstly, at a systemic level, this research has led me to broaden my thinking about enacting change and developing effective interventions within school systems. Due to the challenges reported related to ensuring there is a whole-school understanding of ELSA and the finding that ELSAs appeared to shoulder a lot of the responsibility for proactively addressing pupils' SEMH needs in secondary schools, I have decided to ensure that my initial EP-school planning meetings include members of schools' senior leadership as well as SENCOs. It is hoped that this will help ensure support for pupils' SEMH needs, including the ELSA project, are well understood and prioritised within schools' policies and improvement goals. Additionally, I hope that by disseminating my findings to the LA EPS I am employed with in September 2019, I will be able to help them consider how secondary schools can broaden their understanding and provision of whole-school SEMH support. This could include developing a whole-school SEMH training session that can be delivered to secondary schools with ELSA

projects. Within this training it should be made clear what role both ELSAs and wider school staff have in proactively supporting pupils' SEMH needs.

Secondly, in light of the findings that the ELSAs in this research felt that further EP support and guidance was needed, in my own supervision of primary ELSAs I have made myself available to them for ad-hoc phone calls or email guidance or reflection. As a result of this, two ELSAs in my supervision group have made use of this support.

Further, the limited ELSA-teacher and ELSA-parent communication identified in this research has led to me asking my primary school ELSAs how they felt sharing their thoughts about pupils with others. This conversation led to the discovery that many of my primary school ELSAs felt unconfident in the ability to talk with teachers or parents. This has led to us exploring tools that may facilitate these conversations and enable the ELSAs to feel more confident in sharing their thoughts with colleagues and parents. One tool that we have used is the metaphor of an iceberg. Providing the ELSAs with an outline of an iceberg (see Appendix-14 for example iceberg tool) allowed us to reflect on and explore complex ELSA pupil cases together in supervision. This activity involves firstly looking at what behaviours the pupil demonstrates above the surface (the tip of the iceberg); the underlying emotional, and cognitive motivations behind these observed behaviours (the submerged section of the iceberg); and lastly what ELSA approaches, activities and strategies have, or may help the pupil better manage their behaviours and emotions. This activity aimed to give the ELSAs a tool to take to other school staff in order to share the way they think about and work with pupils. Use of a concrete visual was felt to help the ELSAs feel more confident and assertive in their conversations with other school staff.

Additionally, as I will be working as a qualified EP in the LA where this research was based, I plan on delivering a presentation of my findings to the EPS team so that practice implications can be discussed and considered with the hope of further developing secondary school-based ELSA projects within this LA.

5.4 Directions for future research

Whilst the current research discovered that containment and attunement processes were present within secondary school ELSA sessions, the use of interview data did not allow for a more in-depth investigation of how these processes are utilised. As observation of ELSA sessions may be too intrusive due to the presence of an additional adult in ELSA sessions, video recordings of ELSA sessions may be less intrusive and provide information on processes present within ELSA sessions. The use of video to explore and improve adult-child interactions and attunement is growing within EP practice (Kennedy et al., 2010) and therefore EPs may wish to consider its use in further ELSA research. Additionally, research exploring the effect of longer ELSA interventions on pupil dependency could shed further light on this issue and confirm or disregard whether this is a risk related to longer ELSA intervention. It may also be useful to track pupil need and length of intervention in order to consider whether there are certain needs that appear to require longer intervention support so that ELSAs and schools could be more aware of the time investment needed to support particular pupils.

Although this research highlighted that ELSA-parent communication in secondary school ELSA projects was often limited, as parent views were not included, it was not possible to ascertain a full picture as to the effects of this. Therefore, future research exploring secondary school ELSA projects could

investigate parents', ELSAs' and pupils' views as to the benefits and challenges of parental inclusion in secondary school ELSA projects. This would be particularly useful as previous research has indicated that parents of primary school ELSA pupils wanted better ELSA-parent communication (Wilding & Claridge, 2016).

5.5 Final Summary

This research has offered a distinct contribution to research investigating the ELSA project by exploring how ELSA projects operate in secondary schools, and the inclusion of a range of school-based ELSA project stakeholders' voices. A key and unique finding of this research was that pupils' intervention length was far longer in secondary school ELSA projects than guidance outlines. Linked to previous findings, reasons for longer interventions related to the importance of ELSA-pupil relationships, and that the beginning of pupils' interventions focused on building attuned and genuine relationships before EL skills were targeted. However, the risk of pupil dependency, highlighted by this finding, was also raised.

Secondary school ELSA projects continued to function around this ELSA-pupil relationship, and attachment, attunement, and containment principles demonstrated by ELSAs appeared to be key processes facilitating pupils' ELSA interventions. Whole-school approaches to SEMH support were found to be developing, whilst wider school understanding of SEMH needs appeared to be a challenge to ELSA projects. Similarly, ELSA-teacher and ELSA-parent communication was found to be limited and could explain why understanding of pupils' SEMH needs were, at times, limited. In-line with previous secondary school-based ELSA research, challenging effects for pupils were also found. The

emotional impact on ELSAs was also highlighted within this research and support within the school and supervision from EPs appeared to help ELSAs better manage these effects. The flexibility of the ELSA project also appeared to aid its implementation as pupil-centred interventions could be developed.

This research has identified that ELSA projects operate in-line with much of the guidance provided by the ELSA project literature. It is hoped that implementation and facilitating factors, as well as the challenges identified within this research, will help inform future implementation of secondary school ELSA projects, both within the research's focus LA and across UK ELSA contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix-1: List of acronyms used

CYP – Children and young people

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan

EI – Emotional Intelligence

ELSA – Emotional Literacy Support Assistant

EL – Emotional Literacy

EP – Educational Psychologist

EPS – Educational Psychology Service

HSLW – Home-School Link Worker

LA – Local Authority

PMHWs – Primary Mental Health Workers

P-P-C-T – Process-Person-Context-Time Model

SDT – Self Determination Theory

SEAL intervention – Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning intervention

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SEMH – Social, Emotional and Mental Health

SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability

TA – Teaching Assistant

Appendix-2: Approach to relevant literature search

In order to explore literature relevant to the ELSA project, a systematic approach to searching for peer reviewed research articles, commentaries, books, book chapters, government policy and grey literature was conducted. Searches were carried out through the use of key psychological and educational databases (including: *ERIC EBSCO*, *EBSCOHost*, *Child Development and adolescent studies*, *Open Dissertations*, *The British Education Index*, *PsychInfo* and *PsychARTICLES*), as well as the use of *UCL Explore* search engine, *Google Scholar* and *Google* to identify further missed or grey literature. Search terms used included variants of *emotional literacy*, *mental health*, *wellbeing*, *school*, *secondary school*, *intervention and teaching assistant*. Database searches were limited, where possible, to include: only peer reviewed journal articles; literature published after the year 2000; articles published in English and from educationally similar countries such as the US, and Australia. Abstracts were read to ensure articles were relevant to the focus research area, based on interventions aimed at supporting emotional literacy or wellbeing or specific evaluations of the ELSA project. For an example of database searches completed see the table below. A snowballing of literature and research identified from already acquired reference lists also added to the literature incorporated. The resulting literature and research were included in this report based on their perceived relevance to the current study's aims, methodology and RQs.

Table of database search examples

Database	Terms	Limits applied	Number identified	Number of relevant papers
EBSCO	<i>emotional literacy</i> OR <i>emotional competence</i> AND <i>school</i>	English language; UK based publications; Peer reviewed; After year 2000	14	6 relevant as research related to SEMH/ wellbeing or EL intervention in schools from the UK, US or Australia
EBSCO multi-databases: ERIC British education index EBSCOhost Child development and adolescent studies Open dissertations	<i>social emotional</i> AND <i>wellbeing</i> AND <i>school</i> AND <i>child</i> OR <i>adolescent</i>	English language; Peer reviewed; After year 2000	73	16 relevant as based on SEL/EL in schools from the UK, US or Australia
ERIC Proquest	<i>emotional literacy</i> AND <i>school</i> AND <i>intervention</i> OR <i>program</i> OR <i>programme</i> AND <i>pupil</i>	English language; Peer reviewed; After year 2000	11	5 relevant as research based on a group or individual intervention delivered in schools
PsychArticles	<i>emotional literacy</i> OR <i>emotional competence</i> AND <i>school</i> AND <i>pupil</i>	English language; After year 2000	9	2 relevant as US based 1 review 1 empirical study
British Education Index	<i>emotional literacy</i> AND <i>teaching assistant</i>	English language; Peer reviewed; After year 2000	1	1 relevant as research based on the ELSA project (primary school)

Appendix-3: Outline of ELSA training topics

Based on the underlying principles for the ELSA project outlined by Burton (2009), the initial 5-day ELSA training covered the following topics:

- An Introduction to emotional literacy (Day 1)
- Developing emotional awareness (Day 1)
- Self-esteem (Day 2)
- Active listening (Day 2)
- Understanding anger (Day 3)
- Working with puppets (Day 3)
- Social skills and social stories (Day 4)
- Social communication difficulties (Day 4)
- Friendship skills (Day 5)
- Therapeutic stories (Day 5)
- Supervision (Day 5)
- Supplementary sessions on bereavement and loss (delivered post training)

The LA's EPS that this research is based in delivers 5 days of training adapted from Burton's (2009) training manual. Training has been adapted based on evaluation feedback from ELSAs and schools and aims to cover approaches and needs most pertinent to supporting pupils in this LA.

