

***Doctorate in Professional Educational,  
Child and Adolescent Psychology***

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**Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and  
Adolescent Psychology**

**What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support  
Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal  
Based Outcome measures?**

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I, Caroline King, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## Abstract

The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme is a school-based intervention developed by Educational Psychologists in which Teaching Assistants (TAs) are trained to deliver bespoke support to develop the social and emotional skills of children and young people (CYP) (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009). A systematic critical appraisal of the present ELSA literature was conducted, focusing on what is known about the impact of the intervention on outcomes for CYP. This highlighted the scarcity of available research which focused on ELSA in secondary settings and the limitations around measures available to evaluate the impact of the intervention. To address this, mixed methodology research was conducted to explore the use of three outcome measures, two standardised measures (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Emotional Literacy Checklist) and an idiographic measure (Goal Based Outcomes [GBO]) with a sample of secondary-aged young people (N=5). GBO was used as this approach has evidenced success in clinical settings, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs), in evaluating bespoke interventions akin to ELSA. The researcher intended to triangulate the standardised data by seeking feedback from teaching staff (N = 3), but challenges with recruitment and data collection prevented this. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ELSAs (N = 8) and students (N = 4) to explore their views on using the GBO approach in ELSA. Findings indicate that the GBO data captures richer information about the ELSA intervention when compared to standardised measures in terms of the focus of the sessions. However, the tracking of change over time was limited due to the general nature of goals set. The GBO approach was perceived to benefit ELSA practice by supporting ELSAs' planning and organisation and facilitating a sense of agency for students. ELSAs lacked confidence in using GBO, and students reflected on their uncertainty about the approach, which suggests that ELSAs would benefit from more comprehensive training and ongoing support to build confidence and ensure targets are SMART in nature. The strengths and limitations of this research are highlighted, and implications for the practice of ELSAs and Educational Psychologists, including directions for further research in this area, are discussed.

## **Impact statement**

This research is a novel investigation into the use of a Goal Based Outcomes (GBO) approach which couples quantitative scaling data alongside qualitative descriptors to capture progress towards a goal that has been co-constructed by a secondary-aged student and an ELSA. The research utilised a mixed methodology approach, gathering pre- and post- standardised measures and repeated GBO measures, followed by semi-structured interviews with ELSAs and students. The findings highlight what can be learnt about outcomes for secondary-aged students taking part in the ELSA programme.

This research corroborates previous research in terms of the findings relating to the use of standardised measures (the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Emotional Literacy Checklist). More specifically, findings from this study highlight the challenges of drawing firm conclusions due to their broad nature and difficulties with triangulating feedback from external individuals. The quantitative data from the idiographic measure (GBO) demonstrates that change fluctuated through the course of the intervention, and that not all students engaged with the approach. The qualitative descriptors provide further insight into the scores and suggest they are often influenced by experiences external to the ELSA intervention.

Findings show the GBO approach was accessible and relevant to ELSA practice, and it benefited the delivery of the intervention in terms of providing a focus for planning. Additionally, setting a goal was felt to provide clarity about the purpose of the ELSA intervention for students, and the student-centred nature of goal setting was valued by participants. However, participants experienced some uncertainty about the approach. ELSAs expressed limited confidence in setting targets and students struggled to engage with scaling. Findings indicate this may have been linked

to the lack of specificity of the targets set. Furthermore, ELSAs highlighted the wider pressures placed on them to have an evidence impact.

The findings have implications for ELSAs working in secondary settings, and the Educational Psychologists (EPs) delivering ELSA training and facilitating supervision:

- ELSAs felt that the use of GBO was relevant to their work with secondary-aged students. Findings indicate the approach was accessible for ELSAs and students and enabled ELSAs to document the focus of support and perceived change over time, as well as supporting them in their planning. Therefore, EP services should consider introducing GBO to ELSAs.
- In terms of validly measuring outcomes for CYP, GBO were limited due to their subjective nature. The targets set were often vague, which impacted on how well they could be tracked. As such, ELSAs would benefit from continued support to make sure targets are SMART and focused.
- However, both students and ELSA felt the student-led nature of the approach was meaningful. Therefore, EPs should emphasise the importance of this in ELSA training, particularly for secondary-based ELSAs.
- Findings suggest that a single training session in implementing GBO is insufficient. ELSAs would benefit from ongoing EP support to ensure they feel confident in setting appropriate goals, such as through ELSA supervision.
- A GBO approach is not appropriate for all students who are supported by an ELSA. Student motivation and readiness may impact on their engagement, which is important for ELSAs to reflect on when using GBO. Standardised measures may be useful in capturing student readiness and awareness of needs.

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## **Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| BEI    | British Education Index                                   |
| CAMHs  | Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service                |
| CYP    | Children and Young People                                 |
| DEdPSy | Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology |
| DfE    | Department for Education                                  |
| DISS   | Deployment and Impact of Support Staff                    |
| DoH    | Department of Health                                      |
| EI     | Emotional Intelligence                                    |
| EL     | Emotional Literacy  |
| ELC    | Emotional Literacy Checklist                              |
| ELSA   | Emotional Literacy Support Assistant                      |
| EP     | Educational Psychologist                                  |
| ERIC   | Education Resources Information Centre                    |
| GAS    | Goal Attainment Scaling                                   |
| GBO    | Goal Based Outcomes                                       |
| IoE    | Institute of Education                                    |
| NHS    | National Health Service                                   |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education                         |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| SDQ   | Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire               |
| SEAL  | Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning               |
| SEMH  | Social, Emotional and Mental Health                    |
| SEND  | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities             |
| SMART | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound |
| TA    | Teaching Assistant                                     |
| TEP   | Trainee Educational Psychologist                       |
| TME   | Target Monitoring and Evaluation                       |
| WHO   | World Health Organisation                              |
| WoE   | Weight of Evidence                                     |

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## **1.1 Mental Health and Well-being in Schools**

According to a 2020 NHS survey, one in six children and young people (CYP) identify as experiencing a probable mental health need, and this has increased since 2017 (NHS Digital, 2020). Many authors are highlighting this as a 'crisis' (Humphrey, 2018; Thorley, 2016), with high demand and increasing pressures on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) which is not possible to be met entirely through this service alone (Thorley, 2016). As such, six in ten children with probable mental health needs receive support directly from their school (NHS Digital, 2020). This demonstrates the potentially important role schools may have in supporting the mental health needs of CYP (Humphrey, 2018).

In response to this, the government has introduced initiatives to reinforce the role of schools. For example, the government Green Paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health' (DoH & DfE, 2017) has placed an emphasis on upskilling staff by increasing their knowledge about mental health and appointing a Designated Senior Lead for Mental Health within each school. Their role is to oversee the whole school approach to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, to identify children at risk, signpost them to external support and coordinate and evaluate outcomes of associated interventions delivered within school. Additionally, there were changes to the Ofsted framework in 2019 which introduced joint inspections of how they are responding to these needs (Ofsted, 2019).

Developing children's social and emotional skills in schools through interventions is one way of promoting good mental health in CYP (Weare & Gray, 2003). A literature review conducted by Carroll and Hurry (2018) explored social and

emotional support in schools and demonstrates that the evidence base for such programmes is in its infancy. This review highlights that interventions in this area are usually separated into universal, targeted and individual levels of support, known as tier one, two, and three (Ebbels et al., 2019). The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) resources, an initiative developed by the government, work towards promoting these skills in schools and can be implemented across the three tiers (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigglesworth, 2010). Another example of an intervention to support these needs is the Thrive approach, developed by Banks, Bird, Gerlach and Lovelock (1994). This is a tool used in schools to assess pupils' social and emotional needs and provide a prescribed targeted support plan to meet them. The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme (Shotton & Burton, 2018) is a further example of a widely implemented tier two intervention. However, the approach is unique because it is non-manualised. The programme involves the upskilling of staff to deliver bespoke in-house support and intervention to facilitate CYP's social and emotional development. The ELSA programme has been described as having great potential, but at present is highly under-researched, in part due to challenges with evaluating its efficacy (Pickering, Lambeth & Woodcock, 2019).

### **1.2 The ELSA programme**

The ELSA programme was developed by the Hampshire Educational Psychology Service as a way of enabling both primary and secondary schools to offer in-house support to develop children's social and emotional skills (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009), which the programme terms 'emotional literacy'. The programme was part of a local authority commitment to prioritise and promote the emotional literacy of CYP (Weare & Gray, 2003). A more comprehensive description of ELSA will be given in Chapter 2. However, in summary, the programme involves a member of staff,

usually a teaching assistant, receiving training from Educational Psychologists (EPs) which enables them to practise as an ELSA. The training introduces ELSAs to various psychological models and theories to help them understand and respond to the emotional literacy needs of students (Burton & Okai, 2018). Typically, the period of training varies from five to six days of training, during which ELSAs are introduced to psychological concepts, skills and resources to support them in planning and delivering individualised programmes of emotional literacy support to CYP.

The ELSA programme is highly bespoke on several levels. Firstly, ELSAs are trained by local Educational Psychology Services and materials used can be adapted to suit the needs of the local community (Atkin, 2019). Additionally, the programme can be tailored to the school running the intervention. Schools are advised on best practice, but ultimately implementation is decided by the school, such as how much time ELSAs are allocated and which students are prioritised (Nicholson-Roberts, 2019). Finally, due to the needs-driven and flexible nature of the programme, the way each ELSA runs their intervention is bespoke to them. Sessions are designed by the ELSAs drawing on skills and materials provided in the training and typically last for at least a half term of weekly sessions, though the length and number of sessions varies depending on individual CYP's needs (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009). To give the intervention a clear focus, ELSAs are encouraged to set and work towards a 'Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound' (SMART) target and to use this to evaluate the impact they are having (Burton & Okai, 2018). However, existing literature indicates that gathering robust impact measures has been a challenge (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009; Burton, Norgate & Osborne, 2010; Mann, 2014), and a more bespoke approach to evaluating the programme has been suggested as an area for future research in recent ELSA literature (Nicholson-Roberts, 2019).

The ELSA programme has no direct governance, however, there is a national ELSA network intended to promote good practice. The number of currently practising ELSAs is unclear as there is no formal record keeping of this. However, based on the number of local authority services participating in the ELSA network, the programme is clearly popular with schools and local authorities, with over 100 EP services now signed up to deliver the training on the ELSA network. With such seemingly widespread use, it is imperative we understand the impact this programme is having on outcomes for CYP.

### **1.3 Rationale for the present research**

Despite the widespread appeal of ELSA, there has been limited research into the impact of the intervention for CYP (Pickering et al., 2019). At present, only seven peer reviewed studies exist, all of which mostly take a qualitative approach to understanding key stakeholders' perspectives on ELSA (Osborne & Burton, 2014; France & Billington, 2020; Hills, 2016; Krause, Blackwell & Claridge, 2020; McEwen, 2019; Wilding & Claridge, 2016; Wong et al., 2020). It is hypothesised that the use of qualitative methodologies in these studies may be due to the challenges in obtaining an objective evaluation of the programme using quantitative means. Thus far, the only research which attempted to use quantitative methodologies came from the local authority that created the programme (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010) and doctoral students (Grahamslaw, 2010; Mann, 2014). Within these studies, various challenges were faced in terms of the recruitment of participants and the identification and use of appropriate measures. None of the studies have been peer reviewed.

In previous ELSA research there have also been limitations in terms of representation for secondary-aged students. Although some ELSA studies have attempted to include participants from secondary schools, (Mann, 2014; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010), only three studies that focus directly on this age group were found during the literature review as part of this research. These primarily utilised qualitative methods to explore ELSA and students' experiences of the programme (Begley, 2015; Peters, 2020) or how ELSA is implemented by secondary schools (Nicholson-Roberts, 2019), but did not explore the outcomes of the intervention. Although some early reviews involve secondary participants (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Mann, 2014), findings relating to the impact of the ELSA programme with this population were inconclusive. In summary, much of the existing evidence base explores the use of the ELSA programme with primary school aged children. Since it is not possible to assume the impact of ELSA will transfer to an older age group, there is limited understanding of the effectiveness and impact of ELSA in secondary schools.

Despite the limited evidence base, available studies have highlighted perceived positive experiences from secondary-aged students who have participated in ELSA (Begley, 2015; Peters, 2020). However, thus far, there are no studies that have attempted to measure the extent to which ELSA has impacted on the development of emotional literacy skills in secondary school students. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap in understanding by focusing on the means of evaluating the impact of the ELSA intervention in secondary settings.

A further challenge faced in conducting an objective evaluation of ELSA is the measures utilised. Evaluations so far use measures such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Burton et al., 2009; Mann, 2014) and the Emotional



Literacy Checklist (ELC) (Burton et al., 2010; Mann, 2014) to review the potential impact of the intervention on a wide scale. Results indicate a broadly positive impact of the programme. However, it is challenging to draw firm conclusions from the findings due to the use of the aforesaid measures which are often criticised for being broad and imprecise. For example, the SDQ has been critiqued for its lack of discriminant validity and sensitivity to determine whether an intervention has effected change (Hill & Hughes, 2007). Due to their broad nature, the measures used in these reviews are likely to struggle to detect smaller steps or the nuances of change that may occur because of the ELSA programme. This challenge is potentially compounded by the poorly defined concepts on which the intervention is based, such as 'emotional literacy' and 'mental health' (Weare, 2010), which impact on the validity of the measures (Jacob, Edbrooke-Childs, Costa da Silva & Law, 2021). Therefore, although ELSA is an increasingly implemented approach in schools, the impact of the intervention is poorly understood.

Akin to ELSA, mental health support and intervention delivered in CAMHs are often bespoke to the individual young person (Batty et al., 2013). Within CAMHs, there has been a focus on patient-reported outcomes, or idiographic measures, to evaluate interventions (Wolpert et al., 2012). Research stipulates that these measures can support clinicians to track the trajectories of change and ensure that treatment is focused on clients' needs (Weisz et al., 2011). CAMHs presently use a combination of standardised measures, such as the SDQ, and idiographic measures to get a clear picture of change (Jacob et al., 2021). Goal Based Outcomes (GBO) is an idiographic approach used in CAMHs (Edbrooke-Childs, Jacob, Law, Deighton & Wolpert, 2015), and is a derivative of Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) which ELSAs are recommended to use in practice to track progress (Burton & Okai, 2018). Both approaches involve

clinicians and the young person jointly setting up to three goals at the start of the intervention. However, in GBO the goals are typically reviewed regularly and progress towards the goal is tracked using a 10-point rating scale (Law & Jacob, 2013), whereas in GAS progress is reviewed before and after the intervention (Connor, 2010). There is some evidence to suggest that the GBO approach is better placed to capture information about progress towards a goal following an intervention compared to standardised measures, such as the SDQ (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015). However, until now the use of these approaches in ELSA has not been formally explored in research, which the present study aims to address.

#### **1.4 Relevance to Educational Psychology**

The ELSA programme has been developed and is delivered by EPs. Therefore, research in this area is particularly pertinent to this profession. This study aims to provide an understanding of how idiographic approaches can be used to explore outcomes for secondary-aged children engaging in an ELSA intervention, which has been illustrated as a challenge within the existing literature (Mann, 2014). Idiographic tools like GBO are already familiar to EPs and used in the practice of reviewing targets set during EP consultations, such as Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME), a derivative of GAS (Connor, 2010). These tools are also in keeping with the non-manualised and bespoke nature of an ELSA intervention, and bear similarities to the setting of 'Specific, Measurable, Achievable Relevant and Time-Bound' (SMART) targets, which ELSAs are advised to generate. However, the review of existing literature indicated that no research into the use of idiographic measures or target setting in ELSA practice exists. The present study will also explore ELSA and students' experiences in setting and monitoring progress towards a given target using GBO. Existing research suggests that GBO reinforce the importance of students' input in

generating the target (Law & Jacob, 2013), which is in line with the person-centred approaches outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), which governs the statutory role of EPs. This study provides insights into how GBO can support EP services to demonstrate the potential impact of ELSA in a more bespoke way and will explore the evaluation of the ELSA intervention in secondary school settings which hitherto has been limited. This knowledge will be useful for EPs in shaping future ELSA training sessions and inform best practice in supporting secondary ELSAs during supervision.

### **1.5 Positionality**

This research developed from my interest in ELSA which began when working in this role for two years in a mainstream secondary school. The position was full-time, and I received six days of training and ongoing supervision with other secondary ELSAs from an EP. I have a first-hand understanding of the challenges in evaluating the impact of the support provided to CYP. This interest in ELSA and evaluation continued in a subsequent role as an Assistant Educational Psychologist, in which I supported the training and supervision of ELSAs in a local authority EP service. At this time, I became aware of the limited literature on ELSA, particularly in secondary school settings. When developing this research, I was very aware of the potential bias that these experiences may bring to the research and, as such, was committed to ensuring reflexivity throughout the research process. On the other hand, this experience provided prerequisite knowledge and understanding of ELSA which was beneficial to the success of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Overview**

This section will set the context of the ELSA intervention, exploring important terminology, and providing a full explanation of the ELSA programme. The systematic literature review will then explore what is known about ELSA regarding outcomes for CYP and the methodological challenges surrounding this.

### **2.2 Terminology in ELSA**

#### **2.2.1 Emotional Literacy and Emotional Intelligence**

To understand the impact that ELSA has on CYP terminology associated with ELSA must be clearly defined. Sharp (2014) described emotional literacy as the skills to identify, understand and manage emotions appropriately. The term 'emotional literacy' was developed from the concept of 'emotional intelligence' (EI), which was first coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and became more widespread following Goleman's 1996 book of the same name. Here, he defined 'emotional intelligence' as the awareness of one's own emotions and the emotions of others, and the ability to manage and express these appropriately (Goleman, 1996). This definition of EI clearly overlaps with Sharp's definition of emotional literacy, demonstrating the clear link between the two. In ELSA practice, Shotton and Burton (2018) use the terms emotional literacy and emotional intelligence interchangeably. However, in general, the term 'emotional literacy' is preferred by EPs (Burton et al., 2009). This is due to the notion of 'literacy' reinforcing the view that these skills can be taught (Shotton & Burton, 2018).

## 2.2.2 Mental Health and Well-being

Emotional literacy is considered important for mental health and well-being (Liau et al., 2003; Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halelvy & Weisberg, 2007), which have been the focus of widespread government initiatives in schools. For example, Public Health England released guidance in 2015 which detailed eight principles of whole school approach to promoting CYP's mental health and well-being (Public Health England, 2015). Within this, there was a specific focus on the need for targeted interventions, such as ELSA, to be embedded within a whole-school approach to mental health. Therefore, it is important to be clear about how these concepts are defined.

In recent years, the term 'mental health' has been redefined (WHO, 2005). The new definition moves away from early conceptualisations which focused on the presence or absence of pathologies (Weare, 2010), and has shifted towards it being understood as a positive state of being. The Westerhof and Keyes 'Two Continua Model' (2010) makes a clear distinction between mental health and mental illness, suggesting the former should be considered more broadly in terms of what factors support individuals to feel well, rather than simply the absence of psychopathologies. Westerhof and Keyes (2010) identify three key elements of positive mental health:

- Happiness and life satisfaction or *emotional well-being*
- Functioning well and self-realisation of one's goals or *psychological well-being*
- Positive functioning within society and communities or *social well-being*

Furthermore, when employing this definition, there are clear and significant overlaps between the term 'mental health' and 'well-being'. For example, the Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment (PERMA) model is a widely used definition of well-being (Seligman, 2018) with each letter referring to

one of the 'building blocks' required (Donaldson et al., 2020). This overlaps significantly with the definition from Westerhof and Keyes (2010) in that the two consider mental health and well-being in terms of what individuals have rather than what they lack. However, it has been argued that it is challenging to capture human experiences of these as they are multi-dimensional and highly subjective, resulting in difficulties in objectively and accurately measuring them in research (Kern et al., 2015). Further, it has been highlighted in CAMHS research that it is difficult to measure mental health and well-being due to the "intangible nature" of the concepts (Jacob et al., 2021). In summary, mental health and well-being are overlapping concepts, which have a high level of subjectivity and are somewhat difficult to measure.

Moreover, there is research to suggest a correlation between emotional literacy and mental health and well-being. The Early Intervention Foundation indicated that good mental health in adult life is linked to the development of emotional skills such as self-control and emotional regulation (Clarke, Morreale, Field, Hussein & Barry, 2015), which are key elements of emotional literacy (Sharp, 2014). Research from Ciarrochi, Chan and Caputi (2000) indicates that CYP with higher emotional literacy are better equipped with the skills to cope with adverse life events and manage difficult moods. This was corroborated by Liao et al. (2003) who conducted research exploring the relationship between emotional literacy and internal and externalising behaviour problems in 203 secondary school students in Malaysia using questionnaire data. Results indicate a significant correlation between low levels of emotional literacy and high internalising and externalising behaviour problems. However, it is important to note the cross-sectional nature of this research and the potential bidirectionality of the findings, in that the opposite of the conclusion may be true. Furthermore, Davis and Humphrey (2012) explored the relationship between emotional literacy and mental

health. Their results indicated that high levels of emotional literacy were associated with selecting appropriate coping strategies to manage difficulties. The authors concluded that when developing social and emotional skills interventions for young people, explicit teaching of emotional skills and targeted outcomes of support would potentially optimise the impact they have, which is consistent with the approach taken in ELSA.

### **2.3 The ELSA Programme**

The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) initiative was developed by Hampshire Educational Psychology Service in 2003, after they identified the need for targeted support for social and emotional needs (Weare & Gray, 2003). The programme involves Educational Psychologists delivering five to six days of training to teaching assistants (TAs), which aims to develop their skills in designing and delivering bespoke intervention for children in the following areas:

- Emotional awareness
- Anger management
- Self-esteem
- Social and communication skills
- Friendship skills

Burton and Shotton (2018, p. 10)

Initially, ELSAs were trained as peripatetic workers in primary schools. The initiative then transitioned into a school-based role, which extended to secondary school settings and specialist provisions (Burton et al., 2009). The purpose of the ELSA initiative is to provide a way for EPs to build the capacity of staff in schools to identify and support students in-house with a wide range of emotional needs on a one

to one or small group basis (Burton et al., 2009). Research indicates that this is the case in practice, with ELSAs providing support for students in areas such as friendship difficulties, anger, anxiety, bereavement, school refusal and more (Bradley, 2010; Burton et al., 2009). Since its origins, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of psychology services trained to provide training in ELSA, which continues to rise. In March 2021, over 100 local authorities and private services were signed up to the ELSA Network. There is a website with a forum which allows EP services who are delivering ELSA training and supervision to connect, share knowledge and experience and access and share resources.

### **2.3.1 The role of teaching assistants (TAs) in the ELSA programme**

The ELSA training involves the school, typically the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or inclusion manager, selecting a member of staff, usually a TA, to receive training from the EP service to become an ELSA. Therefore, when exploring ELSA, it is important to consider the legislative context of the deployment of TAs. Since 2000, there has been a threefold increase in the number of TAs in mainstream classrooms (Webster & Blatchford, 2015). Research indicates TAs are considered to reduce teacher workload (Webster, Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Martin & Russell, 2010). However, studies indicate that children with SEND often inadvertently receive their primary school education from TAs (Webster et al., 2010), who are typically less qualified to teach when compared to their class teacher colleagues (Blatchford, Webster & Russell, 2012). Findings from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) research demonstrated that TA support is linked to negative outcomes for children, possibly due to the limited contact with their qualified teacher (Blatchford et al., 2012). This was particularly apparent when children with SEND were matched and compared to peers who were not supported by a TA.



Conclusions from the DISS research identified the need for TAs to receive induction training, continued professional development and appropriate line management to be more effective (Blatchford et al., 2012). Furthermore, this research highlights an implicit criticism of the ELSA programme, the staff with the least training are supporting the most vulnerable students with their emotional needs. However, there are recommendations from the ELSA programme developers in line with the suggestions from the DISS research to ensure ELSAs are well supported through supervision and receive ample training for the role (Burton & Okai, 2018).

### **2.3.2 ELSA training**

The training is delivered across five or more full day sessions, which are led by two qualified Educational Psychologists as stipulated by the ELSA Trainers' Manual (Burton, 2009). [Table A1](#) in the appendix provides an overview of the content covered in the training when it was developed, taken from the ELSA Trainers' Manual (Burton, 2009). The structure, length and topics will vary slightly depending on each EP service delivering the training. Overall, the training aims to provide a variety of psychological models which guide the ELSAs in their role (Burton et al., 2009).

Additionally, ELSAs are given time to develop practical skills vital for delivering the ELSA programme, such as active listening. Training days are typically delivered three weeks apart (Shotton & Burton, 2018) as this provides ELSAs with opportunities to try out new skills in the form of between session tasks which are then reflected on in future sessions. This is in line with Kolb's adult learning model of experiential learning (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2001) which is a widely used (Garner, 2000) cyclical model that posits that "*Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*" (Kolb, 2014, p. 38).

**Figure 1**

*Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (Taken from Bergsteiner, Avery & Neumann, 2010)*

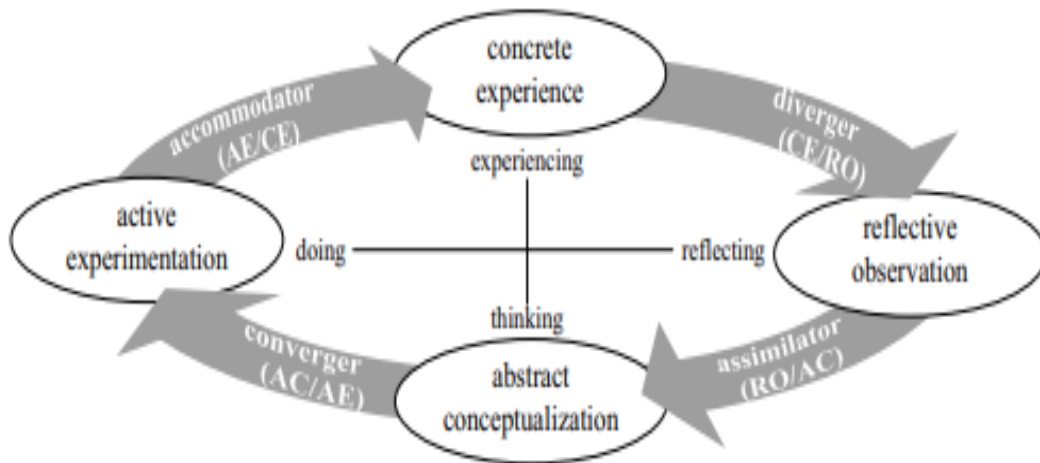


Figure 1 depicts the elements of the model. The use of between session tasks reflects the 'active experimentation' element of the model and opportunities to reflect upon this during sessions (reflective observation).

Services using ELSA can modify materials to suit local needs and consequently they continue to be adapted by the individual services delivering the training. For example, since the conception of ELSA, the training has been extended to include another day of training, and a session around bereavement and loss (Shotton & Burton, 2018). Although it provides an overview of the original content, it is likely the sessions captured in [Table A1](#) will be different depending on the local authority in which the ELSA is trained. However, there is no research specifically reviewing the materials and content of the ELSA training, which is of note given the programme's national use.

### **2.3.3 ELSA supervision**

Following the training, ELSAs receive continued support in the form of group supervision sessions which are facilitated by an EP. Supervision typically involves a group of approximately eight ELSAs coming together for two hours, twice a term (Burton & Okai, 2018). ELSAs can only retain their title as a 'county approved ELSA' if they attend at least four out of the six sessions across the year (Burton & Okai, 2018). In line with the suggestions from the DISS research, alongside EP supervision, ELSAs are also expected to receive support in school from their line manager, who should help them manage the referral process (Burton & Okai, 2018). In some local authorities, managers are invited to attend part of the ELSA training to ensure that they understand their role in supporting their ELSA. Osborne and Burton (2014) gained ELSAs' views on supervision and found that supervision sessions provide ELSAs with opportunities to discuss casework, network with other ELSAs and share resources and ideas. The sample included in this research was from one local authority, which therefore may not represent the views of ELSAs in all areas and findings may be a result of a specific element of their supervision session, such as the framework or supervisor style.

### **2.3.4 ELSA intervention**

With the support of supervision, ELSAs can devise interventions based around the needs of the child using the resources and knowledge introduced to them in their training. The ELSA programme was originally designed to be an individualised intervention (Burton et al., 2009) but can also be delivered in small groups (Burton & Okai, 2018). Research indicates that ELSA work can cover a wide range of emotional needs (Bradley, 2010; Burton et al., 2009). Therefore, to give the session focus and monitor impact, ELSAs are encouraged to set a 'SMART' target. This stands for

'Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound' (Shotton & Burton, 2018). ELSAs are encouraged to track progress towards these outcomes, for example, using idiographic tools such as Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) (Burton & Okai, 2018). Additionally, schools should provide ELSAs with protected time to plan so they can devise appropriate support to reach this target (Burton & Okai, 2018). Thesis research by Grahamslaw (2010) identified that ELSAs having time to plan accounted for 20% of the variance in their self-efficacy for supporting children and young people with their emotional needs, indicating the importance of this time. Further studies have identified that ELSAs perceive planning time as vital to the success of the intervention (Bravery & Harris, 2009). Moreover, the length of the intervention can be adjusted if the target has not been met (Shotton & Burton, 2018). While the flexibility of ELSA is a strength of the programme, it can result in issues with evaluation due to the non-manualised nature of the intervention, which means a lack of fidelity in terms of delivery (Durlak et al., 2011).

## **2.4 Evaluating Social and Emotional Interventions**

Gathering evaluation data on social emotional interventions such as ELSA is important because it helps us to track impact and identify what is working and what could be improved in terms of the intervention (Lambert et al., 2006). As discussed earlier, evaluating social and emotional interventions is a challenge because the concepts are often subjective, multi-dimensional, challenging to define and overlap with other terminology. Measures to capture these phenomena are often very broad and imprecise, resulting in difficulties in detecting change or in making comparisons between groups, for example, those receiving ELSA support and those who are not (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). This has implications in terms of monitoring the impact, which can be seen when reviewing the literature around the Social and

Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials. These materials were developed as a universal and targeted approach to developing social and emotional skills in CYP by the Department for Education (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigglesworth, 2010). Akin to ELSA, the flexible SEAL materials allow schools to apply them in a way that is appropriate for their setting (Humphrey et al., 2010). However, when evaluating the impact of the programme there were challenges linked to the inadequate measures to detect progress (Humphrey et al., 2010) due to the bespoke nature in which they were employed. The SDQ, the measure used in the SEAL evaluation, was considered to lack the discriminant validity and sensitivity to determine whether the programme had effected change on a universal level (Hill & Hughes, 2007). This results in difficulties in collecting robust evidence when trying to measure change in these areas through intervention. This evidence should be considered when exploring appropriate methodologies to evaluate the impact of ELSA.

Overall, ELSA is a practical and flexible social and emotional intervention which has been designed pragmatically to enable schools to deliver in-house social and emotional support. At present there is limited knowledge about the outcomes ELSA has for CYP (Pickering et al., 2019). The following literature review aims to explore what is known about outcomes of the intervention from current research and what methods have been used to generate this understanding.

## **2.5 Systematic Literature Review**

This focused systematic review of the literature aims to understand how ELSA has previously been evaluated. This includes the methods and evaluation tools used to examine impact and explores what studies can tell us about the outcomes of ELSA

for CYP. This review was conducted in March 2021, and therefore any subsequent papers published following this date will not be included.

The review questions are as follows:

1. What is known about the impact of the ELSA programme on outcomes for CYP who have taken part in an ELSA intervention?
2. What is known about the perceptions of key stakeholders about outcomes for CYP who have taken part in an ELSA intervention?

### **2.5.1 Systematic Search Strategy**

To address the research questions, a systematic search strategy was employed. The following data bases were searched: Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), British Education Index and OpenDissertations. These were accessed via EBSCO. PsycINFO was also searched but no new results were obtained. The terms 'Emotional' AND 'Literacy' AND 'Support' AND 'Assistant' were used due to the specific focus on the ELSA interventions. The references of research papers that met the inclusion criteria were also examined to identify further papers relevant to this review.

### **2.5.2 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

This research is interested in methods used to evaluate the ELSA intervention and the outcomes of these. Therefore, this systematic search only focused on the ELSA intervention, and only studies exploring outcomes for the ELSA intervention were included. At present, only seven peer reviewed ELSA studies exist (Burton and Osborne, 2014; France & Billington, 2020; Hills, 2016; Krause, Blackwell & Claridge, 2020; McEwen, 2019; Wilding & Claridge, 2016; Wong et al., 2020). Therefore, it was deemed necessary to include thesis papers. The researcher also reviewed 33 papers

listed on the ELSA Network website under 'Evaluation Reports'. Papers were scanned for their purpose and methodological relevance to review questions and were included if they focused on exploring the outcomes of the ELSA interventions for CYP. Four studies were included (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Burton, Traill & Osborne, 2009; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2015). Studies taking a qualitative approach were included to address question two of the review.

Studies were excluded if they did not examine the ELSA intervention specifically, or if they were conducted outside the UK. Papers were also excluded if the research aims did not mention exploring the impact or outcomes of the intervention itself on CYP. For example, some ELSA studies have focused on exploring ELSAs' experiences of supervision (Burton & Osborne, 2014; France & Billington, 2020) or the impact of training on the support assistant delivering ELSA (Rees, 2016). Such studies were excluded if they did not contain a measure of the impact on children, but were included if the perceived impact of the ELSA programme for CYP was explored through qualitative means.

### **2.5.3 Study Selection and Review Method**

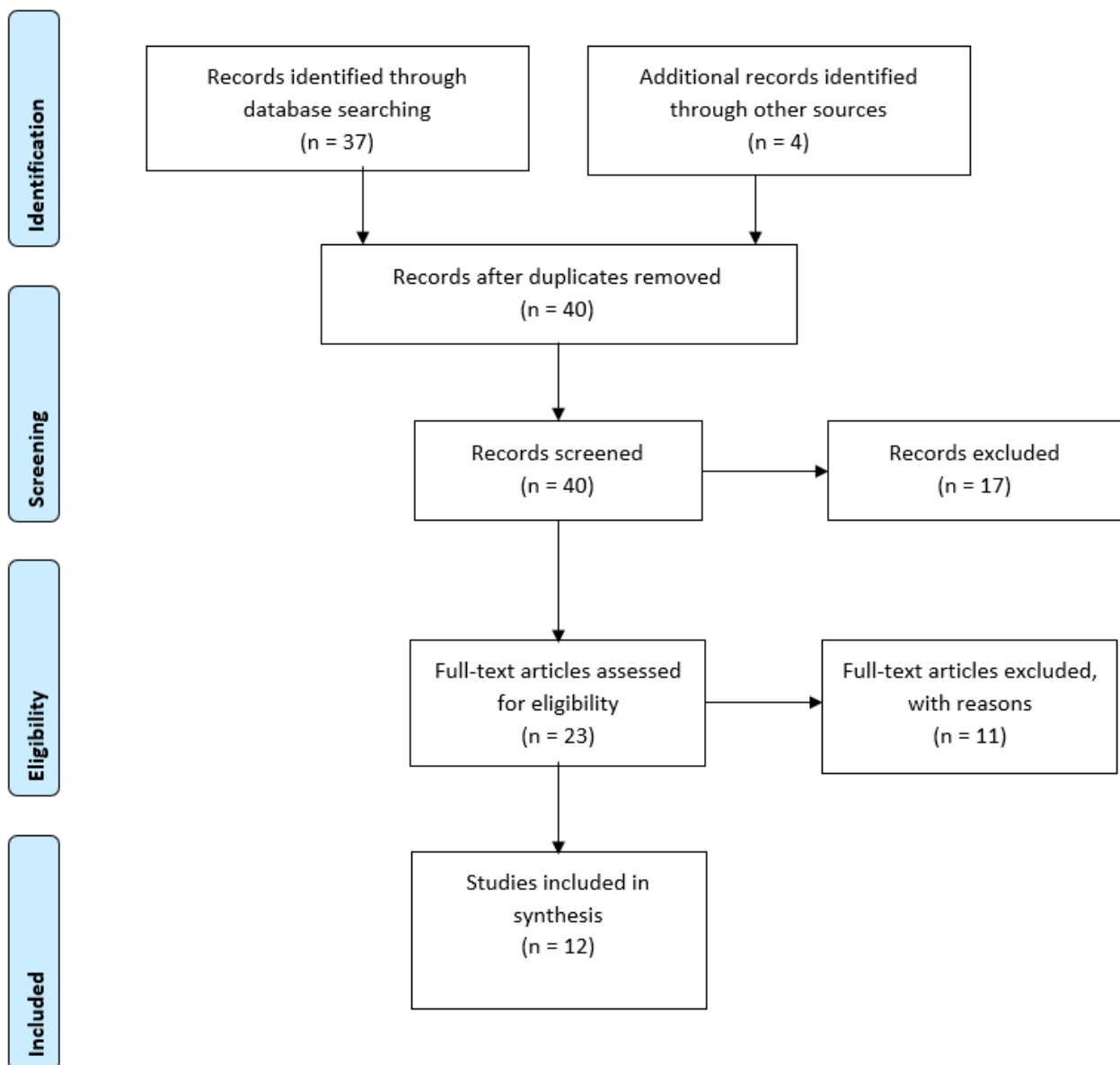
A total of 41 studies were considered by the author. 37 were accessed via EBSCO and four were taken from the ELSA network website. See Figure 2 for a flow chart summarising the systematic screening process.

One study was removed due to duplication. After screening the abstract and titles, 17 were removed due to the identified inclusion and exclusion criteria. An additional 11 studies were removed because of their focus on wider elements of the

ELSA intervention, such as implementation or supervision, and not on the impact ELSA has on outcomes for CYP.

**Figure 2**

*PRISMA diagram of the systematic search within this review.*





#### **2.5.4 Framework for Critical Appraisal**

For a review to be robust, it is important to consider each study and whether it is fit for purpose and valuable to the review (Oancea & Furlong, 2007). The Gough Weight of Evidence (WoE) framework (2007) was harnessed to appraise the quality of each study. This involves screening for methodological quality (WoE A), review of the appropriateness of the method and its purpose (WoE B), and the relevance each study has to the review question (WoE C). Less weight is given to the studies judged to be of low methodological quality or limited relevance to the review. Each study was given a score between 1 and 3 based on their quality, with 3 being the best score. Studies included in this review took a mixture of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Therefore, for the WoE A score, there was a separate framework used to appraise a study depending on the methodological approach.