The training delivered to the ELSAs in this research included the following topics:

- Introduction to emotional literacy (Day 1)
- Developing emotional awareness (Day 1)
- Self-esteem (Day 1)
- Attachment (Day 2)
- Working with puppets (Day 2)
- Active listening and reflective conversations (including Emotion Coaching) (Day 3)
- Autism Spectrum Disorders and social skills (including social stories) (Day 3)
- Managing Emotions: Anger (Day 4)

- Managing Emotions: Anxiety (Day 4)
- Friendship Skills (Day 5)
- Using Therapeutic Stories (Day 5)
- Supervision (Day 5)
- Supplementary training on bereavement and loss (delivered post training)

The most significant additions to training have included sessions on attachment, anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorders as these are common areas of need for pupils in this LA, as identified by the LA EPS.

Appendix-4: Participant information and consent forms

Head Teacher/Senior Leadership Team Information and consent form Institute of Education



How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operate in secondary schools? An explorative study Headteacher/SLT information sheet

I am requesting your consent to agree for staff and pupils atSchool to take part in a doctoral research project that aims to explore the experience of the ELSA project within secondary schools.

This research is guided by the following research questions:

- How do secondary school staff (Teachers and ELSAs) and pupils experience the ELSA project in secondary schools?
- What are the perceived barriers and facilitating factors to the ELSA project in secondary schools?

Why this research is important:

- The ELSA project is a widely used school-based intervention aimed at supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health needs. ELSAs are trained Teaching Assistants who deliver support to children and young people outside of their classrooms in either one to one sessions or in small groups. Through these sessions, ELSAs specifically aim to help children and young people identify, understand, and manage their own and others' emotions (emotional literacy). Although it has a growing research evidence base, much of the ELSA project research has been carried out within primary schools. Therefore, conducting research on the ELSA project within secondary school contexts is important.
- Within the current research literature, the voice of key secondary school ELSA project stakeholders, such as teachers, ELSAs and pupils, is limited so this research aims to gain these views and experiences.
- Interventions for social, emotional and mental health needs are known to work best when their impact is generalised beyond the individual intervention encounter (Roffey, 2010). By exploring how the ELSA project is experienced in secondary school classrooms it is hoped that ELSA best practice can be identified, as well as ways the ELSA project can be adapted to better facilitate children and young people's emotional literacy development and have a greater impact within secondary school contexts.

The researcher:

I am Bryony Nicholson-Roberts, a Trainee Educational Psychologist, currently completing the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, at the Institute of Education, UCL. As part of this course I am currently on a training placement with Educational Psychology Service. I am passionate about improving the wellbeing and learning outcomes for children and young people and hope that this research will inform ELSA practice in the future. This research is conducted as a part of my Doctoral training through the Institute and is supervised by tutors from the Institute of Education, UCL: Dr Matthew Somerville (lead academic supervisor; [REDACTED]) and Dr Frances Lee (Educational Psychology practitioner research supervisor; [REDACTED]).

This research project has ethical approval from the department of Psychology and Human Development within the Institute of Education, UCL, which means that the committee has carefully considered the risks and benefits of the research. Whilst Senior Educational Psychologists in (LA) are aware of this research, it has not been commissioned by the Local Authority.

Research process:

UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL
+44 (0)20 7612 6000 | enquiries@ioe.ac.uk | www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe

How the ELSA project is experienced in secondary school classrooms will be explored through participant interviews. Three participant groups from secondary schools will be interviewed on topics relevant to the ELSA project. Participants will include: secondary school teachers, ELSAs and pupils who have received ELSA support. Therefore, I am asking your permission to allow me to interview both pupils and members of your staff team (teachers and ELSAs) who have been involved in the ELSA project within the last academic year (July 2017 to September 2018).

Participant interviews will take place between June and July 2018. Participants will be interviewed once, for no longer than an hour and at a time deemed convenient to both them and the school. Interview data will be audio recorded for data analysis purposes only. All interview data will be collected with anonymity, handled with confidentiality, stored securely and used only for research analysis. It is possible that I may publish the findings from this research in an educational or psychological research journal, however, any data or information that indicates yours or the school's identity will be anonymised.

At the end of the research project, participating schools, staff, pupils and parents will be sent a summary of the research outcomes.

Data protection information

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. If you are concerned about how data is being processed, please contact **UCL's Data Protection Officer Lee Shailer** - data-protection@ucl.ac.uk . If you remain unsatisfied, you can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office. Details can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-generaldata-protection-regulation-gdpr> .

I hope you feel that this is an interesting opportunity and choose to take part. If so, please sign and return the attached consent form to [redacted] or have it ready for me to collect at School on.....(date).

If you have any further questions before replying, please feel free to email me.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

Bryony Nicholson-Roberts
Trainee Educational Psychologist,
Institute of Education, UCL ([redacted])



**How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project
operate in secondary schools? An explorative study**
Headteacher consent form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form ready for me to collect from you on(date) or return it to me at

████████████████████

Delete as appropriate

I have read the research information leaflet and understand the research	Yes / No
I understand that I can contact Bryony if I wish to discuss the research.	Yes / No
I am happy for teachers, ELSAs and pupils to be interviewed, if their consent is gained.	Yes / No
I am happy for the interviews to be audio recorded, if participant consent is gained.	Yes / No
I understand that I can withdraw from the research project at any time without giving reason, and that if I choose to do this, any data contributed by my school will not be used.	Yes / No
I understand that Bryony will not be able to share any information shared by participants in the interviews as this would breach participant confidentiality.	Yes / No
I understand that any identifying information will be anonymised when the research report is written.	Yes / No
I understand that on completion of the research, the results will be shared with any participants, and should the research go on to be published, all data will remain anonymous.	Yes / No

Name: _____ Role: _____

Contact details phone/email: _____

School Name: _____

Years ELSA has been running in your school _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



**How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project
operate in secondary schools? An explorative study**

SENCO/SLT information sheet

Why this research is important:

- The ELSA programme is a widely used intervention aimed at supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health needs. Although it has a growing research evidence base, much of the ELSA programme research has been carried out within primary schools. Therefore, conducting research on the ELSA programme within secondary school contexts is important.
- Within the current research literature, the voice of key secondary school ELSA programme stakeholders, such as teachers, ELSAs and pupils, is limited so this research aims to gain these views and experiences.
- Interventions for social, emotional and mental health needs are known to work best when their impact is generalised beyond the individual intervention encounter (Roffey, 2010). By exploring how the ELSA programme is experienced in secondary school classrooms it is hoped that ELSA best practice can be identified, as well as ways that it can be improved.

The researcher:

I am Bryony Nicholson-Roberts, a Trainee Educational Psychologist, on the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, at the Institute of Education, UCL. As part of this course I am currently on a training placement with Educational Psychology Service. I am passionate about improving the wellbeing and learning outcomes for children and young people and hope that this research will inform ELSA practice in the future. This research is supervised by tutors from the Institute of Education, UCL, Dr Matthew Somerville and Dr Frances Lee. This research project has ethical approval from the department of Psychology and Human Development, which means that the committee has carefully considered the risks and benefits of the research.

Research process:

How the ELSA programme is experienced in secondary school classrooms will be explored through participant interviews. Four participant groups from secondary schools will be interviewed on topics relevant to the ELSA programme. Participants will include: secondary school SENCOs, teachers, ELSAs and pupils who have received ELSA support.

If you have taught pupils who have received ELSA support within the last year I would be grateful to interview you and gain your insight.

The individual participant interview will take place at a convenient time for you between July and September 2018. The interview should last between 45 minutes to 1 hour. For data analysis purposes only, interviews will be audio recorded. All interview data will be collected with anonymity, handled with confidentiality, stored securely and used only for the research analysis.

At the end of the project participating schools, staff, pupils and parents will be sent a summary of the research outcomes and a training on mental health and ELSA support in schools offered to school staff.

Data protection information

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. If you are concerned about how your, or your child's, personal data is being processed, please contact **UCL's Data Protection Officer Lee Shailer** - data-protection@ucl.ac.uk . If you remain unsatisfied, you can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office. Details can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-generaldata-protection-regulation-gdpr> .

I hope that you feel this is an interesting opportunity and choose to take part. If so, please sign and return the attached consent form to [b\[REDACTED\]](mailto:b[REDACTED])

If you have any further questions before replying, please feel free to email me.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Bryony Nicholson-Roberts
Trainee Educational Psychologist,
Institute of Education, UCL



How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operate in secondary schools? An explorative study

SENCO/SLT consent form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to



Delete as appropriate

I have read the research information leaflet and understand the research	Yes / No
I understand that I can contact Bryony if I wish to discuss the research.	Yes / No
I am happy to be interviewed and for the interview to be audio recorded.	Yes / No
I understand that I can withdraw from the research project at any time without giving reason, and that if I choose to do this, any data that I have contributed will not be used.	Yes / No
I understand that Bryony will not share any information I have given with anyone else, as this would breach participant confidentiality.	Yes / No
I understand that any identifying information will be anonymised when the interview is transcribed and the research report written.	Yes / No
I understand that on completion of the research, the results will be shared with participants, and should the research go on to be published, all data will remain anonymous.	Yes / No

Name: _____ Role: _____

Contact details phone/email: _____

School Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



**How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project
operate in secondary schools? An explorative study**

ELSAs information sheet

Why this research is important:

- The ELSA programme is a widely used intervention aimed at supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health needs. Although it has a growing research evidence base, much of the ELSA programme research has been carried out within primary schools. Therefore, conducting research on the ELSA programme within secondary school contexts is important.
- Within the current research literature, the voice of key secondary school ELSA programme stakeholders, such as teachers, ELSAs and pupils, is limited so this research aims to gain these views and experiences.
- Interventions for social, emotional and mental health needs are known to work best when their impact is generalised beyond the individual intervention encounter (Roffey, 2010). By exploring how the ELSA programme is experienced in secondary school classrooms it is hoped that ELSA best practice can be identified, as well as ways that it can be improved.

The researcher:

I am Bryony Nicholson-Roberts, a Trainee Educational Psychologist, on the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, at the Institute of Education, UCL. As part of this course I am currently on a training placement with ... Educational Psychology Service. I am passionate about improving the wellbeing and learning outcomes for children and young people and hope that this research will inform ELSA practice in the future. This research is supervised by tutors from the Institute of Education, UCL: Dr Matthew Somerville (Lead Academic Supervisor; [REDACTED]) and Dr Frances Lee (Educational Psychology Practitioner Research Supervisor; [REDACTED]).

This research project has ethical approval from the department of Psychology and Human Development, which means that the committee has carefully considered the risks and benefits of the research.

Research process:

How the ELSA programme is experienced in secondary school classrooms will be explored through participant interviews. Four participant groups from secondary schools will be interviewed on topics relevant to the ELSA programme. Participants will include: secondary school SENCOs, teachers, ELSAs and pupils who have received ELSA support.

If you have worked with pupils as an ELSA within the last year I would be grateful to interview you and gain your insight.

The individual participant interview will take place at a convenient time for you, between July and September 2018. The interview should last between 45 minutes to 1 hour. For data

analysis purposes only, interviews will be audio recorded. All interview data will be collected with anonymity, handled with confidentiality, stored securely and used only for the research analysis.

At the end of the project participating schools, staff, pupils and parents will be sent a summary of the research outcomes and a training on mental health and ELSA support in schools offered to school staff.

Data protection information

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact **UCL's Data Protection Officer Lee Shailer** - data-protection@ucl.ac.uk . If you remain unsatisfied, you can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office. Details can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr>

I hope that you feel that this is an interesting opportunity and choose to take part. If so, please sign and return the attached consent form to [REDACTED]

If you have any further questions before replying, please feel free to email me.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Bryony Nicholson-Roberts
Trainee Educational Psychologist,
Institute of Education, UCL



How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operate in secondary schools? An explorative study

ELSAs' consent form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to



Delete as appropriate

I have read the research information leaflet and understand the research	Yes / No
I understand that I can contact Bryony if I wish to discuss the research.	Yes / No
I am happy to be interviewed and for the interview to be audio recorded.	Yes / No
I understand that I can withdraw from the research project at any time without giving reason, and that if I choose to do this, any data that I have contributed will not be used.	Yes / No
I understand that Bryony will not share any information I have given with anyone else, as this would breach participant confidentiality.	Yes / No
I understand that any identifying information will be anonymised when the interview is transcribed and the research report written.	Yes / No
I understand that on completion of the research, the results will be shared with participants, and should the research go on to be published, all data will remain anonymous.	Yes / No

Name: _____ Role: _____

Contact details phone/email: _____

School Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

School staff/Teacher information and consent form

Institute of Education



How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operate in secondary schools? An explorative study

School Staff/Teacher information sheet

The Head teacher, (name.....), has agreed for School to take part in a doctoral research project that aims to explore the experience of the ELSA project within secondary schools.

This research is guided by the following research questions:

- How do secondary school staff (Teachers and ELSAs) and pupils experience the ELSA project in secondary schools?
- What are the perceived barriers and facilitating factors to the ELSA project in secondary schools?

Why this research is important:

- The ELSA project is a widely used school-based intervention aimed at supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health needs. ELSAs are trained Teaching Assistants who deliver support to children and young people outside of their classrooms in either one to one sessions or in small groups. Through these sessions, ELSAs specifically aim to help children and young people identify, understand, and manage their own and others' emotions (emotional literacy). Although it has a growing research evidence base, much of the ELSA project research has been carried out within primary schools. Therefore, conducting research on the ELSA project within secondary school contexts is important.
- Within the current research literature, the voice of key secondary school ELSA project stakeholders, such as teachers, ELSAs and pupils, is limited so this research aims to gain these views and experiences.
- Interventions for social, emotional and mental health needs are known to work best when their impact is generalised beyond the individual intervention encounter (Roffey, 2010). By exploring how the ELSA project is experienced in secondary school classrooms it is hoped that ELSA best practice can be identified as well as ways the ELSA project can be adapted to better facilitate children and young people's emotional literacy development and have a greater impact within secondary school contexts.

The researcher:

I am Bryony Nicholson-Roberts, a Trainee Educational Psychologist, currently completing the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, at the Institute of Education, UCL. As part of this course I am currently on a training placement with Educational Psychology Service. I am passionate about improving the wellbeing and learning outcomes for children and young people and hope that this research will inform ELSA practice in the future. This research is conducted as a part of my Doctoral training through the Institute and is supervised by tutors from the Institute of Education, UCL: Dr Matthew Somerville (lead academic supervisor; [REDACTED]) and Dr Frances Lee (Educational Psychology practitioner research supervisor; [REDACTED]). This research project has ethical approval from the department of Psychology and Human Development within the Institute of Education, UCL, which means that the committee has carefully considered the risks and benefits of the research. Whilst Senior Educational Psychologists in (LA) are aware of this research, it has not been commissioned by the Local Authority.

Research process:

UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL
+44 (0)20 7612 6000 | enquiries@ioe.ac.uk | www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe

How the ELSA project is experienced in secondary school classrooms will be explored through participant interviews. Three participant groups from secondary schools will be interviewed on topics relevant to the ELSA project. Participants will include: secondary school teachers, ELSAs and pupils who have received ELSA support.

If you have worked with pupils who have received ELSA support within the last academic year (September 2017 –July 2018), I would be grateful to interview you and gain your insight.

The individual participant interview will take place at a convenient time for you between June and July 2018. The interview should last between 45 minutes to 1 hour. For data analysis purposes only, interviews will be audio recorded. All interview data will be collected with anonymity, handled with confidentiality, stored securely and used only for the research analysis. It is possible that I may publish the findings from this research in an educational or psychological research journal, however, any data or information that indicates yours or the school's identity will be anonymised.

At the end of the research project participating schools, staff, pupils and parents will be sent a summary of the research outcomes.

Data protection information

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. If you are concerned about how your, or your child's, personal data is being processed, please contact **UCL's Data Protection Officer Lee Shailer** - data-protection@ucl.ac.uk . If you remain unsatisfied, you can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office. Details can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr> .

I hope you feel that this is an interesting opportunity and choose to take part. If so, please sign and complete the attached consent form and either email it to me at [redacted] or have it ready for me to collect at School on.....(date).

If you have any further questions before replying, please feel free to email me. or my supervisors.
Kind regards,

[redacted]

Bryony Nicholson-Roberts
Trainee Educational Psychologist,
Institute of Education, UCL ([redacted]);



How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operate in secondary schools? An explorative study

School Staff/Teacher consent form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form. Please either have it ready for me to collect from you on(date) or return it to me at

████████████████████

Delete as appropriate

I have read the research information leaflet and understand the research	Yes / No
I understand that I can contact Bryony if I wish to discuss the research.	Yes / No
I am happy to be interviewed and for the interview to be audio recorded.	Yes / No
I understand that I can withdraw from the research project at any time without giving reason, and that if I choose to do this, any data that I have contributed will not be used.	Yes / No
I understand that Bryony will not share any information I have given with anyone else, as this would breach participant confidentiality.	Yes / No
I understand that any identifying information will be anonymised when the interview is transcribed and the research report written.	Yes / No
I understand that on completion of the research, the results will be shared with participants, and should the research go on to be published, all data will remain anonymous.	Yes / No

Name: _____ Role: _____

Contact details phone/email: _____

School Name: _____

Years worked in role _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



**How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project
operate in secondary schools? An explorative study**

Parent information sheet

Why this research is important:

- The ELSA programme is a widely used intervention aimed at supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health needs. Although it has a growing research evidence base, much of the ELSA programme research has been carried out within primary schools. Therefore, conducting research on the ELSA programme within secondary school contexts is important.
- Within the current research literature, the voice of key secondary school ELSA programme stakeholders, such as SENCOs, teachers, ELSAs and pupils, is limited so this research aims to gain these views and experiences.
- Interventions for social, emotional and mental health needs are known to work best when their impact is generalised beyond the individual intervention encounter (Roffey, 2010). By exploring how the ELSA programme is experienced in secondary schools it is hoped that ELSA best practice can be identified, as well as ways that it can be improved.