Two separate guidelines for critiquing research were used for quantitative studies (Coughlan, Cronin & Ryan, 2007) and qualitative studies (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007). These guidelines provide a framework of questioning to support the critiquing of each study and allowed the researcher to allocate a 1-3 rating based on the methodological quality. For WoE B, the score was derived from meeting the following criteria. A point was given to each study based on whether they met the following conditions:

- The study had an appropriate, representative sample, sized in keeping with the aims and methodological approach.
- Outcomes of the impact of the ELSA programme for CYP were clearly measured or explored using means in line with their methodological approach.
- Data were gathered before and after the intervention to allow for comparison and to determine the effect of ELSA. This is in line with Wanless and

Domitrovich (2015) who suggest that for interventions to be evidence based it is important to capture pre-and-post data.

For WoE C, each study was judged on its relevance to the review and was given a score of 1 for each of the following criteria:

1. The study directly or indirectly evaluated the outcomes of ELSA.
2. One of the study's primary aims was to evaluate or explore the impact of ELSA on outcomes for children.
3. The topic relevance to the research question was direct.

An average score for each study was taken by calculating the mean of each score from WoE A to C to provide WoE D. This information was then used to inform the synthesis of the literature which follows. No studies were removed during the critical appraisal due to their methodological quality.

## **2.6 Systematic Literature Review Results**

A total of 12 studies were included in the final literature review. See [Appendix B](#) for a full summary of the studies including their Weight of Evidence Scores. The synthesis of the literature review explores these studies in relation to the review questions.

### **2.6.1 Question 1: What is known about the impact of the ELSA programme on outcomes for CYP?**

The first local authority review of ELSA was conducted in 2009 in Hampshire, where ELSA began. This research used the SDQ (Goodman, 1997) as a way of obtaining more objective evidence of the impact of ELSA (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009). 107 teacher-rated and 52 parent-rated questionnaires were completed before and after the intervention. Promisingly, parent and teacher responses highlighted a

significant decrease in the total SDQ score on average, which is the desired direction. Within different subcategories of the SDQ, teacher results demonstrated significant change on the SDQ scales: 'Emotional problems,' 'Pro-social behaviour', 'Peer problems' and 'Conduct disorder'. Average scores showed a reduction on the 'Hyperactivity' scale, but this was not significant. However, using the parent form the 'Hyperactivity' scale was the only one to reach statistical significance in terms of positive change. Despite these findings, there are limitations to this review. Student views of the intervention were not included. This is important when evaluating the impact of programmes as they are key stakeholders, and gathering their views enables the triangulation of information which can enrich understanding (Yardley, 2008). Additionally, no information was provided about the age of the students or the focus of the intervention. Due to the paucity of control data, such as demographically matched students not receiving ELSA, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions as to whether the impact is directly due to the ELSA intervention. Finally, the study was undertaken by the EP service who were also highly involved in the development of ELSA. This raises questions about demand characteristics, particularly considering the pressure to support children with needs and demonstrate impact (Thorley, 2016; Humphrey, 2018).

Some of these limitations were addressed in a subsequent review (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). Student views were included, a control group design was used, and the age group of the participants was clear. However, in contrast to the review by Burton et al. (2009), parent views were not included in this evaluation, although it was not clear why this was the case. The SDQ was used alongside the ELC (Faupel, 2003) to focus on emotional literacy outcomes. There was a significant variation in scores prior to the intervention, with the students in the intervention group

having greater emotional needs than the control. To address this, the researchers matched the control group to the intervention group based on their scores. This had a large negative impact on the size of the sample with only 18 students in each group for primary school aged children, and 12 for secondary school aged young people. Results indicated a positive impact on students taking part in the ELSA programme from the perspective of the teachers. The scores from teachers showed a significant improvement at follow-up in all areas of the ELC, as well as the 'Conduct disorder', 'Hyperactivity', and 'Peer problems' scales of the SDQ. However, student self-reported scores on the ELC did not improve significantly at follow-up, and for secondary-aged students the average scores demonstrated a reduction in emotional literacy. Although the matched sample is helpful to draw tentative comparisons, the resulting sample was small and therefore it is difficult to draw firm conclusions.

The challenge of recruiting a large sample was also found by Mann (2014) in which the same measures as Burton et al. (2010) were collected alongside interview data. 14 children completed the SDQ and ELC before and after the intervention and their scores were compared to those of five children used as a control group. Although results from these scales indicated improvement, statistical analysis was not possible on account of some parametric assumptions not being met. The data were not normally distributed, which was perceived to be due to the needs of the children taking part being high and therefore skewed. Additionally, the sample size was small (N = 14). This reflects the challenges in real-world evaluation research identified by Robson (2011), such as the constraints of timelines and challenges recruiting sufficient participants.

When considering the impact of ELSA on CYP, it is important to note the difficulties addressed earlier with the SDQ measure and its construct validity. The

ELC was introduced in the study by Burton, Osborne and Norgate (2010) to provide a more direct measure of emotional literacy skills. However, there was no indication of number or length of the sessions and how much or what support CYP received during this time. Additionally, it could be argued that the measure is too broad and too general to demonstrate real change. The aim of the ELSA intervention is to focus on a specific area of emotional literacy using a SMART target to guide the direction of the intervention (Shotton & Burton, 2018). This means any change on a broader scale, such as the SDQ, is likely to be modest and therefore diminish its ability to detect the impact the intervention is having. To address this issue, Grahmslaw (2010) developed a questionnaire for ELSAs and children to explore their emotional self-efficacy, using data collected from focus groups. The questionnaire had good internal consistency with an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha score above 0.75. Subsequently, Grahmslaw used this measure in a cross-sectional study which compared scores of 48 children who had received ELSA support with 50 children who had not. Results from a regression analysis demonstrated that taking part in ELSA only accounted for 5.1% of the variance of total self-efficacy scores, whereas the ELSAs' self-efficacy accounted for 17.9%. This indicates that children's emotional self-efficacy is influenced by the ELSAs' own self-efficacy, more so than taking part in the intervention itself, although it is not clear what variables might influence ELSAs' self-efficacy. Additionally, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the impact of the intervention itself, as data were only gathered at one time point. It is important to note that the children were recruited from schools where the head teacher was a 'strong advocate' of ELSA, which may lead to bias in terms of children's emotional self-efficacy. Despite the study providing useful insights, it offers limited information about the outcomes of the intervention and how students made progress.

Recognising the challenges of using broad measures to evaluate ELSA, Butcher, Cook and Holder-Spriggs (2013) took a more bespoke approach and conducted a within-child single-case study design in which comparisons were drawn over time. In this, researchers tracked students' progress towards an identified target behaviour linked to the ELSA target. First, the researchers generated a baseline of the behaviour using repeated momentary time sample observations prior to the intervention. The target behaviour was then tracked during the intervention through weekly observations. Although the sample was very small with only three children taking part, the study offers a unique approach to evaluating the impact of ELSA. The data indicated all the children showed improvement on their agreed targets during the intervention. However, there was no statistical analysis of the data, and the change was only found through visual inspection and presentations of the data. Additionally, no follow-up data were gathered, and therefore it is unclear whether the observed improvements were sustained once the intervention ended, and replications are required to draw firmer conclusions. However, this approach does demonstrate an interesting method of evaluating the programme in a way that is bespoke to the aim of the intervention.

A meta-analysis of studies evaluating social and emotional interventions found that broad measures are typically used, rather than outcome specific measures assessing the targeted skills (Ura, Castro-Olivo & d'Abreu, 2020). From this literature review, the same could be argued for the ELSA intervention. Objective attempts at measuring the intervention have relied on imprecise measures that do not adequately capture the bespoke, targeted nature of ELSA support. There have been attempts made to undertake evaluation in a more bespoke way (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013), but these have been small-scale and difficult to draw firm conclusions

from. Therefore, this study is interested in how to develop a more bespoke means of evaluating ELSA.

## **2.6.2 Question 2: What is known about the perceptions of key stakeholders about outcomes for children and young people?**

Qualitative approaches can be beneficial to researchers in understanding and adapting interventions (Duggleby et al., 2020). Regarding the available ELSA research, studies taking a qualitative approach have been revealing in terms of the perceptions of how ELSA has potentially impacted on CYP and what this might mean for future developments. This section explores the themes that have arisen in terms of impact and outcomes from the studies included in this analysis, in addition to some of the emergent challenges.

### *Perceived outcomes of ELSA*

Of the research reviewed, many of the qualitative studies identified the development of skills as a key outcome for children. Wong et al. (2020) explored the perspectives of 12 primary children on their experience of ELSA support using semi-structured interviews. Four core themes were obtained from the analysis: positive relationships, skill development, the unique qualities of the ELSA and positive impact. Within the theme of skill development, it was revealed that children felt they had developed their skills in managing and understanding difficult emotions, such as anger. This was achieved using practical resources and activities, which were also found to be valued by children in research by Hills (2016). In this study, children suggested they would like more of these activities, feeling this would improve the intervention. The finding that children developed skills in coping and managing difficult feelings was echoed by Krause et al. (2020) who gathered data from children through semi-structured interviews. This potentially reflects the learning from the ELSA training

about models and approaches to understanding and managing emotions, such as the Assault Cycle for managing anger (Breakwell, 1977). A theme from Balampanidou (2019) indicated that these skills were applied to the wider context, however it is difficult to know from these studies if this was the case, as the samples only included children and the data were not triangulated with other sources. It may have been helpful to gather further data to see if the learnt skills were being applied in settings such as the classroom and home environment.

In addition to the development of emotional literacy skills, some studies have reflected the impact ELSA has on wider areas such as academic outcomes and self-awareness. Addressing the limited triangulation described above, Grahamslaw's study (2010) asked head teachers to complete a questionnaire on their perceptions of the impact of ELSA. Findings revealed they felt children who had received ELSA were more able to learn and concentrate following the intervention. However, the head teachers included in this study were 'strong advocates' which may lead to bias in the data towards the intervention. This finding was echoed in Krause et al. (2020), in which children felt ELSA had increased their ability to concentrate and engage with school, with two participants suggesting they felt more willing to attend school following the support. Although a promising finding, no objective data were gathered to reinforce this. In Wong et al. (2020), the theme of students developing self-awareness emerged from the interviews, which was also reflected by head teachers in other studies (Grahamslaw, 2010; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013). This may demonstrate the application of ELSAs' developed knowledge around 'Selfhood', which is one of Borba's Building Blocks to Self-Esteem (1989). Overall, these are interesting findings and there is an indication that key stakeholders have positive perceptions of the impact of the programme. However, sample sizes in these studies were small, include limited or



no secondary representation and often participants were recruited from one local authority (Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013; Wong et al., 2020). This means it is difficult to generalise these claims to wider populations. Additionally, although qualitative data can be helpful in adapting interventions (Duggleby et al., 2020), these findings are based on subjective viewpoints which may be biased in favour of ELSA. For example, head teachers have a financial investment and ELSAs and CYP are invested in the relationships they have developed.

### *ELSA-student relationship*

The importance of the ELSA-student relationship was a theme in all six of the qualitative studies reviewed. Hills (2016) explored the perspectives of CYP using questionnaires and interviews and found that children valued this relationship, particularly the space and time to talk about feelings with a trusted adult, this was also found in Balampanidou (2019). Hill et al. (2013) triangulated this finding through semi-structured interviews with ELSAs, students and head teachers. Thematic analysis revealed the importance of a strong, trusting relationship between the ELSA and the student. However, the sample size of this study was modest which means findings are difficult to generalise. These findings were echoed in research into parental perceptions by Wilding and Claridge (2016) and Barker (2017). Both studies gathered parent views through semi-structured interviews, and emerging themes indicated that parents perceived the relationship between the ELSA and child to be essential and distinct from their relationships with other school staff. Parents understood that the relationship developed between the child and the ELSA was a result of their child receiving opportunities to talk and feel listened to without judgement.

This relationship could be described as a therapeutic alliance, or an emotional bond between the student and the ELSA (Fourie, Crowley & Oliviera, 2011). Research

indicates that a strong therapeutic alliance is attributed to more positive outcomes for students engaging in therapy or a therapeutic style intervention (Kazdin, Marciano & Whitely, 2005), such as the ELSA programme. Although this is a helpful insight into the perceived success of the ELSA intervention, it could be argued that this indicates the benefit of the programme is due to the member of staff running the intervention, and not the intervention itself. As such, this alliance may have been achieved without ELSA training through students and adults having opportunities to spend time developing rapport. The ELSA training does equip TAs with understanding of interpersonal communication skills (Schutz, 1967) to develop this bond with sometimes 'hard to reach students' (Burton & Okai, 2018). However, it is impossible to know from these studies whether these relationships would have been formed, or have been perceived as important to children, without ELSAs engaging in this training. Moreover, although these findings indicate that ELSAs are valuable in building relationships with children, it could be argued that these findings do not contribute to our understanding of whether this relationship supports children to make progress with their emotional literacy.

#### *The purpose of ELSA intervention*

Despite the positive implications in terms of skill development and relationships, a theme arose in some studies that the purpose of the intervention was not always clear to the children taking part (Wong et al., 2020). Hills (2016) interviewed CYP on their views and found that they would benefit from more preparation for ELSA, as there was some uncertainty about the reason for taking part in the intervention. This was also seen in Wilding and Claridge (2016), a study exploring parental views of ELSA, with a theme emerging around the lack of clarity of the purpose. However, these findings are not always consistent. Other studies indicate that parents do have this

clarity (Barker, 2017), and Hill et al. (2013) found that children perceived a sense of transparency about their involvement. This indicates a lack of consistency in terms of whether the purpose of ELSA is clear to key stakeholders. This could reflect the challenges of the non-manualised programme in that different ELSAs will explain the purpose in different ways. Moreover, findings from Hills (2016) and Wong et al. (2020) indicated that some children can become dependent on the relationship with the ELSA and do not want the intervention to end, especially if they have been working with them for a long period of one to two years. This reflects the work of Webster et al. (2010) which highlights the overreliance students can develop on support from TAs. This overreliance could be linked to the challenges in clearly identifying the impact of the programme as demonstrated by the studies taking a more quantitative approach (Burton et al., 2009; Burton et al., 2010). If a clear intended outcome was identified, this would enable ELSAs to track progress, provide clarity around the purpose of the intervention, with progress towards the outcome being part of the natural and predictable ending of the intervention.

### *ELSA in secondary schools*

It is noteworthy that no studies focusing on a secondary-aged population have been included in this review. This is because the available studies involving this age group do not explore the impact ELSA has on secondary-aged students, and instead explores the implementation (Nicholson-Roberts, 2019) and experiences of the programme (Begley, 2015; Peters, 2020). Although not included, these studies indicate that the programme was positively received in this setting. Studies included in this review have highlighted challenges in recruiting secondary-aged participants (Mann, 2014; Burton et al., 2009), and further studies have identified the need to explore the differences between primary and secondary age groups in terms of

outcomes for ELSA (Krause et al., 2020). It should not be assumed that impact in a primary setting will transfer to a secondary school setting, and therefore this is a clear gap within the literature.

### **2.6.3 Summary**

Research hitherto has primarily explored the views of impact through qualitative means. This is likely due to challenges with the standardised measures available to evaluate, which are not sufficiently sensitive enough to detect subtle changes within such an individualised intervention. The qualitative studies explored here have provided helpful insight into how different stakeholders perceive the impact of the programme, which has been overwhelmingly positive. The research illuminated important elements of the intervention, such as the ELSA-student relationship and the sessions providing students with new skills. However, it also indicates some challenges, such as parents and students not being clear about the aim of the intervention and a lack of representation for secondary school aged students. In conclusion, this review indicates a need for further evaluation of the programme in terms of outcomes for children to ensure a strong evidence base for ELSA.

### **2.7 Idiographic Approaches to Evaluating Outcomes**

As identified in the literature review, evaluation of the impact of a bespoke programme, such as ELSA, is difficult with available measures. This challenge has also been found within the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHs) due to the bespoke nature of interventions delivered in this setting. Since 2007, there has been a move within this setting towards the use of idiographic measures to supplement the typically used standardised scales (Law & Jacob, 2013). A central and unique principle of this approach to evaluation is that the outcome is bespoke and meaningful

to the individual. Furthermore, the aim of this approach is to “*facilitate discussion with clients about their hopes for the outcomes of a therapeutic encounter*” and allow for “*the development of a stronger therapeutic alliance and thus may increase the likelihood of improved outcomes*” (Jacob et al., 2021, p. 3).

### **2.7.1 Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)**

There are various derivatives of idiographic approaches to monitoring outcomes. GAS was the first (Kiresuk & Sherman, 1968), and has subsequently been utilised in a variety of settings (Ruble, McGrew & Toland, 2012) and is a recommended approach for tracking progress in ELSA (Burton & Okai, 2018). GAS involves identifying up to three goals surrounding an area of need, selecting a behavioural indicator to represent the goal and progress towards it, outlining expectations of outcomes after intervention, and reviewing this outcome (Kiresuk, Smith, Cardillo, 2014). There are five levels of outcome which are linked to a numerical representation of progress which are:

- Much more than expected (+2)
- Somewhat more than expected (+1)
- Expected (0)
- Somewhat less than expected (-1)
- Much less than expected (-2)

However, research highlights the challenge of drawing firm conclusions about the impact of a programme through GAS alone (Caslyn & Davison, 1978). This is due to the argument that the levels of change in GAS should not be considered as interval data and thus are not possible to convert into standard scores (Ruble et al., 2012). As a result, it has been suggested that other standardised measures should be collected

alongside idiographic measures (Caslyn & Davison, 1978). However, authors propose that when the levels of change are carefully constructed and well-defined this challenge can be mediated (Ruble et al., 2012).

### **2.7.2 Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME)**

GAS is often adapted for pragmatic purposes depending on the context (Cytrynbaum, Ginath, Birdwell & Brandt, 1979; Hurn, Kneebone & Cropley, 2006). TME is one such adaptation and Goal Based Outcomes (GBO) is another. TME has been developed as an adaptation of GAS in EP services to monitor outcomes in a way that is congruent to a consultation model of service delivery (Dunsmuir, 2009). This approach involves Educational Psychologists setting up to three 'SMART' targets towards an agreed area of concern within consultation (Connor, 2010). Those setting the goal provide a 'baseline' rating using a Likert scale (1-10), identifying where the CYP sits in relation to their goal at that point. Individuals also set an 'expected' rating on the same Likert scale to demonstrate where, with support, the individual feels they could achieve on each target within an agreed time scale. At the review, an 'outcome' rating is given based on the change that has occurred, allowing EPs to monitor progress from the initial meeting. However, TME is under-researched with only two studies exploring its use in EP practice (Connor, 2010; Dunsmuir et al., 2009). However, some studies completed by EPs have used this measure as part of data collection to provide evidence of impact (Hayes, Richardson, Hindle & Grayson, 2011).

### **2.7.3 Goal Based Outcomes (GBO)**

GBO are a more widely researched adaptation of GAS (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015). This approach is used in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHs) settings to identify progress within mental health interventions (Jacob, Edbrooke-Childs, Law & Wolpert, 2017). Whilst not claiming to be a 'silver bullet' for measuring outcomes

(Law & Jacob, 2013), GBO was developed as an alternative to standardised measures of outcomes in this setting, such as the SDQ. However, these measures are still used to triangulate information about outcomes (Sales et al., 2022). The approach allows for the setting and monitoring of targets in line with the aspirations of CYP and their parents (Moran et al., 2012). Law and Jacob (2013) provided a detailed description of GBO and how they are generated and tracked. There are similarities between GBO and TME as both involve setting between one to three targets and monitoring progress towards an identified goal on a scale of 1 to 10. However, TME and GAS are only tracked pre- and post-intervention (Connor, 2010), whereas GBO are tracked more regularly, often weekly. Typically, when using GBO the client has met that target when they reach ten (Law & Jacob, 2013), whereas in TME the individual sets an 'expected' outcome level to work towards that might not be the maximum of ten (Dunsmuir et al., 2009). However, further research into what constitutes meaningful change on a GBO scale using the Reliable Change Index (RCI) (Jacobson & Truax, 1992) has been conducted. RCI provides an estimation for the change required to suggest that improvements were not attributed to an error of measurement (Edsbrook-Childs et al., 2015), and findings indicate that a change of 2.8 points on the GBO scale demonstrates reliable change (Jacob et al., 2021). A GBO approach is arguably more in line with the ELSA intervention which typically occurs weekly (Burton & Okai, 2018) akin to CAMHs' interventions. Research indicates that this weekly tracking is an important element in ensuring idiographic measures are effective and efficient (Weisz et al., 2011).

Furthermore, research into young people's experiences of GBO indicates some promising findings around their ability to capture relevant change for individuals receiving support (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015). Young people felt setting realistic

outcomes was meaningful (Grossoehme & Gerbetz, 2004) and that it provided them with a clear focus for their intervention (Bromley & Westwood, 2013). This is likely to increase motivation of students to engage in the process, and therefore lead to improved outcomes (Dunsmuir et al., 2009). There is also more widely available and accessible guidance on setting GBO in practice (Law & Jacob, 2013; Law, 2019), compared to TME and GAS. For the reasons discussed here, GBO was deemed the most appropriate idiographic approach for this study.

## **2.8 The present study**

Despite GAS being a recommended method of evaluation by ELSA creators (Burton & Okai, 2018), idiographic approaches to monitoring outcomes have not yet been explored in ELSA research. Studies from CAMHs settings (Weisz et al., 2011) suggests GBO is more favourable due to it forming part of the intervention through regular feedback rather than being a pre- and post-measure. To the researcher's knowledge there has been no published research into using GBO in educational environments. However, research into the use of GBO with adolescents has yielded some positive results in clinical settings (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015) because it allows for more regular tracking of progress towards outcomes when gathered alongside the SDQ. Moreover, the need for further research into ELSA being delivered to a secondary-aged population has been identified in the above review. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to the evidence base of the ELSA intervention by examining the use of GBO in the practice of ELSAs working with secondary school students. This will be achieved by triangulating idiographic and standardised measures, to explore the extent to which they can document change. As the idiographic approach is novel in this setting, further insights will be gained through interviews to explore ELSAs' and students' views and experiences.



## **2.9 Research Questions**

- RQ1: To what extent can an idiographic measure (GBO) be utilised as part of an ELSA intervention to document progress for secondary-aged students?
- RQ2: To what extent do standardised measures (ELC and SDQ) show changes over time relative to the ELSA intervention for secondary-aged students, and how far do they triangulate with idiographic measures (GBO) and qualitative data?
- RQ3: What are the perceptions and experiences of ELSAs and secondary-aged students of using GBO within an ELSA intervention?

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Epistemological and Ontological Position

Creswell (2014) encourages researchers to be clear about the philosophical perspective underpinning the proposed methodology of a study. A researcher's ontological position is concerned with their assumptions about "the nature of reality" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Ontology tends to fall on a spectrum of realism and relativism. Relativism posits that reality is made up of individuals' subjective experiences, and perceives there to be numerous, socially constructed realities (Robson, 2011). Conversely, realism theorises that there is an objective reality that is possible to observe (Creswell, 2014). A researcher's epistemological position is concerned with their perceptions of the nature of knowledge and assumptions about how knowledge is investigated and constructed. Epistemological positions can be thought to sit on a continuum from positivism to interpretivism (Willig, 2022). Positivists perceive it possible to generate objective facts through empirical research (Robson, 2011). Conversely, interpretivists are concerned with understanding individuals' social constructions of their experiences of the world, and believe that knowledge is subjective, in line with the relativist ontology (Creswell, 2014).

Critical realism can be thought of as a philosophical position of both epistemology and ontology (Ayers, 2011), and is ontologically realist, and epistemologically relativist. This position posits that there is an observable reality, but epistemologically the way we produce knowledge about this is imperfect, and research is influenced by the subjective agency of individuals and the societal structures in which they exist (Bhaskar, 2009). Therefore, it is not possible to capture a completely objective view of reality. Although seemingly in line with interpretivist viewpoints in

terms of the subjective influence of individuals, critical realism posits that we construe our own interpretation of reality, rather than there being multiple realities occurring. As such, critical realists often adopt a mixed methodology to provide a deeper understanding of the research problem compared to a single methodology (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), and emphasis is placed on drawing on qualitative approaches to further explore and understand the complexity of experiences.

The critical realist position aligns with this research because the intention is to generate deeper understanding of outcomes for secondary-aged CYP taking part in the ELSA intervention using a variety of means: standardised measures, idiographic approaches, and semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the use of an idiographic approach to evaluating an intervention, in this case GBO, fits with this philosophical position as it incorporates quantitative data, in the form of scaling, alongside a qualitative descriptor of the score to help further understanding. By nature, idiographic approaches are concerned with individual experiences, and contrasts with the positivist approaches typically used to evaluate outcomes of interventions (Sales et al., 2022). Furthermore, the interview element of the study provides a voice to participants to “identify recurring patterns of experience” (Willig, 2022, p.13). Interviews serve to deepen understanding of experiences of the novel use of idiographic approaches within the ELSA intervention. When analysing the interviews, the researcher maintained an awareness of the influence of the individual’s context and subjective viewpoint on their comments.

### **3.2 Research Design**

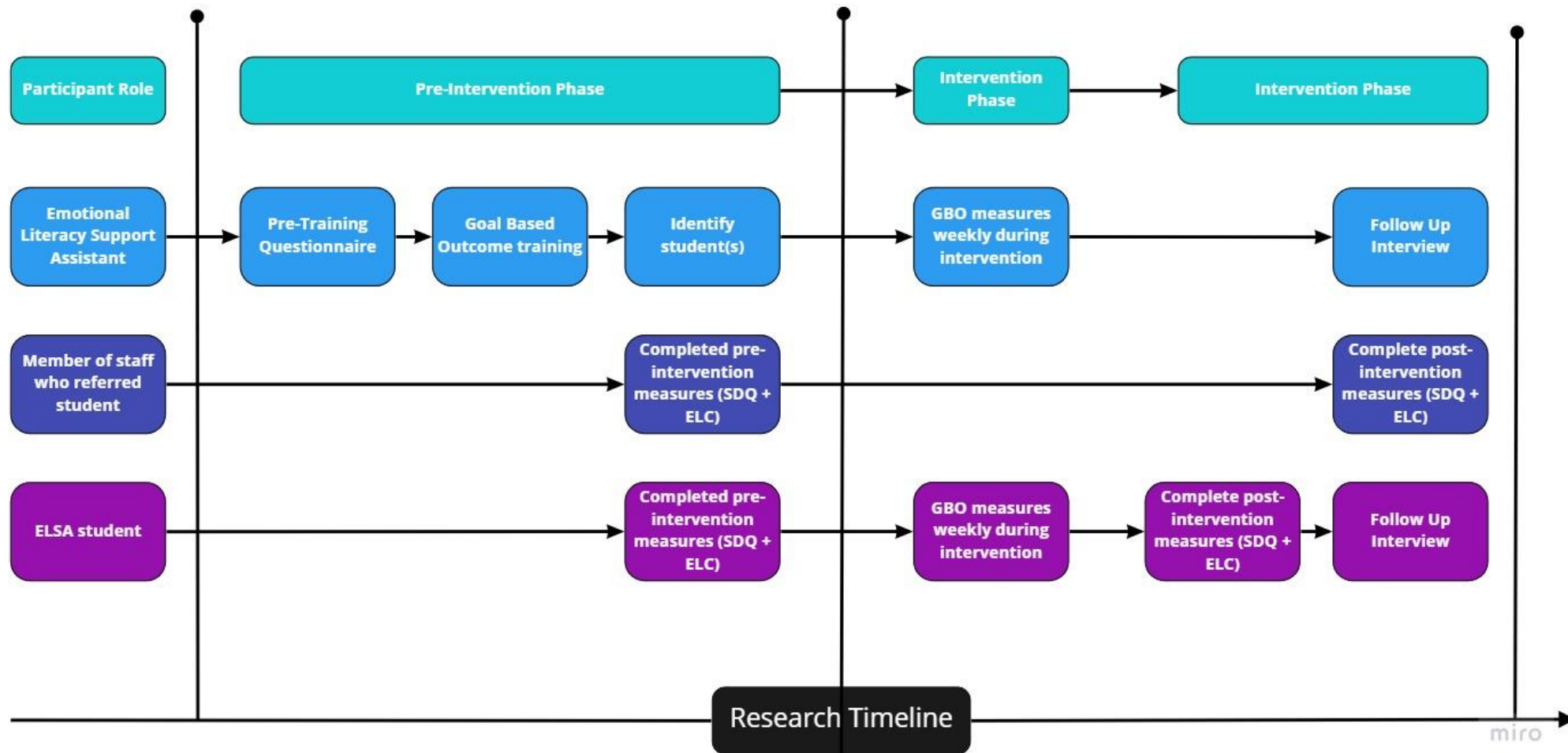
The study adopted a mixed methodological approach to address the research questions. Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches

to gain a deeper and more complete understanding of the research issue (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). This study adopted a multiphase mixed methods design, in which concurrent measures were used alongside one another to best understand the outcomes for children and young people in the ELSA intervention (Creswell, 2014). This approach is commonly used “in fields of evaluation and programme interventions” (Creswell, 2014, p.16). However, this study is not concerned with drawing firm conclusions on the impact of ELSA, but in how standardised and idiographic outcome measures can be used to document change. Data were collected for this research over three phases: the pre-intervention phase, the intervention phase, and the post-intervention phase. Figure 3 provides an outline of the phases within the study and the data collected within each phase.

Within clinical settings, idiographic measures are used to complement nomothetic measures and further understand the impact (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015). Therefore, ELSAs were asked to select a student to set a Goal Based Outcome with and collect weekly quantitative scaling data of progress towards a goal. Qualitative descriptors of the reason for change were gathered and content analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to illuminate reasons for documented change. Standardised measures, the ELC and SDQ, were also gathered pre-and-post-intervention to explore the extent to which they capture change. To further triangulate this data and provide richer understandings, the adult who referred the student was also asked to complete the standardised scales.

**Figure 3**

*Diagram of the three phases of the present research*



The Reliable Change Index (RCI) will be utilised to explore whether the change captured from GBO, the SDQ and the ELC data at time one (pre-intervention) and time two (post-intervention) constitutes reliable change. Using idiographic approaches is novel in ELSA practice, and therefore interviews will be conducted to deepen understanding of ELSA and student experiences of using these approaches in the ELSA intervention.

### **3.2.1 Recruitment**

The focus of this study was on ELSAs working with secondary-aged students due to the dearth in the literature in this area as described in Chapter 2. Therefore, there was a clear set of inclusion criteria which can be seen in Table 1. The sampling method for this research took a purposeful criterion sampling approach. The process was three-fold to account for previous research challenges with recruiting participants from secondary school settings (Mann, 2014):

- The researcher directly contacted a list of secondary based ELSAs via e-mail. See [Appendix C](#) for the scoping e-mail sent. Contacts were obtained from a previous research project questionnaire (King & Baines, forthcoming) in which a question scoped their interest in being involved in future research.
- The researcher contacted EPs who are registered on the ELSA Network website as running the programme in their local authority.
- The researcher posted on the ELSA Network forum to seek support from EPs to share the research information sheet and consent form with ELSAs who fit the criteria in their local authority.

**Table 1***Participant Inclusion Criteria*

| <b>Inclusion Criteria</b>  | <b>Rationale</b>   |
|--|--|
| A member of staff who has received ELSA training from an Educational Psychology Service.   | This is the criteria for the member of staff to be considered as an ELSA.  |
| ELSAs should attend at least 4 sessions of EP supervision per year.                        | To be considered an accredited ELSA, an individual who has received the training must attend 4 out of 6 possible supervision sessions with an Educational Psychologist each academic year (Burton & Okai, 2018). This was also considered important so that ELSAs had an additional source of support when implementing GBO in their role. |
| The ELSA must be working in a school with children aged 11-18 years (secondary age range). | This research was focused on the secondary age group due to the gap in the literature for ELSA research.   |
| They must currently be working as an ELSA with children and young people in their setting. | This was part of the criteria so that it was possible for the ELSA to identify a student for the research project.   |

This approach meant that there was a wide geographical spread of participants. The author was aware that this meant that the participating ELSAs may have been provided with different ELSA training depending on which local authority they were from. To gather GBO data for this research, participating ELSAs were asked to identify and recruit a student. They were also asked to recruit the member of staff who referred the student for support to complete the standardised measures. During the training provided for participating ELSAs, they were encouraged to consider whether the student's needs were appropriate for an ELSA intervention and to seek support from their EP supervisor if uncertain.

### 3.2.2 Research Phases

#### Phase 1: Pre-Intervention Phase:

##### *Goal Based Outcomes Training*

Research thus far into GBO has identified the need for support and training to develop skills in formulating goals (Jacob et al., 2017). To support ELSAs' efficacy in using GBO, the researcher delivered a single, hour-long virtual training on the approach to each ELSA (Stanbridge & Campbell, 2016) held via Microsoft Teams. Prior to the training, ELSAs completed a pre-training questionnaire to gather demographic information and ensure they met the inclusion criteria, which all those recruited did. The aims of the training session were two-fold, to introduce the ELSAs to using GBO in practice and to introduce them to the aims of the research and what their participation would involve. The training package was developed by the author, drawing on resources from Law and Jacobs (2013). The researcher included YouTube video clips of professionals' setting and tracking GBO in a CAMHs setting. The presentation also highlighted examples of 'solution-focused questions' that could be used to generate students' aspirations, including the "miracle question" and "three wishes" as recommended in CAMHs' guidance (Law & Wolpert, 2014, p. 131).

**Table 2**

*Number of attendees to Goal Based Outcomes training sessions:*

| Session of training      | N |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1 (Oct 1 <sup>st</sup> ) | 8 |
| 2 (Oct 6 <sup>th</sup> ) | 5 |
| 3 (Nov 2 <sup>nd</sup> ) | 1 |
| 4 (Nov 9 <sup>th</sup> ) | 3 |



See [Appendix D](#) for example slides from the presentation. The training also recapped the principles of SMART target setting for ELSAs to keep in mind when developing the goal (Burton & Okai, 2018). The session was delivered using a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation with an accompanying script, to try to ensure consistency between sessions. Four training sessions were delivered to allow for flexibility around dates in attempt to generate a greater sample size. Table 2 provides the number of training sessions and the number of attendees.

### *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Emotional Literacy Checklist*

After ELSAs had identified and recruited a student to take part, and sought relevant consent, the student was asked to complete the pre-intervention standardised measures: the SDQ (Goodman, 1997) and the ELC (Faupe, 2003). The ELSAs were also asked to recruit the member of staff who referred the young person for ELSA support to complete these measures to triangulate the data. Triangulation helps to enrich the understanding of an intervention (Yardley, 2008), and a lack of triangulation has been a noted limitation in previous studies using the SDQ and ELC (Mann, 2014). While it would have helped to gain parent/carer ratings to measure the impact of a school-based intervention, it was felt to be beyond this project.

### *Phase 2: Intervention Phase*

This began when ELSAs started their intervention with the student they had identified. The ELSAs were asked to support the student to set a goal and use the Goal Based Outcome (GBO) Weekly Tracking Form (see [Appendix E](#)) to monitor progress towards it. The GBO tracking form asked students to provide a numerical score on a scale of 1 – 10 in relation to the progress they felt they had made towards their goal. Students were also asked to provide a brief explanation for the number. There was also space for the ELSA to provide a summary of the weekly sessions.

### Phase 3: Post-Intervention Phase

Following the intervention, the ELSA and student participants were asked to attend a semi-structured interview with the researcher which was held via Microsoft Teams and audio and video recorded. The purpose of the interviews was to explore participants' views and experiences about the use of a repeated idiographic measure within the ELSA intervention.

### Support available to ELSAs

To support data collection, the researcher created a guide for ELSAs to refer to in terms of what they needed to do as part of this research (See [Appendix F](#)). The document included a summary of information from the training and what was being asked as part of the research in as much detail as possible which was sent alongside the relevant materials for the research. Additionally, participating ELSAs were offered access to an optional online virtual support group facilitated by the researcher. The purpose of this was to provide support for ELSAs in setting and tracking GBO and to address any concerns about using this approach. A total of 10 sessions were offered across the data collection phase. They were held at different times throughout the week to maximise the opportunity for ELSAs to be able to access the support, as their working days and times often varied. The researcher also sent a fortnightly check-in e-mail to find out about any developments and to provide support for any difficulties faced. The ELSAs were also encouraged to contact the researcher via e-mail with any questions and were offered individual support for issues as needed.

## **3.3 Research Tools**

### **3.3.1 Pre-Training Questionnaire**

The researcher developed a pre-training questionnaire to seek demographic data about the sample and to gauge ELSAs' confidence in using targets. In terms of

demographic information, staff were asked the local authority they work in, and whether they attend supervision at least 4 times per year, as is mandatory to be considered as an ELSA (Burton & Okai, 2018). The participants were also asked whether they typically set SMART targets in their practice (Yes/No/Sometimes) and provide a 1-5 rating of their confidence in SMART target setting as part of their work, from 'Very Confident' to 'Extremely Unconfident'. This information was also used to support questioning during the interview phase. The questionnaire also asked their working days, which was utilised to schedule the drop-in sessions.

### **3.3.2 Pre- and post-intervention measure: Emotional Literacy Checklist (ELC)**

The intention of the ELC is to be a screening tool for students with difficulties in emotional literacy (Faupel, 2003), which can be rated by the student (11-16), teachers and parents. A lower score on the scale would indicate difficulties. The scale explores five key areas within emotional literacy.