The researcher:

I am Bryony Nicholson-Roberts, a Trainee Educational Psychologist, on the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, at the Institute of Education, UCL. As part of this course I am currently on a training placement with Educational Psychology Service. I am passionate about improving the wellbeing and learning outcomes for children and young people and hope that this research will inform ELSA practice in the future. This research is supervised by tutors from the Institute of Education, UCL: Dr Matthew Somerville (Lead Academic Supervisor; [REDACTED]) and Dr Frances Lee (Educational Psychology Practitioner Research Supervisor; [REDACTED]).

This research project has ethical approval from the department of Psychology and Human Development, which means that the committee has carefully considered the risks and benefits of the research.

Research process:

How the ELSA programme is experienced in secondary schools will be explored through participant interviews. Four participant groups from secondary schools will be interviewed on topics relevant to the ELSA programme. Participants will include: secondary school SENCOs, teachers, ELSAs and pupils who have received ELSA support.

What will my child be asked to do?

Your child will be asked to take part in an interview at a time convenient to them during their school day. The interview will be arranged to take place between July and September 2018 and last no more than one hour. They will be asked about their experience of the ELSA programme in school and if there are any ways that the ELSA programme could be improved.

The interview will be semi-structured so they may be asked additional questions to help clarify their views and experiences. I will ensure that your child is aware that they do not have to answer any questions if they don't want to and that they can end the interview at any point, without giving reason.

For data analysis purposes only, interviews will be audio recorded. All interview data will be collected and transcribed with anonymity, handled with confidentiality, stored securely and used only for the research analysis.

At the end of the project participating schools, staff, pupils and parents will be sent a summary of the research and findings.

Data protection information

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. If you are concerned about how your child's, personal data is being processed, please contact **UCL's Data Protection Officer Lee Shailer** - data-protection@ucl.ac.uk . If you remain unsatisfied, you can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office. Details can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr>

I hope you feel that this is an interesting opportunity and choose to take part. If so, please sign and return the attached consent and information form to [REDACTED]

If you have any further questions before replying, please feel free to email me.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Bryony Nicholson-Roberts
Trainee Educational Psychologist,
Institute of Education, UCL



How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operate in secondary schools? An explorative study

Parent consent form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to

████████████████████

Delete as appropriate

I have read the research information leaflet and understand the research.	Yes / No
I understand that I can contact Bryony if I wish to discuss the research.	Yes / No
I am happy for my child to be interviewed and for their interview to be audio recorded.	Yes / No
I understand that the interview will only take place if my child is happy to participate.	Yes / No
I understand that I can withdraw my child from the research project at any time without giving reason, and that if I choose to do this, any data that they have contributed will not be used.	Yes / No
I understand that my child's information will be treated with confidentiality and that Bryony will not be able to share information that my child has given.	Yes / No
I understand that if my child discloses any information which suggests that they or others are at risk of significant harm, Bryony will need to pass this information on to an appropriate adult/professional.	Yes / No
I understand that any identifying information will be anonymised when the interview is transcribed and the research report written.	Yes / No
I understand that on completion of the research, the results will be shared with participants, and should the research go on to be published, all data will remain anonymous.	Yes / No

Participant consent and information

Parent's Name: _____

Relationship to child: _____ Contact number: _____

Child's name: _____

Age and school year: _____ Gender: _____

School Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



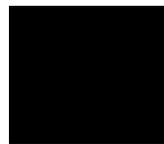
**How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project
operate in secondary schools? An explorative study**

Pupil information sheet

Who am I?

I am Bryony Nicholson-Roberts, a Trainee Educational Psychologist, studying at the Institute of Education, UCL.

I work with children and young people, their families and schools to find out what can help them at school.



Why this research is important:

- The ELSA programme is a widely used programme in schools which aims to support children and young people with any social, emotional and mental health needs they might have. Although there is research that shows that the ELSA programme can be effective, much of this research has been carried out within primary schools. Therefore, I think it is important that more research is carried out on the ELSA programme within secondary schools.
- This research hopes to find out what your experience of the ELSA programme in your school has been, what you think has worked well and what could make it even better.

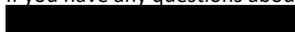
What will I be asked to do?

- An individual interview with me at your school, for approximately one hour.
- In the interview, I will ask you some questions and do some activities with you.
- I will record the interview on an audio recorder, so that I can listen back to the interview whilst doing my research.
- Interview questions will relate to the ELSA programme and your life in school.
- If there are questions you don't want to answer you can refuse to answer them without giving me a reason.
- You do not have to take part in the interview if you don't want to and you can decide, at any time, to end the interview, without giving me a reason.

What will happen to the interview information I give?

- I will type up the recording of the interview and write up a research **report** about what I found.
- I will share my findings with other people but **I will not use your real name in my report** so people will not know that it was you that told me that information.
- I will give you a summary of my findings at the end of the research project.
- Anything that you tell me is **confidential**, so **it will not be shared with anyone else**. However, if you tell me something that makes me think that you or anyone else is in danger then I will need to tell somebody.

If you have any questions about the research please email me:



Thank you!



How does the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project operate in secondary schools? An explorative study

Pupil consent form

I would like/would not like to take part in this study (circle the one which applies to you).

If you would like to take part, please circle 'Yes' or 'No' to each statement:

Circle as appropriate

I have read the research information leaflet and understand the research.	Yes / No
I understand that I can contact Bryony if I wish to discuss the research.	Yes / No
I am happy to be interviewed about the ELSA programme and for the interview to be audio recorded.	Yes / No
I understand that it is my decision to take part and nobody else's.	Yes / No
I understand that I am free to pull out from the research project at any time without giving a reason.	Yes / No
I understand that my real name will not be used in the report and that no one will be able to identify me from what I have said.	Yes / No
I understand that if anything I say in the interview makes Bryony think that I or anybody else is in danger then she will have to tell somebody.	Yes / No
I understand that Bryony will use my interview information to write reports and presentations that will be shared with others, and that she will make every effort to protect my identity.	Yes / No

Participant consent and information

Name: _____

Age and school year: _____ School Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to your ELSA and I will come in to school and collect it.

Appendix-5: Semi-structured interview schedules

SENCO/Senior Leader semi-structured interview schedule

SENCO/SLT interview record

Interview number	
Interviewee initials	
Participant code	
School code	
Gender (if happy to provide)	
Date and time of meeting	
Duration of interview	
Role title(s)	
Number of years in education/role	
Number of pupils they know have received ELSA support	
Other information	

Interview schedule protocol

- All participants to sign opt-in consent form prior to interview recording; this will stress confidentiality and anonymity.
- Introduce self as interviewer, and researcher as well as a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL, IOE and in the Local Authority.
- Explain that I want to gain their views and experiences regarding the ELSA project within their school context and that it does not matter if this is positive or negative.
- Agree timing of interview before commencing.
- Conduct interview
- Thank participant, check if they have any questions and ensure they have researcher contact details, in case of further queries.

Semi-structured interview schedule

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. Firstly, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded and kept anonymously. To ensure further anonymity and sensitivity, if in your answers you wish to talk about a specific pupil or school it is requested that you refer to them using a pseudonym or say child A or school X, for example. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without giving a reason.

1. How familiar are you with the ELSA project?

- How and when have you encountered the ELSA project?
- How did you find out that your school had ELSAs?

2. Why was the ELSA project introduced in your school?

- Can you tell me more about this?
- Can you tell me when the project started at this school?
- How were children's emotional and social needs met before the ELSA project?

- What other support is there in this school for children and young people with emotional or social needs?
 - Why is the ELSA project continuing?
3. There are a number of terms used to describe emotional literacy and similar concepts. These include, Social Emotional Learning skills, Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), soft skills, non-cognitive skills, and Emotional Intelligence. Which of these are most familiar to you?
- Have you heard of any of these terms before?
 - If so, where have you heard of this/these terms?
 - How relevant are these concepts to your role within school?
4. What is your understanding of *this term* or 'Emotional Literacy'?
- What areas does it cover?
 - Clarify meaning of emotional literacy if needed: e.g. ability to recognise, understand and manage emotions of self and others.....
 - Can you tell me how you think this term applies to school contexts?
5. What do you think the aims of the ELSA programme are?
- Can you tell me more about this?
 - Can you give me an example of this?
 - Can you tell me what you mean by ...?
 - Can you tell me more about how the ELSA programme does that?
 - Are there any other aims that you can think of?
 - Do you think it could improve wellbeing? Behaviour? Learning? Relationships? Anything else?
 - What do you know about the content of the ELSA project?
 - What sort of pupils might benefit from the ELSA project? Why?
6. Can you tell me how the ELSA programme operates in your school?
- Can you tell me about
 - the pupils that are referred to the ELSA programme?
 - how are ELSA referrals made? By whom?
 - how are pupil outcomes decided?
 - how do you know how pupils are getting on with ELSA?
 - When does ELSA support for a pupil end?
 - What contact have you had with the ELSAs in your school?
7. How has the ELSA programme impacted on pupils at this school?
- Can you tell me more about
 - the effects on pupils' educational attainment?
 - the effects on pupils' emotional and social skills – including their ability to regulate their feelings, self-esteem, their behaviour in class, their behaviour around school, their behaviour and relationships with others?
 - Can you tell me how you noticed something had changed?
 - In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?
8. Do you think that the ELSA project impacted classroom environments?
- Can you tell me about...
 - any ELSA or emotional literacy approaches that you have adopted in your teaching?
 - any effect it has had on your relationship with the pupils you teach?
 - any effect it has had on the relationships between the pupils you teach?
 - Can you tell me how you noticed something had changed?
 - In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?
9. Do you think the ELSA project has impacted on the whole-school system?
- Why/why not

- Can you tell me more about that....
- In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?

10. Can you tell me about any ELSA or emotional literacy training or support you have received?

- Can you tell me more about...
 - who the training/support was delivered by?
 - what impact has this training/support had on you or your teaching?
- Is there further training/support that you feel you need?
- What impact do you think this training/support would have on you or your teaching?

11. In what ways could the ELSA programme be improved?

- Can you tell me more about this?
- In what ways do you think this would improve the ELSA programme?
- Are there any other improvements you would like to suggest?

That is the end of this interview. Is there any else that you would like to add?

ELSA semi-structured interview schedule

ELSA interview record

Interview number	
Interviewee initials	
Participant code	
School code	
Gender (if happy to provide)	
Date and time of meeting	
Duration of interview	
Role title(s)	
Number of years worked as a trained ELSA	
Number of years worked in schools	
Number of ELSA pupils worked with	
Other information	

Interview schedule protocol

- All participants to sign opt-in consent form prior to interview recording; this will stress confidentiality and anonymity.
- Introduce self as interviewer, and researcher as well as a Trainee Educational Psychologist at IOE, UCL and in the Local Authority.
- Explain that I want to gain their views and experiences regarding the ELSA programme within their school context and that it does not matter if this is positive or negative.
- Agree timing of interview before commencing.
- Conduct interview
- Thank participant, check if they have any questions and ensure they have researcher contact details, in case of further queries.

Semi-structured interview schedule

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. Firstly, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded and kept anonymously. To ensure further anonymity and sensitivity, if in your answers you wish to talk about a specific pupil or school it is requested that you refer to them using a pseudonym or say child A or school X, for example. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without giving a reason.

1. How long have you been working as an ELSA?
 - In this school?
 - Have you had a similar role before? What was similar? What was different?
 - What other roles do you have in this school?
 - Do you enjoy the ELSA role? Why?/why not? Can you tell me more about this?
2. Why do you think the ELSA programme was introduced in your school?
 - Can you tell me more about this?
 - Can you tell me when the programme started at this school?

3. There are a number of terms used to describe emotional literacy and similar concepts. These include, Social Emotional Learning skills, Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), soft skills, non-cognitive skills, and Emotional Intelligence. Which of these are most familiar to you?
 - Have you heard of any of these terms before?
 - If so, where have you heard of this/these terms?
 - How relevant do you feel these concepts are to schools?

4. What is your understanding of *this term (cite term used by interviewee)* or 'Emotional Literacy'?
 - What areas does it cover?
 - Clarify meaning of emotional literacy if needed: e.g. ability to recognise, understand and manage emotions of self and others.....
 - Can you tell me how you think this term applies to school contexts?

5. How would you describe your role as an ELSA within this school?
 - Can you tell me more about...
 - the focus of your ELSA support?
 - the types of pupils supported?
 - the amount of time allocated to you for your ELSA role?
 - The amount of time timetabled for you to prepare your ELSA work?
 - the timings of your ELSA sessions?
 - where you carry out your ELSA sessions in school?

6. What do you think the aims of the ELSA programme are?
 - Can you tell me more about this?
 - Can you give me an example of this?
 - Can you tell me what you mean by ...?
 - Can you tell me more about how the ELSA programme does that?
 - Are there any other aims that you can think of?
 - Do you think it could improve wellbeing? Behaviour? Learning? Relationships? Anything else?
 - What can you tell me about the content of the ELSA programme?
 - What sort of pupils might benefit from the ELSA programme and why?

7. Can you tell me how the ELSA programme works in your school?
 - Can you tell me more about...
 - the pupils that are referred to the ELSA programme?
 - how ELSA pupil referrals are made? By whom?
 - how pupil outcomes are decided?
 - how ELSA pupils' progress towards their targets are tracked and evaluated?
 - how it is decided that ELSA support should end?
 - What contact do you have with other key adults involved with your ELSA pupils, e.g. teachers, other support staff, parents.

8. How has the ELSA programme impacted on pupil's you have taught?
 - Can you tell me more about....
 - the effects on pupils' learning?
 - the effects on pupils' emotional and social skills – including their ability to regulate their feelings, self-esteem, their behaviour in class, their behaviour around school, their behaviour and relationships with others, their behaviour and relationships at home (if known)?
 - Can you tell me how you noticed something had changed?

9. Do you think that the ELSA programme impacts upon classroom environments?
 - Can you tell me more about ...
 - any ELSA or emotional literacy approaches that you have seen teachers or other key adults use?
 - any effect it has had on teacher-pupil relationships?
 - any effect it has had on the relationships between pupils?

- Can you tell me how you noticed something had changed?
- In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?
- Have other staff members asked you for advice regarding the emotional or social needs of pupils?
- Can you tell me more about this?

10. Do you think that the ELSA programme has impacted upon the whole-school system?

- Why/ why not?
- Can you tell me more about that.....
- In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?

11. Can you tell me about any support or training that has helped you in your ELSA role?

- Can you tell me more about
 - Who the training/support was/is delivered by?
 - What impact has this training/support had on you or your ELSA work?
- Was this supervision or training?
- Is there further training/support that you feel you need?
- What impact do you think this training/support would have/has had on you or your ELSA role?
- Is there any training or support that you think could benefit teaching staff working with pupils who have emotional or social needs?

12. In what ways could the ELSA programme be improved?

- Can you tell me more about this?
- In what ways do you think this would improve the ELSA programme? What might you notice after this change?
- Are there any other improvements you would like to suggest?

That is the end of this interview. Is there any else that you would like to add?

Pupil semi-structured interview schedule

Pupil interview record

Interview number	
Interviewee initials	
Participant code	
School code	
Gender (if happy to provide)	
Age and school year	
Date and time of meeting	
Duration of interview	
Reason for ELSA referral	
Length of time received ELSA support	
Other information	

Interview schedule protocol

- All participants to sign opt-in consent form prior to interview recording; this will stress confidentiality and anonymity.
- Introduce self as interviewer, and researcher as well as a Trainee Educational Psychologist at IOE, UCL and in the Local Authority.
- Explain that I want to gain their views and experiences regarding the support they have received from their school ELSA (name the ELSA who has supported them) and the ELSA programme. Make it clear that it does not matter if their views are positive or negative.
- Reiterate confidentiality and process in case they disclose anything that warrants breaking confidentiality (e.g. something that signifies, they or others are at risk of harm).
- Agree timing of interview before commencing.
- Conduct interview
- Thank participant, check if they have any questions and ensure they have researcher contact details, in case of further queries.

Semi-structured interview schedule

Introduce self and build rapport with simple questions.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. Firstly, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded (show recording device) and kept anonymously, this means that your name and school details will be removed from the data. To ensure further anonymity and sensitivity, if in your answers you wish to talk about school staff or pupils you can refer to them using a pretend name or say child A or Miss/Mr/Sir. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without needing to give me a reason.

1. How do you feel about school? (introduce opportunity to draw responses to questions)

- What is good about school/teachers/ELSAs at this school?
- How could school/teachers/ELSAs be better?
- Can you tell me more about...
 - How they might talk to pupils?
 - What are they like as a person (teachers, staff, ELSAs)? (Prompt if necessary with characteristics)
 - How would they help you in school?