- Self-regulation
- Self-awareness
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

(Faupel, 2003)

The skills addressed overlap with the Sharp (2014) definition of the concept of emotional literacy. However, Faupel acknowledges that the subscales are “not completely independent of each other” (2003, p. 29). For the student self-reported ELC, the score is provided as a single number, capturing overall emotional literacy. This is because the reliability analysis (Chronbach’s Alpha) score for the subscales of

the student questionnaire did not reach a score of 0.70 or above which would indicate reliability, but the scale overall was sufficient ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ). However, for the parent and teacher checklist the score is broken down into the 5 subscales above, as the reliability measure for these subscales was sufficient. Furthermore, the overall teacher checklist ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) and the parent checklist ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ) are also sufficient. Validity assessments for the parent and teacher subscales outlined above were conducted through exploring patterns of correlations between scale items and conducting factor analysis. Results indicate good internal consistency between subscales (Faupel, 2003). The checklist has been used alongside the SDQ because of its specific focus on measuring emotional literacy (Mann, 2014), and because of its use in past research exploring the impact of the ELSA role (Mann, 2014; Burton, Traill and Norbert, 2009).

### **3.3.3 Pre- and Post- intervention Measures: Strengths and Difficulties**

#### **Questionnaire**

It was felt a second measure should be included to provide further insights into the range of possible ways in which the ELSA intervention may have had an impact on students. The individualised nature of the ELSA intervention often means that behavioural and social difficulties children are facing are targeted. Therefore, it may be that changes in these areas would be evident prior to changes captured by more generalised measures of emotional literacy.

The SDQ has been used in previous ELSA studies (Mann, 2014; Burton, Traill & Norbert, 2009), as well as in clinical settings such as CAMHs to evaluate mental health interventions with young people (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015). The scale comprises 25 statements about psychological attributes. These are rated by participants to be 'Not True,' 'Somewhat True' or 'Certainly True.' Teacher, parent and child rated forms are standardised for students above the age of 11, and therefore it

is appropriate for secondary students to complete these (Goodman, 1997). Individual subscales obtain a score ranging from 0 to 10, and the total difficulties score ranges from 0 to 40. The SDQ calculates an overall difficulties score based on 4 subscales:

- Emotional problems
- Conduct problems
- Hyperactivity
- Peer relationship problems

Goodman (1997)

The SDQ includes an additional subscale for “Pro-Social” behaviours. This is not included in the ‘Total Difficulties’ final score. For the SDQ, a lower score indicates the individual is experiencing reduced difficulties. Research indicates that the internal consistency, test-retest stability for the overall scores on the SDQ scales are satisfactory across the board. However, the subscales explore relatively independent domains (Muris, Meesters & van den Berg, 2003) and the internal consistency scores across some scales are low, such as for the conduct problems and peer problems subscale on the self-reported SDQ.

### **3.3.4 Goal Based Outcomes Weekly Tracking Form**

In line with guidance from Law and Jacobs (2013), the ELSA and students set a goal at the beginning of the intervention. In the training, ELSAs were encouraged to consider the ‘SMART’ principles outlined in the ELSA training (Burton & Okai, 2018), but in line with recommendations from Law and Jacobs (2013) the emphasis was placed on the goal being focused on students’ aspirations. Once this goal was identified, the ELSAs were encouraged to review this with the student each week. This involved students rating on a scale of 1 to 10 where they felt they were at in relation

to the specified target. This document was generated through adapting the examples in Law and Jacob's (2015) guidance. Other idiographic measures, such as TME, encourage the user to provide qualitative information to support the numerical data gathered (Dunsmuir et al., 2009) which were not included on GBO templates in Law and Jacobs (2015). This was considered valuable in this study due to the subjective nature of the goal scoring. Therefore, students were asked to specify a 'Reason for the Number Provided' to provide further qualitative data in relation to the weekly GBO scores. The form can be seen in [Appendix E](#).

Alongside this Goal Based Outcome data, the ELSAs were asked to provide a brief description of the activities completed in the session that week. This was considered important for providing the researcher with insights into the process and experiences during the session and to understand the activities that were being used to meet the goal. These also provided useful data that supported discussions during the interview phase. Additionally, as the ELSAs were from various local authorities and had received training by different Educational Psychology Services, it was considered important to capture the types of activities ELSAs were utilising to explore variation in how the ELSA programme was being implemented in different LA contexts (Fairall, 2020).

### **3.3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews**

After the intervention, semi-structured interviews with students and ELSAs were conducted to understand their experiences of using the Goal Based Outcome tracking tools during the intervention. Interviews took place virtually, via Microsoft Teams, and were conducted individually with ELSAs and students. All final interview schedules can be seen in [Appendix G](#).

The researcher developed a separate interview schedule for ELSAs and students which involved a small number of open-ended questions (Willig, 2022). The interview questions were developed considering research question 3. Following Willig (2022), the initial questions were more general, about experiences of evaluating ELSA (for ELSAs) or being involved in ELSA (for students). Later questions were more specific about their experiences of setting and tracking GBO, and the perceived benefits or challenges in doing so. Following the initial generation of interview questions, these were discussed with the researcher's supervisor and questions were revised to ensure the student schedule was accessible for young people. The topic areas in the ELSA and student schedules remained similar, but questions were adjusted for students. For example, ELSAs were asked: "Tell me about your experiences of using Goal Based Outcomes within your ELSA sessions?", this was adjusted for students to be, "I understand that you set a goal with (ELSA name). Tell me about what it was like to do that?". Due to the limited number of participants, the interviews were piloted with an EP colleague with experience of using GBO and minor textual adjustments were made. The schedule was then used with the first participants for whom data were collected, and the schedule was further adjusted based on the researcher's experience of the interviews, with minor textual amendments being made to question wording.

During the interviews, the author attempted to remain neutral in response to answers using pre-prepared phrases such as "thank you" and "I really appreciate hearing what you think" to ensure responses were not influenced by the researcher's feedback. The researcher used approaches within the interview such as repeating back what participants had said to encourage them to say more on a topic (Willig, 2022). There were also several possible follow-up questions to explore which were

presented next to the key questions on the schedule. Furthermore, the researcher had pre-prepared question prompts to clarify participant meanings and deepen understanding, for example “What do you mean by that?” and “Can you tell me anything further about that?”, as advised by Willig (2022). The researcher also drew on the Goal Based Outcome data as part of the interview schedule and adapted each interview schedule based on the steps of progress the student made, so each interview was personalised based on the GBO data.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

#### **3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

For the standardised measures, the ELC and the SDQ, the researcher intended to present individual and group descriptive statistics for the pre- and post- scores for both the student and teacher scores. For the Goal Based Outcome scaling data, the author intended to provide descriptive statistics around the mean change score for each student made across the course of the intervention (Jacob et al., 2021). Where possible, the researcher intended to present participants’ mean change score for each subscale, such as the Hyperactivity, Conduct Problems and Peer Problems for the SDQ, to explore change on a more detailed level. The Reliable Change Index (RCI) calculation (Jacobson & Truax, 1992) “estimates the amount of change required to confidently conclude that the change was not solely attributable to measurement error” (Wolpert, Gorzig, Deighton, Fugard, Newman & Ford, 2015, p. 95). This measure was intended to be used in order to explore how much change on a given scale there should be to conclude there have been improvements following participant engagement in an intervention (Jacobson & Truax, 1992). Provided there is a sufficient sample, this approach to analysis is possible for Goal Based Outcome Data (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015), SDQ data (Wolpert et al., 2015) and the ELC through



utilising the test-retest reliability of measures (Chronbach's Alpha) and through calculating the standard deviation of change for the data set (Blampied, 2016). Using these calculations would allow the researcher to present a percentage of the total sample that demonstrated meaningful change on each measure. This allows for tentative comparisons between the scales and whether reliable change was observed using the various instruments. However, in this study, the use of the Reliable Change Index was not possible due to difficulties with recruitment. Further details about study amendments can be found in Section 3.6.

### **3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

#### *Goal Based Outcomes Qualitative Data – Content Analysis*

Qualitative descriptors from the GBO and activities were intended to be content analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to explore patterns across the data. Considering the qualitative descriptors for GBO scaling and the reasons behind change within the intervention, the researcher intended to look separately at descriptors for the scores going up on the scale, indicating positive change, and the score going down suggesting a decrease in progress.

#### *Semi-Structured Interview Data - Thematic Analysis*

A reflexive thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the interview data. This means the researcher practised critical reflection on the practice of conducting thematic analysis when approaching the data. Braun and Clarke's (2022) guidance outlines six phases of the process which were followed to ensure a thorough and rigorous analysis of the data. These phases are outlined in Figure 4. The author notes the term phases as opposed to steps, as "the different phases of reflexive thematic analysis are not always sharply delineated" and that the process of thematic analysis is "unidirectional" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 34).

Therefore, throughout the process of analysis the researcher moved back and forth through the different phases in a fluid way. The researcher will describe the process of conducting thematic analysis, in line with Braun and Clarke's recommendation to describe the "analytic process, not the generic phases of reflexive TA" (Braun & Clark, 2022 p.125). The researcher took an inductive approach to analysis as there were no predetermined constructs being explored (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

For this approach to constitute as reflexive thematic analysis, the author continuously reflected whether their thoughts and beliefs about the role were being imposed on the analysis and endeavoured to take lead from the data. This was achieved through keeping a reflective journal at different points during the analysis. The scrutiny of the coding with a peer, outlined below, also enabled the author to reflect on whether the interpretation of the codes was driven by the data.

#### *Phase 1: Familiarity*

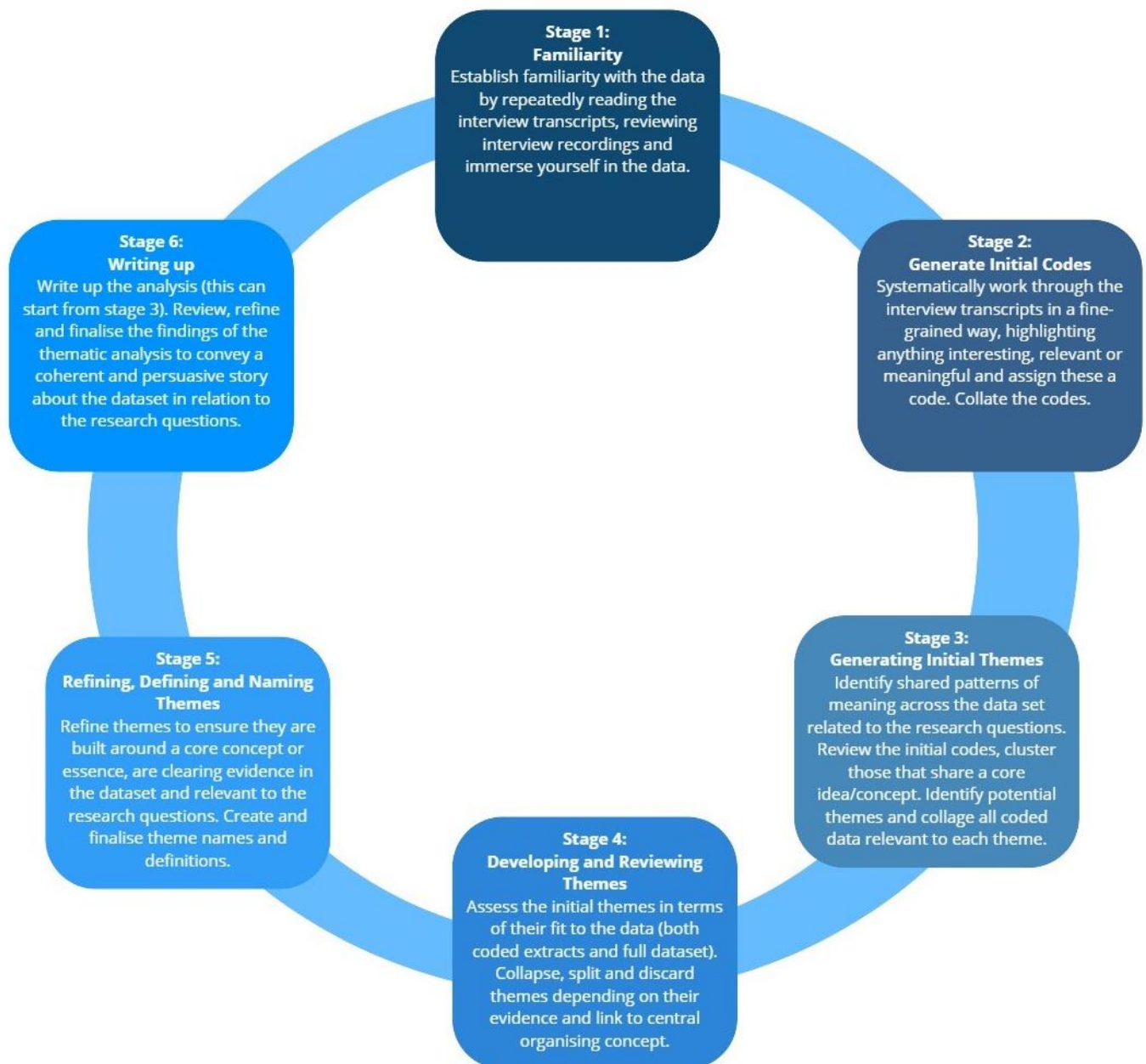
The researcher transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews. This process supports familiarisation of the data. The transcripts were read multiple times while listening to the audio to ensure they were correct and to facilitate further familiarisation. Throughout the transcription process the author made notes about topics that emerged, as encouraged by Braun and Clarke (2022).

#### *Phase 2: Coding*

The coding process was completed on Microsoft Word using the 'comment' function. The transcripts were systematically coded, participant by participant, with initial codes added as comments.

**Figure 4**

*Phases of Thematic Analysis, Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2022).*



The author started by coding ELSAs transcripts, due to their central role in the study in using GBO, and then moved onto student transcripts. The transcripts and codes were reviewed multiple times. During this phase the researcher also engaged in a peer moderation process, in which a colleague who was also engaging in reflexive thematic analysis reviewed three pages of two interview transcripts separately to the

researcher. This was to ensure that the generated codes were reasonable and coherent (Yardley, 2008). The codes generated in this process were compared and any contrasts in viewpoint were resolved through dialogue and amended. For example, one quote was initially coded “lack of time” by the researcher, however in discussion it was agreed that this was specific to engaging in the research and therefore was changed to “lack of time to participate in research”. This process supported the researcher’s specificity of coding moving forwards and encouraged reflexivity through providing an alternative viewpoint.

Once the codes had been refined, the comments were then generated into a table using a Microsoft Word macro plug-in called ‘DocTools’. This software enabled the researcher to download comments made on each document through the coding process, and highlighted which page the code was located on in the document. This approach enabled the author to easily select extracts from the data in later phases.

Through the note taking process, the researcher identified commonalities in the data in terms of ELSA and students’ reflections on GBO. Therefore, during this phase the author decided that when generating themes for the thematic analysis, ELSA and student data would be analysed as a whole data set. It was considered that the focus of the research question was to explore the use of GBO within the ELSA intervention, as it is a collaborative process, rather than viewing ELSA and students’ distinct experiences.

### *Phase 3: Generating initial themes*

Potential themes in the data were generated by thoroughly reviewing the codes and coded extracts. These were downloaded onto a virtual note board, Miro, which was utilised to cluster the different codes into meanings across the data set and

visually map out the developing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The author tried various combinations of codes. During this process, the author held in mind the idea of topic summary versus themes. The researcher focused on the notion that themes should have a “central organising concept” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 89) rather than providing a list of comments around the same topic.

#### *Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes*

Once the initial themes were generated, they were reviewed in relation to the transcript extracts to check the validity of the themes generated. Within this phase, the author reworked the code clusters, considering the volume of meaningful data evidencing the theme and began to group them into overarching themes to link the different emerging areas together.

#### *Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes*

The researcher read through all coded extracts relevant to the theme, and it was considered whether the original data fitted with the identified theme. At this point, some of the themes were renamed to provide a better descriptor of the data emerging. For example, one candidate theme within the data was initially called “regularity of feedback”, however when reviewing the codes, the author felt this theme was better understood by being termed “facilitating ELSA organisation”. See [Appendix H](#), Table H1 for a table of example codes and extracts from this phase

#### *Phase 6: Writing up the analysis*

The author organised themes into a table and selected key extracts to highlight the theme. At this phase, the author noticed that some quotes and codes suited better within other themes, therefore they continued to be reviewed throughout the process, as well as within Phase 4 and 5.

### **3.5 Final Sample**

A total of 17 ELSAs took part in the training sessions from 12 different local authorities. See Table I1 in [Appendix I](#) for a table summarising the location of participants recruited. As outlined previously, the researcher offered considerable support to ELSAs throughout the data collection process. During this phase from October 2021 to March 2022, 2 of the 17 ELSAs attended the drop-in sessions offered. However, an additional 4 of the 17 ELSAs requested a meeting with the researcher to discuss data collection. Despite this, there was considerable attrition of participants in the study. A flow chart of participant recruitment and attrition can be seen in Figure 5. Following the training, 9 ELSAs were not able to complete the research for various reasons, see Table 3 for a summary. It is important to note here that the research took place at a time of significant upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After a series of lockdowns, there was a positivity that the country appeared to be returning to some normality in the summer of 2021, as recruitment for this study commenced. However, in the autumn term of 2021 further variants of COVID-19 (Delta and Omicron) impacted on the country, which resulted in high levels of staff and student absence in schools.

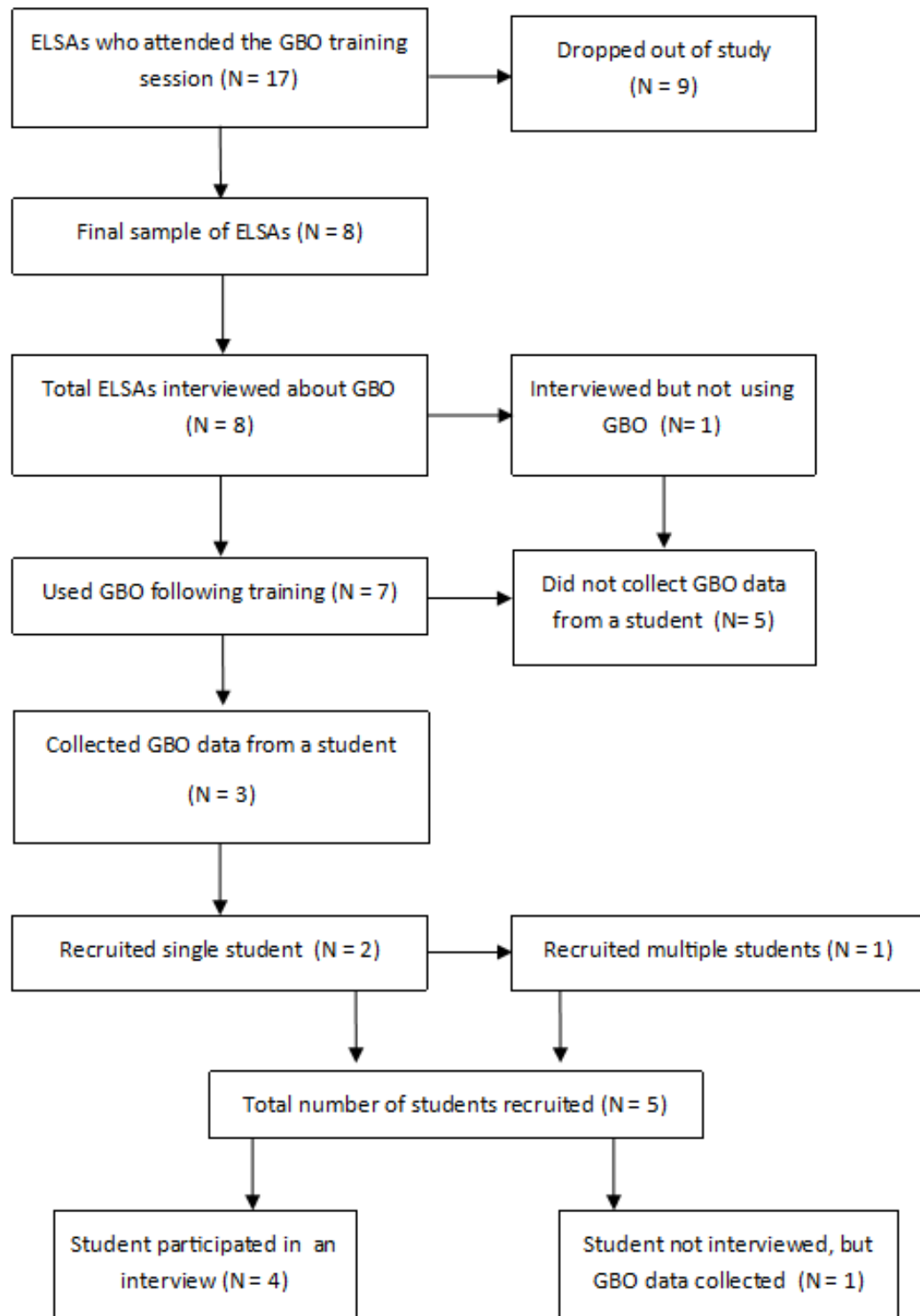
**Table 3**

*Summary of reasons for ELSAs dropping out of study*

| <b>Reason for drop-out</b>                               | <b>N = 9</b> |
|--|--------------|
| ELSA illness   | 3            |
| Difficulty recruiting student due to complexity of needs | 1            |
| Change in job  | 1            |
| No reason provided                                       | 4            |

**Figure 5**

*A flowchart of the sample recruitment process*



This was when data collection for this study had started. Therefore, although 17 ELSAs signed up to take part, there was significant attrition due to the changes in circumstances for schools, whereby ELSAs felt they were not able to continue their involvement in the research.

### Final Sample

The final sample was made up of 8 ELSAs, 5 students and 3 teachers. Table 4 provides a summary of the ELSAs who took part and demographic information about their role as an ELSA, and the extent to which they were able to participate in the study. The table also captures their reported use and confidence using SMART targets in practice. All participating ELSAs took part in interviews. As seen in Table 4, five ELSAs had difficulties in recruiting students to take part in the study. This was due to several reasons: the ELSAs' lack of available time (N=2), difficulties recruiting an appropriate student due to their complex needs (N=1), parental consent to participate not being returned (N=1) and a student experiencing a family bereavement (N =1).

**Table 4**

*Final sample of ELSAs demographic information*

| <b>ELSA<br/>(N = 8)</b> | <b>Years<br/>practicing<br/>as an<br/>ELSA</b> | <b>Typically<br/>used<br/>SMART<br/>targets</b> | <b>Confidence<br/>in setting<br/>SMART<br/>targets</b> | <b>Type of Secondary<br/>School</b> | <b>Used<br/>GBO</b> | <b>Students<br/>Recruited<br/>(N = 5)</b> |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| <i>E1</i>               | 3 Years  | ×   | SWUC   | Mainstream                          | ✓                   | 0   |
| <i>E2</i>               | 2 Years  | Sometimes                                       | SWC  | Mainstream                          | ✓                   | 1   |
| <i>E3</i>               | 2 Years  | Sometimes                                       | SWC  | Specialist Provision                | ✓                   | 1   |
| <i>E4</i>               | 2 Years  | Sometimes                                       | SWC  | Mainstream                          | ✓                   | 0   |
| <i>E5</i>               | 4 Years  | ✓   | SWC  | Specialist Provision                | ✓                   | 0   |
| <i>E6</i>               | 2 Years  | ×   | SWUC   | Mainstream                          | ✓                   | 3   |
| <i>E7</i>               | < 1 year                                       | Sometimes                                       | SWC  | Mainstream                          | ✓                   | 0   |
| <i>E8</i>               | 2 years  | ✓   | SWC  | Mainstream                          | ×                   | 0   |

*Notes: SWC = Somewhat Confident; SWUC = Somewhat Unconfident*



**Table 5**

## Student Demographic Information

| <b>Student</b> | <b>ELSA</b> | <b>Year Group</b> | <b>Number of ELSA sessions</b> | <b>Teacher Recruited</b> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1              | ELSA 3      | 11                | 12                             | Teacher 1                |
| 2              | ELSA 6      | 10                | 12                             | x                        |
| 3              | ELSA 6      | 7                 | 12                             | x                        |
| 4              | ELSA 6      | 9                 | 12                             | x                        |
| 5              | ELSA 2      | 7                 | 10                             | Teacher 2, 3             |

All 5 ELSAs agreed to be interviewed. 4 of these ELSAs managed to use GBO with a student. 1 had not yet managed to use GBO with a student but had considered how they would implement the approach within their setting. Table 5 provides a summary of students and teachers involved in the study, and for which student the teacher(s) provided standardised data.

**3.6 Adaptations to Research**

To account for the paucity of participants in the study, there were adaptations to the research tools used and the data analysis. However, the phases of the research remained largely unchanged. During the recruitment and data collection phase it was unclear as to whether there would be enough participants. Therefore, to account for ELSAs experiencing difficulties recruiting participants, the researcher developed two additional interview schedules which were developed using the initial interview schedule as a foundation. The first was developed for those who had not recruited a student to participate but had used GBO with a student. For this schedule questions were amended to take account of the missing student data and did not ask specifically about students' data. The other schedule was developed for those who had not used

GBO and was based on the initial interview schedule, but questions related to their experience using GBO were removed. The purpose of this interview was to explore ELSAs' perceptions of the value of using a GBO approach based on the training and to capture the challenges they experienced in being involved in the research process. See [Appendix G](#) for the interview schedules.

Due to the lack of participants, the volume of standardised data (SDQ and ELC) and GBO was not sufficient to warrant calculating descriptive statistics or the Reliable Change Index. Additionally, it was not possible to gather teacher reported standardised measures for all students. For example, ELSA 6 experienced difficulties recruiting the member of staff who referred the student to complete the questionnaires, so they were completed by the ELSA for Students 2, 3 and 4. For the GBO data, the researcher's intention was to content analyse the reasons provided for the change. This was not felt to be necessary given the limited available data. Instead, this data has been presented for individual participants within the case outlines. The analysis of the interview data has remained unchanged.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval for the project was sought and received from the UCL Institute of Education Doctoral Research Ethics Committee in March 2021. The application outlined ethical considerations and proposed methodology for the project. See [Appendix J](#) for the full ethics application and ethical considerations. The researcher adhered to the ethical principles set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021) and the Institute of Education Doctorate in Educational Psychology Regulations (UCL, 2021) which outlines the requirements of the thesis. As part of this process, the research was registered with the UCL Data

Protection Office, where the ethics application was screened to ensure it was compliant with the UCL policies around data protection and GDPR. Please see [Appendix K](#) for all information sheets and consent forms for the study.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### **4.1 Introduction**

As discussed in Chapter 3, there were several challenges in the process of data collection in terms of participant attrition and the subsequent amount of data collected. As a result, section 4.2 will involve a case-by-case analysis for each of the students for whom data were collected as part of this project. Data will be analysed relative to research questions one and two and a summary provided of each student's data collected using the idiographic (GBO) and standardised measures (ELC & SDQ). Section 4.3 will present the findings from the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews with ELSAs and students, which relate to research question three.

### **4.2. Case Outline of Students**

This section provides an outline of each student for whom data were collected as part of this research. This comprises of the Weekly GBO Tracking Form ([Appendix E](#)) and pre- and post-measures of the SDQ and ELC. The intention of the study was to gather pre- and post-intervention SDQ and ELC data from both the student and the member of staff that referred them. This was not the case for all students in the study, and there are variations in the standardised data gathered due to complications faced by ELSAs when collecting data, see Section 3.6 for further information. Table 6 summarises the available data for each student. All ELSAs in the final sample were interviewed (N =8), and 4 of the 5 participating students agreed to be interviewed as part of the research.

**Table 6**

*Summary of standardised student data available*

| Students  | Post-Intervention Measures |                    |                    |                    | Pre-Intervention Measures |                    |                    |                    |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|           | <i>ELC student</i>         | <i>ELC Teacher</i> | <i>SDQ student</i> | <i>SDQ Teacher</i> | <i>ELC student</i>        | <i>ELC Teacher</i> | <i>SDQ student</i> | <i>SDQ Teacher</i> |
| <i>P1</i> | ✓                          | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                  |
| <i>P2</i> | ✓                          | x                  | x                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | x                  | x                  | ✓                  |
| <i>P3</i> | ✓                          | x                  | x                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | x                  | x                  | ✓                  |
| <i>P4</i> | ✓                          | x                  | x                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | x                  | x                  | ✓                  |
| <i>P5</i> | x                          | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                  | x                         | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                  |

The case outlines will include a narrative description of each case and include available interview data from the ELSA and students to deepen understanding. A summary of each student’s Goal Based Outcome data can be seen in [Appendix L](#).

#### **4.2.1 Student 1: Case Outline**

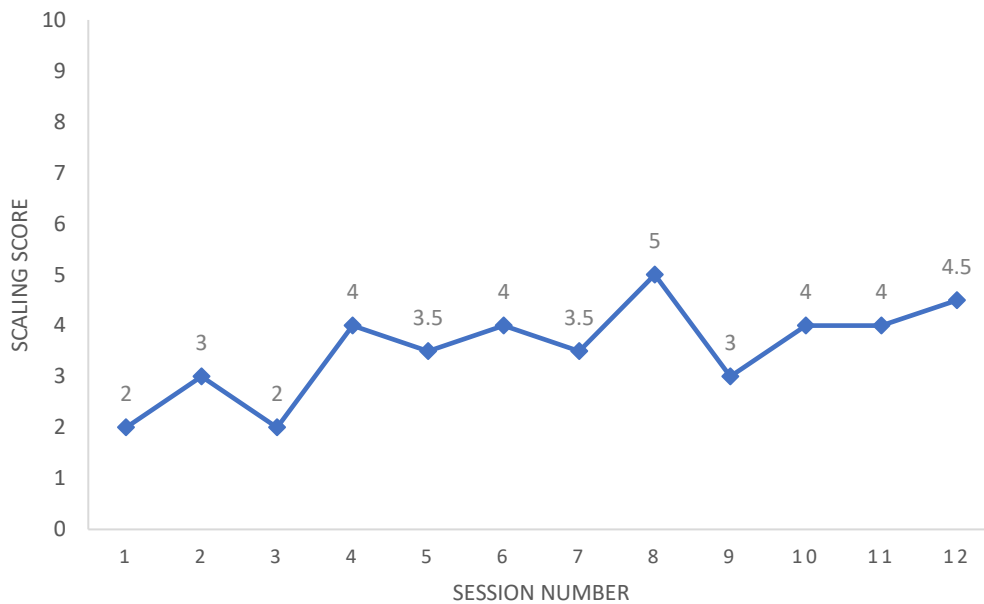
Student 1 was referred to work with ELSA 3 for support around their self-esteem. The goal identified by Student 1 was “*to be more confident around peers*”.

##### *Student 1: GBO Weekly Tracking Data*

The graph in Figure 6 demonstrates that Student 1 made 2.5 steps of progress over the course of the intervention. However, there were fluctuations throughout, for example in week 9 where their GBO score moved from 5 to 3. The reason for this fluctuation was they “*received a vile text message. Given the wrong exam paper and had to re-sit exam*”. Additionally, in week 8 when the score increased from 3.5 to 5, this was attributed to “*friendship group (being) more positive. Looking forward to Sixth Form, moving forwards*”. Therefore, the qualitative descriptors (see [Appendix L](#), Table L1) suggests that these fluctuations were due to external situations that occurred. In the interviews, Student 1 corroborated this when talking about their fluctuating score, “*I think it depended on what the week was like overall, who was in my friends*”.

**Figure 6**

*Goal Based Outcome Weekly Tracking Score for Student 1*



This suggests that the scoring was interpreted to be more general, rather than specific to the goal. However, they did express a perceived outcome from the ELSA support within the interview, *“I can talk to people a bit more in lessons and stuff”*.

Additionally, Student 1 expressed that they perceived the goal to be in line with what they wanted, *“I think it was good because it was the goal that I felt that I wanted”*, and that it broke their aspiration down into manageable steps, *“It helped me realise how I could get to it and did it in little bits, so it wasn’t straight to the goal”*. In terms of the reason why they felt they made progress, the space to speak to the ELSA was perceived to be important and helpful, *“I know that I could talk to Miss about what’s happened and then make the next steps”*.

Student 1: SDQ

Student 1’s scores on the SDQ can be seen in Table 7. Scores indicate that there was a clear difference in the Teacher and Student’s perception of initial need and progress over time.

**Table 7**

*Student 1's SDQ Teacher and Self-Reported Scores. Decrease in score illustrates positive change*

| <b>Scale</b>              | <b>Teacher 1</b> |                   |                     | <b>Student 1</b> |                   |                     |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|                           | <i>Pre score</i> | <i>Post score</i> | <i>Score change</i> | <i>Pre score</i> | <i>Post score</i> | <i>Score change</i> |
| <i>Emotional Problems</i> | 6                | 3                 | -3                  | 9                | 9                 | 0                   |
| <i>Conduct Problems</i>   | 0                | 0                 | 0                   | 0                | 0                 | 0                   |
| <i>Hyperactivity</i>      | 6                | 1                 | -5                  | 4                | 6                 | 2                   |
| <i>Peer Problems</i>      | 2                | 4                 | 2                   | 5                | 9                 | 4                   |
| <i>Pro-Social</i>         | 6                | 9                 | 3                   | 9                | 9                 | 0                   |
| <b>Total Difficulties</b> | 14               | 8                 | -6                  | 18               | 24                | 6                   |

*Note: Total Difficulties is a sum of: Emotional Problems, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems.*

Teacher 1 perceived the student's total difficulties to be lower than Student 1. Post-intervention, the student perceived their difficulties to increase, particularly in terms of Peer Problems and Hyperactivity. Conversely, the teacher perceived their Emotional Problems, Hyperactivity and Pro-Social skills to have improved. The teacher and student perceptions do corroborate in terms of a perceived increase in difficulties in terms of Peer Problems.

#### Student 1: ELC

A similar picture can be seen in the ELC. Although scale level comparisons cannot be drawn, there are discrepancies between teacher and student perception of needs on the ELC overall before and after the intervention. Student 1's score indicates a minimal decrease in difficulties, whereas Teacher 1 perceived the student to show a clear increase in Emotional Literacy, particularly regarding their Self-Awareness.

**Table 8**

*Student 1's ELC Teacher and Self-Reported Scores. An increased score indicates positive change in Emotional Literacy.*

| <b>Scale</b>           | <b>Teacher 1</b> |                   |                     | <b>Student 1</b> |                   |                     |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|                        | <i>Pre score</i> | <i>Post score</i> | <i>Score change</i> | <i>Pre score</i> | <i>Post score</i> | <i>Score change</i> |
| <i>Self-Awareness</i>  | 7                | 14                | 7                   | N/A              | N/A               | N/A                 |
| <i>Self-Regulation</i> | 12               | 14                | 2                   | N/A              | N/A               | N/A                 |
| <i>Motivation</i>      | 12               | 14                | 2                   | N/A              | N/A               | N/A                 |
| <i>Empathy</i>         | 14               | 16                | 2                   | N/A              | N/A               | N/A                 |
| <i>Social Skills</i>   | 10               | 11                | 1                   | N/A              | N/A               | N/A                 |
| <b>Total</b>           | 55               | 69                | 14                  | 62               | 61                | -1                  |

*Note: Subscale level analysis is not possible on student completed ELC.*

### Summary

Findings here highlight that the GBO data provide insights into change over time and indicate that, although the score fluctuated, the student perceived there to be progress towards the goal over time. These improvements were also captured in the Teacher SDQ and ELC data. However, this was not seen in the student's scores on the standardised measures. It is noteworthy that none of the scales on the SDQ or the ELC directly link to the focus of the intervention, which was self-esteem and confidence around peers.

#### **4.2.2 Student 2: Case Outline**

Student 2 referred themselves for ELSA support as they were *“having some trouble at home, and I just didn't know how to cope with it. So, I came in and I asked someone for assistance...then I was filed for the [ELSA] sessions”*. Student 2 and



ELSA 6, agreed on a target, “*To have healthier coping mechanisms*”. Student 2 said of the target they chose:

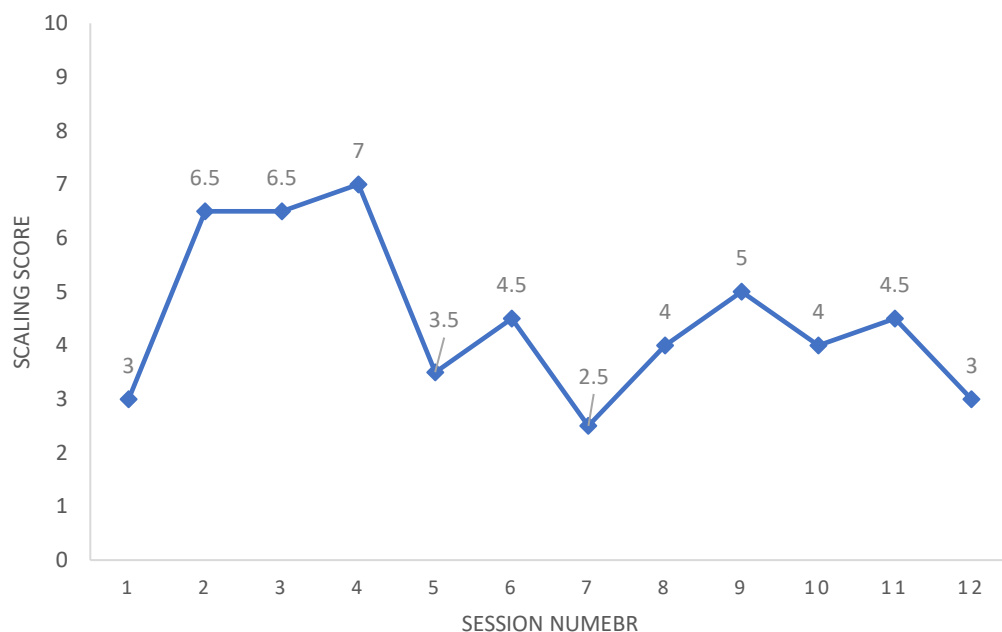
*I guess it covers a lot. Like, a lot of bases because I can't identify my emotions, therefore I lash out in a lot of different ways, and a lot of the coping mechanisms that I did have were really unhealthy.*

### Student 2: GBO Weekly Tracking Data

Data from the graph in Figure 7 indicates that Student 2 made 4 steps of progress towards the goal in the first 4 sessions, but this dropped in session 5. The student's final score suggests they had reverted to their initial score. However, examining the student's qualitative descriptors, the reason behind the scoring seemed to be linked to other external pressures on them, rather than issues at home.