- How would they make you feel?
 - When has your ELSA shown those qualities?
 - Can you give me an example? Is there a teacher who you think is most like that description at this school?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
2. What can you tell me about the ELSA support/programme in your school?
- Who runs it? Who are the ELSAs?
 - Why might pupils get support from the ELSAs?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
3. You have received ELSA support in the last year, can you tell me what your ELSA target was?
- Clarify if needed:
 - What did/do you hope would/will be different after your ELSA sessions?
 - Were you involved in deciding a target for your ELSA work?
 - Is there another target/skill you would like to work on?
4. What can you tell me about your ELSA sessions with.....(ELSA)? (use scaling to ascertain view of ELSA sessions)
- Where would you place ELSA support on this scale? Why?
 - What activities have you done in your ELSA sessions?
 - What have you enjoyed about the sessions?
 - Are there times where you've found ELSA sessions hard or unenjoyable?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
 - Can you tell me more about....
 - The timings of your ELSA sessions?
 - How many times a week do you meet with(ELSA)?
 - Do you always know when you will see your ELSA?
 - Where do you and your ELSA meet? Has your ELSA ever joined you in a lesson? Can you tell me more about this?
 - When will/did your ELSA support come to an end?
5. Since having ELSA support have you noticed any difference in yourself during your lessons/in the playground/in your free time/at home?
- Have you noticed any change in your feelings or behaviour?
 - Can you tell me how you noticed this change? What was different?
 - What skills or strategies do you think have helped you with this?
6. Does anyone else at school support you with(ELSA target)?
- Can you tell me more about...
 - How they help you?
 - How else they could support you?
 - Is there anyone else that you would like support from?
7. Do your teachers know that you have ELSA support?
- How do you know that they know?
 - Does/would it help for them to know?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
8. Would you recommend ELSA support to a friend?
- Why? Why not?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
9. How could the ELSA programme at this school be improved?
- Prompts might include:
 - Discussion around ideal and non-ideal school notes above
 - How could ELSA support begin? What should happen first, then...?
 - What targets might be set for pupils in ELSA? How might targets for ELSA be set?

- How often should ELSA support happen?
- Where would be the best place for ELSA support to happen in school?
- Could the ELSA support you at other times in the school day?
- What strategies or activities might be best for ELSA sessions?
- How should people decide when ELSA support ends?
- What might be helpful once your ELSA support has ended?
- Can you tell me more about this?

Thank you, that is the end of this interview. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about ELSA support in your school?

School staff/Teacher interview schedule

Teacher interview record

Interview number	
Interviewee initials	
Participant code	
School code	
Gender (if happy to provide)	
Date and time of meeting	
Duration of interview	
Role title(s)	
Number of years teaching	
Number of pupils taught who have received ELSA	
Other information	

Interview schedule protocol

- All participants to sign opt-in consent form prior to interview recording; this will stress confidentiality and anonymity.
- Introduce self as interviewer, and researcher as well as a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL, IOE and in the Local Authority.
- Explain that I want to gain their views and experiences regarding the ELSA project within their school context and that it does not matter if this is positive or negative.
- Agree timing of interview before commencing.
- Conduct interview
- Thank participant, check if they have any questions and ensure they have researcher contact details, in case of further queries.

Semi-structured interview schedule

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. Firstly, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded and kept anonymously. To ensure further anonymity and sensitivity, if in your answers you wish to talk about a specific pupil or school it is requested that you refer to them using a pseudonym or say child A or school X, for example. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without giving a reason.

1. How familiar are you with the ELSA project?
 - How and when have you encountered the ELSA project?
 - How did you find out that your school had ELSAs?
2. Why do you think the ELSA project was introduced in your school?
 - Can you tell me more about this?
 - Can you tell me when the project started at this school?
 - How were children's emotional and social needs met before the ELSA project?

- What other support is there in this school for children and young people with emotional or social needs?
3. There are a number of terms used to describe emotional literacy and similar concepts. These include, Social Emotional Learning skills, Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), soft skills, non-cognitive skills, and Emotional Intelligence. Which of these are most familiar to you?
- Have you heard of any of these terms before?
 - If so, where have you heard of this/these terms?
 - How relevant are these concepts to your role within school?
4. What is your understanding of *this term* or ‘Emotional Literacy?’
- What areas does it cover?
 - Clarify meaning of emotional literacy if needed: e.g. ability to recognise, understand and manage emotions of self and others.....
 - Can you tell me how you think this term applies to school contexts?
5. What do you think the aims of the ELSA programme are?
- Can you tell me more about this?
 - Can you give me an example of this?
 - Can you tell me what you mean by ...?
 - Can you tell me more about how the ELSA programme does that?
 - Are there any other aims that you can think of?
 - Do you think it could improve wellbeing? Behaviour? Learning? Relationships? Anything else?
 - What do you know about the content of the ELSA project?
 - What sort of pupils might benefit from the ELSA project? Why?
6. Can you tell me how the ELSA programme operates in your school?
- Can you tell me about
 - the pupils that are referred to the ELSA programme?
 - how are ELSA referrals made? By whom?
 - how are pupil outcomes decided?
 - how do you know how pupils are getting on with ELSA?
 - When does ELSA support for a pupil end?
 - What contact have you had with the ELSAs in your school?
7. How has the ELSA programme impacted on pupil’s you have taught?
- Can you tell me more about
 - the effects on pupils’ educational attainment?
 - the effects on pupils’ emotional and social skills – including their ability to regulate their feelings, self-esteem, their behaviour in class, their behaviour around school, their behaviour and relationships with others?
 - Can you tell me how you noticed something had changed?
 - In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?
8. Do you think that the ELSA project has impacted on your classroom environment?
- Can you tell me about...
 - any ELSA or emotional literacy approaches that you have adopted in your teaching?
 - any effect it has had on your relationship with the pupils you teach?
 - any effect it has had on the relationships between the pupils you teach?
 - Can you tell me how you noticed something had changed?
 - In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?
9. Do you think the ELSA project has impacted on the whole-school system?
- Why/why not
 - Can you tell me more about that....

- In what way do you think the ELSA programme helped bring about this change?
10. Can you tell me about any ELSA or emotional literacy training or support you have received?
- Can you tell me more about...
 - who the training/support was delivered by?
 - what impact has this training/support had on you or your teaching?
 - Is there further training/support that you feel you need?
 - What impact do you think this training/support would have on you or your teaching?
11. In what ways could the ELSA programme be improved?
- Can you tell me more about this?
 - In what ways do you think this would improve the ELSA programme?
 - Are there any other improvements you would like to suggest?
12. That is the end of this interview. Is there any else that you would like to add?

Appendix-6: Example of coding and peer-review coding

Transcript excerpts from ELSA-1a	Researcher codes	Peer-review codes
I thought it was really good to be reminded of erm the Maslow's erm basic you know the hierarchy of needs	Training confirmed what ELSA thought	Training confirms prior knowledge
...head of house will always refer or tutor will notice and then speak to head of house and then refer and on our ELSA referral form which is really good it says what ELSA is not which is like you know mental if we've got someone who has actually got a mental health diagnosis or you know there's a list of three things	<p>ELSA referral has clear process</p> <p>ELSA referral form has clear criteria and questions</p>	<p>Systems for referral are present</p> <p>Boundaries for ELSA referral are clear</p>
...so my typical ELSA is friendship issues, anxieties, low self-esteem erm not really thriving in this environment really, bit sad bit sad, it's all a bit difficult	ELSA is for low level SEMH issues	ELSA child is usually lower level need

Appendix-7: Examples of codes to theme development

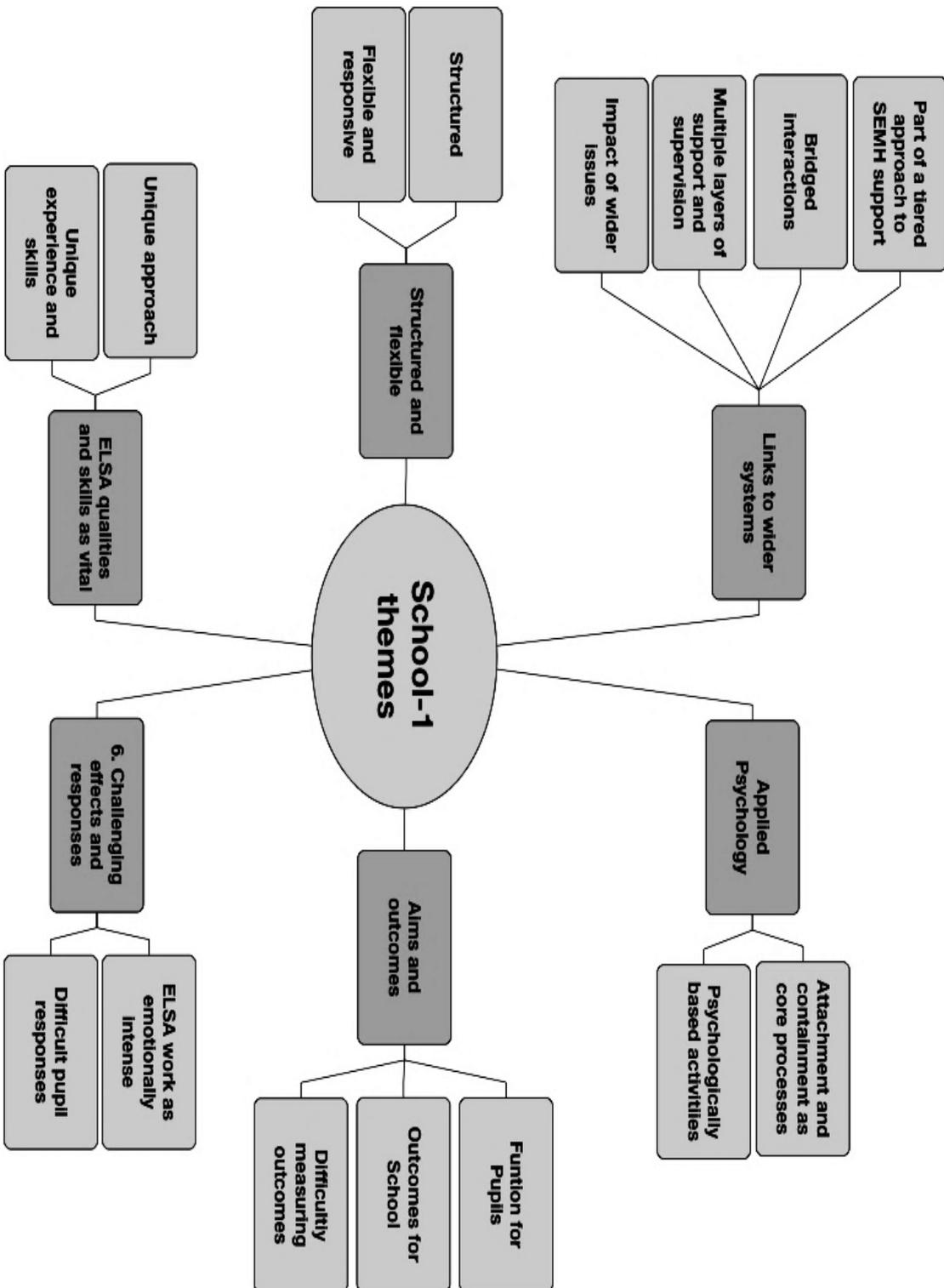
Participant	Transcript excerpt	Code	Theme
Pupil-1a	I have quite a few things that worry me but I go to Miss [ELSA] and although not all my problems can be solved it feels easier to get emotions and thoughts that I have been bottling up out to get this weight off my shoulders	Pupils can express bottled up emotions to ELSA	Attachment and containment as key processes
Teacher-1	I think in a sense it has probably reduced a bit but if you looked at a long term situation I think you'd see a bigger change	ELSA has longer term impact so change not noticed instantly	Tracking outcomes
Pupil-2b	I don't particularly like to think about the end of things.*	Pupil doesn't want to think about end of ELSA	Challenging effects on pupils
ELSA-2	I know that that's life and that's daily school life you know you can't be here 24/7 but it does always make me feel really guilty when I'm not here	Guilt when time spent away from pupils	Emotional impact on ELSAs

Appendix-8: Overview of themes and occurrence across data

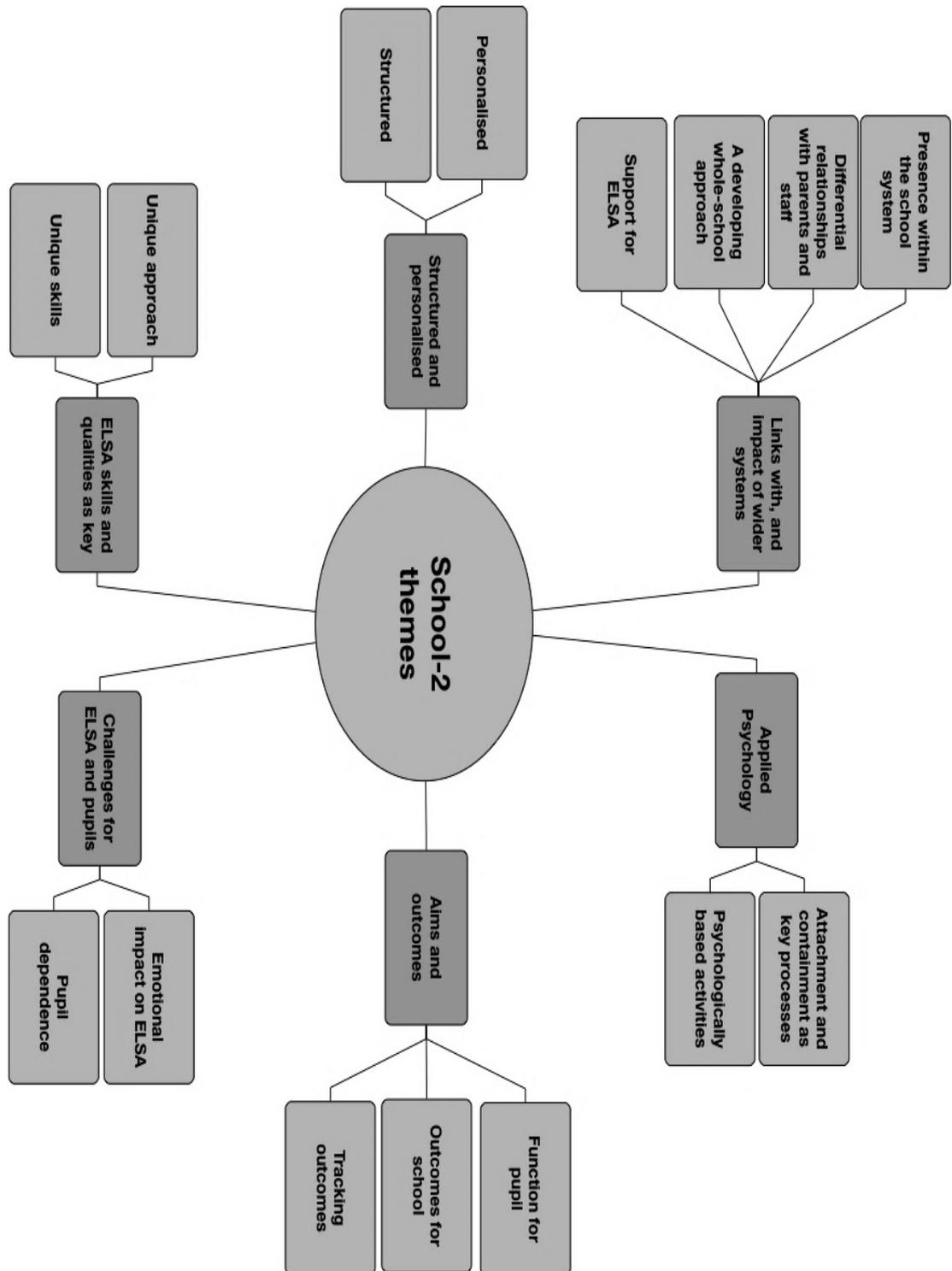
Cross case overarching theme	Theme definition	Occurrence of theme in data set
<p>Links with, and impact of wider systems</p> <p><i>Sub-themes</i> Presence and value within the school system Importance of relationships with parents and staff Support for ELSAs Impact of school and wider-system issues</p>	<p>ELSA projects' linked to wider systems within the schools' communities and externally to the LA EPS. Links were identified between ELSAs and school staff and parents. However, differences in the degree and nature of these communications emerged within and between each school. ELSA-school staff communication appeared underdeveloped and ELSA-parent contact was limited and bridged by other staff, such as SENCOs. Supportive and challenging factors were highlighted. Whilst ELSAs felt supported particularly the challenges of running the intervention within and alongside the complex systems of schools and pupils' home lives.</p>	<p>ELSA-1a ELSA-1b Pupil-1a Pupil-1b SENCO-1 Assistant head-1 Teacher-1 ELSA-2 Pupil-2a Pupil-2b SENCO-2 Teacher-2a Teacher-2b HSLW-2</p>
<p>Structured and flexible</p> <p><i>Sub-themes</i> A structured intervention Flexible</p>	<p>ELSA projects in both schools operated around structure and flexibility. Structure related to the set-up of the intervention, including referral and timetabling, whereas flexibility related to the pupil-centred approach that was utilised within target setting, intervention length and individualising sessions based on pupils' need.</p>	<p>ELSA-1a ELSA-1b Pupil-1a Pupil-1b SENCO-1 Assistant head-1 Teacher-1 ELSA-2 Pupil-2a Pupil-2b SENCO-2 Teacher-2a Teacher-2b HSLW-2</p>
<p>Core ELSA skills and qualities</p> <p><i>Sub-themes</i> Unique approach Unique skills</p>	<p>ELSA project was delivered by ELSAs who have unique qualities. Participants recognised the ELSA role as different to many other roles in school, based on</p>	<p>ELSA-1a ELSA-1b Pupil-1a SENCO-1 Teacher-1 ELSA-2</p>