**Figure 7**

*GBO Weekly Tracking Score for Student 2*



For example, in week 12, the student said the score of 3 was selected because “*homework situations made it hard to cope*”. Student 2 reflected on this within the interview:

*Because I’m autistic...changing things that quickly, on a weekly basis can get really hard for me. I go through burnout very often because of school. So, I think the weeks I was on a more up numbers I was really positive about it... And then, the more down weeks I was more stressed and very anxious... I was finding it even harder to identify how I was feeling and put the coping mechanisms into place that we had.*

This indicates that Student 2’s mood regarding external factors was linked to their appraisal of the target within the session. Additionally, qualitative comments from Student 2’s GBO data indicated some uncertainty about their scores. In session 5 and 6 respectively, Student 2 gave the responses, “*Don’t know*”, and “*Just felt like a 4.5*”, indicating some uncertainty in the qualitative descriptor element of scaling. It is important to note that the ELSA intended to continue working with Student 2 following data collection. Despite the limited changes in the numerical and qualitative data in the GBO, Student 2’s comments in the interview highlighted that having a goal was perceived to be helpful and they noticed some outcomes from ELSA:

*Having that target in place of having healthier coping mechanisms and having something to work towards was helpful...I feel like I’m much more of a positive person now and less of a self-destructive, isolated person. And, having the better coping mechanisms that I’ve put in place now, makes me feel a lot more relieved and less stressed.*

#### Student 2: SDQ

For Student 2 the SDQ was completed by ELSA 6 due to difficulties recruiting a member of staff to complete them.

**Table 9**

*Student 2: SDQ Teacher Reported Scores. Decrease in score illustrates positive change*

| <b>Scale</b>              | <b>Pre score</b> | <b>Post score</b> | <b>Score change</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Emotional Problems</i> | 6                | 5                 | -1                  |
| <i>Conduct Problems</i>   | 1                | 1                 | 0                   |
| <i>Hyperactivity</i>      | 4                | 2                 | -2                  |
| <i>Peer Problems</i>      | 3                | 1                 | -2                  |
| <i>Pro-Social</i>         | 8                | 9                 | 1                   |
| <b>Total Difficulties</b> | 14               | 9                 | -5                  |

*Note: Total Difficulties is a sum of: Emotional Problems, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems. Positive score change illustrates positive progress. Scale was completed by ELSA 6.*

This raises questions about the ‘objectivity’ of the data given the ELSA’s involvement in the intervention process and therefore caution is needed when interpreting the responses. Table 9 provides a summary of Student 2’s SDQ scores. The results suggest that the ELSA’s view of the student’s needs overlapped with the student’s area of focus, in terms of difficulties with “*coping mechanisms*” and with “*identifying emotions*” as their ‘Emotional Problems’ scales were scored highly pre-intervention. Overall, Student 2’s scores on this scale indicated that ELSA 6 perceived their difficulties to decreased, particularly on the ‘Hyperactivity’ and ‘Peer Problems’ scale. These were not areas of focus for the ELSA intervention. However, their scores reduced by 1 point on the ‘Emotional Problems’ scale.

Student 2: ELC

**Table 10**

*Student 2's ELC Self-Reported Scores. An increased score indicates positive change in Emotional Literacy.*

| <b>Emotional Literacy Checklist</b> | <b>Pre score</b> | <b>Post score</b> | <b>Score change</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Total Score</b>                  | 52               | 67                | 15                  |

*Notes: Subscale level analysis is not possible on student completed ELC.*

Table 10 provides a summary of Student 2's ELC scores. This indicates an improvement in overall Emotional Literacy as their score increased on the ELC. The norm-referenced score descriptors from the ELC manual (Faupel, 2003) indicate that Student 2's scores initially fell within the 'Well Below Average' range but improved to be within the 'Average' range when compared to same age peers.

Summary

Overall, the standardised data for Student 2 indicates progress and positive change. The discussion from the interview with the student reflects consistencies in the accounts and indicates the student noticed an impact of the support from the ELSA sessions. However, the numerical data collected as part of GBO does not necessarily reflect this, and the qualitative descriptors provide limited information about the reason for the scoring.

**4.2.3 Student 3: Case Outline**

Student 3 was referred for support with anger management. Student 3 and ELSA 6 agreed the target, "*To work on my anger issues and self-esteem*". Student 3 explained their reasoning for selecting their target:

*It was because I can get very stressed easily, and I didn't have the best self-image of myself, and the obvious part is I have anger issues, so I've got to work on my calm and being calmer... it just makes sense for that to be my target.*

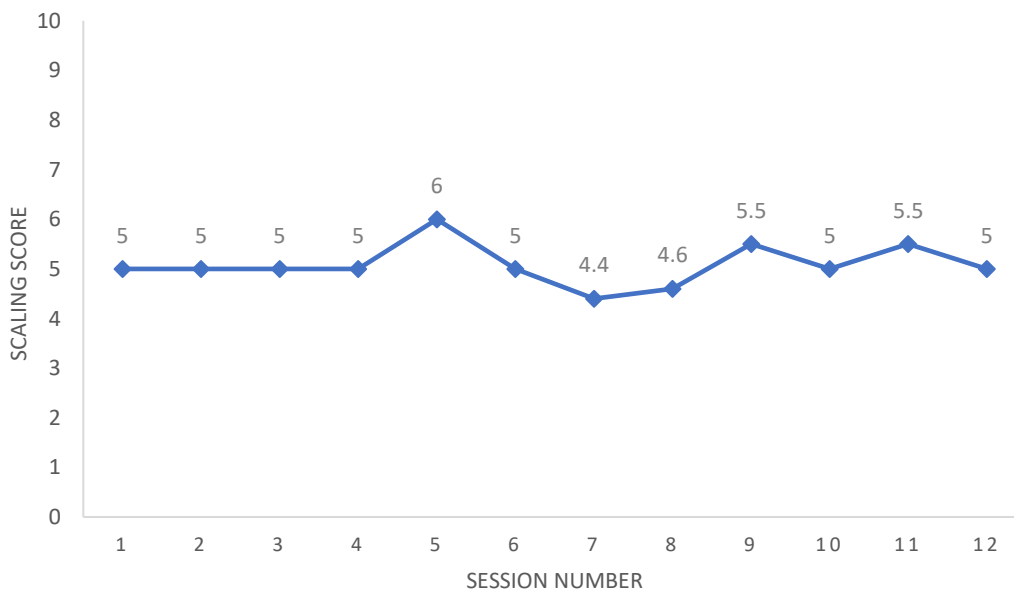
Student 3: GBO Weekly Tracking Data

Student 3 made 1 point of progress over the course of the intervention but reverted to their initial score of 5 for the final session. Student 3 expressed in the interview some uncertainty over the scoring, *“Usually I was around 5, maybe 4 or 6, whatever. But sometimes I put decimals because I might be unsure”*.

Akin to Student 1, the qualitative descriptors provided by Student 3 were sometimes linked to external situations, for example in week 7 their score decreased to 4.4 which was because of a *“recent incident”*. This was corroborated in the interview with Student 3 saying other children can impinge on them making progress, *“This kid in my class. He can be quite annoying towards me and try and purposely make me angry... which is probably my biggest obstacle”*.

**Figure 8**

*Goal Based Outcome Weekly Tracking Score for Student 3*



Furthermore, GBO qualitative descriptors from Student 3 indicated that they did not notice change within the first few weeks because of developing rapport. In week 3, the student provided the reason for no change as being, “*We had just got to know each other [Student 3 and ELSA 6]*”. The student also suggested that in week 4, “*We haven’t thought of many strategies*” which was why there had been no change.

Despite the limited numerical change on the GBO, Student 3 perceived their target to be helpful to give clarity throughout the intervention, “*I think it’s helpful because I know what I’m actually doing, instead of just blindly doing something and hoping it’ll work out*”. Additionally, Student 3 expressed that they perceived themselves to have made progress towards the goal within the qualitative descriptors. For example, for week 11 they stated, “*I managed to stay calm more recently*”, and in the interviews they said, “*I’ve managed to stay a lot calmer. I think it’s a bit of a massive improvement*”. This reflects the student’s perceived outcome for the intervention, which was linked to the goal they had initially created. When talking about why this had happened, they said:

*I’d say just being able to chat about them [challenging situations], and if they annoy me and what I can do about these situations. Like, that’s helped me because when I hear about what I can do, I will keep that in my head for some time and try and remember it when I’m in one of those situations again.*

### Student 3: SDQ

For Student 3, the SDQ was completed by the ELSA who worked with them (ELSA 6), due to difficulties recruiting a member of staff to complete them. Table 11 provides a summary of Student 3’s SDQ scores. The results suggest that the ELSA perceived Student 3’s difficulties overall to remain unchanged.

**Table 11**

*Student 3: SDQ Teacher Reported Scores. Decrease in score illustrates positive change*

| <b>Scale</b>              | <b>Pre score</b> | <b>Post score</b> | <b>Score change</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Emotional Problems</i> | 2                | 4                 | 2                   |
| <i>Conduct Problems</i>   | 3                | 2                 | -1                  |
| <i>Hyperactivity</i>      | 2                | 3                 | 1                   |
| <i>Peer Problems</i>      | 6                | 4                 | -2                  |
| <i>Pro-Social</i>         | 6                | 7                 | 1                   |
| <b>Total Difficulties</b> | 13               | 13                | 0                   |

*Note: Total Difficulties is a sum of: Emotional Problems, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems. Measure was completed by ELSA 6.*

However, looking at the individual subscales, their “Emotional Problems” and “Hyperactivity” scores have increased. The ‘Emotional Problems’ score increasing is interesting given this was the area of focus for the intervention, which suggests the student has not made progress, which contrasts with comments and perceptions from the student in the GBO summary. However, their “Conduct Problems” and “Peer Problems” were perceived to have reduced, which somewhat reflects the comments from Student 3 which indicated they perceived themselves to be calmer.

*Student 3: ELC*

The ELC was completed by Student 3 only. Table 12 summarises Student 3’s overall scores on this scale.

**Table 12**

*Student 3's ELC Self-Reported. An increased score indicates positive change in Emotional Literacy.*

| <b>Emotional Literacy Checklist</b> | <b>Pre score</b> | <b>Post score</b> | <b>Score change</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Total Score</b>                  | 52               | 55                | 3                   |

*Notes: Subscale level analysis is not possible on student completed ELC.*

Student 3's scores indicate a modest improvement on the scale between the start and the end of the intervention. However, referring to the norm-referenced score bands from the ELC manual (Faupel, 2003), the descriptors for Student 3's scores indicate that they remain in the 'Well Below Average' range for their emotional literacy skills.

### Summary

Overall, the data for Student 3 demonstrates very modest changes on the GBO data in relation to the goal. This is also captured in the ELSA rated SDQ data and the student rated ELC data, which show relatively little change over time. However, comments from the student during interview and from the qualitative descriptor indicate they perceived there to be progress in relation to their goal.

#### **4.2.4 Student 4: Case Outline**

Student 4 was referred for support with low mood, and to enable them to develop a relationship with a member of staff to support them to build trust and express feelings. Student 4 and ELSA 6 agreed on the target, "*To be able to trust my friends and reduce fear of them leaving*". In the interview, Student 4 described how this goal was developed:

*At first, I couldn't think of one because I'm very bad when it comes to things like that. So, in the end we started talking*



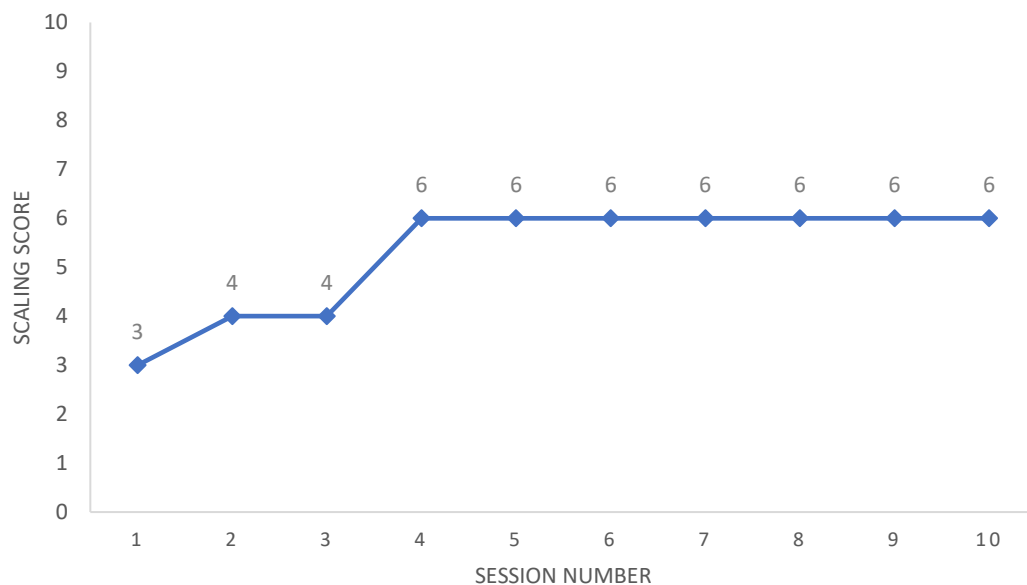
*and then I kept mentioning about how I couldn't trust my friends completely because I was afraid they'd leave me. So, we kind of just went off of that and picked it.*

Student 4: GBO Weekly Tracking Data

Overall, the student made 3 points of change from start to finish. The results and qualitative descriptor indicated that Student 4 disengaged from reflecting on the numerical scoring from session 4 onwards, as the qualitative descriptor provided from this session onward was, “*because it's what I put last time*”. When talking about the challenge with scaling in the interview, Student 4 expressed this was because, “*I just kept going off of the last thing that I put... I'm really bad at scaling... so I pick random numbers*”.

**Figure 9**

*Goal Based Outcome Weekly Tracking Score for Student 4*



Student 4 also shared that they found the process of setting a goal difficult, and found the accountability of GBO more challenging:

*I'll admit putting a goal down on paper, I'm not very good at them because I always end up giving up on them... So, it's a little harder when you can't just get rid of them when you want to give up.*

Additionally, within the interview, Student 4 expressed that the focus of the session changed, "*During the sessions we ended up half switching the goal. We kept with the main one, but then we also started doing my self-esteem*". It is possible that the changing of the goal made engaging with the scaling more challenging as the intervention had moved to a new focus. However, Student 4 did express that they perceived themselves to have made progress, "*I can tell from the beginning to the end, the progress I made. I feel like I could've made more, but, you know, I did my best*". When talking about why they felt this happened it was attributed to the space to reflect with the ELSA about themselves and being taught novel ideas:

*Having the worksheets and having something you had to think about, a lot of the times it was stuff I would've never have thought about before. So, it was setting something that I had to think about... So, it helped quite a bit because I could use the things, I'd discovered about myself.*

#### Student 4: SDQ

For Student 4, the SDQ was completed by the ELSA who worked with them (ELSA 6), due to difficulties recruiting a member of staff to complete them. Table 13 provides a summary of Student 4's SDQ scores. Scores here indicated that Student 4's 'Total Difficulties' increased slightly over the course of the intervention. In particular, "Emotional Problems" and "Conduct Problems" increased, though only by 1 point each. Overall, the scores here indicate little in the way of student progress.

**Table 13**

*Student 4: SDQ Scores. Decrease in score illustrates positive change*

| <b>Scale</b>              | <b>Pre score</b> | <b>Post score</b> | <b>Score Change</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Emotional Problems</i> | 3                | 4                 | 1                   |
| <i>Conduct Problems</i>   | 2                | 3                 | 1                   |
| <i>Hyperactivity</i>      | 5                | 5                 | 0                   |
| <i>Peer Problems</i>      | 3                | 3                 | 0                   |
| <i>Pro-Social</i>         | 9                | 9                 | 0                   |
| <b>Total Difficulties</b> | 13               | 15                | 2                   |

*Note: Total Difficulties is a sum of: Emotional Problems, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems. A decrease in score illustrates positive change. Measure was completed by ELSA 6.*

*Student 4: ELC*

The ELC was completed by Student 4 only. There are no adult scores available for this scale. Table 14 summarises Student 4's overall scores on this scale. For students' self-reported ELC, it is not possible to break the scores down into subscales. Student 4's score here indicates they perceive themselves to have made modest improvements over the course of the ELSA intervention in terms of their emotional literacy. However, referring to the norm-referenced score bands from the ELC manual (Faupe, 2003), the descriptors for Student 4's scores indicate that they remain in the 'Well Below Average' range for their emotional literacy skills.

**Table 14**

*Student 4's ELC Scores. An increased score indicates positive change in Emotional Literacy.*

| <b>Emotional Literacy Checklist</b> | <b>Pre score (P4)</b> | <b>Post score (P4)</b> | <b>Score change (P4)</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Total Score</b>                  | 56                    | 61                     | 5                        |

*Notes: Subscale level analysis is not possible on student completed ELC.*

### Summary

Student 4's scores on the GBO scaling and qualitative descriptors indicate that they disengaged with this process to an extent, as they provided the same score each week from week 4 onwards. Comments made by Student 4 during interview indicate they found this process difficult. The data from the student rated ELC indicates very modest positive change over time. Conversely, the ELSA rated SDQ data suggests the opposite, capturing a very slight increase in difficulties.

#### **4.2.5 Student 5 Case Outline**

Student 5 was referred for ELSA support to develop self-regulation strategies to manage their feelings. In the interview, the ELSA supporting them (ELSA 2) highlighted that this support was recommended as part of their Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), "*on their EHCP it does say that they would benefit from ELSA and to be able to talk about their feelings and to do one strategy that is chosen by an adult*". It is also worth noting that Student 5 attends a specialist resource base for Communication and Interaction needs attached to a mainstream secondary setting. Two members of staff completed standardised measures for them, Teacher 2 is Student 5's key worker at the setting they attend, and Teacher 3 is a member of staff who 'works closely' with Student 5.

### Student 5: GBO Weekly Data Tracking Data

ELSA 2 and Student 5 agreed the target, “*to discuss how feelings make us feel*”. This was decided upon in session three. ELSA 2 accessed one of the drop-in sessions with the author to discuss goal setting, as Student 5 had expressed some uncertainty about what they wanted to work on. Therefore, the ELSA decided to utilise information from the SDQ to support their discussions around what the target would be. Due to the student not always engaging with the scoring, Student 5’s Goal Based Outcome data is presented in Table 15. The student also did not engage in providing a descriptor for their score and this section of the tracking form was left blank. However, data from the interview with ELSA 2, who supported Student 5, highlighted that, “*they find it really difficult to express themselves, there are days when they just hardly speak*” [ELSA 2], which resulted in them not engaging in the scoring and descriptors on three of the sessions. The ELSA tried a range of activities to engage them which varied in terms of how successful this was, “*I got a selfie work sheet that I found, and I thought, ‘Oh this’ll be fab’... they didn’t want to do that at all*” [ELSA 2].

Additionally, ELSA 2 expressed that the target chosen was not in line with the student’s personal aspirations, “*they wanted to talk about... how tired they were*”. The ELSA felt this was inappropriate as “*there are other people out there for sleep*”, but they did discuss sleep during the course of the intervention, “*we did bring that into some of the sessions*”. Furthermore, during the interviews ELSA 2 reflected on why the target was selected and expressed that Student 5 indicated that talking about feelings was challenging, “*they kept saying to me, ‘I don’t want to talk about my feelings, I’ve never talked about my feelings. I can’t even comprehend about talking about feelings*”. This may have impacted on their engagement as the target felt too great to achieve, which may explain their reluctance in scoring.

**Table 15:**

*Goal Based Outcome Scaling Score for Student 5*

| <b>Session Number</b> | <b>Score</b>  |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1                     | Goal not set  |
| 2                     | Goal not set  |
| 3                     | Goal set: 5.5 |
| 4                     | 5             |
| 5                     | Not scored    |
| 6                     | Not scored    |
| 7                     | Not scored    |
| 8                     | 4             |
| 9                     | 4.5           |
| 10                    | 4.5           |

*Note: Scaling score value falls between 1 and 10.*

*Student 5: SDQ*

The SDQ (SDQ) was completed by two members of staff who referred Student 5 for support, and by Student 5 before and after the intervention. Scores can be seen in Table 16. This scale indicates differences in the teacher and student perspective of Student 5's needs. Pre-intervention scores from the teachers, using the SDQ norm-reference descriptors (Goodman, 1997), place the student in the 'Very High' range in terms of Total Difficulties, whereas the student score places them in the 'Average' range. For the post-interventions scores, the teachers' ratings did not change significantly, except for Teacher 3 noting a drop in Student 5's 'Conduct Problems'. Conversely, the student's scores increase post-intervention, particularly on the 'Emotional Problems' scale. This may reflect increased difficulties in managing emotions or may reflect the student's developed self-awareness of their emotional difficulties. Moreover, there is limited consistency across the scoring and therefore these scales provide limited insight in terms of change.

**Table 16***Student 5: SDQ Scores. Decrease in score illustrates positive change*

| Scale                   | Teacher 2 |            |              | Teacher 3 |            |              | Student 5 |            |              |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
|                         | Pre score | Post score | Score change | Pre score | Post score | Score change | Pre score | Post score | Score change |
| Emotional Problems      | 9         | 9          | 0            | 6         | 7          | 1            | 1         | 5          | 4            |
| Conduct Problems        | 4         | 4          | 0            | 7         | 4          | -3           | 3         | 3          | 0            |
| Hyperactivity           | 10        | 10         | 0            | 8         | 10         | 2            | 8         | 7          | -1           |
| Peer Problems           | 4         | 5          | 1            | 3         | 3          | 0            | 1         | 2          | 1            |
| Pro-Social              | 4         | 4          | 0            | 3         | 3          | 0            | 5         | 5          | 0            |
| Total Difficulties (TD) | 27        | 28         | 1            | 24        | 24         | 0            | 13        | 17         | 4            |

*Notes: T2 = Teacher 2 completed; T3 = Teacher 3 completed. P5 completed. Note: TD is a sum of: Emotional Problems, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems.*

**Student 5: ELC**

The ELC was completed by the two members of staff who referred Student 5. Student 5 did not complete the ELC. Scores can be seen in Table 17. There is a clear discrepancy in the perspective of Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 on this scale. Using the norm-referenced descriptors from Faupel (2008), Teacher 1 perceived Student 5 to be in the “Well Below Average” range pre- and post-intervention and indicate a reduction in Student 5’s emotional literacy, particularly regarding their ‘Social Skills’ and ‘Empathy’. Conversely, Teacher 2 perceives that Student 5 improved from being in the “Well Below Average” range, to being in the “Below Average Range”, with the scoring indicating improvement in “Self-Regulation” and “Motivation”.

**Table 17**

*Student 5's ELC Scores. An increased score indicates positive change in Emotional Literacy*

| Scale           | Teacher 2 |            |              | Teacher 3 |            |              |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
|                 | Pre score | Post score | Score change | Pre score | Post score | Score change |
| Self-Awareness  | 7         | 6          | -1           | 11        | 9          | -2           |
| Self-Regulation | 6         | 5          | -1           | 5         | 8          | 3            |
| Motivation      | 7         | 7          | 0            | 5         | 7          | 2            |
| Empathy         | 8         | 6          | -2           | 8         | 8          | 0            |
| Social Skills   | 14        | 11         | -3           | 12        | 13         | 1            |
| Total           | 42        | 35         | -7           | 41        | 45         | 4            |

*Notes: The total score is a sum of the 5 subscales.*

### Summary

Student 5's Goal Based Outcome data indicates that they found it difficult to engage with this approach. This may be explained by comments from the ELSA working with Student 5 which indicate that the goal set may have been perceived by Student 5 to be unachievable. Their scaling was not completed each week, and the qualitative comments provided were not possible to capture. In terms of their standardised scores, scores from Teachers 2 and 3 indicate a discrepancy in their perception of change, with Teacher 2 perceiving an increase in need, whereas Teacher 3 noticed very slight improvements. Standardised scores from Student 5 indicate an increase in difficulties on the SDQ, particularly regarding their emotions, though only slightly. It is not clear why there was a discrepancy in the scoring, but this may be due to differences in their experiences of supporting the student and the behaviours they have observed.



#### **4.2.6 Summary of Case Outlines**

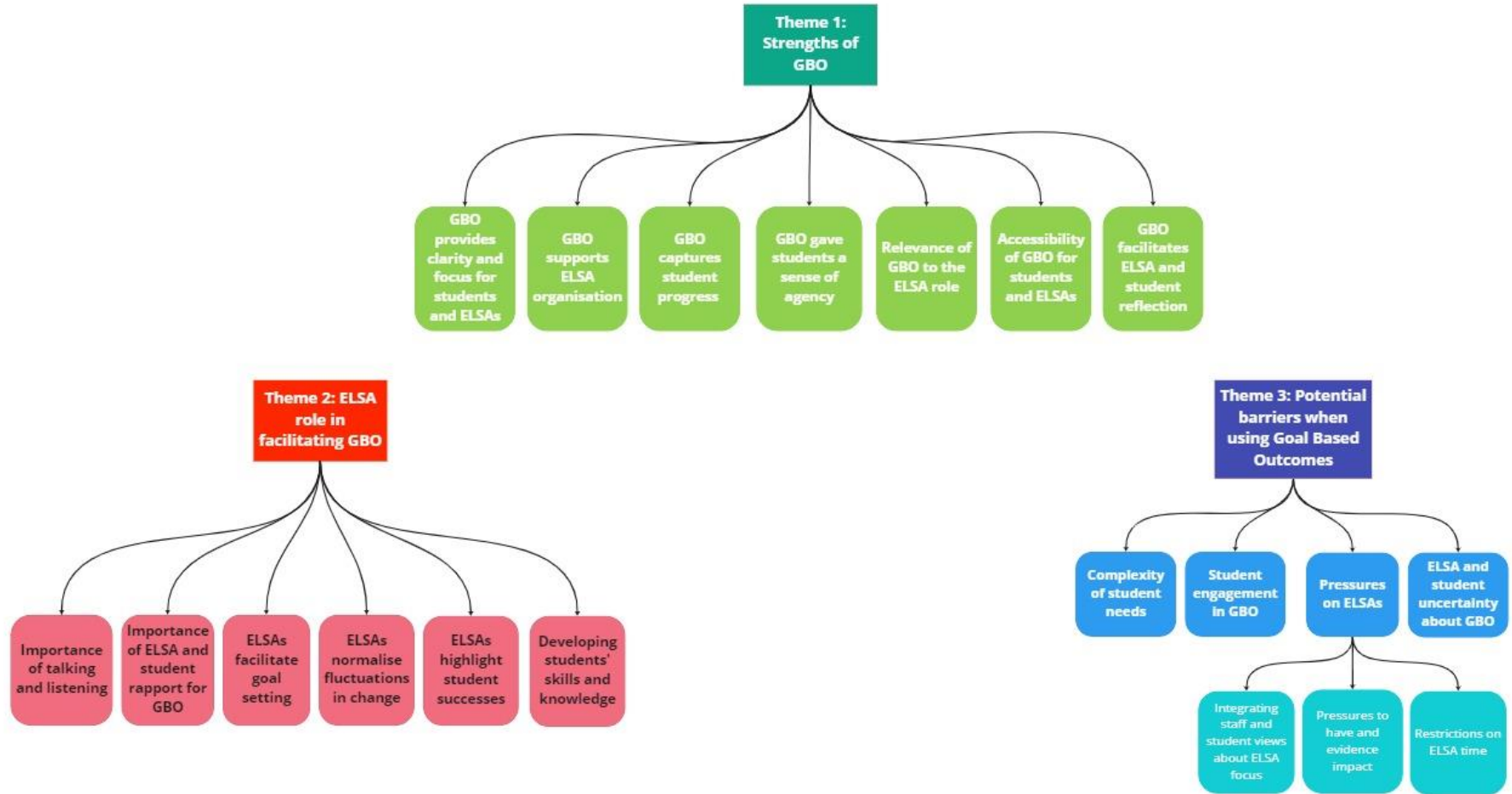
The findings from these case outlines indicate that students did not always engage with the GBO scale, as can be seen for Student 4 and 5. Most students highlighted at least one point of change on the scale, but this fluctuated throughout the course of the intervention and some reverted back to initial scores or demonstrated only modest gains by the end of the data collection period. The interview data suggests that most students identified that setting a goal was helpful for them as part of the ELSA intervention, to provide focus and clarity and most of the students interviewed were able to identify an outcome from the intervention. For the standardised measures gathered, in some cases, there were contrasts between participants' perspectives of needs and how they changed over the intervention. Overall, these measures often only showed modest change over the course of the intervention and baseline scores and changes did not always reflect the intended focus of the sessions.

#### **4.3 Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews**

This section will present the findings from the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data. This captures the views and experiences of the 8 ELSAs and 4 students that took part in interviews. There were three themes in the data: Strengths of GBO, ELSAs' role in facilitating GBO, and potential barriers when using GBO. See Figure 10 for a full thematic map.

**Figure 10**

*Full Thematic Map for Semi-Structured Interviews*

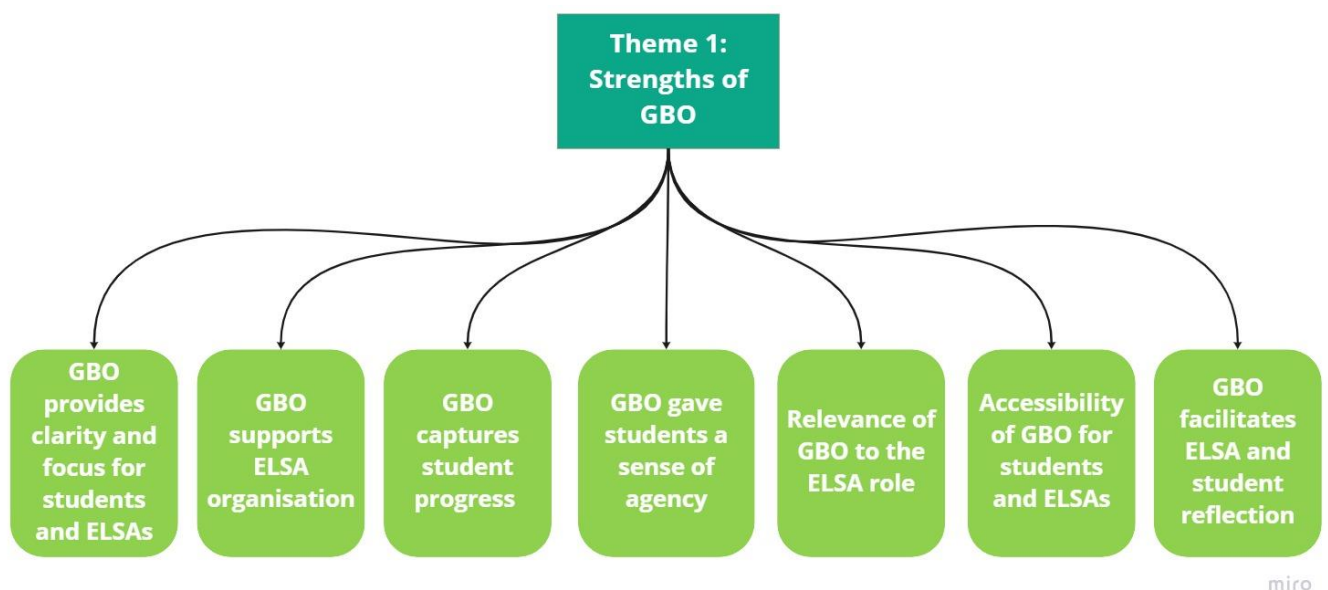


### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Strengths of Goal Based Outcomes

This theme is concerned with the perceived strengths of using GBO in ELSA practice, from the perspective of students and ELSAs, and is made up of 7 subthemes. This theme highlights the relevance of GBO to the ELSA role and the accessibility of GBO as an evaluative tool for both ELSAs and students. GBO was considered to provide the intervention with focus and clarity and supported ELSAs in organisation and planning. For ELSAs and students the approach was considered to facilitate reflection, and students and ELSAs noticed that it allowed students to have a sense of agency over the sessions.

**Figure 11**

*Theme 1 Thematic Map*



#### *GBO provides focus and clarity for students and ELSAs*

This subtheme explores how GBO supported the ELSA intervention by providing clarity about the purpose of the ELSA sessions and a focus on outcomes for ELSAs and students to work towards. The target set as part of GBO was perceived to

be a helpful element to the intervention by students, *“I think having that target in place... having something to work towards was helpful”* [Student 2], and ELSAs who could *“really see the benefit of having a goal”* [ELSA 2]. It was felt the goal allowed the sessions to have a clear ending, *“I think we’ve got a finishing point [using GBO]”* [ELSA 1]. Furthermore, regular time to review the target was felt to provide the intervention with structure which was perceived to be helpful, *“I’ve liked that you can look at it each week”* [ELSA 3].

Interview data also indicated that this structure of GBO and the setting of a goal offered clarity for students about the purpose of the intervention, as one student said:

*I think working towards it has been really helpful instead of just like, with other mental health services I’ve been with, we didn’t really have anything to work towards. So, it was just-, I was being given information about myself, and about things that they want me to do. It was really confusing to me and it really just made things a lot worse. But now, having something to work towards and knowing why, what the activities we are doing were for. [Student 2]*

It was also considered by ELSAs and students to give them a clear outcome which they were then aware of, *“I think it helped me because I know where I wanted to get to”* [Student 1] and helped the ELSA to have a clear purpose of the intervention, *“I feel like I have now been able to identify a Goal Based Outcome instead of just having sessions where we are just flaying about in the dark really, where we know what we’re trying to achieve”* [ELSA 1].

This clear purpose enabled ELSAs to keep focused on the intervention, *“It helped me get on track with what we needed to do for (student)”* [ELSA 3], which was previously considered to be a challenge for some when GBO was not used, *“Because sometimes you can go off, when the young person comes in you can lose focus”* [ELSA

4]. Additionally, setting the Goal Based Outcome and talking about this with their ELSA was felt by one student to provide them with accountability to keep focused:

*I mean, it was a good thing because I knew that I couldn't give up because there was also somebody else who was keeping me trying it. Whereas, if it was myself, I would've just been like, 'Nah, I can't be bothered with it.' [Student 4]*

Overall, codes and data within this subtheme indicated that ELSAs and students benefited from the way GBO provided clarity about the purpose and intended outcome of the intervention, which enabled ELSAs and students to remain focused within sessions.

#### *GBO supports ELSA organisation*

As a result of the clarity and purpose described in the previous subtheme the Goal Based Outcome set also supported the ELSAs in their organisation of materials and facilitated keeping records of the intervention. ELSAs expressed that the target set within GBO enabled them to plan future sessions with the intended outcome in mind, *"So, once I'd figured out their target, it gave me quite a clear plan of what worksheets and workbooks I wanted to work from. So, the targets helped me to integrate their work to their target" [ELSA 6]*. ELSAs were able to use the goal as a basis for their planning, *"So, I did set things to do each week based on when we made a goal" [ELSA 1]*.

This planning was also supported by the regular feedback from students as part of GBO. Reviewing the target weekly with the student meant ELSAs could adjust their planning accordingly to suit the student they were working with:

*Whereas now, because we look at it each week, it's made me evaluate what I do each week, and what I need to do. And, it's made me think, today those worksheets didn't work.*

*I'll never give her worksheets again. So, I've had to think of something else. Whereas previously I may have done a worksheet and a child might have thought, 'I'm not loving this,' but I might have gone back in with another work sheet.*  
[ELSA 3]

Additionally, the GBO approach was felt to support their record keeping within the intervention, the paperwork was helpful in “*keeping a log*” [ELSA 4] of the work they were doing, and was perceived to be quick, “*My sessions could end, and I could quickly write it up and evaluate it*” [ELSA 2].

#### GBO captures student progress

The GBO documentation was felt to capture students' experiences within the intervention. The format of reviewing progress weekly better captured the nuances of change over time compared to other means of evaluating:

*I think this is better at capturing a process, bit by bit, because it can show you week-by-week the changes that they've had. And also, it's very good at tracking how they've been over a prolonged time. Whereas, if you have one at the start and one at the end, it doesn't capture all that middle information.*  
[ELSA 6]

Additionally, the qualitative descriptors were felt to be useful to explain the scaling and help illuminate the scores, “*Also, getting them to explain why, because quite often you have the scale without any of the sentences underneath*” [ELSA 6].

This approach also enabled ELSAs to explore the change process with the student by drawing comparisons to earlier scores in the intervention. This was perceived by some to help students notice their own emotions through the course of the intervention, “*It was nice for him to compare as well. He could track his own feelings and how he was*” [ELSA 7]. This comparison was also perceived to support

students to recognise their progress, *“But you can see, ‘I can compare it to that, and I am moving forward. I’m not going backwards. I am doing well.’ And (the student) was like, ‘Yes, I am, I’m doing OK, aren’t I?’”* [ELSA 3].

Furthermore, the visual nature of the GBO tracking document was perceived to support the student in identifying the progress they were making within ELSA. This was noticed by ELSAs, *“I’ve really enjoyed the fact we can pick out the positives and mark out the achievements”* [ELSA 3], and students, *“I think that helped because then instead of just having these sessions every week, I’m acknowledging it even further that it’s helping me”* [Student 2]. As a result, this provided ELSAs with a *“sense of achieving something”* [ELSA 2] within their sessions, as well as providing students with this, *“They can get something, they get that little sense of achievement which will come into their self-esteem and things”* [ELSA 5].

ELSAs also felt that the change captured using the GBO tracking sheet could be shared with others to evidence the impact of the intervention as it generates *“data at the end to show the school”* [ELSA 1] and was *“good for feedback to the wider school”* [ELSA 4]. This allowed them to show that *“there’s progress being made with ELSA as an intervention in school”* [ELSA 3].