	<p>their approach demonstrating attunement humanistic therapeutic principles. The role appeared to be unique in both the approach the ELSAs utilised and the skills the ELSAs held.</p>	<p>SENCO-2 Teacher-2a Teacher-2b HSLW-2</p>
<p>Applied Psychology</p> <p><i>Sub-themes</i> Attachment and containment as key processes Application of psychologically based activities</p>	<p>Psychology was applied within the ELSA sessions. Key processes appeared to relate to attachment and containment principles. In addition a range of psychological principles were also evident through descriptions of ELSA session activities.</p>	<p>ELSA-1a ELSA-1b Pupil-1a Pupil-1b SENCO-1 Assistant head-1 Teacher-1 ELSA-2 Pupil-2a Pupil-2b SENCO-2 Teacher-2a Teacher-2b HSLW-2</p>
<p>Aims and Outcomes</p> <p><i>Sub-themes</i> Function for pupil Outcomes for school Tracking outcomes</p>	<p>This theme explores the functions that the ELSA project is perceived to fulfil. Two core functions were identified from the interviews: meeting pupil's needs and supporting the school system. School staff also spoke about how ELSA was tracked and the difficulties associated with tracking ELSA.</p>	<p>ELSA-1a ELSA-1b Pupil-1a Pupil-1b SENCO-1 Assistant head-1 Teacher-1 ELSA-2 Pupil-2a Pupil-2b SENCO-2 Teacher-2a Teacher-2b HSLW-2</p>
<p>Challenges for ELSAs and pupils</p> <p><i>Sub-themes</i> Emotional impact on ELSAs Challenging effects on pupils</p>	<p>Challenges appeared to be experienced by both the ELSAs and the pupils as a result of the ELSA intervention. For ELSAs these factors related to the provocation of difficult emotions. Whereas for pupils there was evidence of both difficult emotional reactions as well as resistance and dependency towards ELSA intervention.</p>	<p>ELSA-1a ELSA-1b Pupil-1a Pupil-1b SENCO-1 Teacher-1 ELSA-2 Pupil-2a Pupil-2b SENCO-2 HSLW-2</p>

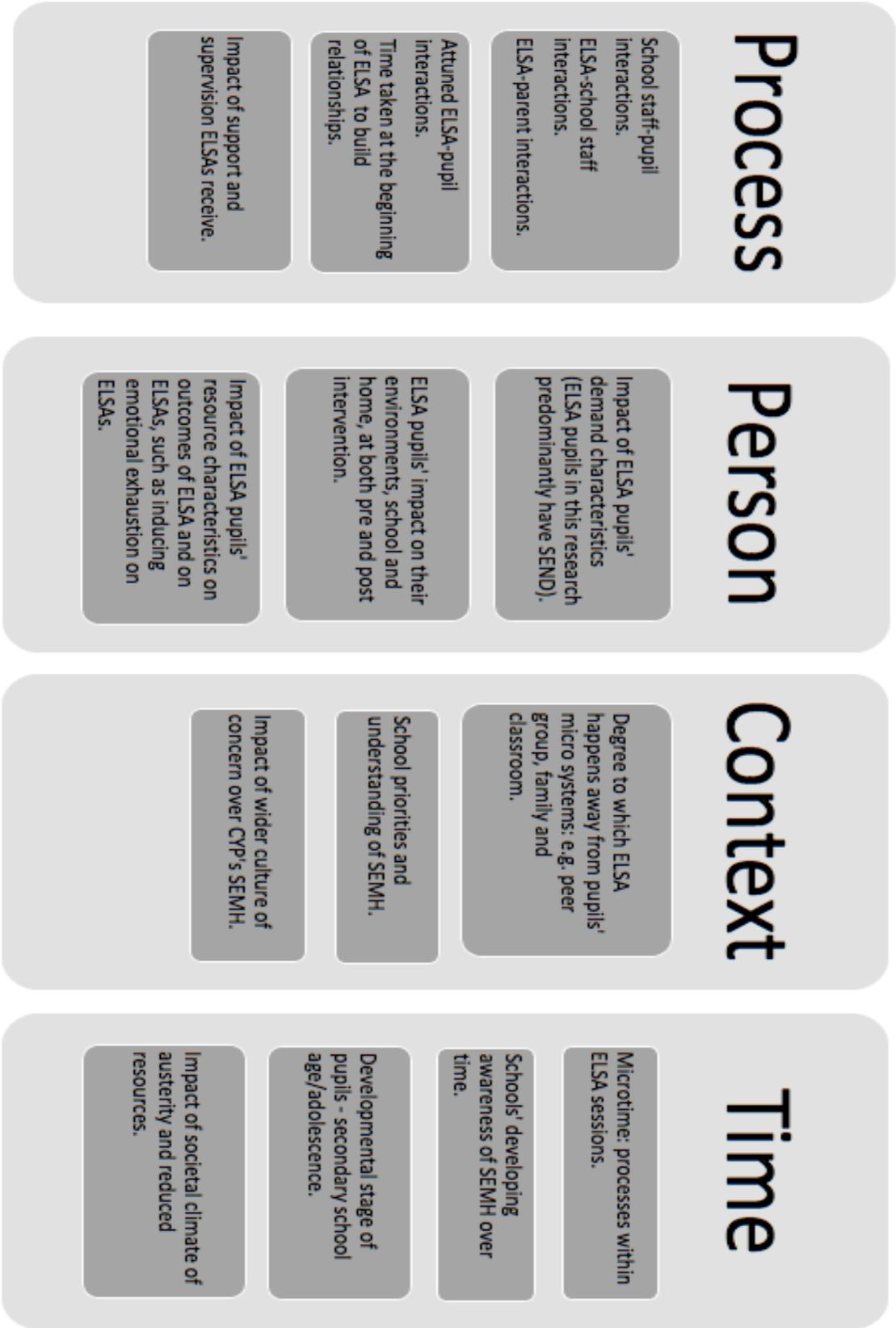
Appendix-9: Thematic map for School-1



Appendix-10: Thematic map for School-2



Appendix-11: Findings mapped to P-P-C-T model



Appendix-12: Principles of attuned interactions

Adapted from Kennedy et al. (2011)

<p>Being Attentive and Inclusive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creating ease, e.g. problem free talking, looking interested with friendly posture and intonation ■ Giving time and space for the other ■ Wondering what the other person is doing, thinking or feeling. ■ Receiving and returning/ sharing turns / balanced turn taking ■ Using accessible language
<p>Encouraging Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Waiting ■ Active listening and initiative encouraging behaviours - friendly intonations / positive comments / affirmations ■ Showing emotional warmth - labelling / naming what you hear, see, think, feel ■ Clarifying purpose, eliciting & naming hopes, intentions / co-constructing agendas ■ Asking what you want to know / using follow up question ■ Saying what you are doing
<p>Receiving Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Showing that you have heard / noticed the other persons initiatives (verbal and non-verbal reception) ■ Repeating / using the other persons words, summarising ■ Building on the other's response / asking follow up questions ■ Emotional reception – acknowledging and naming feelings, responding with empathy, appreciation
<p>Developing Attuned Interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Each making initiatives – waiting, receiving and returning / sharing turns / balanced turn taking ■ Receiving and then responding in a congruent way ■ Asking / giving/accepting/exchanging opinions ■ Giving second / further turns on the same topic ■ Checking you are being understood and that the other person is understanding you.
<p>Guiding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scaffolding thinking by extending and building on other's responses and providing help when needed ■ Problem analysis - Inviting & supporting predictions, probing / investigating opinions ■ Accessing prior knowledge, exploring attributions / constructions ■ Noticing, naming, exploring contradictions (real or potential) ■ Using psychological approaches to scaffold thinking, e.g. exploring functions, exploring exceptions, preferred / desired futures etc ■ Proposing possibilities, offering tentative hypotheses / explanations ■ Offering perspectives / choices/ information as appropriate in ways that the other person can follow. ■ Managing and facilitating the perspectives of others
<p>Deepening Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inviting and supporting review / progress description, attributions of achievements / change ■ Eliciting and sharing impact (thoughts, feelings, behaviours) ■ Drawing on psychological theory to frame / re-frame issues ■ Collaborative problem formulation - proposing /accepting / amending / summarising shared understandings. ■ Managing conflicts with aim of restoring attuned interaction. ■ Using psychological theories and models of psychology to support the formulation of interventions ■ Collaborative discussion around creating well formed desired outcomes / goal setting ■ Identifying existing resources, making plans / generating strategy ■ Evaluation of future strategy / actions, i.e. likelihood of success. ■ Evaluating experience / impact of consultation

Appendix-13: Research timeline

Task	Completed
Research Proposal	February 2018
Ethics signed off and Data Registration number obtained	March 2018
Pilot interviews	June 2018
Initial head teachers and SENCOs contacted	April 2018
EPs contacted to aid recruitment	May 2018
Participant interviews	July-September 2018
Interview data transcription	July-October 2018
Data analysis started	October 2018
Thesis report due	June 2019

Appendix-14: Example of ELSA iceberg tool