#### *GBO gave students a sense of agency*

A key strength highlighted in the interview data about the Goal Based Outcome approach is that it is inherently student led. As a result, students felt that setting a Goal Based Outcome gave them a sense of control over the intervention, remarking that, *“It was the goal that I felt I wanted”* [Student 1]. The key outcomes from the intervention were felt by students to be positive as they were in line with their priorities, *“I think, like I said, how it was my priority to get better coping mechanisms. I think one*

*of the best parts that's come out of it was the fact that I have found better coping mechanisms" [Student 2].*

In turn, this was helpful to ELSAs, *"Actually turning it on its head and thinking about the student setting the target is very useful" [ELSA 5].* Additionally, the solution-focused questions, which were discussed in the training, facilitated the ELSAs to give students a sense of agency over the intervention:

*This is definitely giving the student control. I think asking them those questions at the start about what they would like to be different and if they had a wish. If they woke up the next morning and things could be different. What would it be? Those sorts of questions, I feel like it is giving them the control. [ELSA 2]*

This concept of giving students a sense of agency over their target was perceived by some to be novel within the ELSA intervention. When talking about how this was different to previous methods, one ELSA said, *"It was different, in a case of working with the child and them coming up with the goal" [ELSA 7].* Another expressed that this was something they would continue using in their practice, *"Definitely asking the student [to have some input regarding the outcome of the intervention], not using the referrer and their summary, which I did before. Now, I can't believe I did that. I just can't believe I did that" [ELSA 1].* Furthermore, it was felt to be helpful to encourage this approach in the ELSA training, *"But actually stop, in the training, and think, 'Hang on, what about the students?'"* as it is *"fundamental" [ELSA 5]* to seek student views on the goal.

#### Relevance of GBO to the ELSA role

This subtheme highlights ELSAs' perceptions that the GBO approach is *"very similar" [ELSA 7]* to approaches they have used previously, and they could *"see the*



*relevance*” [ELSA 1] to the role. The majority of ELSAs were already setting targets, using scaling, and seeking student views in their role.

Interview data captured the similarities and differences of GBO compared to the existing scaling used by some ELSAs to evaluate the intervention, “*So, what do they feel their need is? On a scale of 1 to 10. I’d do that at the beginning and the end*” [ELSA 6]. The majority were also already using targets to support their sessions, “*I would set a SMART target*” [ELSA 4] and “*would speak to the student and have a little look of what area they thought they needed*” [ELSA 3]. Furthermore, many of the ELSAs indicated that they would seek student views as part of the session, for example, “*Discussing that with the student. I used to give them quite an open question of, ‘Oh, why do you think you’re here for ELSA? What do you think?’*” [ELSA 6].

Furthermore, one ELSA who had not managed to try using GBO with a student at the time of interview felt it to be important that the approach fits alongside existing structures within ELSA, “*Rather than change anything, I need to implement it with what we’re already doing*” [ELSA 8]. One ELSA who had utilised the approach remarked that, “*I think the goal tracking helped. I wouldn’t say it change the way I worked*” [ELSA 6], indicating that in practice it is possible for the approach to fit alongside what ELSAs are already doing.

GBO was also perceived by some to be a flexible approach. “*They were SMART, and it was achievable, and it was measurable, but it just didn’t seem so rigid. It was more flexible to get the same outcome. And I enjoyed working in that way much more*” [ELSA 3]. This indicates that the approach is relevant to the SMART target setting encouraged in the ELSA training, but that it provided more flexibility as it was possible to “*tweak it a little bit*” [ELSA 7].

### Accessibility of GBO for students and ELSAs

A clear strength of the approach was that it was perceived by the participants to be easy for students and ELSAs to access. Students themselves considered it to be uncomplicated to use, *“It’s not that complicated to be honest. It was just think to myself, ‘Okay yes. I’ve got a goal.’ Yeah, it wasn’t that complicated.”* [Student 3], and another said *“I don’t think anything was necessarily difficult about it.”* [Student 4]. It was felt by one ELSA that the Goal Based Outcome tracking sheet was *“more digestible for the student”* compared to other approaches that have *“lots of writing on them”* [ELSA 7] and was more *“student friendly”* [ELSA 3]. Some of the ELSAs felt that it was more appropriate for secondary-aged students compared to other resources they have used:

*I like this more than the ELSA paperwork and the things that I’ve been given previously for secondary school because they were very primary school based. And, I find at times I can’t motivate and involve them in some of them. So, I have to adapt it for an older age group... you have to bring it up to today, and this did because some of the paperwork that I do is quite immature in a sense. So, yes. The paperwork has been great. [ELSA 4]*

Furthermore, this approach was easy for the ELSAs to use as well as the students. One ELSA remarked *“You could just fill it out and go with it. So, that was quite handy”* and it was described as *“pretty straightforward”* [ELSA 7]. The Goal Based Outcome tracking sheet was considered simple to use for ELSAs, *“I liked the tracking sheet. And, I think for me, selfishly, it is because the sheet made it simple for us to track”* [ELSA 3], with another ELSA describing the tool as *“lovely and clear”* [ELSA 6].

### GBO facilitates ELSA and student reflection

Another perceived strength of the approach was that GBO facilitated a space for ELSA and students to reflect on the intervention and themselves. For ELSAs, the Goal Based Outcome facilitated reflections on the activities within the sessions and their own practice as an ELSA and how this could be adapted: *“I keep using the word reflecting on your practice, isn’t it? And get you thinking, ‘OK yes, we could be doing this a bit differently. Yes, that works, but this could work better”* [ELSA 5]. The regularity of this reflection was felt by one ELSA to be beneficial to the student they were working with, compared to how they were working previously:

*Whereas now, if you evaluate each week, you’re looking at it and you’re doing the right thing for that person for the next time you’re together, rather than that person doing it, all that work, and someone else benefits from the changes I make in my own practice.* [ELSA 3]

This participant also added, *“Perhaps I wasn’t reflecting on my own practice quite so often previously”* [ELSA 3]. Furthermore, ELSAs considered it *“important to reflect”*, and some of the ELSAs comments indicate that regular feedback via the use of GBO enabled them to do this.

For students, some of the interview comments reflected how GBO facilitated a space for reflection for them, with one student sharing how they were reflecting on feelings when using the Goal Based Outcome scaling, *“I just thought to myself, ‘How do you feel?’”* [Student 3]. Another student shared that this approach created a space to reflect on learning throughout the intervention, *“It was setting something that I had to think about, and I discovered new things. So, it helped me quite a bit because I could use the things that I had discovered about myself”* [Student 4]. ELSAs also noticed that this space enables students to reflect, *“He particularly liked it because it*

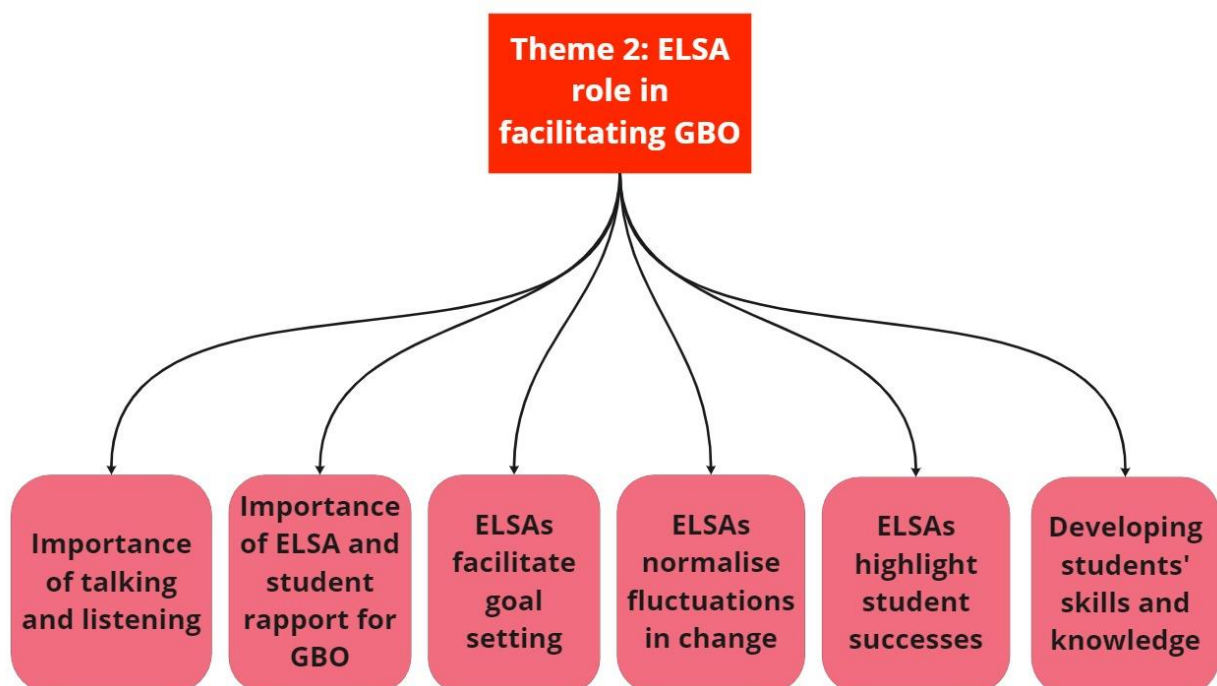
was just time for him to reflect and think about things. And, giving him time to process it rather than, 'I need an answer now'" [ELSA 7], which they saw as positive. This suggests that the use of GBO by ELSAs in their practice creates important space for students to reflect on their progress towards a co-constructed goal.

#### 4.3.2 Theme 2: ELSA role in facilitating Goal Based Outcomes

This theme is concerned with how the ELSA role was perceived in terms of facilitating GBO. Subthemes illustrate the importance of talking and listening and developing rapport with students. Additionally, this theme considers the ELSAs' role in facilitating the setting of goals, supporting the tracking of goals through highlighting progress and normalising fluctuations in change, as well as helping students to make progress towards their goal.

**Figure 12**

*Theme 2: Thematic Map*



miro

### Importance of talking and listening

ELSAs interviewed identified that students talking and feeling listened to was an important element of the ELSA intervention in secondary settings:

*Quite often there is a lot of value in just talking...sometimes the biggest value comes from just a young person being listened to. They just want to be listened to. They don't want it fixed. They just want someone they can talk to who will listen and attune and validate. [ELSA 1]*

ELSAs also identified the importance of talking to build rapport with students and helping them to feel comfortable with the ELSA in the first session:

*It's a case of walking around the school and talking to them that way if they feel more comfortable, I'll do that. It's just more talking to them. So, they get to know me, I get to know them a little bit. There's nothing heavy about it. [ELSA 7]*

ELSAs indicated that they made it clear to students that they were listening to them during the sessions, which facilitated this rapport. One ELSA reflected on telling a student, *"We're listening to you, you told me that and I want to support you"* [ELSA 5]. Talking with the ELSA was also highlighted by students as a space to offload their emotions and *"rant"* [Student 2]. Another student highlighted that this opportunity to offload was important, *"It's just a good place for me to just get some things off my chest... I just think having a chat, talking about it. I think that may have been the biggest factor to helping me"* [Student 3].

Furthermore, some students interviewed indicated they felt safe and able to trust the ELSA they were working with, and this was important within the intervention, *"Because I trust Miss. If it was a teacher, I didn't trust I probably wouldn't have done as well"* [Student 4]. Another student highlighted that they felt safe and heard within

the sessions, *“I could finally just talk without any judgement... I was having actual help with something, and I was able to talk and talk to someone instead of having someone talk at me” [Student 2].*

#### Importance of ELSA and student rapport for GBO

Developing rapport was also perceived to be important when using GBO, with some ELSAs indicating that rapport is important before setting a goal, and that this can take time, *“And, you know, it (setting a goal) wouldn't be week one, it wouldn't be week two, it might be week three or four, of building up that relationship and doing it, it's getting to know your students” [ELSA 5].* It was considered by one ELSA that this can impinge on setting an appropriate goal with a student if the ELSA does not have a relationship with them, *“Making it personalised for that young person, I find that quite challenging at times. Especially in the early days when you don't know somebody” [ELSA 4].*

Another theme within the data indicated that utilising a Goal Based Outcome approach within ELSA contributed to the building of rapport with students, as it enabled them to *“look back (at the paperwork) and show, ‘I've listened to you’” [ELSA 5].* ELSAs referenced that using solution-focused questions supported students to *“open up about what they would like to be different” [ELSA 1].* Another commented that using a solution focused question meant *“he just sat there, and... it all poured out” [ELSA 5].*

#### ELSAs facilitate goal setting

To set the goal, ELSAs indicated that they have a role in ensuring that students understood the purpose of the intervention:

*It (the goal) always just comes from a conversation about, you know, an honest conversation... explain what my role is, and what I've previously helped students with. I always give*

*them a little bit of an outline of the kind of stuff I've done before. [ELSA 6]*

ELSAs also mentioned that they needed to explain what GBO are, which some found challenging, *“After you'd explained it and explained it and explained it, because they do forget, and they do wonder what it all means” [ELSA 4]*. However, others felt this explanation was facilitated by their confidence in the approach, *“I felt quite confident in it, so I think then you make the child feel more at ease and just explaining to them” [ELSA 7]*.

Data from interviews with the students indicated that setting a goal was something they found challenging, *“Also the fact that I'm just not really the type of person to-, I don't know how to explain it, but come up with these sort of things (a goal)” [Student 2]*. Students indicated that this is not something they find easy, *“At first, I couldn't think of one because I'm very bad when it comes to things like that” [Student 4]*.

As well as developing rapport, solution focused questions were perceived as useful for ELSAs in initially exploring a goal and giving student ownership of this:

*On this one (GBO) we've had a lot more input to have a look at the target and I've used the different questions. 'If I've got a magic wand and I could change it, what would we be changing?' That opens up a whole new world, because then they're exploring it themselves, aren't they? And that's the important part of it. [ELSA 3]*

Interviews with ELSAs also indicated that it could be challenging at times to seek students' aspirations. One ELSA expressed that their aspirations could be unclear, *“Sometimes they are too vague. The students are too vague or they're unable to identify something themselves... I think one student just said they felt bad” [ELSA*

1]. An emphasis was placed on the ELSA and student collaborating to set a goal within GBO and “*coming up with something together*” [ELSA 7].

When talking about deciding on a goal, ELSAs talked about their role to understand student needs. Some ELSAs highlighted a need to gather more information about the student after the referral to help them understand what support might be beneficial, with some completing observations of students to try and understand their needs, “*I would then observe that child and try and identify what those behaviours that they were seeing in their classroom were trying to give them, the children*” [ELSA 4]. Other ELSAs utilised questionnaires and referral forms to understand the students’ needs, “*The form I had before, yes they’re handy at getting all the information*” [ELSA 7]. Some ELSAs would further their understanding through speaking to students, “*So, then you would do the work with the students to see why they weren’t staying in (lessons)*” [ELSA 3]. It was indicated by one ELSA that gathering information about the student is still helpful when using a Goal Based Outcome approach, “*I still get that information*” [ELSA 1].

A key part of facilitating goal setting was managing student expectations and narrowing down the goal into manageable steps. One ELSA indicated that some goals can be “*something really big in the future*” [ELSA 5], and that ELSAs needed to support students to develop a more focused goal by helping them to consider “*how they would achieve this, or what it would look like*” [ELSA 4]. Some reflected on how they unpicked the goal, “*this is the goal and then unpicking that into smaller steps*” [ELSA 5]. One student reflected on this during the interview and the benefit this had, “*It helped me to realise how I could get to it (the goal) and did it in little bits*” [Student 1].



Furthermore, ELSAs expressed that they also needed to be careful when setting goals to ensure that this was achievable, in line with the 'A' of 'SMART' target setting, and how they needed to focus on “*things that maybe we can control*” [ELSA 1]. This was particularly important as failing to achieve the goal was felt to have potential negative repercussions for the student:

*If he doesn't get there it's going to be so detrimental to his self-esteem... So, he set a goal, but I've got to be really careful. You know, it's something to aim for, it's a possibility, it's not a dead set. Although, if he doesn't make it, it would be really detrimental to him. [ELSA 5]*

Interviews indicated that ELSAs play a key role in facilitating goal setting with students and navigating the potential challenges involved in this.

#### ELSAs normalise fluctuations in change

Interview data indicated that when tracking progress within GBO the scaling can fluctuate each week, “*Sometimes you go up, and sometimes you come down. And then, sometimes you fly to the top*” [ELSA 7]. As can be seen in Section 4.2, students do not always make it to 10 on a scale. Some students found this challenging to manage. One ELSA reflected on a student's comments, “*And he was like, 'I'm not a 10. I'm not a 10'* [ELSA 7]. Another ELSA reflected on whether this may have an impact on students:

*I think I worry about how they feel about themselves as well when we do these ratings. Because, I think that, you know, if you've got a rating and they're looking at the rating, how do they feel if it's still low, or lower than the week before? What kind of impact does that have on them? [ELSA 1]*

Therefore, a key role of the ELSA within Goal Based Outcome was to reassure and normalise this fluctuation in progress, “*They do seem to accept it. I think I'm always*

*quite upbeat about it and tell them it's natural and it's normal, you know" [ELSA 1].*

Findings from the students indicate that they are aware that progress can fluctuate, *"Oh yes, sometimes it went up, sometimes it went down" [Student 3].*

### ELSAs highlight student success

As well as normalising fluctuations, a key role for ELSAs within GBO was to help students to notice successes within their week. One student identified their tendency to focus on the negative, *"I found the 1 to 10 things quite hard at first because I was always finding it really hard to look back on my week and see it as anything other than negative" [Student 2].* One ELSA said, *"I think any little wins they forget because of the obstacles that they come across" [ELSA 1].* ELSAs suggested they were able to use scaling and the progress on the scales to help students notice positive change:

*So, when we had a look at it, and I went through, 'Well, that's a five so that's a real positive. That's a real positive, that's a real positive.' And they were like, 'Oh yes, I haven't had a really bad week, I've felt like I've had a really bad week, but seeing it written down and seeing it there. I haven't had a bad week'. [ELSA 3]*

Moreover, the interview findings indicate that students can find it difficult to see progress or feel as though they should have *"made more" [Student 4].* Therefore, an element of the ELSA role within GBO could be to remind them or support them in noticing what has gone well.

### Developing students' skills and knowledge

Another key aspect of the role was supporting students in making progress towards their goals through teaching or sharing strategies to support children, *"I gave him a lot more strategies that he was going to keep using" [ELSA 7].* Interview data

indicated that part of this role in teaching strategies is to reassure students that not all strategies are successful, and to focus on finding out what works for each child:

*And I said to him, 'The strategies I give you, we have to try and use them when you feel absolutely calm and everything is OK. And what happens is, if we find that they're not for you, and they're not working, that's absolutely fine. We just go back to the drawing board and we think of another strategy. As not everything is going to be for you'. [ELSA 2]*

In the interviews, ELSAs indicated that students needed opportunities to practise these skills to help them retain what they had learnt in the ELSA sessions:

*It's like anything you get better with practice. So, doing a little six-week session, or 10 weeks, they feel like you're modelling and guiding them for those ten weeks, then they're on their own and it just slips away, or they forget. [ELSA 1]*

In the interviews, students spoke about the strategies they had been taught as being helpful to them in terms of making progress, *"Maybe the methods have helped, and being told what I could have done in those situations"* [Student 3], with another student indicating that these were novel, *"A lot of the times it was stuff I would've never have thought about before"* [Student 4]. It was also noticed by ELSAs that some students were applying these skills to real-life situations, *"The techniques that I'd given him were really helping him in the performance, because when he was getting stressed and stuff... he was able to use some of the techniques for that"* [ELSA 7].

Additionally, ELSA activities were felt to develop students' understanding of their emotions, which was noticed by ELSAs, *"The more he was getting an understanding about himself and what those physiological symptoms of anger were, he was becoming more aware of it"* [ELSA 4], and the students, *"We would do a blob*

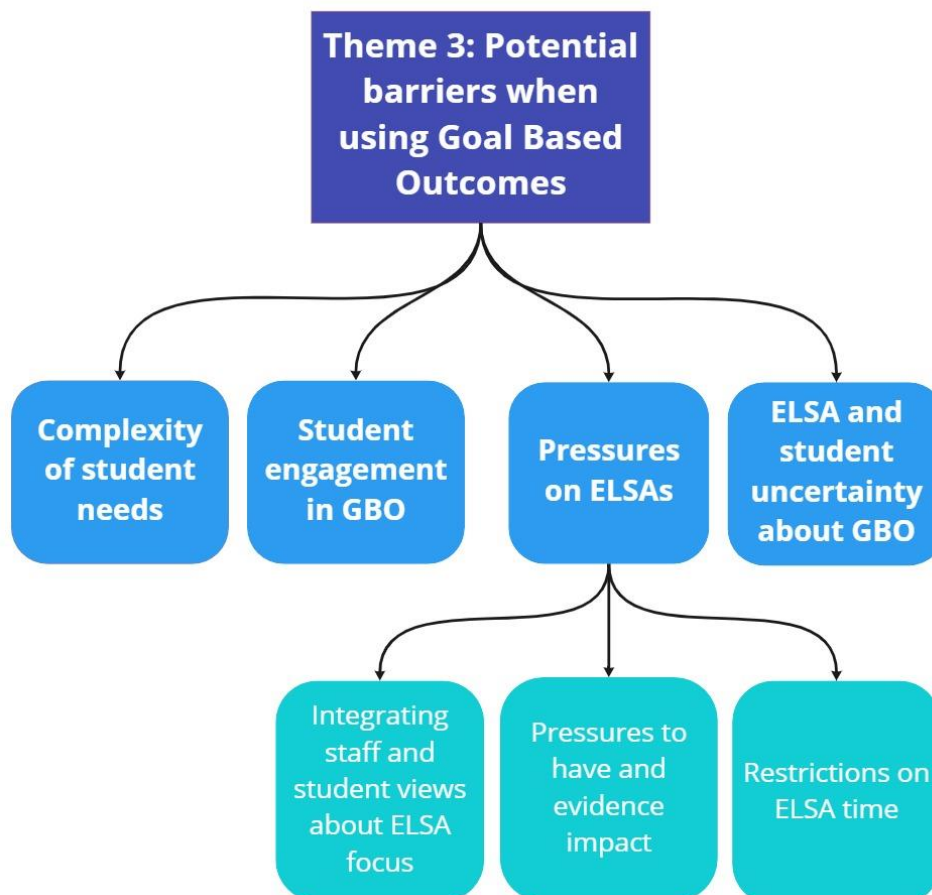
tree which is little men on a tree, and you would colour them in. I think that really helped a lot, because I have trouble identifying how I feel” [Student 2].

### 4.3.3 Theme 3: Potential Barriers when using Goal Based Outcomes

This theme is concerned with the potential challenges and barriers encountered by ELSAs and students when utilising GBO as part of ELSA. ELSAs highlighted challenges with the complexity of student needs, their readiness for change, and the pressures on them in their role that can impact on GBO. Finally, both students and ELSAs highlighted some uncertainty around using GBO in practice, which was a barrier.

**Figure 13**

*Theme 3: Thematic Map*



### Complexity of student needs

A key subtheme within the data, and a potential barrier to the use of GBO, was the complexity of student needs. ELSAs referenced working with students experiencing “*depression*” “*self-harm*” and “*PDA*” (Pathological Demand Avoidance). Additionally, some children had complex backgrounds or were experiencing “*bereavement*” [ELSA 5] which made it challenging for one ELSA to identify a student to be involved in this research, “*I found it difficult, and I put that down to students I was seeing with the added layer of complications, or background being complicated at the time. And I thought, ‘Oh, that just doesn’t seem the right time.’*” [ELSA 5]. Furthermore, some of the ELSAs working with students felt it necessary to seek further support from other agencies as their needs were “*just a bit bigger than me*” [ELSA 7]. Some ELSAs found that using GBO was a way of signalling that further support was needed:

Maybe at the end of this it's important to let people know that they need to be passed to, you know, a professional to carry on some work with them that, ELSA, it's been something for them, someone to listen to them, but they actually do need to get some professional help. [ELSA 1]

As a result of the complexity of student needs, some ELSAs felt it was difficult to know the area of focus, and therefore some students needed “*two programmes rather than one*” [ELSA 1]. This can put additional pressures on ELSAs when delivering the intervention, with one ELSA highlighting, “*I suppose I was trying to tick too many boxes, this is the bit I find a bit tricky and I suppose with ELSA, you know, we can’t work on everything*” [ELSA 2]. This highlights the narrow focus for ELSA which was a theme within the interviews. However, some ELSAs felt that setting goals was important in their role given students can have a variety of needs, “*I’m at a special school, so our students’ needs have quite spikey profiles... I think goal based or setting*

*our SMART targets, having a focus, I feel in my role as an ELSA is important” [ELSA 5].*

### Student engagement in GBO

Additional to complexity of needs, ELSAs identified that students’ readiness to change was a potential barrier to GBO, *“Certain students...are hesitant to change and help” [ELSA 6].* During interviews ELSAs highlighted a variation in their engagement in the ELSA intervention which could impact goal setting:

*It’s not easy. I don’t find it easy (setting a goal), because you’re working with that young person to try and do that, and they’re not always receptive, or even aware of what it is they should be doing. So, there’s a lot of prompting going on.*  
[ELSA 4]

ELSAs indicated that they need to be cautious and focus on building rapport and not putting too much pressure on them, *“It’s going with the child, you don’t want to push anything” [ELSA 7].*

This readiness to change and receive support was felt to impact on the evaluation tools used. When talking about evaluating the intervention, one ELSA said, *“What I think you often see with students that don’t want to access support for whatever reason that is, they’re not ready to access support. Of course, they’re (questionnaires for evaluation) completely skewed” [ELSA 8].* Another ELSA commented that the success of GBO was dependent on *the “type of student you had”* and ensuring that there was the *“right target” [ELSA 6].*

As noted in Section 4.2.5, not all students engaged with the scaling within GBO. This was also reflected in comments from students during interviews. One student shared that, *“It probably would’ve been better if I’d actually tried and didn’t just tick*

*random numbers,” [Student 4].* However, other students’ comments indicated that they were ready for the support and that the process may have been challenging if they were not ready to change:

*I think, maybe because before the sessions I wasn’t really identifying the fact that I needed help. Or, needed assistance with how I felt. So, I think coming up with it (the goal) could’ve been difficult because I didn’t want to accept that I needed it. [Student 2]*

This quote also touches on the challenge ELSAs faced in setting goals in terms of students’ awareness of their needs. This was another factor that was perceived to act as a barrier to the success of GBO. For some ELSAs, students not knowing what would be helpful for them made setting a goal within the sessions a challenge, “*We couldn’t really pick out what it was. They feel bad at home. They sometimes feel bad at school*” [ELSA 1]. This indicates that students were not always aware of what they needed support with. This links back to the ELSA role in facilitating GBO (See 4.3.2), and a potential barrier to this is students’ self-awareness. When students had this awareness, it made the process easier for ELSAs, “*I don’t think they’ll all be as straightforward as that. But, with him, he knew what he needed*” [ELSA 7]. When interviewing students, it was clear some of them had an awareness of their own needs, “*Sometimes my self-esteem can be low... and then I say anger issues, pretty obvious, I can harm other people when I’m angry and I need to just stay calm overall*” [Student 3]. This appeared to facilitate the students in setting a goal as Student 3 described the process as “*not that complicated*”. Moreover, the complexity of students’ needs, and their awareness and readiness to change appeared to be a potential barrier to implementing GBO.

### Pressures on ELSAs

Another emerging theme within the barriers to GBO were the perceived external pressures on ELSAs. Some of these pressures were internal anxieties about supporting students to make change happen, but others felt there were external pressures on them, such as evidencing impact and having the appropriate tools to do so.

### *Integrating staff and student views about ELSA focus*

Some ELSAs reflected on how they were carrying out their role prior to learning about GBO, the majority of whom reported that the focus for the intervention came from the member of staff who referred the student for the support, *“I would go with whatever the pastoral or the SENCo told me the issue was” [ELSA 1]*. However, some of the ELSAs reported that staff are not always clear about the purpose of the ELSA role:

*Some teachers are very familiar with ELSA. You get others, which perhaps not. You know, (they) might think, ‘Oh gosh, they need ELSA’....and they say, ‘Oh yes, this person needs counselling’ and I think, ‘Right, you just don’t know what ELSA is about’. [ELSA 5]*

Some comments indicated that ELSAs were led by what the other members of staff suggested, and the ELSA subsequently tried to integrate this as part of the session:

*Sometimes people would say, ‘They find this particularly difficult.’ So, I would try and incorporate a session or two where we talked about that as well... and try and marry that up with the target I had chosen as well. [ELSA 2]*



However, when talking about GBO there was a mixed view in terms of whether the student target matched staff referral for ELSA. In some cases, the student's aspiration was different to the reason they were referred:

*When I was asked to see him, people said he was struggling to manage his emotions and there were anger issues, but mostly at home. But when I spoke to him, he told me it was about how he's feeling, he struggles when he's feeling sad. [ELSA 1]*

Other ELSAs found that the GBO that students decided upon matched the staff aspirations, *"actually, all of them came up with a target that matched what their teacher had put them forward for as well. So, that was quite nice"* [ELSA 6]. Moreover, this suggests that integrating staff perceptions of need within GBO may be a barrier for ELSAs to navigate when using GBO.

#### *Pressures to have and evidence impact*

ELSAs within this study also indicated feelings of pressure to have an impact on students through the intervention. For some this was coming from staff pressure to see changes in student behaviour:

*Because it had come in from teacher referral quite often, or leadership referrals.... It could've been something that was like, 'They need to stay in class all of the time.' I can't guarantee that they'll stay in class all of the time. [ELSA 4]*

For others, it appeared to be an internal pressure to see students make progress, *"I need her to be confident"* [ELSA 3]. Additionally, some ELSAs expressed they felt this pressure when using GBO, *"I'm looking, I'm feeling the pressure of seeing those ratings go up"* [ELSA 1], but others noted that this decision on progress was

down to the students and out of ELSA control, “*you can’t force them to change their number*” [ELSA 6].

However, another subtheme within the data suggests that the changes on the scale within GBO were related to external factors for the student and not always to do with the target itself:

*I think that something else might be happening in their diary, in their day. They might have an appointment coming up. I suppose it's just things in life come up and it just makes you feel bad on that day. [ELSA 1]*

This was reflected by some of the students in the interviews when speaking about scaling, “*I think it depended on what the week was like overall, who was in my friends and that*” [Student 1]. This suggests that the scores on the scaling in GBO can be influenced by how they are feeling more generally or external factors and may not always be related to the goal.

Alongside the pressure of making an impact was the theme about pressure to evidence this change. Many of the ELSAs referred to the need to collect data about the impact of ELSA in their school, “*we needed to have some sort of evidence of what had gone on*” [ELSA 3]. Another said this was a pressure from their school, “*the school does like you to have data at the end of a session, end of a programme*” [ELSA 1].

Further to this pressure to gather evidence, some ELSAs reflected on the limitations of the current means of collecting data. There was a mixture of approaches that ELSAs adopted to evaluate the impact. Some were gathering qualitative feedback from staff and students, “*At the end of it I would send e-mails to staff and say, ‘Has there been a change? Can we notice any difference?’ So, I would have that teacher feedback*” [ELSA 3], and some were gathering pre- and post-measures using

questionnaires, *“Before I just used a pre- and post-questionnaire”* [ELSA 6]. ELSAs reflected on the challenges of obtaining feedback from staff and the limited information some available questionnaires provided. When discussing the SDQ, one ELSA reflected, *“I think we need to remember it’s a very broad overview... I think it gives an indication, I wouldn’t say they’re particularly accurate,”* [ELSA 8]. Additionally, ELSAs spoke about the demand characteristics of using evaluation tools, *“If students don’t want support, they’re bright enough to realise they just answer what they think we want to hear”* [ELSA 8]. This was also considered by one ELSA to be a potential barrier in GBO, *“I think we have to bear in mind that there could be a possibility that somebody is scoring it because they feel they should go in that direction”* [ELSA 2].

#### *Restrictions on ELSA time*

The final pressure on ELSAs was the demands of time available to them as an ELSA. Several ELSAs referenced having to cover other more prioritised roles within the school due to illness:

*We’ve had a lot of staff illness. So, I’ve been called to cover what we call essential lessons, where people quite often have a physical disability or they have learning needs which require a teaching assistant in the room, and some of them with medical needs. So, it’s just my time’s been so stretched.*  
[ELSA 1]

Others were providing reactive support to high-need students within the school, *“It’s difficult because if something comes in over the weekend, or somebody has self-harmed that morning, it’s just always trying to get that balance”* [ELSA 8]. Furthermore, student absence was also cited as a challenge in terms of completing ELSA work, *“It’s been a bit in and out because he’s not been here”* [ELSA 4]. For some ELSAs the lack of time available was a barrier to them engaging in research, when talking about the

challenges involved in data collection one ELSA said, *“I absolutely wish that I’d had more time” [ELSA 8].*

### ELSA and student uncertainty about GBO

A key theme that emerged within the data was ELSAs’ confidence in utilising a new approach to evaluation. A particular element of GBO that ELSAs found challenging was the setting of targets with the young people, *“Just coming up with the goal really, the target. That’s something even before this, it’s just, ‘What should this target be?’ Making it personalised for that young person, I find that quite challenging at times” [ELSA 4].* Several ELSAs commented on their limited confidence in setting targets in general and felt they needed to practise this skill, *“I still don’t feel 100% confident with SMART targets, or the goal based targets because I don’t think I’ve had enough practice yet” [ELSA 1].* The interviews indicated that ELSAs felt uncertainty about whether they were setting targets correctly, *“Have I got it right? Am I doing it right? Is that right for the student? More playing on my own emotions” [ELSA 7].* Furthermore, some of the ELSAs who managed to collect data for the study felt that the targets they had set with students were *“woolly” [ELSA 2]* and *“could’ve been worded better” [ELSA 3].*

As highlighted in section 4.2, some students found engaging with the scaling element of GBO challenging. This was noticed by some of the ELSAs within the interviews:

*The times that he didn’t want to score, I just left it that he didn’t want to score and that’s absolutely fine. Rather than push it and, you know, break down any trust that he had had with me or relationship. We just left it because I know that he finds that incredibly difficult. [ELSA 2]*

In the interviews some students reflected on finding scaling difficult in terms of deciding on a number:

*Just having to choose an exact number. It's kind of hard because it's more of a general thing for me. So, I wouldn't be able to put into one particular number. It would be a mixture. So, say 7 to 9 or something. I wouldn't pick an exact number.*  
[Student 4]

This challenge is something for ELSAs to be aware of when utilising a Goal Based Outcome approach, as students may require support and practice when deciding on a number and explaining this.

#### **4.3.4 Summary of Thematic Analysis**

Findings from the interviews indicate that there were many identified strengths in using the GBO approach. GBO were felt to provide ELSAs with focus and clarity which supports their organisation. The GBO tracking sheet was considered accessible and supported ELSAs to share with others what had been happening in the intervention. Additionally, the focus on the goals being student led and based on their aspirations was favoured by ELSAs and students. However, in practice, ELSAs felt that they did not find GBO straightforward to use, and this was also reflected in the case outlines. An important finding was that the GBO tracking data often reflected students' general experiences at the time, rather than capturing their progress towards a goal. The ELSAs and students felt uncertainty and a lack of confidence around the setting and tracking of goals. This is a key challenge considering ELSAs were felt to play an important role in facilitating this process, which was also identified in the interviews.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### **5.1 Key Findings in Relation to Research Questions**

The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which idiographic (GBO) and standardised measures (SDQ and ELC) can be used as part of the ELSA intervention with secondary-aged children to document progress, and to explore the experiences and views of ELSAs and students in using GBO in this context. Findings will be considered in relation to the three research questions. Strengths and limitations of the study and design will be discussed, and the implications of the research findings for EP and ELSA practice will be considered.

Overall, drawing firm conclusions from the GBO and standardised data is difficult due to the challenges of recruiting participants, participant attrition and the resulting paucity of the data set. When reviewing this discussion, it is important to bear in mind the research occurred at a particularly difficult time for schools in terms of COVID-19, as discussed in Section 3.5. Involvement in the study required ELSAs to have available time to recruit participants and collect pre- and post-intervention measures alongside their typical ELSA duties. In the interviews, some participating ELSAs highlighted that this is time they did not have, as they were covering staff absence from COVID-19 related illness and providing support for a high volume of students. This context is important to consider as it will have impacted on the findings presented here.

**5.1.1 RQ 1: To what extent can an idiographic measure (Goal Based Outcomes) be utilised as part of an ELSA intervention to document progress for secondary-aged students?**

This section will consider how GBO can be utilised to document progress for students taking part in ELSA. The quantitative scaling score and the qualitative descriptors provided using the GBO Weekly Tracking Form ([Appendix E](#)) are both considered, alongside some pertinent comments from interviews with ELSAs and students.

The quantitative scaling scores from the GBO data in Section 4.1 highlight that most students participating in this study made small steps of progress towards their target. However, these scores fluctuated over the course of the sessions, with some students reverting to their initial score at the end of data collection. The qualitative descriptors for the GBO scoring highlighted that the students' reasons for change were often influenced by their experiences external to the ELSA sessions, such as challenging peer relationships and difficulties at home. The fluctuation in scoring and the qualitative descriptors reflect the nature of emotional literacy being "*not stable over time*" (Sharp, 2001, p. 14). However, this brings into question whether the GBO data is a valid documentation of students' progress towards their target, or if it captures their experiences more generally over the course of their participation in ELSA. This may have been due to the way in which ELSAs reviewed the goals with students, reviewing progress more generally rather than focusing specifically on the target in question. Conversely, this issue may have been due to the goals set lacking sufficient clarity to enable the tracking to be more specific.

It is of note that none of the students 'met' their target and reached a score of 10. However, this is common in the use of GBO, and previous research has indicated that a change of 2.8 on the scale is considered reliable change (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015). Therefore, this potentially indicates a lack of clarity and specificity about the goal and whether it was deemed by students to be achievable. The GBO approach

hinges on the setting of an appropriate target (Law & Jacob, 2013). ELSAs reflected in interviews that the GBO targets set were sometimes vague and in some cases student aspirations were perceived to be difficult to achieve. During the GBO training, the researcher outlined the importance of ELSAs drawing on the principles of SMART targets when setting a goal. However, more emphasis was placed on the goal being student led, in line with the Law and Jacob (2013) guidance around setting GBO. Participants reflected positively on the sense of agency this provided students within the interviews, indicating that being student led was their primary focus for target setting. Therefore, it is likely the SMART principles were less closely followed when co-constructing targets. Additionally, in the interviews and pre-training questionnaire ELSAs indicated that they perceived SMART target setting to be challenging, which is reflected in the general nature of the goals. Considering these challenges, and in line with recommended best practice for ELSAs (Burton & Okai, 2018), it would be beneficial for ELSAs to construct GBO considering the SMART principles. This will ensure the goals set are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound where possible, so that it is clear as to whether they have been met. As such, the training delivered as part of this research should be refined, with further emphasis placed on the importance of the SMART principles when setting GBO.

A novel element of GBO is their ability to document information about the intended outcome and area of focus for the intervention. This is important information which is not possible to capture using standardised measures. Findings in this study demonstrate that the targets identified were in line with the areas covered in the initial ELSA training, summarised in the literature review in Chapter 2, such as managing anger (Student 3) (Breakwell, 1997) and building self-esteem and confidence (Student 1) (Borba, 1989). This suggests that, despite the aforesaid vague nature of the goals,



they were relevant to ELSA, which is in line with the 'R' of the SMART principles. The GBO approach also allowed the length of the ELSA intervention to be documented for each student. For all case outlines, the ELSA intervention lasted 10 or more sessions and many of the ELSAs interviewed highlighted the intention to continue providing check-in sessions following involvement. ELSAs are recommended to work with students for "at least a half term... although the length and frequency of sessions depends on individual circumstances. Many programmes continue for a longer period" (Burton et al., 2010, p. 11). This suggests the length of the intervention captured here is in line with recommended practice. However, previous research indicates managing the ending of the intervention can be a challenge and that ELSAs sometimes have no clear conclusion (Fairall, 2020; Hills, 2016; Wong et al., 2020). The open-ended nature of the sessions captured in this study may have been a result of the goal set not being SMART, due to ELSAs' limited confidence in these principles. As such, it is possible that students perceived they had not met their goal. Setting a SMART goal may support the ending of the intervention by providing a clear criterion for ending, to ensure sessions do not continue indefinitely. Nevertheless, the extended nature and flexibility of the ELSA intervention is a strength of the programme, as the students are able to continue accessing in-house support from the ELSA as required.

The GBO measure also documented that not all students engaged with the idiographic measure in this study, indicating that this is not an approach that can be universally used by ELSAs as it may not always be appropriate or possible depending on the student. Further understanding of why this might be the case will be addressed in subsequent sections.

Overall, the GBO data provide insights into the focus of the ELSA intervention and students' perceived progress towards a collaboratively agreed target. The data

were limited due to the paucity of participants, but overall students perceived themselves to make modest steps of progress towards their goal, which tended to fluctuate over time. The targets documented using this approach were reflected upon by ELSAs to be vague or unachievable at times and did not always adhere to the SMART principles that intend to provide interventions with a clear focus and endpoint. The data indicates the ELSA sessions extended over a half-term, with some ELSAs continuing their involvement after data collection had concluded. Although this is in line with best practice, it reflects the challenges of the open-ended nature of ELSA identified in previous research. Furthermore, the qualitative descriptors indicate that the change in scaling scores captured by GBO was often attributed to more general experiences rather than reflecting specifically on the goal. This demonstrates the continued challenges in objectively documenting change in the ELSA intervention.

**5.1.2 RQ2: To what extent do standardised measures (Emotional Literacy Checklist and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) show changes over time relative to the ELSA intervention for secondary-aged students, and how far do they triangulate with idiographic measures (GBO) and qualitative data?**

In previous research exploring the impact of ELSA, the use of the SDQ and ELC have shown limited or slight changes that were not statistically significant (Ball, 2014; Mann, 2009). A similar pattern is evident within this study, though due to the scarcity of data, statistical tests were not conducted, and as such it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about outcomes for children using these measures. The total score changes on the standardised scales are limited in their ability to detect change at an individual level, let alone across a group of CYP. In clinical settings, standardised measures are not considered to sufficiently capture the difficulties specific to the individual or the area of focus of the intervention (Edbrooke-Childs et al., 2015).

Furthermore, as has been suggested within mental health support settings, the concepts purported to be measured using these standardised questionnaires are often broad, intangible and ill-defined (Jacob et al., 2021). As a result, it is difficult to use them objectively to quantify the impact of ELSA. In CAMHs settings, these measures are sometimes used as an aggregate to draw comparisons on a wider scale but are considered to show little in the way of outcomes at an individual level. In this research, the SDQ and ELC measures did not always reflect the areas of focus for the students but this was possible to capture through the GBO data. For example, Student 1's goal was centred around self-esteem and confidence and the subscales for these measures do not capture this area, which may explain why little change was detected for this student. Therefore, it is recommended that standardised tools are used to complement other means of evaluating outcomes, such as GBO which can be utilised to give more detailed information about the focus for change (Sales et al., 2022). Additionally, once this focus in GBO is agreed ELSAs could use this information to select a more relevant pre- and post-intervention standardised measure. For example, in the case of Student 1 the Self Image Profile (Butler, 2001) or other self-esteem measures may be better placed to detect change.

The author's intention was to triangulate multiple perspectives on student change using standardised measures by recruiting the member of staff who referred the student. However, ELSAs experienced challenges in seeking the views of others, and as a result some of the standardised measures were completed by the ELSA delivering the intervention. In the case of Students 2, 3 and 4 the ELSA completed the SDQ measure, due to challenges with recruitment. As a result, the data are likely to be influenced by demand characteristics as the ELSA has an interest in the success of the intervention. This challenge in obtaining and triangulating feedback has also

been highlighted in previous studies into ELSA (Mann, 2014), as well as in clinical settings using the SDQ (Moran et al., 2012; Batty et al., 2013). As such, in this study it is not possible to draw firm comparisons between the measures across multiple respondents.

Despite these challenges, there were several notable points in terms of the use of standardised measures in this study. For some cases, these measures highlighted the differences in student and staff perspectives on need, which was also an emerging theme within the interview data. For example, the SDQ data for Student 5 indicated that they did not perceive themselves to have a need, whereas staff perceived their needs to be high. Conversely, the pre- and post-data comparisons indicated that the teaching staff who referred the student did not identify positive change using the standardised measures, which was also reflected in the student's GBO scores which did not change. This may reflect the convergent validity that has been documented between GBO and the SDQ as there is a corroboration between the two perspectives (Sales et al., 2022). However, this student struggled to engage with the GBO process and therefore their perception of themselves as having a low level of difficulty on the SDQ may have reflected a limited self-awareness of need or readiness to change. Student readiness was also described by the ELSAs as a challenge when using GBO, which suggests this is a key factor to consider when using any measure to document change in the intervention. Additionally, it is important to consider that the differences in staff and student perspectives may reflect the challenge of capturing the internal nature of emotions (Sharp, 2001). Discrepancies across respondents may be explained by differences in subjective position. Those referring students are primarily basing questionnaire responses on informal experiences and observations. However, some of the areas being reported on may relate to internal thoughts and emotions of

the child, such as the 'Empathy' scale of the ELC, and thus the student would be more aware of these than adults.

In summary, due to the paucity of data gathered in this study it is difficult to draw firm conclusions in relation to the standardised measures. The use of these measures highlights the challenges for ELSAs in terms of gathering feedback and evidencing the nuances of change with such rigid measurement tools. Given previous findings, it is possible this would be the case regardless of the number of participants due to the broad nature of the scales (Hill & Hughes, 2007), and the contrastingly bespoke nature of the intervention. However, the standardised measures were able to provide a sense of students' perspectives on their needs, such as in the case of Student 5. Furthermore, it is possible that GBO could be utilised to draw out a goal and area of focus, which could feed into selecting a more appropriate measure to document change.

### **5.2.3 RQ3: What are the perceptions and experiences of ELSAs and secondary-aged students of using Goal Based Outcomes within an ELSA intervention?**

This section will consider the insights learned from exploring the views and experiences of ELSAs and students who have used GBO in practice. The identified strengths of GBO are highlighted, as well as potential pitfalls and challenges in utilising this approach as part of the ELSA intervention.

One overarching theme from the interviews was the perceived strengths of GBO from the perspective of ELSAs and students taking part in this study (Section 4.3.1). Fundamentally, the GBO approach was perceived by participants to be accessible and uncomplicated to use in practice, which is a key strength. Additionally,

GBO were perceived by ELSAs and students to be helpful in terms of having a goal to work towards, which provided clarity about the purpose of the ELSA intervention. Previous research identified that the purpose of ELSA can be unclear to students in both primary (Wong et al., 2020; Hills, 2016) and secondary school settings (Begley, 2015). Evidence emerging from thematic analysis around the use of GBO in this study suggests that this approach enabled ELSAs to capture information about change over the course of the intervention. This is pertinent given the perceived pressures ELSAs experience in terms of having and evidencing impact, a finding captured in the thematic analysis. Additionally, the goal facilitated the ELSAs' planning for the intervention. Previous research in CAMHs settings has echoed this finding (Pender et al., 2013). Some ELSAs reflected that previously their sessions tended to lack focus and a clear objective. This links to discussions in Section 5.1.1 which highlight the importance of having a SMART goal in terms of providing a clear focus for planning the intervention overall, as well as supporting ELSAs to objectively track change. Overall, this finding indicates the positive influence the GBO approach had on the ELSA intervention.

Despite these strengths, some students presented as not ready to engage with the GBO approach, as highlighted in Section 5.1.1. Student 4's quantitative and qualitative data suggested that they disengaged with GBO after four weeks, and Student 5's data demonstrated a variation in engagement with scaling from week to week and a complete disengagement with providing qualitative descriptors for scores. This issue was discussed by Burton and Okai who highlighted that when students are reluctant to engage, ELSAs should "*attempt to develop a shared understanding of the importance of current behaviours*" (2018, p. 64). This should be done sensitively to avoid any sense of coercion into engaging as this is likely to be resisted against. This

is pertinent to GBO, and the present study's findings indicate that this approach may not be appropriate unless the student is ready to engage or has a sense of awareness that change might be possible. For example, in the case of Student 2 they were experiencing a range of difficulties but were aware of what they wanted to change. They subsequently demonstrated engagement with the approach and perceived its use during the intervention to be positive. Conversely, regarding Student 5, their SDQ data indicated they did not perceive themselves to have a need, and their subsequent engagement in the GBO approach was limited. Interview data highlighted that student readiness and self-awareness of their needs was felt to influence engagement with this approach. Therefore, it is pertinent for ELSAs to consider whether GBO are appropriate for an individual based on their readiness and self-awareness.

This links to another key finding about the need for rapport prior to setting a goal. It is possible students who were not able to engage needed more time to develop trust before exploring their emotional literacy needs. In the interviews, having space to reflect and talk with the ELSA without judgement was important to students in building rapport. It was reported that this took time for some students to develop but predicated the setting of a goal in GBO. This impacted on the length of time it took to set a goal with the student and the subsequent length of the intervention highlighted in section 5.1.1. Additionally, GBO research in clinical practice has emphasised the importance of practitioners taking students lead and being flexible about when goals are reviewed (Bromley & Westwood, 2013). This is reflected in the case of Student 5 in which the ELSA supporting them followed their lead as to when goals were reviewed.

The lack of engagement from students may also have been due to their own confidence and understanding of GBO, which was also an emerging theme in the

interviews. Scaling goals was perceived by students to be difficult. This could be linked to the issue of the general nature of the goals set, which has previously been discussed. However, their engagement may also have been linked to the ELSAs confidence with the GBO approach as previous research has suggested that ELSAs self-efficacy has a considerable impact on the success of the intervention (Grahamslaw, 2010). In the interviews, ELSAs indicated they experienced a lack of certainty around the setting of goals. In some cases, this was due to their limited confidence in their skills in target setting, as discussed in Section 5.1.1. In other cases, this was due to the breadth and complexity of needs arising for students, as ELSAs were unsure where to start, and felt multiple interventions were required to adequately support their needs. Thorley (2016) emphasised this difficulty, highlighting the pressure on schools to support students with complex mental health needs on account of the scarcity of services available. In practice, this made deciding upon a goal challenging and ELSAs reflected on the need to refer to more specialised services. Overall, this finding reflects research from Blatchford et al. (2012) in that teaching assistants, which ELSAs often are, invariably work with students with complex needs. ELSAs have training and are strongly encouraged to set clear boundaries around their role to ensure the support they offer is within their level of competency (Burton & Okai, 2018). However, there is a question about the depth of this training and the skills and practices that ELSAs gain from it, and the extent to which this affords ELSAs the confidence to work with young people in the somewhat sophisticated way that is necessary.

It is important to consider ELSAs skills in facilitating GBO as themes emerging from the interview indicate that ELSAs play a vital role in supporting students to set and track GBO, a finding echoed in the practice of psychotherapists using idiographic



measures (Troupp, 2013). In terms of setting goals, the use of solution-focused questioning was felt by some ELSAs to be helpful. This finding is mirrored in clinical practice, particularly regarding “*more entrenched problems*” (Bradley et al., 2013, p. 10). However, some ELSAs felt this opened broad areas of focus, and although positive in terms of exploring aspirations, several ELSAs described that goals set by students were at times unachievable within the ELSA intervention alone. This finding further corroborates the need for ELSAs to utilise SMART principles when setting GBO, as it suggests that students may benefit from adult support to consider what is achievable in the ELSA intervention.

Despite some of the potential pitfalls and challenges of GBO described above, another key strength of the approach was the sense of agency it provided students. “In education, decisions are made for students much more frequently than with students” (Burton and Okai, 2018, p. 64), and using GBO is a means for the ELSA and the student to collaborate in developing joint understanding about the purpose of the intervention. This re-establishes and emphasises the intended ethos of ELSA which is child-centred (Burton & Okai, 2018). ELSAs indicated that previously adults would decide the focus of ELSA support, and therefore seeking student views about the goal of the intervention was not routine practice for participants in this study. In line with previous research exploring students’ perceptions of GBO (Bromley & Westwood, 2013), students valued setting a goal that was meaningful to them. This sense of agency is arguably missing from the SMART framework, but this research indicates it is of value and importance for ELSA interventions in secondary settings. Student agency has been captured in subsequent frameworks for goal setting, such as Schunk and Zimmerman (2008) who highlighted the importance of goals being ‘self-generated’ and not imposed on CYP. This is particularly important, as Deci and Ryan (1985) posit

in their theory of self-determination that self-generated goals are likely to enable greater student motivation to work towards the target, provided they are realistic (Day & Tosey, 2011). Therefore, this research suggests that this is an important element to consider in ELSA alongside the SMART framework, and as such any future training should emphasise this.

In summary, the participants' perspectives on GBO indicate they have clear strengths, such as the focus and clarity they give participants, and the sense of agency they provide to students. The complexity of students' needs and difficulties with their engagement has resulted in key reflections about when GBO is appropriate to use, and what needs to predicate this approach. These findings highlight the importance of establishing ELSA and student rapport and the student having an awareness of their needs and a readiness to change to engage with GBO. There are some clear areas for development in terms of GBO in ELSA practice, such as ensuring ELSAs feel confident in goal setting and are able to draw on the SMART principles when setting a goal to provide clarity and to ensure they are achievable.

### **5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Research**

#### **5.3.1 Limitations of the Research**

In terms of limitations, it is important to reflect on the significant challenges of conducting this research. The project took place between September 2020 and May 2022 and during this period national lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic meant the researcher was unable to begin data collection until summer 2021. This resulted in tighter time restrictions on the study. Over the course of data collection there were continued, repercussive time pressures on staff in school due to COVID-19 absences. This was highlighted in interviews with ELSAs who were unable to collect data as

absences and restrictions posed a considerable challenge on their workload and therefore time available for administrative tasks and the additional tasks participating in this research involved. As such, it was particularly difficult to recruit and sustain the involvement of participants. The resulting sample size is small, consisting of 8 ELSAs, 5 students and 3 members of staff. Therefore, findings are not conclusive or widely generalisable. However, the qualitative data generated has been helpful in highlighting some important implications for GBO and possible improvement to ELSA training in this approach.

Additionally, the sample of participants is not necessarily representative of all ELSAs and students engaging in the ELSA programme in secondary schools. It is likely there was a bias towards ELSAs who have a positive view of the programme and/or a desire to explore ways to evidence or capture change. This bias may also have been seen in students who agreed to take part. For example, it is of note that one of the students who was reluctant to engage with GBO did not agree to be interviewed. In addition, as the researcher who conducted the interviews also delivered training on the approach, this is likely to have skewed participants' comments in favour of GBO or caused them to place greater emphasis on the strengths of the approach. In the interview process the researcher took steps to try and address this by emphasising that honest opinions and reflections were valued. However, the validity of the findings may have improved if the researcher had checked with the participants to ensure the analysis was representative of their views.

There is limited insight within this study as to the fidelity of how GBO were introduced and implemented by the ELSAs. It is possible that the students gave more general responses about external experiences in the qualitative descriptors in GBO because of the approach the ELSA took when reviewing the target, such as asking

open questions to explore progress overall rather than being specific to the target. Additionally, as previously discussed in this chapter, the goals themselves lacked specificity in terms of what the students would be doing to meet the goal. This may have fed into some of the uncertainty students experienced with scaling due to the broad nature of the goals. The importance of operationalising goals and specifying what needs to happen to meet them has also been highlighted as an issue in CAMHs research exploring the use of GBO (Moran et al., 2012) and it is not clear from the data in the present study whether this occurred.

### **5.3.2 Strengths of the Research**

A key strength of this research is that it addresses an area of literature of which there is relatively little understanding. This study provides new thinking in relation to the ELSA intervention in secondary schools, and the use of idiographic approaches in this context. To the researcher's knowledge this has not yet been explored in research but has been recommended as an area for development in a previous study exploring ELSA in secondary settings (Nicholson-Roberts, 2019).

A novel element to the research design was the inclusion of data collection from the member of staff who referred the student for ELSA. Although limited due to sample size, data gathered were triangulated from a variety of perspectives to provide a richer understanding (Yardley, 2008). Furthermore, reflecting the client-focused nature of GBO, an emphasis was placed on student voice, and the study was able to gain insights into this approach through understanding students' lived experiences of using GBO in the ELSA intervention.

The dependability of the data was enhanced by the researcher's reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process, such as when conducting peer-

reviewed coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, the author has remained transparent about the methodological challenges faced when conducting this research, and it is hoped this knowledge will benefit future studies through researchers addressing concerns and issues noted here.

Finally, a key element of this research was a systematic review of the ELSA literature which centred on what is known about outcomes for children supported by this intervention. To the researcher's knowledge, there has not yet been a systematic review which critically appraises ELSA research in this area with such rigour. Therefore, this review provides novel contributions to the present understanding of ELSA.

#### **5.4 Implications for ELSA and Educational Psychology Practice**

Overall, this research highlights the potential value of using the GBO approach in ELSA practice. Despite a lack of conclusive findings, sufficient information is available to identify the important contribution that GBO might have in relation to ELSA. In interviews, themes emerged about the strengths of the approach, which indicate GBO are accessible, relevant to the role and support ELSAs' organisation and planning. As such, EP services may consider introducing this approach to secondary school based ELSAs as a means of generating goals and a focus for ELSA, progress towards which can be tracked over time. For secondary-aged students, the goals provided clarity about the purpose of the intervention, which has been identified as a limitation of ELSA in previous studies (Begley, 2015; Hills, 2016; Wong et al., 2020). This research also affirms the value of student views being central to the intervention. Although this is explored in guidance from Burton and Okai (2018), this study indicates it was not something ELSAs were routinely implementing in practice and that adults

were primarily deciding the focus of ELSA support. It may be pertinent for EPs to emphasise this approach during initial ELSA training, particularly for those working with secondary-aged students, as having input regarding the focus of their ELSA support is likely to impact student motivation to engage with the support (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Training for ELSAs should consider how they can co-construct goals in practice, for example using solution-focused questioning as a starting point for this discussion (Bradley et al., 2013). However, this should not be at the cost of goals being SMART and training should also emphasise the importance of targets being specific, measurable and achievable, as the findings demonstrate the challenge of monitoring goals when they are more general. Therefore, training using this approach should provide regular opportunities to practise the setting of SMART goals and provide instruction on how ELSAs can co-construct these with students. This may involve developing scripts and questions to support ELSAs in ensuring targets that students set are SMART and that they are being specific to the target when reviewing progress with students.

Furthermore, findings suggests that ELSAs should carefully consider the appropriateness of using GBO as some students were not ready to engage with the approach. This might have been because the goal lacked clarity, or because students did not have an awareness of the support they could benefit from. ELSAs using this approach should be encouraged to take time to build rapport and understand student needs before they set a goal for the sessions, in line with recommended practice for ELSAs (Burton & Okai, 2018). This research suggests that standardised measures may have a place in highlighting students' awareness of their needs and readiness for support. This is crucial as a lack of awareness and motivation may impact on their

engagement with GBO, and with ELSA in general. Therefore, encouraging ELSAs to build a relationship with students and gauge their self-awareness and readiness to change will support them in setting clear GBO.

ELSAs lacked certainty in this approach which is an important area to address as they play a key role in the setting and tracking of goals in GBO. In the present study, ELSAs had a single one-hour training session on using the approach ahead of implementing it, and findings indicate that this was insufficient to facilitate confidence. This has been echoed in clinical settings in which further training on using GBO was considered important for practitioners (Batty et al., 2013; Pender et al., 2013). Additionally, there were limited opportunities to try out the approach and reflect on experiences, which is important in adult learning (Kolb et al., 2001). Although the author attempted to address this through drop-in support sessions, these were largely unattended by participants due to challenges with available time, difficulties with timetabling and their opt-in format. Therefore, any EP services considering implementing this approach should ensure that sufficient training is provided. The concept of setting and tracking goals should be introduced early and revisited across the days of initial ELSA training. These skills would be pertinent to revisit during regularly scheduled ELSA supervision (Osbourne & Burton, 2014) to allow ELSAs a space to reflect on their experiences and further develop their confidence.

In terms of disseminating these findings, the author will create a 'Research Briefing' to share on the ELSA Network website and with the ELSAs who participated in the research. Additionally, the findings will be presented to peers on the IoE DEdPsy programme and to the researcher's present local authority colleagues. To contribute to the limited ELSA literature, the researcher may submit the findings for peer-review and publication to a research journal, such as Educational Psychology in Practice.

## **5.5 Future Research**

As discussed in Section 5.1.1, GBO allowed ELSAs to capture information about the focus for the ELSA intervention. If conducted on a wider scale, this approach could mirror the use of GBO in CAMHs settings (Jacob et al., 2021), where idiographic measures have been utilised as a way of exploring which goals are important to CYP. Gathering information about ELSA targets would allow for individual schools to monitor the needs supported within the ELSA intervention, which may inform wider school planning around SEMH needs. On a broader scale, EP Services could gather information about targets to develop further training and support which is bespoke to the needs of ELSAs.

This research has highlighted some promising insights regarding the utilisation of idiographic measures for structuring and evaluating the ELSA programme. However, the project did not run as the researcher had envisaged and therefore a more robust triangulation and comparison of data was not possible. Future research may consider addressing the problems encountered in the present study regarding recruiting and engaging participants to generate sufficient data. This may be overcome by recruiting ELSAs through one local authority EP Service and working with ELSA supervision groups. This will ensure the ELSAs receive ample support from their link EP and ELSA peer group. Additionally, the physical presence of the researcher at the supervision group may enable them to support and address any issues through the data collection process, as it was a challenge to offer this support virtually in the present study. A larger research team working in the aforementioned manner would allow for sufficient data to be collected to enable comparisons to be drawn. Furthermore, as addressed previously, a key limitation within this research is the narrow insight into the fidelity of the ELSAs' implementation of the intervention and



GBO. Therefore, future research may consider exploring in more depth how the ELSA intervention is delivered in secondary school settings.

Target setting is considered good practice for ELSAs (Burton & Okai, 2018). A key finding within this research is the limited confidence that ELSAs had with setting targets within their role and that this needs to be developed. The single training session delivered within this project was insufficient to facilitate ELSAs confidence. Given that targets were perceived here to be useful, future research may consider exploring the setting and tracking of goals within ELSA to explore what practice best facilitates this, and what support may be of benefit to ELSAs when developing these skills. This could be achieved through observation of ELSAs who have high self-efficacy in using targets in their role.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This study explored the potential use of GBO during the ELSA intervention with secondary-aged students using standardised measures triangulated with an idiographic GBO approach. Despite the challenges in terms of recruitment and data collection, which resulted in difficulties drawing firm conclusions, the findings overall suggest that idiographic measures can be used to document key information about the ELSA intervention. However, due to their subjectivity and the general nature of the goals captured here, there is a limit in terms of what they can validly measure in terms of change over time. All measurement tools have limitations, and when compared to standardised measures previously used to evaluate the programme, such as the SDQ (Mann, 2014; Ball 2014), the GBO approach provides a richer insight into the focus of support. Nevertheless, findings highlight that standardised measures may be beneficial in terms of identifying student readiness to change or awareness of their

needs. Additionally, ELSAs could use the information from GBO to select a standardised tool more specific to the intervention as the measures used here were not always relevant to the students' area of need.

Feedback from participants in this study indicate GBO may have a place in the practice of secondary school ELSAs, in terms of documenting change over time and supporting their planning and organisation. The approach supported ELSAs to ensure that the intervention is collaborative and that student views are heard and remain central to the focus of sessions, which was valuable to both ELSAs and students in this study. However, findings indicate that a single training session is insufficient and ELSAs would benefit from on-going support to implement this approach and increase their confidence, and ensure targets are sufficiently SMART to track over time. Overall, this research suggests that triangulating the use of idiographic and standardised measures may be beneficial to provide a richer insight into outcomes for secondary-aged CYP taking part in ELSA, and indeed other social and emotional interventions in schools.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Summary of ELSA training contents

**Table A1:**

*Overview of content covered in the ELSA Trainers' Manual (Burton, 2009)*

| <b>Day</b>  | <b>Theoretical/Psychological Models Referenced</b>  | <b>Aims</b>  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>1: Emotional Literacy in Schools &amp; Raising Emotional Awareness</b> | Maslow's Hierarchy of Need (1987)<br>Gardener's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983)<br>Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996)<br>Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1961) | To introduce the trainees to the purpose of the ELSA programme.<br>To develop trainees' understanding of emotional literacy.<br>To explore the need to develop children's emotional awareness and vocabulary.  |
| <b>2: Self-Esteem and Active Listening &amp; Communication Skills</b>     | Borba's Building Blocks to Self-Esteem (Borba, 1989)  | To develop trainees' understanding of self-esteem and its importance.<br>To focus on basic counselling skills required by ELSAs.<br>To build on their active listening and communication skills.   |
| <b>3: Understanding and Managing Anger &amp; Working with Puppets</b>     | The Assault Cycle (Breakwell, 1997)   | To develop trainees' understanding of the nature of anger and physiological changes.<br>To introduce trainees to using puppets in a therapeutic way.   |
| <b>4: Social Skills Training &amp; Introduction to Autism</b>             | Schutz (1967) – Basic Elements of Communication<br>Triad of Impairments (Wing, 1981)<br>Theory of Mind (Frith, 1989)  | To introduce the fundamental importance of interpersonal communication<br>To introduce trainees to the nature of autism<br>To introduce trainees to social stories for supporting children with social communication difficulties                    |
| <b>5: Friendship Skills &amp; Therapeutic Stories</b>                     | Circle of Friends (Pearpoint et al., 1992)<br>Therapeutic stories (Brett, 1986)   | To introduce trainees to the friendship intervention Circle of Friends.<br>To provide guidelines for setting up friendship interventions.<br>To introduce trainees to the use of therapeutic stories for helping students consider sensitive issues. |

## Appendix B: Table of synthesis for systematic review

| Sample, Focus of the study, Method/measures   | Key findings   | Limitations, Impressions and Weight of Evidence Scores  |   |
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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Wong et al. (2020)<br/> <b>Peer Reviewed Study.</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Title:</b> Primary school children’s perspectives and experiences of Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) support</p>  |  |   |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br/>                     -To add to the evidence base of ELSA programme and the lack of children’s views and perspectives in previous studies.<br/>                     Explore primary aged children’s perspectives and experiences of ELSA support.</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/>                     12 KS2 primary school children who have worked with an ELSA<br/>                     14 families contacted, 13 parents gave consent, but one child did not agree to take part = 12.</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b><br/>                     Pilot interview conducted</p> | <p><b>Key findings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlights the gap around peer reviewed studies but doesn’t look at thesis works which are often robust</li> <li>4 core themes pulled out – positive relationships, skill development, positive impact, unique qualities of the ELSA</li> </ul> <p>Following themes identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impact directly linked to this review: self-awareness, access to learning, value ELSA support, emotional regulation and behaviour management – felt they benefited from the relationship with the ELSA, support children to develop their self-awareness, better able to focus on classwork,</li> <li>Positive relationship with ELSA: can depend on them, acts as an advocate for CYP, supports with resources etc.</li> <li>ELSAs have unique qualities: distinct role in the school, available when needed</li> <li>Skill development: practical resources, emotional literacy skills (regulate emotions, understand feelings), through explicit teaching’</li> </ul> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot interview was conducted to test out interview question.</li> <li>Interview schedule checked by the researchers and considered suitable and appropriate.</li> <li>Child centred approach is a strength, ensuring children are able to access and understand the purpose of the study</li> <li>ELSA work is varied, it’s unclear whether the outcomes were due to the ELSA-child relationship or the ELSA programme per se.</li> <li>Want to explore the mechanisms of the change process from children’s perspective</li> <li>Self-selecting and potentially biased sample.</li> <li>Need wider age ranges, no secondary perspective.</li> <li>Not possible to determine the extent to which the impact was due to ELSA.</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/>                     A – 2<br/>                     B – 1<br/>                     C – 1<br/>                     D – 1.7</p> |
|   |  | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helpful contribution in terms of person-centred approaches to including pupils in ELSA research.</li> <li>Themes overlap with other studies that gain pupil views about ELSA (e.g. Balampanidou, 2019; Hills et al., 2013) suggests there is some consistency.</li> </ul>  |   |

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| <p>Semi structured interviews framed as informal discussions. Thematic analysis to analysis used to explore themes.</p> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highlights some positive outcomes of ELSAs which can be understood using qualitative means, but these are highly subjective.</li></ul> |  |
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| <b>Author and date:</b> Balampanidou (2019)<br><b>Unpublished Doctoral Thesis.</b> Qualitative  |   | <b>Title:</b> Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme: Child-centred approach, building trust, listening and valuing children's voices: A grounded theory analysis  |  |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b> Aims to get children's perspectives of receiving the ELSA intervention in the LA and explore how this may lead to change.</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b> 8 children (6 female, 2 male) who had a mixture of group and individual ELSA support for a variety of reasons (e.g. anxiety, friendships).</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b> Semi-structured interviews with key Stage 2 children in a mainstream setting who have completed an ELSA intervention. Grounded theory.</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b></p> <p>4 Overarching Themes Emerged: Structure of the ELSA, Child-centred sessions, Impact of ELSA, Rationale why ELSA helps</p> <p>Visual representation of grounded theory breaking themes down, highlights the important factors of ELSA and why it works from children's viewpoint including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELSA is a collaborative process</li> <li>• Consistent Support</li> <li>• CYP highly values the ELSA work</li> <li>• Range of activities being fun and helpful</li> <li>• Application of learned skills to wider context</li> <li>• Positive impact on CYP wellbeing</li> <li>• Changing thought processes of CYP</li> <li>• Teaching children coping mechanisms</li> <li>• Teaching CYPS specific strategies</li> <li>• Positive impact on CYP academic attainment</li> <li>• ELSA room is different to classroom</li> <li>• ELSA work is different</li> <li>• CYP has a choice</li> <li>• CYP has voice</li> <li>• CYP feels safe, contained and calm</li> <li>• Importance of relationships</li> <li>• ELSA being kind and available</li> <li>• ELSA is meaningful for CYPs</li> </ul> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous knowledge may have influenced the data interpretation.</li> <li>• Small sample size – only 8 children (mainly white British) not possible to generalise findings, Imbalance of gender (mainly girls)</li> <li>• Half of the interviews took place in the ELSA room location may have impacted on the experience</li> <li>• Power differentiation between researcher and participant could influence responses</li> <li>• Used peer supervision to cross reference during analysis stage, didn't return to check with children that they agreed with what was found</li> <li>• No follow up data to see if the effects were maintained following the intervention</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b></p> <p>A – 2<br/>B – 1<br/>C – 1<br/>D – 1.3</p> |
|   |   | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighting that ELSA needs to be a child-centred approach that values the voice of the child.</li> <li>• Overview of how children feel the sessions have impacted on them, how they've generalised skills and build their confidence and capacity for coping.</li> <li>• Model is helpful summary of the elements of ELSA that matter to children and are perceived as important</li> <li>• Difficult to generalise wider than the group included.</li> </ul>  |  |



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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Krause et al., (2020)<br/> <b>Peer Reviewed Study</b> - Qualitative</p>  | <p><b>Title:</b> An exploration of the impact of ELSA programme on wellbeing from the perspective of pupils</p>   |  |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br/> To investigate the impact of the ELSA programme on wellbeing from the perspective of pupils, using the wellbeing components described by the NEF and the PERMA model</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/> 4 schools took part (2 primary, 2 secondary school). (N = 13) Wales LA EPS recruited pupils through headteachers.</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b><br/> Exploratory research. Semi-structured interviews, 2 interviewers. Questions structured around PERMA model. Visuals to support pupils to share ideas. Thematic</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b> 6 overarching themes.</p> <p><b>Feelings and emotions:</b> linked to 4 key areas; <i>happiness/positives</i> were linked to feeling safe, <i>calming</i> suggested ELSAs calmed them down; <i>anger</i>, pps feel they had better control, and <b>anxiety</b>, children felt this had reduced – linked to strategies to cope</p> <p><b>Engagement:</b> <u>2 pupils</u> said they felt more willing to <i>attend school</i>, more <i>engagement in school</i>, less disruption and more concentration. <u>One</u> pupil sowed increased <i>engagement outside of school</i></p> <p><b>Resilience:</b> The programme was seen to boost pps ability to <i>cope with difficulty</i> through increased <i>confidence</i></p> <p><b>Hopes &amp; Aspirations</b> included subthemes of <i>goals</i> and <i>future optimism</i> suggesting that the ELSA sessions helped them with this – working towards goals.</p> <p><b>Relationships:</b> Focus on the closeness of the ELSA/pupil, strengthening and resolving relationships through offering opportunities to talk</p> <p><b>Strategies &amp; Talk:</b> Talk is important for building positive relationships. Able to talk to others and resolve and strengthen relationships (at home and school)</p> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limitations of just focusing on emotional literacy (suggests an impact on wellbeing outcomes)</li> <li>• These concepts are hard to define (e.g. resilience, wellbeing, mental health etc.)</li> <li>• Highlights the value of getting pupils perspective on the programme.</li> <li>• Using primary and secondary but not able to draw comparisons of the two, future research in this area.</li> <li>• Highlights a key limitation the ELSA findings are hard to generalise anyway, due to the individualised nature of the intervention.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/> A – 2<br/> B – 1<br/> C – 3<br/> D - 2</p> |
|   |   | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELSA framed as building capacity of school staff (Fallon, Woods &amp; Rooney, 2010).</li> <li>• Use of the PERMA framework was novel and helpful. This is linked to government initiatives around well-being (PHE, 2015).</li> <li>• ELSA is received positively by children. Alludes to outcomes such as developing coping strategies, increased attendance and engagement.</li> <li>• Would be helpful to know specific outcome for each child and what the focus of the intervention.</li> <li>• The relationship was important, but what was it about the sessions that had an impact?</li> <li>• Highlights need to explore ELSA in primary and secondary</li> </ul> |   |

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| analysis to draw out themes. |  |  |  |
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| <b>Author and date:</b> Hill, O' Hare & Weidberg, 2013   |  | <b>Title:</b> He's always there when I need him": Exploring the perceived positive impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme.  |   |
| <b>Local Authority Evaluation,</b> Qualitative   |  |  |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br/>         What is the appeal of ELSA?<br/>         What impact does ELSA have on children, school and staff?<br/>         What has worked well for the school/individual in deploying ELSA?<br/>         What advice can be given to other schools and authorities considering deploying ELSA?</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/>         4 children and 2 headteachers, 3 ELSAs – two case study schools</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b><br/>         Semi-structured interviews conducted singularly with children and jointly with headteacher and ELSA.</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b><br/>         Key Themes:<br/> <b>Organisational factors:</b> Findings suggest that ELSAs having multiple roles within the school seen as helping it to work, as they are able to draw on a range of experiences to support them in their role.</p> <p><b>Specific Strategies:</b> Children developed strategies<br/>         Building personal skills &amp; resilience</p> <p><b>Creating positive change:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded ethos – whole school approach was clear</li> <li>• Not just being an 'ELSA' also using this role in other ways, looking wider than the intervention itself</li> <li>• Confidentiality and transparency of ELSA was seen as positive by children and something they valued.</li> <li>• The study also provides further evidence for the importance of relationships for children, backing up McEwen's findings.</li> <li>• Thematic analysis of the data revealed children were seen to be developing a sense of self with the ELSA</li> </ul> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulated different perspectives.</li> <li>• One of the research questions is what impact does ELSA have on CYP (and others), but it's hard to draw firm conclusions.</li> <li>• Can't generalise the findings well due to the small scope of the project, but this was acknowledged by the authors</li> <li>• Highlighted the need to provide additional mediums for children to share their views (one child had speech and language difficulties)</li> <li>• Cross-sectional study – no change over time</li> </ul>   | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/>         A – 2<br/>         B – 1<br/>         C – 1<br/>         D – 1.7</p> |
|  |  | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates that transparency is valued by children.</li> <li>• It was a useful study and demonstrated the use of interviews with children, headteachers and ELSAs – triangulation of perspectives.</li> <li>• Demonstrates the usefulness of including headteachers views in terms of understanding ELSA from a more systemic perspective.</li> <li>• The fact the programme is being delivered differently in each school is problematic when it comes to standardisation of the programme – limitation of it being non-manualised but without that it wouldn't be as bespoke</li> </ul> |   |

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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Barker (2017)<br/> <b>Unpublished Doctoral Thesis -</b><br/> Qualitative</p>  | <p><b>Title:</b> The emotional literacy support assistant intervention: an exploration from the perspectives of pupils and parents</p>  |   |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br/> Explore the experiences and views of pupils and parents about their participation in the ELSA intervention<br/> Explore any perceived impact the participants felt the intervention had.</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/> 2 pupils and their parents (4 participants total).</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b><br/> Qualitative study using IPA (Silverman, 2006)</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews conducted with pupils and their parents on their perspectives on ELSA<br/> Use visuals to support children. Thematic analysis</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b></p> <p><b>Theme 1: Process of intervention</b><br/> <u>Enjoyable and special</u> – pupil and parents felt this about the intervention<br/> <u>Communication and informed consent</u> – clear understanding from pupils and parents of purpose<br/> <u>Perceptions of the ELSA role</u><br/> <u>Space to talk and problem solve</u> – ELSAs were able to do this – created a safe and trusting space</p> <p><b>Theme 2: Perceived impact of Intervention</b><br/> <u>Improving relationships and friendship skills</u> – Relationships with siblings had improved as a result (novel finding) Humphrey (2010) – helpful comments<br/> <u>Managing and expressing emotions and developing coping strategies</u> – ELSA had supported children to work through problems and develop strategies<br/> <u>Improving confidence</u> – seen by parents and pupils, parents used this word directly, children described behavioural changes (putting hand up more)<br/> <u>Alleviating worries and anxiety</u>- ELSA was seen to reduce anxiety and worry, benefited both pupils and parents, reducing parents worry</p> <p><b>Theme 3: Evidence of impact</b><br/> <u>Feedback from others</u> – for parents this was a source that reinforced their views that changes had occurred.</p> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous knowledge may have influenced the researchers data interpretation.</li> <li>• Small sample size – only 4 participants, hard to generalise findings but IPA doesn't aim to do this</li> <li>• Limitations of IPA were addressed</li> <li>• Power differentiation between researcher and participant could influence responses- mitigated by use of blob men</li> <li>• Confident pupils included – may have influenced the results, desirability biases.</li> <li>• Based on retrospective accounts – participants may have forgotten, influenced by present circumstances.</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/> A – 2<br/> B – 2<br/> C – 2<br/> D - 2</p> |
|  |   | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study implies good communication between ELSA and parents which is not always seen – some of the advice available to ELSAs</li> <li>• A good study when thinking about the justification of working with parents and pupils when evaluating ELSA</li> <li>• Suggests that there are positive outcomes for children (e.g. better able to cope with worries and setbacks, developed skills, space to talk)</li> <li>• Raises the question of the wider impact of ELSA, not just on the child but positive for families too.</li> </ul>   |   |

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|  | <u>Observable change</u><br><u>No setbacks</u> – ELSA helped to develop pupil's resilience<br>–children could cope better with set backs |  |  |
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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Wilding &amp; Claridge (2016)<br/> <b>Peer Reviewed</b> - Qualitative</p>  | <p><b>Title:</b> The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme: parental perceptions of its impact in school and at home</p>  |   |  |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b> How do parents construe the aims of the ELSA programme? How do parents feel the programme has impacted on their child in school? How do parents feel the programme has impacted on their child at home? In what ways have parents had contact with ELSAs? How do parents feel the programme could be improved?</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b> 8 parents (7 females, 1 male) of children who had received 6+ sessions of ELSA. Recruited from two primaries within two LAs</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b> Semi-structured interviews, 5 open-ended</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b></p> <p><b>What is the ELSA programme?</b> theme highlighted parents lack of clarity and understanding of what ELSAs do. <b>Problem solvers</b> – parents described a ‘deficit’ model of difficulties which they believe ELSA supports with, inconsistent with the philosophy of ELSA (moving away from changing behaviour) Need to explain aims of ELSA to parents. <i>‘Emotional regulator’</i> subtheme identified that ELSA helped to regulate their child’s emotions. The <i>‘skilled for life’</i> sub theme reflects how parents identified skills developed can be carried through life.</p> <p><b>The ELSA-child relationship</b> was considered important by parents, and facilitated by <i>‘the process of talking’</i> and the importance of this in decision making</p> <p><b>‘Impact of ELSA’</b> two subthemes were <i>‘Social and emotional development’</i> parents saw the programme to impact positively on social and emotional skills. <i>‘Transferable skills &amp; resources’</i> sub theme evidenced that skills developed in ELSA were being transferred to home. <b>‘Home-school communication’</b> was seen to be important to improve ELSA. Highlighted children’s need for consistency in approach from parents and staff. <b>‘What happens next’</b> demonstrates the lack of clarity around support following the intervention and endings.</p> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative perspective, social constructionist epistemological position. Highlights ethical considerations and data protection, debriefing.</li> <li>• Limited triangulation of perspective (e.g. only parents).</li> <li>• Limitations of only one researcher analysing the data.</li> <li>• Small sample of participants with only one father and no secondary students.</li> <li>• Potential bias – parents who have negative perceptions may have been less likely to engage.</li> <li>• Can’t determine the impacts noticed is specifically to do with ELSA, perceptions of impact.</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b></p> <p>A -3<br/> B – 2<br/> C – 2<br/> D – 2.3</p> |
|   |   | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contrasts around lack of clarity about what ELSA is all about – different to other findings.</li> <li>• Lit review highlights the parental involvement in the early reviews (Burton et al. 2009).</li> <li>• Reference to the ethical duty of EPs to ensure there is an evidence based to support the programme.</li> <li>• Does give some reference to the impact of ELSA – development of social and emotional skills and that these were transferred into the home setting</li> <li>• Lack of clarity about what comes after ELSA.</li> </ul>   |  |

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| questions to explore<br>constructions |  |  |  |
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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Butcher, Cook &amp; Holder-Spriggs (2013)<br/> <b>Local Authority Review</b> - Quantitative</p>   | <p><b>Title:</b> Exploring the impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) intervention on primary school children using single-case design</p>   |   |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:.</b><br/> The title is the research question. No specific research question identified</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/> 3 children at one school (2 males, year 3 and one girl, year 5)</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b><br/> Single case design.<br/> Unstructured playground observations, structured lesson observations, meeting with ELSAs to obtain information regarding children’s concern behaviours<br/> Momentary time sampling and frequency recording was used to monitor target. Data gathered before the intervention, and weekly during the intervention but not after.</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend of the data gathered in this study supports the view that ELSA impacts on the concern behaviours and increase in positive behaviours – but only during the ELSA training</li> <li>• No follow up data was gathered.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline was taken at 4 time points before the intervention began.</li> <li>• Didn’t observe all elements of certain behaviours (e.g. asking friends and not teachers)</li> <li>• No data gathered post intervention – hard to know if the changes were lasting</li> <li>• Internalising behaviour is hard to observe – single case study doesn’t work for these (e.g. negative self-talk)</li> <li>• Need to be replicated for more children to be generalisable and confirm findings.</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/> A – 1<br/> B – 1<br/> C – 3<br/> D – 1.7</p> |
|  |   | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting design to explore the effectiveness of ELSA, could be an interesting one to replicate – interesting to comment on when thinking about the use of ‘blanket’ questionnaires given the nature of ELSA</li> <li>• It would be interesting to triangulate the findings, using other observers (e.g. teacher/TA) and consider the inter-rater reliability of the observations.</li> </ul>  |   |



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| <b>Author and date:</b> Burton, Traill & Norgate (2009)   |   | <b>Title:</b> An evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme   |   |
| <b>Local Authority Review</b> - Quantitative  |   |  |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br/>How do schools perceive the ELSA programme?<br/>Outcomes for young people?</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/>2005: 58 pupils, 13 ELSAs, 14 line managers.</p> <p>2009: 107 matched teacher SDQ, 52 matched parent rated SDQ from pupils who received ELSA support</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dramatic increase of trainee ELSAs from 2003 to 2009.</li> <li>• 2005 findings suggests that ELSA is well received by pupils and staff in schools. Teachers claimed improvements in relation to identified targets (no objective data to back this up)</li> <li>• 107 matched (pre- and post-intervention) teacher responses to the SDQ indicated that there was significant decreases on the 'Emotional Problems,' 'Peer Problems', and 'Conduct Disorder'. It additionally indicated a significant increase in pro-social behaviour. Hyperactivity did decrease, but not significantly.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear background about developments of ELSA</li> <li>• Limitation in that pupil views of the intervention were not gathered using the SDQ.</li> <li>• Can't be certain that the impact was entirely due to the ELSA intervention.</li> <li>• Can't be a randomised control as pupils are specifically selected to sign up to ELSA</li> <li>• Did not use a control group to draw comparisons.</li> <li>• Difficulties with the broad nature of the SDQ – self reported in nature, impact of bias.</li> <li>• Tells us very little about the purpose of the intervention – did they achieve what they were setting out to?</li> <li>• No objective data to back up the fact teachers felt pupils met their targets.</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/>A – 2<br/>B- 2<br/>C- 3<br/>D - 2.3</p> |

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| <p><b>Method/ measures:</b><br/>Parent and Teacher Rated SDQs were completed before and after the intervention</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additionally, fifty-two matched (pre- and post-intervention) parent-rated questionnaires were gathered, which demonstrated a significant decrease in the SDQ.</li> <li>• Demonstrates differences in the home and school contexts. Indicates that teacher perceive ELSA results differently to parents.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key question we want to explore with ELSA research: 'is anyone better off?</li> <li>• Biased in the main researcher is the EP that developed ELSA.</li> <li>• Helpful in terms of demonstrating outcomes on a broad scale, but this has a lot of limitations due to the bespoke nature of ELSA. How do we know it is ELSA that is having the impact?</li> </ul> |  |
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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Burton, Osborne &amp; Norgate (2010)<br/> <b>Local Authority Review</b> - Quantitative</p>   | <p><b>Title:</b> An evaluation of the impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project on pupils attending schools in Bridgend.</p>  |   |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br/> How do schools perceive the ELSA programme?<br/> Outcomes for young people?</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/> 12 secondary pupils, 18 primary pupils, matched with controls</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b></p> | <p><b>Findings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Rates SDQ: Intervention group made significant changes in conduct and hyperactivity (control did not), both groups made (intervention and control) made gains in peer problems. The total score improved for ELSA group but not the control.</li> <li>• Teacher rated EL improved in ELSA group but not control (significantly).</li> <li>• Pupil rated EL showed no significant change. Secondary pupil rated EL dropped in secondary school and it went up slightly for primary (neither change was significant – could be due to small sample size).</li> </ul> | <p><b>Critical Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents not included this time – not clear why.</li> <li>• Improvements based on previous LA review – introduced control group and an additional measures</li> <li>• Only quantitative data so hard to ascertain why pupils didn't experience change in their EL scores, and no evidence to suggest pupils enjoyed/rated the experience positively.</li> <li>• Use of waiting list as control could be problematic as some may be receiving other types of intervention in the school if they have been highlighted as needing support.</li> <li>• Relatively small sample size with children from only one LA.</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/> A – 2<br/> B – 3<br/> C – 3<br/> D – 2.7</p> |

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| <p>Used SDQs, Emotional Literacy Checklist (for pupils and teachers) as measures before and after the intervention, matched pupils in control group</p> |  | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of pupil views is helpful – demonstrates the difficulties in demonstrating outcomes for pupils using broad measures</li> <li>• Pupil rated EL dropped in secondary rather than going up post ELSA</li> <li>• Suggests that ELSA does have an impact on CYP but the broad measures tells us little about the mechanisms</li> <li>• It's positive that they used secondary and primary school data, which are reasonable similar sized group – but not able to compare primary to secondary – would be useful</li> </ul> |  |
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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Grahamslaw (2010)<br/> <b>Unpublished Doctoral Thesis</b> - mixed methods</p>   | <p><b>Title:</b> An evaluation of the ELSA Project: What is the impact of ELSA Project on support assistants' and children's self-efficacy beliefs?</p>   |   |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br/> Impact of ELSA project on ELSA's self-efficacy for working with CYP?<br/> What is the impact of ELSA on children's emotional self-efficacy</p> <p><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br/> Phase 1 – 6 ELSAs, 12 boys and girls in focus groups<br/> Phase 2 - ELSA (64), non-ELSA (58), ELSA pupil (48)</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAs were found to have the greatest impact on children's self-efficacy if they had: completed the training, protected time to plan and protected time to attend refresher events.</li> <li>• Taking part in the ELSA group accounted for 44.8% of the variance in self-efficacy between groups.</li> <li>• Time to plan accounted for 20.1% of the variance – self-efficacy score of ELSAs who had time to plan were higher than those that didn't – medium effect size</li> <li>• Being part of the intervention accounted for 5.1% of the variance for children</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire design, rigorous approach, utilising ELSAs to develop, piloted it</li> <li>• Children were chosen from a school where the 'head was a strong advocate for ELSA' which could lead to biases in terms of children's self-efficacy across the school</li> <li>• Two of the predictor variables were joined together – not really explained as to why that is.</li> <li>• Fairly big sample size but maybe the questionnaire wasn't sensitive enough to pick up changes in children's emotional self-efficacy</li> <li>• There was only one secondary school included in the pre-post investigation</li> <li>• Adopted a reflexive approach to research to avoid bias</li> </ul> | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/> A – 2<br/> B – 3<br/> C – 3<br/> D – 2.7</p> |

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| <p>and non-ELSA pupils (50) - comparison groups.</p> <p><b>Method/ measures:</b><br/>Phase 1 – designed self-efficacy questionnaire using focus groups with ELSAs and pupils; Phase 2 – cross-sectional investigation, pre and post control group investigation into impact of ELSA training on ELSAs self-efficacy &amp; the impact of ELSAs self efficacy on children</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ELSAs self-efficacy score accounted for 17.9% of the variance for childrens scores– effect size of 0.54 (medium)</li> <li>● Outcomes for children from perspective of HT: personal, academic, emotional</li> <li>● HT perceived ELSA to have a wider school impact, cost effective</li> <li>● Highlighted a challenge of ELSA was measuring impact and providing time/space and the clarity of the role</li> </ul> | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HT comments links to other studies.</li> <li>● Different definitions of emotional literacy – something to think about in my introduction</li> <li>● Helpful to look at this paper in relation to questionnaire use and development – did a reliability measure – Cronbach’s A = 0.78</li> <li>● Interesting results from the headteachers in terms of impact of ELSAs for children</li> <li>● Suggests that ELSA having self-efficacy impacts on outcomes for children</li> </ul> |  |
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| <b>Author and date:</b> Hills (2016)<br><b>Peer Reviewed Study</b> - Mixed methods   |   | <b>Title:</b> An evaluation of the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) project from the perspectives of primary school children   |  |
| <b>Research Questions/Aims:</b><br>Explore whether factors highlighted in previous research are consistent with those identified by children as contributing to the perceived effectiveness of ELSA<br><br><b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b><br>54 children (32 males, 21 females) between 6 and 11<br><br><b>Method/ measures:</b><br>Questionnaire comprised of three areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demographic variables</li> <li>- Likert scale</li> <li>- Three open-ended questions</li> </ul> Semi structured interviews undertaken for the | <b>Findings:</b><br><b>Questionnaire</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 42% scored the maximum effectiveness score and there was no significant difference on effectiveness between gender.</li> <li>- Analysed open ended questions through content analysis</li> <li>- 32% said ELSA helped them through talking and 20% said activities</li> <li>- 34% said it was already good, and 30% there was nothing the ELSA could do to improve and 13% said they would like more sessions</li> </ul> <b>Factors contributing to effectiveness (interviews)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of therapeutic relationship between the child and ELSA, ability to share with a trusted adult</li> <li>- Space and time to talk about feelings, feel more comfortable to share with parents and manage them effectively</li> <li>- Reframing situations to build confidence and self-esteem/resilience, different perspective helped manage feelings</li> <li>- Developed coping strategies</li> </ul> <b>Improvements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparing children before starting ELSA. Some uncertainty about reason for referral, involving them in the process</li> </ul> | <b>Limitations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Didn't gain perspective of secondary pupils – could repeat to gain their insight in a similar way</li> <li>• Own questionnaire, using only descriptive statistics.</li> <li>• Doesn't cover the limitations in the write up</li> <li>• Doesn't highlight epistemological perspective of the study.</li> </ul>  | <b>WoE scores:</b><br>A – 2<br>B – 2<br>C – 2<br>D – 2 |
|  |   | <b>Impression:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlights the limitation of no established measure to explore the effectiveness of ELSA from the perspective of children</li> <li>• Findings highlight need to involve pupils in the referral process and explain the project to them, listening to pupils - explore what they would like to happen.</li> <li>• Importance of involving children in research - children as young as 6 able to give their views with the right methods.</li> <li>• Refers to introducing ELSAs to feedback forms for evaluating the sessions.</li> <li>• Importance of the therapeutic relationship within ELSA.</li> </ul> |  |



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| qualitative phase – open ended questions, with the options to draw | - Difficulties with endings<br>Altering aspects such as more activities and more space. |  |  |
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| <p><b>Author and date:</b> Mann (2014)<br/> <b>Unpublished Doctoral Thesis</b> - Mixed methods</p>  | <p><b>Title:</b> A mixed methods evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) project</p>  |  |   |
| <p><b>Research Questions/Aims:</b> Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?<br/> 2. How does the ELSA project impact on TAs' perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, and their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?<br/> <b>Sample, Ages, Context:</b> 14 ELSAs recently trained took part in gathering pre and post data for the study. Each TA took pre and post measures for 1 pupil they were working with. 5 pupils used as control.<br/> <b>Method/ measures:</b> SDQ and EL checklists</p> | <p><b>Findings:</b><br/> Changes to SDQ &amp; EL scores were made in the desired direction. Quantitative analysis of the checklists was not possible due to the assumptions for parametric tests not being met.</p> <p><b>Findings from focus group:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenges of the ELSA role – time, evidencing outcome of intervention, CYP reluctant to change, perceptions of others</li> <li>- Role – varying perspectives of the purpose of their role, support from peers was valued, working with others was helpful, role is different depending on who they are working with, challenging to effect change in secondary</li> <li>- Training experience was helpful and practical</li> <li>- Some ELSAs had pre-existing knowledge of EL and wellbeing</li> <li>- Training helped them to develop skills</li> </ul> <p>The questionnaire (6 months after ELSA training) generated themes: working with others, challenges to the role, development needs &amp; professional knowledge/skills → echoing some of the themes in the focus group.</p> | <p><b>Limitations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges with generating participants</li> <li>• Hard to draw firm conclusions due to small sample size – parametric assumptions not met</li> <li>• Can't really ascertain if ELSA is <b>effective</b> using these scales</li> <li>• Use of the median score for change doesn't give a clear picture of what was happening in the whole data set.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>  | <p><b>WoE scores:</b><br/> A – 2<br/> B – 2<br/> C – 2<br/> D - 2</p> |
|   |  | <p><b>Impression:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could this be explained by the measure not being sensitive enough -ELSA is a bespoke intervention targeting one specific area not developing it as a whole.</li> <li>• The pressures and barriers of the role link nicely to other research in this area. However, also adds some evidence of the challenges of evidencing outcomes, EL is a difficult construct to measure</li> <li>• Some interesting comments about working with secondary school pupils, and feeling as though behaviour is more entrenched at this point.</li> </ul> |   |

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| Self-efficacy scores taken from ELSAs.<br>Focus groups with ELSAs |  |  |  |
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## Appendix C: ELSA scoping interest e-mail

Dear Sir/Madam

I hope you are keeping safe and well.

I am writing to sincerely thank you for your completion of my secondary school ELSA questionnaire last summer. Please see the attached summary of my report findings from this. If you have any questions about the summary, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

I also wanted to let you know that I am in the process of developing this project and further exploring the secondary ELSA role this year. I am seeking participants to be involved. I am hoping to explore ways of assessing how the impact of involvement in the ELSA programme can be measured or captured more formally, and ELSAs' experiences of evaluating the impact of their sessions. This will involve you completing one or all of the following depending on how your school is operating:

- Engaging in a one-to-one interview with me around your experiences of evaluating the intervention.
- Attending a virtual training session to on different ways of monitoring, documenting and evaluating the intervention (COVID permitting).
- Applying knowledge from this training and gathering some data before, during and after their ELSA sessions for one or more pupils they are working with, using evaluative tools introduced as part of the training to explore the impact of ELSA (COVID permitting).

I am hopeful that the study will take place over the Autumn Term of 2021.

If you would be interested in participating in any of the above, I would be keen to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline

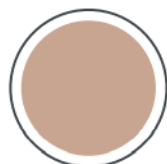
## Appendix D: Example slides from ELSA GBO training

### Reviewing a Goal

'Looking at your goal.. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 means you have fully reached the goal, and zero means you haven't even begun to make any progress towards it, and a score of 5 is exactly half way between the two, today where would you rate your current progress towards this goal?'



### What do I have to do?



#### Before

- Identify one or more pupils
- Seek parent + pupil consent
- Gather pre data (SDQ + EL Checklist)



#### During

- Set a goal with the pupil(s)
- Track progress weekly
  - Run ELSA
- Keep a weekly log of activities



#### After

- Gather post measures
- Short interview with Caroline about your experiences

**Appendix E: Goal Based Outcomes Weekly Tracking Form**

**Goal Based Outcomes Weekly Tracking Form**

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Child / Young Person Pseudonym: | ELSA: |
| <b>Target Agreed:</b>           |       |

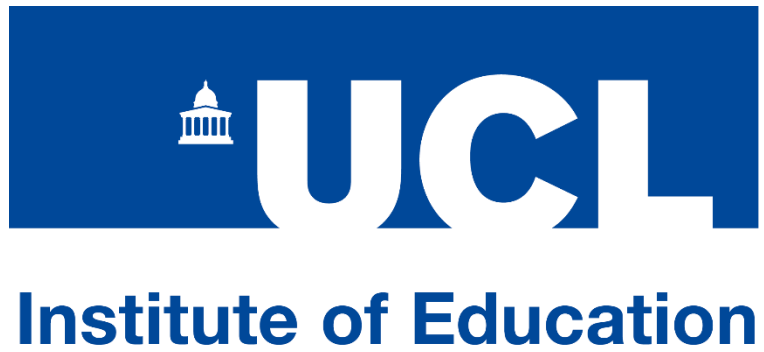
**Session 1:**

|       |
|-------|
| Date: |
|-------|

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Rating:  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Descriptor of today's GBO rating for your target (i.e. why was this selected): |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| <hr/>  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| <hr/>  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

|   |
|---|
| Brief description of activities from this week's session: |
| <hr/>   |
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**Appendix F: ELSA Step-by-step Guide for Research**



**Secondary ELSA Research Project**

**ELSA Support Pack**

## **1. Step-by-Step Guide for ELSA Secondary Research Project**

### **1.1 Before your first ELSA session:**

1. **Identify a pupil to try out goal-based outcomes with.** Some factors to consider:
  - Is this an appropriate referral for ELSA? If you're not sure, this might be a case to speak with your supervisor about.
  - Is this case highly complex in terms of pupils need? If yes, this might not be appropriate for your first time trying out Goal-Based Outcomes. A case with a clear area of need may be helpful.
  
2. **Gain pupil and parental consent for participation in the study.**
  - Speak to the parent about their child's involvement and what this means. Share the Parent Information Sheet (Appendix 1<sup>1</sup>), the Pupil Information Video and Caroline's contact details and ask them to complete a Parent Consent Form (Appendix 2)
  - Speak to the pupil about participating in the project. Explain your ELSA role as you would normally. Share the Pupil Information Sheet (Appendix 3) and Video (Appendix 4) and ask them to complete the Pupil Consent Form (Appendix 5).
  - Send Caroline the signed consent forms.
  - Please send Caroline signed consent form before collecting and sending any data.
  
3. **Once you have consent, ask the adult who referred (For example their teacher/SENCo) to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Emotional Literacy Checklist for the child.**
  - Seek their consent to sharing this data as part of the study. Ask them to read the Staff Information Sheet (Appendix 6) and complete the Staff Consent Form (Appendix 7)
  - Print and ask them to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire - Teacher (Appendix 8) and the Emotional Literacy Teacher Checklist (Appendix 9).
  - You do not need to score these questionnaires up. Caroline will do this.

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<sup>1</sup> Found in the folder shared with you.



- Scan and send to Caroline once completed.

## **1.2 During your initial ELSA session(s):**

1. Ask the pupil to complete the **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – Pupil Form (Appendix 10) and the Emotional Literacy Student Checklist (Appendix 11)**. You do not need to score these up. Send to Caroline once completed.
2. **Set a Goal Based Outcome.** Use the guidance from the training and this booklet. This may not be in your first session. Please document when you agree on this outcome.
3. **Decide on a pseudonym/code name for the child to keep the data anonymous.** Ask them to think of a Colour, Animal, Shape and Number. Put the words together and this will be their pseudonym. Once you have agreed this share with Caroline. If you are using Microsoft Forms for data collection she will send you the Weekly Tracking Form.
4. **Make a log of the goal on the Weekly Tracking Form (Appendix 12).** This can be using a paper copy or via Microsoft Forms, whatever you have agreed. The link will be sent to you via e-mail. Please ask Caroline to re-sent if needed.

## **1.3 Weekly Data Collection**

1. **Review the progress towards the target at the start of the session with the pupil.** You could ask them:
  - ‘Looking at your goal... On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 means you have fully reached the goal, and zero means you haven’t even begun to make any progress towards it, and a score of 5 is exactly halfway between the two, today where would you rate your current progress towards this goal?’
  - Why have you placed yourself at a ‘X’ this week and not a ‘X’ (number below)?
  - What has happened to make you say this number?

## 2. Make a log of the following on your Weekly Tracking Document/Form:

- The number they have ranked themselves.
- A reason for the number. This can be a short sentence.
- Log a brief overview of what was covered during your ELSA session.

### 1.4 After the Intervention

This will be once the target has been met/accomplished or the time has come to an end, please contact Caroline so she is aware data collection has finished. You may continue working with the young person on a new target. If you do not 'meet' the target after a typical number of sessions (e.g. 8-10) sessions let Caroline know when you have hit 10 sessions. Once the ending has been identified:

- Ask the **pupil** to complete the 'post' Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Appendix 10) and the Emotional Literacy Student Checklist (Appendix 11)
- Ask the **member of staff** to complete the 'post' SDQ (Appendix 8) and EL Checklist (Appendix 9)
- Let Caroline know the sessions have ended and send the completed questionnaires across.
- You and the pupil **may** then be asked to take part in a short interview about your experience of using Goal Based Outcomes. This will involve a maximum 30-minute conversation via Zoom or Microsoft Teams exploring your experiences of using Goal Based Outcomes.

## Weekly Tracking Document Information

### Paper Copy Guidance

If you have decided to use a Paper/Word copy to track your data. This will be sent with this with the pack. You will need to either:

- Print and complete the version by hand.
- Complete the form online via Microsoft Word following the session.

Complete the form using the child's pseudonym. You only need to complete the child's pseudonym once on the form. The target also only needs to be logged once unless it changes during the course of the sessions.

You will then need to scan this document in once completed and send to Caroline.

### Microsoft Forms:

If you have opted to collect data using Microsoft Forms. Once you have identified a pupil, I will send you a personalised questionnaire which you can complete each week. This will be specific for the pupil you have selected and use their pseudonym. Follow the link each week, complete the questionnaire with all the information and submit.

This will provide Caroline with a weekly log of the data you are collecting.

#### ELSA Goal Based Outcomes - Weekly Tracking Data

Please use this form to document your weekly tracking as part of the research project. There is no need to specify the target once you have already done this in a previous week, unless the target has changed.

1. Please specify the identified goal for the pupil:

2. What session number are you on? \*

3. How did the pupil rate their progress towards the identified target this session? \*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Please briefly explain why they chose this number? \*

5. Please provide a brief overview of the activities in your session today: \*

## **2 Scripts/Prompts to Support Goal Setting**

### **2.2 Exploring their goals and setting an outcome:**

At this point you are trying to identify what is meaningful to the young person in terms of progress around emotional literacy. Part of this is knowing what they would be able to do differently. Here are some prompts to help them think about this:

- If working with me was a real success, what would be different?
- How would you like things to be different?
- ‘Imagine when you go to bed tonight a miracle happens that makes everything challenging better. When you wake up in the morning, what will be different?’
- ‘If you had three wishes, what are the things you would wish to change that would make life better than it is now?’
- You could also wonder with them about what you have noticed (E.g. ‘I’ve noticed that you sometimes appear cross/frustrated’ or insight from the SDQ data/referral form)

### **2.3 Reviewing the goal-based outcome:**

When using Goal Based Outcomes you review the goal each week. You will spend around 5 minutes exploring the change on the scale of 1-10. This might not always be progress, and that is OK. To help you understand the score, it is useful to explore why they have provided that number. Here are some scripts you might use to review the goal and the score provided.

- ‘Looking at your goal... On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 means you have fully reached the goal, and zero means you haven’t even begun to make any progress towards it, and a score of 5 is exactly half-way between the two, today where would you rate your current progress towards this goal?’
- What has happened this week that has put you at a 7?
- How do you know you’re a 7 and not a 6?
- What is your reason for putting yourself at a 7?

## **Support Available During the Project**

This document is your guide for the project. If you come across any difficulties or questions about process, please refer to this first. However, if you are stuck here are some alternative means of support:

- I am available by e-mail throughout the week and will endeavour to get back to you by the end of the day if you have a question I can answer.
- I will send fortnightly e-mails to check in with all participants. I will be available for phone calls/catch ups as needed.
- I have identified some slots for weekly drop-in sessions. I have tried to vary these times, so they are accessible for all diaries. However, I am nearly always available on Fridays for a call if you need it. These are not mandatory to attend. They are there as a support session as required.
- The following dates have been allocated but may be subject to change:
  - Friday 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 – 10.00am – 11.00am
  - Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 – 2pm – 3pm
  - Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of November - 11.30am – 12.30pm
  - Monday 8<sup>th</sup> of November 9.30am - 10.30am
  - Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2.30pm - 3.30pm
  - Friday 26<sup>th</sup> of November 9.30am - 10.30am
  - Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> of December – 2.30pm - 3.30pm
  - Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> of December – 2.30pm - 3.30pm
  - Monday 13<sup>th</sup> of December - 9.30pm - 10.30 am

## Useful Links

### **Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC) Goal Based Outcomes Information Sheet:**

<https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/goal-based-outcomes-gbo/#:~:text=Unless%20otherwise%20stated%2C%20CORC%20is%20not%20the%20developer,for%20themselves%20at%20the%20beginning%20of%20an%20intervention.>

### **Duncan & Law Guidance for Goal Based Outcomes (2018)**

<https://goals-in-therapy.com/2018/12/07/guidance-notes-for-using-the-goal-based-outcome-gbo-tool/>

### **CORC YouTube page:**

[Child Outcomes Research Consortium - YouTube](#)

### **CORC Video: Setting a Target:**

[Adolescent with Anxiety Discussing Difficulty – YouTube](#)

### **CORC Video: Reviewing a Target:**

[Adolescent with Low Mood - Reviewing and Adding Goals – YouTube](#)

### **SMART Target Video:**

[How to Set SMART Goals | Goal Setting for Students – YouTube](#)

### **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Website:**

<https://www.sdqinfo.org/a0.html>

### Caroline's Contact Details:

**E-mail Address:** xxxx

**Phone number:** Available on request.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1:** Parent Information Sheet\*
- Appendix 2:** Parent Consent Forms\*
- Appendix 3:** Information Sheet for Pupils\*
- Appendix 4:** Secondary ELSA Research Project Information Video
- Appendix 5:** Pupil Consent Form\*
- Appendix 6:** Staff Information Sheet
- Appendix 7:** Staff Consent Form
- Appendix 8:** Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (English, UK) - Teacher
- Appendix 9:** Emotional Literacy Teacher Checklist
- Appendix 10:** Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (English, UK) – Pupil
- Appendix 11:** Emotional Literacy Student Checklist
- Appendix 12:** GBO Weekly Tracking Document
- Appendix 13:** PowerPoint Slides for Goal Based Outcome Training

## Appendix G: Interview schedules for semi-structured interviews

### G1: Secondary ELSA Goal Based Outcomes Questions: Interview for ELSAs (collected data)

#### Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The purpose of this interview is to gain more detailed information about your experiences of using Goal Based outcome in your role as an ELSA.

Before we start, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded, and data will be stored anonymously. The recording will be transcribed and then deleted. All names used will be referred to using a pseudonym. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without giving a reason. This interview will not take longer than 30 minutes.

| <b>Section 1 – Pre-Interview Table</b>                           |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Participant name</b>  |  |
| <b>Participant LA and school</b>                                 |  |
| <b>From data (add anything to follow up/ask for more detail)</b> |  |
| Pupil Target:  |  |
| How many sessions:   |  |
| How many steps of progress on GBO:                               |  |

#### Interview schedule

| <b>Section 2 – Main Body</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Questions</b>   | <b>Prompts/follow up questions</b>   |
| 1. What were your experience of using targets in ELSA before the Goal Based Outcomes training? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You said you feel X (level of confident) in setting targets prior to the training, can you tell me about that?</li> <li>• You said you Sometimes/Do/Never use SMART targets in your ELSA work?</li> <li>• Why/Why not?</li> <li>• How do you find setting targets?</li> <li>• How do they impact your role? The pupil? Etc.</li> </ul>  |
| 2. Tell me about your experiences using Goal Based Outcomes within your ELSA sessions?         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about using Goal Based Outcomes in ELSA practice?</li> <li>• Your pupil made X steps of progress. What helped that to happen?</li> <li>• To what extent do you feel the goal based outcome tracking accurately captured the change process for each pupil?</li> <li>• xxx/that sounds interesting, tell me more about that.</li> <li>• you mentioned xxx, tell me more about that.</li> <li>• Can you tell me more about xxx</li> </ul> |



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|--|--|
|  |  |
| 3. To what extent did using Goal Based Outcome influence what happened in your sessions? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you notice?</li> <li>• What was different?</li> <li>• What was the same?</li> <li>• For you? For the young person?</li> </ul>  |
| 4. To what extent do feel there were benefits to using this approach in your session?    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you notice?</li> <li>• Earlier you mentioned XXX, can you tell me more about that?</li> <li>• For you as an ELSA?</li> <li>• For the pupil?</li> <li>• For anyone else?</li> </ul> |
| 5. To what extent did you encounter any challenges with using this approach?             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you notice?</li> <li>• Earlier you mentioned XXX, can you tell me more about that?</li> <li>• For you as an ELSA?</li> <li>• For the pupil?</li> <li>• For anyone else?</li> </ul> |
| 6. How did this compare to your previous experience of evaluating the ELSA intervention? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was different?</li> <li>• What was the impact of using this approach?</li> </ul>   |

### Section 3

We've come to the end of our interview. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

#### **Closing**

Thank you for participating in this interview, I really appreciate your time and contributions. We will use your responses to the questions in the data analysis and use this to write up the project. Thank you for your time.

**G2: Secondary ELSA Goal Based Outcomes Questions: Interview for ELSAs (used GBO, no student data)**

**Introduction:**

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The purpose of this interview is to gain more detailed information about your experiences of using Goal Based outcome in your role as an ELSA. This is an exploratory research project, so I'm interested to hear your experience, positive and negative, of implementing this approach.

Before we start, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded, and data will be stored anonymously. The recording will be transcribed and then deleted. All names used will be referred to using a pseudonym. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without giving a reason. This interview will not take longer than 30 minutes.

| <b><u>Section 1 – Pre-Interview Table</u></b>                    |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Participant name</b>  |  |
| <b>Participant LA and school</b>                                 |  |
| <b>From data (add anything to follow up/ask for more detail)</b> |  |
| Have you used goal-based outcomes?                               |  |
| How many pupils with approximately?                              |  |

**Interview schedule**

| <b><u>Section 2 – Main Body</u></b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Questions</b>  | <b>Prompts/follow up questions</b>   |
| 7. Tell me about your experiences of evaluating ELSA before the Goal Based Outcomes training? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You said you feel X (level of confident) in setting targets prior to the training, can you tell me about that?</li> <li>• You said you Sometimes/Do/Never use SMART targets in your ELSA work?</li> <li>• Why/Why not?</li> <li>• How do you find setting targets?</li> <li>• How do they impact your role? The pupil? Etc.</li> </ul>                                  |
| 8. Tell me about your experiences using Goal Based Outcomes within your ELSA sessions?        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about using Goal Based Outcomes in ELSA practice?</li> <li>• How did you experience setting the goal?</li> <li>• How did you experience the weekly tracking of the goal?</li> <li>• xxx/that sounds interesting, tell me more about that.</li> <li>• you mentioned xxx, tell me more about that.</li> <li>• Can you tell me more about xxx</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>9. To what extent did setting a Goal Based Outcome impact your ELSA practice?</p>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was anything different?</li> <li>• What did you notice?</li> <li>• What was different?</li> <li>• What was the same?</li> <li>• For you? For the young person?</li> </ul>  |
| <p>10. To what extent do feel there were benefits to using this approach in your session?</p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you notice?</li> <li>• Earlier you mentioned XXX, can you tell me more about that?</li> <li>• For you as an ELSA?</li> <li>• For the pupil?</li> <li>• For anyone else?</li> </ul>  |
| <p>11. To what extent did you encounter any challenges with using this approach?</p>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you notice?</li> <li>• Earlier you mentioned XXX, can you tell me more about that?</li> <li>• When setting the goal?</li> <li>• When tracking the goal?</li> <li>• For you as an ELSA?</li> <li>• For the pupil?</li> <li>• For anyone else?</li> </ul> |
| <p>12. How did this compare to your previous experience of evaluating the ELSA intervention?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was different?</li> <li>• What was the impact of using this approach?</li> </ul>  |

### Section 3

We've come to the end of our interview. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

#### **Closing**

Thank you for participating in this interview, I really appreciate your time and contributions. We will use your responses to the questions in the data analysis and use this to write up the project. Thank you for your time.

**G3: Secondary ELSA Goal Based Outcomes Questions: Interview for ELSAs**  
**(No GBO, no data)**

**Introduction:**

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The purpose of this interview is to gain more detailed information about your experiences of participating in this research.

Before we start, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded, and data will be stored anonymously. The recording will be transcribed and then deleted. All names used will be referred to using a pseudonym. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without giving a reason. This interview will not take longer than 30 minutes.

| <b><u>Section 1 – Pre-Interview Table</u></b>                    |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Participant name</b>  |  |
| <b>Participant LA and school</b>                                 |  |
| <b>From data (add anything to follow up/ask for more detail)</b> |  |
| Reason for dropping out/difficulties collecting data:            |  |

**Interview schedule**

| <b><u>Section 2 – Main Body</u></b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Questions</b>   | <b>Prompts/follow up questions</b>  |
| 13. Can you tell me about your experiences of evaluating ELSA before the Goal Based Outcomes training?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You said you feel X (level of confident) can you tell me about that?</li> <li>• You said you Sometimes/Do/Never use SMART targets in your ELSA work? Can you tell me a bit about that?</li> <li>• Why/Why not?</li> <li>• How do you find setting targets?</li> <li>• How do they impact your role? The pupil? Etc.</li> </ul>                               |
| 14. What are your thoughts about the use of Goal Based Outcomes in ELSA practice?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent do you perceive there to be benefits of this approach?</li> <li>• To what extent do you perceive there to be challenges in using this approach?</li> <li>• For you? For the young person?</li> <li>•</li> </ul>   |
| 15. I understand there were some challenges for you being involved in the research and collecting data. Can you tell me a bit about your experience? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me a bit about the barriers</li> <li>• I noticed from our correspondence that XX was an issue (e.g. recruiting a pupil/parental consent) can you tell me a bit about that?</li> <li>• xxx/that sounds interesting, tell me more about that.</li> <li>• you mentioned xxx, tell me more about that.</li> <li>• Can you tell me more about xxx</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>16. Is there any support that would have enabled you to better engage in the research?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the researcher?</li> <li>• From anyone else?</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>Section 3</b></p>  |
| <p>We've come to the end of our interview. Is there anything else you'd like to add?</p>   |
| <p><b>Closing</b><br/> Thank you for participating in this interview, I really appreciate your time and contributions. We will use your responses to the questions in the data analysis and use this to write up the project. Thank you for your time.</p> |

## **G4: Secondary ELSA Goal Based Outcomes Questions: Interview for Students**

### **Introduction:**

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The purpose of this interview to hear what you think about your sessions with (ELSA name). I understand that you set a goal with them and I would like to learn about what that was like.

Before we start, I'd like to remind you that your responses will be recorded, and data will be stored anonymously. The recording will be transcribed and then deleted. All names used will be referred to using a pseudonym. If at any point you wish to pause or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without giving a reason. This interview will not take longer than 30 minutes.

| <b><u>Section 1 – Pre-Interview Table</u></b>                    |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Participant name</b>  |  |
| <b>Participant ELSA</b>  |  |
| <b>From data (add anything to follow up/ask for more detail)</b> |  |
| Target:  |  |
| How many sessions:   |  |
| How many steps of progress on GBO:                               |  |

### **Interview schedule**

| <b><u>Section 2 – Main Body</u></b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Questions</b>   | <b>Prompts/follow up questions</b>  |
| 1) Tell me about what it was like to do your weekly sessions with (ELSA name)?                   | a) Was there anything you liked? What did you like most?<br>b) Was there anything you didn't enjoy?<br>c) Is there anything you would have liked to be different about your sessions?<br>d) Anything you found particularly helpful?  |
| 2) I understand that you set a goal with (ELSA name). Tell me about what it was like to do that? | a) What was your target? (Remind if forgotten of what it was)<br>b) How did you come up with the target?<br>c) What do you think of the target?<br>d) Did you make progress towards your target?<br>e) What did you do to try and meet the goals?<br>f) Did you notice anything helpful about setting a goal? What?<br>g) Was there anything difficult about setting a goal? What?<br>h) To what extent do you think that was a useful thing to do? |
| 3) If they have made progress: I noticed that you made X steps of progress on the                | a) What helped you to make progress? Within the session? Outside the session?<br>b) Who helped you?<br>c) What helped your score go up?   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>scale. What helped that to happen?</p> <p>4) If they have not made progress: I noticed that your progress towards the goal went up and down over the weeks, can you tell me a bit about that?</p> | <p>d) What made your score go down?</p> |
|--|---|

| <b>Section 3</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <p>We've come to the end of our interview. Is there anything else you'd like to add?</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Closing</b><br/> Thank you for participating in this interview, I really appreciate your time and contributions. We will use your responses to the questions in the data analysis and use this to write up the project. Thank you for your time.</p> |  |

## Appendix H: Example table of codes and extracts for thematic analysis

| Theme 3: Potential barriers when using Goal Based Outcomes |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Sub Theme  | Example Codes  | Example Excerpts  |
| <b>1:<br/>Complexity of student needs</b>                  | ELSAs working with pupils with various/complex needs     | “I’m trying to think that, you know, maybe at the end of this it’s important to let people know that they need to be passed to, you know, a professional to carry on some work with them” [ELSA 1]                                    |
|  | Complex needs – GBO not always appropriate               | “As I said, it was too big for me to deal with. So, that’s when we went off and found the wellbeing team and passed him over and they had a bit of a chat with him and spoke to his parents, and did what they needed to do” [ELSA 7] |
|  | Challenge of identifying pupil research – complex needs  |   |
|  | Can take time to build rapport                           |   |
|  | Some pupils need further involvement from other agencies | “So, in a way I suppose I was trying to tick too many boxes... this is the bit I find a little bit tricky and I suppose with ELSA, you know, we can’t work on everything” [ELSA 3]  |
| <b>2:<br/>Student engagement in GBO</b>                    | Importance of pupil-self-awareness of need               | “I know the young people are, sort of, look at me like ‘I don’t know’” [ELSA 4]   |
|  | Some pupils are reluctant to engage in GBO               | “When setting some goals it’s important that they understand that there’s like reasons behind it.” [ELSA 1]   |
|  | GBO impacted by pupil engagement                         | “So, that was one of my main priorities was to get help with coping with things.” [Pupil 2]   |
|  | Pupil self-awareness impacts on ability to set a goal    | “Well, self-esteem, sometimes my self-esteem can be really low, not the best, in particular. And, then I say anger issues, pretty obvious, I can harm other people when I’m angry and I need to just stay calm overall.” [Pupil 3]    |
|  | GBO pupil need self-awareness to set a goal              | “So maybe certain students you’ve spoken to today are hesitant to change and help” [ELSA 5]<br><br>“We went through a phase when he didn’t want to engage” [ELSA 2]   |



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | “It probably would’ve been better if I’d actually tried and didn’t just tick random numbers” [Pupil 4]   |
| <b>3:<br/>Pressures on<br/>ELSAs</b>                                       | This theme was made up of the subsequent sub-themes.   |  |
| <b>3.1:<br/>Integrating<br/>staff and<br/>student views<br/>about ELSA</b> | <p>Previously staff decided focus for ELSA</p> <p>Staff wanting to change pupil behaviour</p> <p>Teachers not always sure about purpose of ELSA</p> <p>ELSA trying to integrate pupil and staff views when picking goal</p>                    | <p>“I would go with whatever the pastoral or the SENCo told me the issue was.” [ELSA 1]</p> <p>“Some teachers are very familiar with ELSA. You get others, which perhaps not” [ELSA 6]</p> <p>“You know it's the old classic one, ‘Can you help this person with change?’ And it's like, ‘OK, change from what?’” [ELSA 5]</p> <p>“and the underlying was that her self-esteem was really low so that met the needs of staff that were asking for the support” [ELSA 3]</p>                    |
| <b>3.2:<br/>Pressure to<br/>have and<br/>evidence<br/>impact</b>           | <p>Previous methods of evaluation not providing regular feedback</p> <p>Limitations of standardised measures</p> <p>Demand characteristics of evaluation</p> <p>Challenges obtaining staff feedback</p> <p>Importance of evidence for ELSA</p> | <p>“We needed to have some sort of evidence of what had gone on” [ELSA 3]</p> <p>So, as much as, I don’t know, you’re monitoring, but you’re not because again you don’t always get the feedback from the teaching staff so you spend half your week trying to say, ‘Well you haven’t filled in this. Did you see this happen?’ [ELSA 4]</p> <p>you can’t force them to change their number” [ELSA 5]</p> <p>I'm looking, I'm feeling the pressure of seeing those ratings go up. [ELSA 1]</p> |
| <b>3.3:<br/>Restrictions<br/>on ELSA time</b>                              | <p>Barriers of ELSA role – time limitations</p> <p>Time/workload a barrier to engaging in research</p>   | <p>“Just my time must be so stretched” [ELSA 1]</p> <p>“Yes, it’s challenging in that I am a full time ELSA, but I am also our DDSL. So,</p>   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p>Challenge of multiple ELSA roles on time</p> <p>Demand for ELSA is high/High volume of SEMH need</p>   | <p>we're trying to balance everything which is difficult" [ELSA 8]</p> <p>"That's it's been a bit in and out because he's not been here and all the other things that are happening." [ELSA 4]</p> <p>"So, I'm not spending hours planning, because I'm back to back. I'm literally an hour and then the next person. The person stands up and leaves and then I'm cleaning the desk and then the next one's coming in." [ELSA 8]</p>   |
| <p><b>4:<br/>ELSA and student uncertainty about GBO</b></p> | <p>ELSA uncertainty about GBO</p> <p>ELSA feels inexperienced in goal setting</p> <p>Pupils struggled with scaling in GBO</p> <p>Pupils struggle to explain their score</p> | <p>'...and the times that he didn't want to score, I just left it that he didn't want to score and that's absolutely fine.' [ELSA 2]</p> <p>"I'm really bad at scaling" [Pupil 4]</p> <p>"But sometimes I put decimals because I might be unsure" [Pupil 3]</p> <p>"I still don't feel 100% confident with a SMART target or the goal-based targets... because I don't think I've had enough practice yet." [ELSA 1]</p> <p>"Have I got it right? Am I doing it right? Is that right for the student? More playing on my own emotions" [ELSA 7]</p> |

## Appendix I: Table of participants location

**Table I1**

*Geographical location of ELSAs who took part in the ELSA training (N= 17)*

| <b>Local Authority</b>    | <b>N = 17</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Oxfordshire               | 3             |
| London Borough of Merton  | 3             |
| Suffolk                   | 2             |
| Central Bedfordshire      | 1             |
| Peterborough City Council | 1             |
| South Gloucestershire     | 1             |
| Bridgend                  | 1             |
| Staffordshire             | 1             |
| Hampshire                 | 1             |
| Surrey                    | 1             |
| Norfolk                   | 1             |
| London Borough of Barnet  | 1             |

## Appendix J: Ethical considerations and full ethics form

### Doctoral Student Ethics Application Form

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute of Education (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in simple terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

#### **Registering your study with the UCL Data Protection Officer as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process**

If you are proposing to collect personal data i.e. data from which a living individual can be identified **you must be registered with the UCL Data Protection Office before you submit your ethics application for review**. To do this, email the complete ethics form to the [UCL Data Protection Office](#). Once your registration number is received, add it to the form\* and submit it to your supervisor for approval. If the Data Protection Office advises you to make changes to the way in which you propose to collect and store the data this should be reflected in your ethics application form.

**Please note that the completion of the [UCL GDPR online training](#) is mandatory for all PhD students.**

#### Section 1 – Project details

- a. **Project title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?
- b. Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678): Caroline King, **19166191**
- c. **\*UCL Data Protection Registration Number: Z6364106/2021/06/52 social research**
  - a. Date Issued: **04/06/2021**
- d. Supervisor/Personal Tutor: **Enter text**
- e. Department: **Psychology and Human Development**
- f. Course category (Tick one):  
PhD   
EdD   
DEdPsy
- g. **If applicable**, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.
- h. Intended research start date: **March 2021**
- i. Intended research end date: **July 2022**
- j. Country fieldwork will be conducted in: **England**
- k. If research to be conducted abroad please check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If the FCO advice is against travel this will be required before ethical approval can be

granted: [UCL travel advice webpage](#)

I. Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?

Yes

External Committee Name:

Date of Approval:

No  **go to Section 2**

**If yes:**

- Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application.
- Proceed to Section 10 Attachments.

**Note:** Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service](#) (NRES) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee](#) (SCREC). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.

## Section 2 - Research methods summary (tick all that apply)

Interviews

Focus Groups

Questionnaires (SDQ)

Action Research

Observation

Literature Review

Controlled trial/other intervention study

Use of personal records (Goal Based Outcomes tracking data)

Systematic review – **if only method used go to Section 5**

Secondary data analysis – **if secondary analysis used go to Section 6**

Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups

Other, give details:

Please provide an overview of the project, focusing on your methodology. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, data collection (including justifications for methods chosen and description of topics/questions to be asked), reporting and dissemination. Please focus on your methodology; the theory, policy, or literary background of your work can be provided in an attached document (i.e. a full research proposal or case for support document). *Minimum 150 words required.*

### **Purpose:**

To explore the use of Goal Based Outcomes in the practice of secondary Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA). To understand the what can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme from using these measures.

### **Rationale**

There is limited evidence base around the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant intervention, with only 6 peer-reviewed studies so far. Additionally, there are only 3 papers which focus on ELSA with secondary aged pupils (Begley, 2015; Nicholson-Roberts, 2019; Peters, 2020).

There are challenges measuring the impact of ELSA due to the non-manualised and bespoke nature of the intervention (Pickering, 2019). Therefore, a lot of the research thus far have used qualitative means to explore the impact of ELSA and how it is received. The evaluative tools that have been used thus far, such as the SDQ, are not always sensitive enough to detect the impact of ELSA (Mann, 2014).

Idiographic measures, such as Goal Based Outcomes are being used in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to explore outcomes of interventions in that setting. So far, these measures have not been used within ELSA to explore the impact of the intervention.

Therefore, it would be helpful to explore what can be learnt about ELSA through using this method, as it will allow the ELSA to use more bespoke means to evaluate impact and outcomes.

### **Main Research Questions**

1. What can an idiographic measure of Goal Based Outcomes tell us about the impact/efficacy of delivering ELSA intervention with secondary aged CYP?
2. How do the outcomes of idiographic measures compare with outcomes from other quantitative methods of evaluating ELSA?
3. What are ELSA and Pupils experiences of using idiographic measures in ELSA practice?

### **Research Design:**

#### **Participants:**

The participants will be:

- Emotional Literacy Support Assistants from secondary schools who are running ELSA sessions with children and young people.
- Children and young people
- Member of staff who referred the child to receive an ELSA intervention.

### Sampling:

ELSAs will be recruited through Educational Psychology services who have ELSAs in secondary. This would be convenience opt in sampling.

### Phases of the research

#### Phase 1: Data collection within the ELSA intervention

The researcher will deliver virtual training to ELSAs with an expression of interest on using idiographic outcome measures.

ELSAs who participate will be asked to:

- Identify pupil(s) who have been referred to work with them who it would be suitable to set a Goal Based Outcome for their work (i.e. a clear reason for referral such as managing emotions, self-esteem, friendship issues/social skills).
- Administer the strengths and Difficulties questionnaire with the pupil taking part who has given informed consent, and by the adult who referred them for ELSA support. This will first be completed prior to the intervention starting (the first session). It will then be completed again immediately following the final session by the referring adult, and as part of the final session by the pupil.
- Gather weekly tracking of Goal Based Outcome data using the attached sheet. This will involve scoring from 1-10 the progress towards the goal and 1-2 sentences of qualitative data explaining the chosen number from the pupil's perspective.

#### Phase 2: Follow-up interviews with ELSAs and Pupils

The second phase aims to explore the ELSA and pupils experience of using the Goal Based Outcome measures. This will involve semi-structured interviews with pupils and ELSAs separately. The questions within the interview will cover:

#### ELSA Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with ELSAs, virtually as is necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following questions will be used as the basis of the interviews:

- How do you typically evaluate your ELSA sessions?
- How did you find running the intervention with X? What went well? What were the challenges?
- How did using goal-based outcomes impact the intervention?
- Were there any benefits to using GBO?
- Were there any challenges to using goal-based outcomes
- How did the GBO data compare to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire/Emotional Literacy Checklist?
- How did the Goal Based Outcomes data compare with previous methods you have used to evaluate the ELSA intervention?

#### Pupil Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with pupils, virtually as is necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this interview will be to explore pupils' experiences of the ELSA intervention and using goal-based outcomes. The interview will use the following questions to form part of an interview schedule:

- How have you found the ELSA sessions? What did you like about them?
- Is there anything you haven't liked about the sessions? Why? What would you change/how would you make it better?
- Why were you taking part of the ELSA intervention?
- What did you want to get better at?
- Have you improved in this area?
- How do you know?
- I understand you completed this sheet (show GBO sheet) weekly. What was that like? How did you find this?
- Did you know the intervention was going to end? How?

### Section 3 – research Participants (tick all that apply)

- Early years/pre-school
- Ages 5-11
- Ages 12-16
- Young people aged 17-18
- Adults please specify below\*
- Unknown – specify below
- No participants

\*Emotional Literacy Support Assistants and a member of staff who knows the pupil well.

**Note:** Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service](#) (NRES) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee](#) (SCREC).

### Section 4 - Security-sensitive material (only complete if applicable)

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

- a. Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?

Yes\*  No

- b. Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?

Yes\*  No

- c. Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?



Yes\*  No

\* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

## Section 5 – Systematic reviews of research (only complete if applicable)

a. Will you be collecting any new data from participants?

Yes\*  No

b. Will you be analysing any secondary data?

Yes\*  No

\* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

*If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) and if you have answered **No** to both questions, please go to **Section 8 Attachments**.*

## Section 6 - Secondary data analysis (only complete if applicable)

a. Name of dataset/s:

b. Owner of dataset/s:

c. Are the data in the public domain?

Yes  No

**If no**, do you have the owner's permission/license?

Yes  No\*

d. Are the data special category personal data (i.e. personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation)?

Yes\*  No

e. Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?

Yes  No\*

f. **If no**, was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?

Yes  No\*

g. **If no**, was data collected prior to ethics approval process?

Yes  No\*

\* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

*If secondary analysis is only method used and no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to **Section 9 Attachments**.*

## Section 7 – Data Storage and Security

Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.

- a. Data subjects - Who will the data be collected from?

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants who are delivering the intervention with secondary aged pupils. Secondary aged pupils who are taking part in the ELSA intervention. The member of staff who referred the pupil to receive ELSA support.

- b. What data will be collected? Please provide details of the type of personal data to be collected

Each pupil will gather Goal Based Outcome tracking sheets for each session. Strength and Difficulties questionnaires completed by pupil taking part in ELSA and the member of staff before and after the intervention. Interview transcripts with ELSAs

Is the data anonymised? Yes  No\*

Do you plan to anonymise the data? Yes\*  No

Do you plan to use individual level data? Yes\*  No

Do you plan to pseudonymise the data? Yes\*  No

\* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

- c. **Disclosure** – Who will the results of your project be disclosed to?

The anonymised data (tracking data, SDQ and interview transcripts) will be shared with research supervisors. The final thesis report with all data anonymised will be shared with exam markers and stored in UCL Institute of Education library. The research briefing will be shared with participants and possibly the wider ELSA network (on the ELSA network website). The researcher also aims to publish findings in a professional journal.

**Disclosure** – Will personal data be disclosed as part of your project?

Gender and age of the pupils will be disclosed in the report but data will be fully anonymised.

- d. Data storage – Please provide details on how and where the data will be stored i.e. UCL network, encrypted USB stick\*\*, encrypted laptop\*\* etc. Data will be stored on an encrypted file on a password protected. Consent forms and visual data will be locked in a secure cupboard and destroyed in accordance with the UCL data protection guidelines.

\*\* Advanced Encryption Standard 256 bit encryption which has been made a security standard within the NHS

- e. **Data Safe Haven (Identifiable Data Handling Solution)** – Will the personal identifiable data collected and processed as part of this research be stored in the UCL Data Safe Haven (mainly used by SLMS divisions, institutes and departments)?

Yes  No

- f. How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format?

In paper format, or encrypted file in accordance with UCL guidelines. Anonymised data need to be kept for 10 years. All audio recordings and identifying information will be destroyed at the end of the project

Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area? (If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with GDPR and state what these arrangements are)

No

Will data be archived for use by other researchers? (If yes, please provide details.)

No

- g. If personal data is used as part of your project, describe what measures you have in place to ensure that the data is only used for the research purpose e.g. pseudonymisation and short retention period of data’.

Pseudonyms will be used throughout the research process to ensure anonymity of participants.

*\* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

## Section 8 – Ethical Issues

Please state clearly the ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research and how will they be addressed.

**All** issues that may apply should be addressed. Some examples are given below, further information can be found in the guidelines. *Minimum 150 words required.*

- Methods
- Sampling
- Recruitment
- Gatekeepers
- Informed consent
- Potentially vulnerable participants
- Safeguarding/child protection
- Sensitive topics
- International research
- Risks to participants and/or researchers

- Confidentiality/Anonymity
- Disclosures/limits to confidentiality
- Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection)
- Reporting
- Dissemination and use of findings

**Ethical considerations section:**

Due to the social distancing restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all data will be collected remotely, unless there is a change to UCL policy that allows for face-to face interviews.

**Sampling procedure and informed consent**

1. ELSAs will be recruited via e-mails gained during a previous DEdPsy study which involved secondary ELSA participants. ELSAs will be contacted to explore expression of interest in the study and sent relevant information sheet if they are interested.
2. Interested ELSAs will be invited to attend a virtual training session run by the researcher around Goal-Based Outcomes and evaluation methods in ELSA. There will be opportunities within this session to clarify any questions about the study.
3. Those attended the training who express interest in taking part will be sent an information sheet and consent form, outlining phase one and two of the research. Consenting ELSAs can opt to take part in phase one, two or both phases.
4. Once ELSAs have been identified and provided informed consent to take part, they will then identify pupils whom they have been referred to receive ELSA support. These pupils should be deemed suitable by the ELSA to take part and have a clear area of need identified through referral (e.g. emotion regulation management, social skills development, self-esteem etc.)
5. Identified pupils will receive an information sheet explaining the research and asked for their informed consent to take part in Phase 1 and 2. Pupils can opt to take part in one, both or neither of the phases. Parental informed consent will also be sought, and parents will be provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research. Parental consent will agree for their child to take part in one, both or neither of the phases.
6. Following Phase 2, participating pupils and ELSAs who have provided consent to take part in Phase 2 will then be invited to take part in semi-structured interviews. At the beginning of the interview, the consent form will be revisited to ensure they are happy to take part.

**Vulnerable participants**

This research involves children and young people who are receiving ELSA support which is to support social, emotional and mental health needs. These children may be vulnerable and therefore, the researcher will ensure that the following steps are taken.

- All interviews will take place while the child is at school, in a familiar environment.
- These interviews will take place via Microsoft Teams and therefore the researcher will ensure the child can identify a designated adult to check in with following the interview.
- They will be informed that they do not have to participate. It will be made clear that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

- They will be informed there are no correct responses the researcher is looking for, and if they don't want to answer a question that is OK.
- The researcher will be mindful of the power imbalance and take steps to address this. The researcher's role will be made clear at the beginning of the research process.
- A debriefing following the interview will take place, and an identified adult they can speak to if they have any concerns.

#### Power Imbalance

- During pupil interviews, a warm-up task will take place to enable to young person and researcher to build rapport.
- The researcher will ensure an approachable and warm manner is adopted throughout with pupils and ELSAs.
- Semi-structured interviews will enable the researcher to follow the participants lead during the interview.
- All participants will be reminded of their right to omit questions that they do not want to answer without repercussion or recourse and reminded of their right to anonymity and withdraw before and after the questionnaire and interview.
- The interview will conclude with a clear ending. The researcher will provide an opportunity for the participant to answer any questions they have. They will be thanked for their participation and allowed an opportunity to ask any questions afterwards and what will happen with the data will be clarified.

#### Confidentiality and anonymity

- All data will be anonymised, and all participants will be allocated a pseudonym which will be used within the report.
- The only identifiable information will be the age and gender of the pupil.
- All information will be kept confidential, unless participants make disclosure which causes the researcher to believe there is a safeguarding concern.

#### Accessibility

- The researcher will ensure that the study is accessible to all families who have English as a second language through making the information sheet and consent forms available in their first language.

#### Disclosures and Safeguarding

- The researcher has an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check which can be presented to schools upon request.
- All participants will be informed of my responsibility as a professional to pass on any safeguarding concerns at the beginning of the interview.
- The researcher will be aware of the designated safeguarding lead of the school the pupil attends (available on the school website) and any concerns or disclosures made will be reported to the relevant party (e.g. parents, designated safeguarding lead, or social services).
- The researcher will seek advice from her supervisor if any distress is experienced as a result of the topics discussed within the interviews.

#### Dissemination of Findings

- Findings will be written up in the form of the full thesis report and a research briefing document (poster outlining the findings). The research briefing will be shared with all participants and may be shared with the wider community.
- The researcher hopes to publish the findings within a professional journal. The findings may be used with future studies and reports.
- The researcher will make clear to participants on the information sheet and following the interview how the findings will be shared. This will ensure the confidentiality of any findings that are shared.
- Participants will be given an opportunity to review their contributions.
- An accessible summary report will be made available for all participants.

Please confirm that the processing of the data is not likely to cause substantial damage or distress to an individual

Yes

## Section 9 – Attachments.

*Please attach your information sheets and consent forms to your ethics application before requesting a Data Protection number from the UCL Data Protection office. Note that they will be unable to issue you the Data Protection number until all such documentation is received*

- a. Information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research (List attachments below)

Yes  No

Items to attach:

- Appendix A: ELSA and referrer consent
- Appendix B: Parental Consent
- Appendix C Pupil Consent
- Appendix D: Staff Consent
- Appendix E: Parental Information Sheet
- Appendix F: Staff Information Sheet
- Appendix G: ELSA information sheet
- Appendix H: Pupil information sheet

b. Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee Yes

c. The proposal ('case for support') for the project Yes

d. Full risk assessment Yes

## Section 10 – Declaration

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information in this form is correct and that this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.

Yes  No

I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.

Yes  No

### I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name

Date

**Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor for review.**

## Notes and references

### Professional code of ethics

You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:

[British Psychological Society](#) (2018) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*

Or

[British Educational Research Association](#) (2018) *Ethical Guidelines*

Or

[British Sociological Association](#) (2017) *Statement of Ethical Practice*

Please see the respective websites for these or later versions; direct links to the latest versions are available on the [Institute of Education Research Ethics website](#).

### Disclosure and Barring Service checks

If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through at IOE.

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

### **Further references**

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.

This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury.

A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

## **Departmental Use**

If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, the supervisor must refer the application to the Research Development Administrator via email so that it can be submitted to the IOE Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A departmental research ethics coordinator or representative can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the REC. If unsure please refer to the guidelines explaining when to refer the ethics application to the IOE Research Ethics Committee, posted on the committee's website.

Student name:

Student department:

Course:

Project Title:

### **Reviewer 1**

Supervisor/first reviewer name: Ed Baines

Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?

Supervisor/first reviewer signature:

Date:



## Reviewer 2

Second reviewer name: Helen Upton

Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?

Second reviewer signature:

Date:

### Decision on behalf of reviewers

Approved

Approved subject to the following additional measures

Not approved for the reasons given below

Referred to the REC for review

Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC:

Comments from reviewers for the applicant:

***Once it is approved by both reviewers, students should submit their ethics application form to the Centre for Doctoral Education team: [IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk).***

## **Further Ethical Considerations**

### **Informed consent**

The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics highlights that “every person from whom data are gathered for the purposes of research consents freely and voluntarily to participation, having been given sufficient information to enable them to make an informed choice” (BPS, 2021, p. 12). Informed consent was sought and gained from the ELSAs, staff, parents of the pupils in the study and from the pupils themselves. The ELSAs were provided with an information sheet and a consent form (Appendix K). To support informed consent for the pupils, the researcher developed [an introductory video](#) to explain to participants what engaging in the research would entail. This was done to ensure that literacy levels would not impact on children’s access to the information about their involvement in the research. The video explained what the project would involve and highlighted the ethical points included within the written pupil information sheet (Appendix K). During this period of remote working and research, the study was dependent on the goodwill of the ELSA in seeking and managing the consent process. The video and written information sheets (Appendix K) and consent forms (Appendix K) were shared with the ELSA, and in turn they were asked to share the pertinent information sheets with the relevant member of staff, the child’s parents/carers and with the pupil(s) they had identified for involvement. During the interview phase, when the researcher met with participants remotely via Teams, the researcher reviewed the information sheet at the start of the interview, explaining to the ELSAs and the pupils involved that the data would be anonymous and that they had a right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences (BPS, 2021, p. 16). The researcher sought verbal consent that all participants wanted to proceed with the interview.

## **Duty of care**

This research involves CYP who are receiving ELSA support, which supports social, emotional, and mental health needs, and are under the age of 16. Therefore, it was considered by the BPS Guidelines to involve 'more than minimal risk' (BPS, 2021, p. 10), and as such the researcher did their utmost to ensure all ethical considerations were made. The researcher was mindful of the power imbalance and took steps to address this. This included the interviews taking place at school via Microsoft Teams in a familiar environment to the child. The researcher agreed with the ELSA that they would be sitting next door throughout the interview, and that the pupils could access them at any time. The ELSA returned following the interview. All participants were informed at the start of the interview that they did not have to participate if they did not want to, they were free to withdraw at any time, there were no correct responses to questions, and they were not obligated to answer any questions if they did not wish to.

## Appendix K: Information Sheet & Consent Forms for Participants

### K1: Student Information Sheet



Nice to meet you, my name is Caroline!

I am doing a project to find out about Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA). You may have heard about or met the ELSA at your school. They will have asked you to read this document!

**What is an ELSA?**  
An ELSA offers support to pupils with an area they might find difficult. For example, friendship difficulties, recognising and managing feelings (e.g. worry, anger, sadness), or developing confidence. This support typically happens one-to-one and lasts for approximately 6-8 weeks.

**Why have I been asked to take part?**  
You have been asked to help because someone you know has noticed you might need some support from an ELSA, and you have agreed to this.

**Who are you? What do you do?**  
I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. My job is to help young people, their families, teachers, and other staff to think about pupil's learning and happiness, and how we can make this the best it can be. I am interested in finding out about how pupils can work with an ELSA to set and work towards a goal that is important to them.

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20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL [www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe)  
Caroline King | [Caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:Caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk)



### What will I be asked to do?

The first part of research you will be asked to:

- Set a target with the ELSA that you would like to work towards
- Take part in 6 or more ELSA sessions
- Fill out a questionnaire before and after your work with the ELSA
- Track how you are progressing towards the target during the sessions

This information will be shared with Caroline if you are happy with this.

### Then what happens?

After your ELSA support has finished, you will be invited to meet Caroline via Zoom and have a conversation about ELSA. This will happen while you're at school and Caroline will ask about the sessions and how you found them.

### Some things you need to know...

- The interview will last around 25 minutes.
- It will be recorded so Caroline can listen back to it.
- You do not have to take part. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer Caroline's questions if you don't want to.
- You can bring a member of staff if you would like.
- What we talk about is private, but if you tell me something that might hurt you, or others, Caroline may have to tell someone about it.
- Caroline will write a report about the things you tell me, but your name will not be on this.

**IMPORTANT!**

When you have read this/watched the video, please sign the consent form if you are happy to take part. If so, I look forward to working with you!

If you have any questions, please feel free to  
e-mail me: 



## K2: Student Consent Form

Institute of Education



### Young Person Consent Forms

**Research title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?

**Name of researcher:** Caroline King

**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:

|  | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| I have read and understood the information sheet.  |     |    |
| I have had the opportunity to ask Caroline questions on the phone or by email.   |     |    |
| I confirm that it is my decision to take part is my own and not anybody else's.  |     |    |
| I understand that I am free to ask Caroline any questions about the study at any time.   |     |    |
| I know that I will talk to Caroline and be asked about my involvement in the ELSA intervention.  |     |    |
| I understand that I do not have to answer questions I do not want to and can pull out at any time.   |     |    |
| I understand that what I say will be recorded and typed up.  |     |    |
| I understand that Caroline will use the information I tell her to write presentations and reports which will be shared with others, but that no one will be able to identify me from what I've said. |     |    |
| I understand that Caroline will not use my real name in the report or presentation.  |     |    |
| I understand that if I tell Caroline anything that makes her concerned that I, or anyone else, is in danger, she will have to tell somebody.   |     |    |

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Caroline King



## K3: Staff Information Sheet

Institute of Education



### Staff Information Sheet

**Research title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?

**The researcher:** Caroline King

I'm a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Education Doctorate in Child and Adolescent Psychology. I previously worked as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant in a secondary school and am passionate about researching this intervention to explore the impact it has on children.

#### **Purpose of this research**

I am hoping to explore the impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme on pupils. I intend to research how progress towards a personalised target can be tracked within ELSA. In other settings, Goal Based Outcomes have been used as a way of exploring progress. I hope to use these measures and explore what this can tell us about the intervention.

#### **Why have I been asked to take part?**

You have identified a pupil in the school who may benefit from support from the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant. The ELSA at your school, the pupil and their parent/carer have agreed to take part in this research.

#### **What will I have to do?**

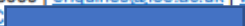
As part of the study, you will be asked to complete a Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire prior to the young person starting the intervention and following their involvement.

#### **What will happen to the information?**

The data from both phases of the study will be stored electronically on a password protected computer. I will analyse the result of the questionnaires. I may occasionally share anonymised data with my research supervisor. Once the data has been analysed, this will be written up as part of my thesis report and submitted as a requirement of the Doctorate I am presently studying for. The final report will be anonymised and only pseudonym codes for each participant will be used. The results may be published in an academic journal later on and will be stored securely for up to 10 years. Please see the Data Protection Privacy Notice below for a summary of the UCL policies that will be adhered to as part of this research.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

It is entirely up to you whether you agree to take part. We hope if you do decide to take part then this will be a valuable experience for you and any pupils involved. There will be no negative repercussions if you decide you do not want to take part.

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Caroline King | 

### What do I do now?

If you are happy with the above information, please sign the attached consent form. If you have any questions about the research you would like to clarify before making your decision, please feel free to contact me by e-mail ([caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk)).

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

#### Data Protection Privacy Notice

I am required to tell you that 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 and can be contacted at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk). UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk). Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here:

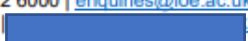
[www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice)

The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data will be 'performance of a task in the public interest'. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk).

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Caroline King 



## K4: Staff Consent Form

Institute of Education



### Staff and Professionals Consent Form

**Research title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?

**Name of researcher:** Caroline King

**Please read the following statements and date and sign the form if you agree they are correct.**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| I have read and understood the attached information sheet about the research project  |  |
| I have had the opportunity to ask Caroline any questions that I have about the project and can do at anytime  |  |
| I understand my role in the project   |  |
| My decision to give consent to participate is entirely voluntary  |  |
| I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and that if I choose to do so the data I have contributed will not be used   |  |
| I understand that any participation will be confidential, and that Caroline won't be able to share the information that is shared outside what has been agreed  |  |
| I understand that if I disclose any information which suggests that I or others are at risk of significant harm, Caroline will need to pass this information on to an appropriate adult/professional  |  |
| I understand that the information gathered in this project will be used to form the basis of a thesis and that the findings may be used in future reports and presentations   |  |
| I understand that my name will not be used in any report, publication or presentation, and that every effort will be made to protect my confidentiality   |  |
| I agree for the data will be kept securely in accordance with UCL Data Protection Policy. I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form |  |
| I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form   |  |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Caroline King | [C \[REDACTED\]](mailto:caroline.king@ioe.ac.uk)

## K5: ELSA Information Sheet

Institute of Education



### ELSA Information Sheet

**Research title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?

**The researcher:** Caroline King

I am a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Education Doctorate in Child and Adolescent Psychology. I previously worked as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant in a secondary school and am passionate about researching this intervention to explore the impact it has on children.



#### **Purpose of this research**

I am hoping to explore the impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme on pupils in secondary schools. I am exploring how progress towards a personalised target can be tracked as part of the ELSA intervention, what this can tell us about the impact of ELSA, and how ELSAs and pupils experience this process. In other settings, Goal Based Outcomes (GBO) have been used to explore the impact of support, which is the method that will be used here.

#### **Why have I been asked to take part?**

You are an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant working with secondary aged pupils. You may have expressed an interest in taking part in this project or are interested in exploring the evaluation of ELSA.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

##### *Phase 1:*

As part of the first phase of the project you will be asked to:

- Complete a brief questionnaire about your background as an ELSA and using targets in your role.
- Attend a virtual training session around Goal Based Outcomes and how they can be used in ELSA practice.
- Identify one or more pupils to be involved in the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant intervention through typical referral means.
- Support the researcher to seek consent from the pupil(s) and their parent/carer to take part.
- Ask the pupil and member of staff who referred the pupil to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and/or Emotional Literacy Checklist before and after the intervention.
- Deliver ELSA sessions and collaboratively set a target with the with the identified pupil(s) to work towards throughout the intervention using learning from training.
- Complete a weekly tracking sheet to monitor progress towards the identified target and a log of ELSA activities within the sessions, to be shared with Caroline.

##### *Phase 2:*

Following the intervention, you may be invited to take part in a virtual interview with the researcher and support researcher to run virtual interviews with the pupil(s) you delivered the intervention with.

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Caroline King | [REDACTED]

### **What will happen to the information?**

The data from both phases of the study will be stored electronically on a password protected computer. The interviews will be audio recorded on a password protected device. Once the interview has been transcribed, the audio recording will be permanently deleted. I will analyse the result of the questionnaires, weekly tracking data and interviews. I may occasionally share anonymised data with my research supervisor. Once the data has been analysed, this will be written up as part of my thesis report and submitted as a requirement of the Doctorate I am presently studying for. The final report will be anonymised and only pseudonym codes for each participant will be used. The results may be published in an academic journal later on and will be stored securely for up to 10 years. Please see the Data Protection Privacy Notice below for a summary of the UCL policies that will be adhered to as part of this research.

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is entirely up to you whether you agree to take part. I hope if you do decide to take part then this will be a valuable experience for you and any pupils involved. There will be no negative repercussions if you decide you do not want to take part. You can withdraw your consent to take part in the study at any time.

### **What do I do now?**

If you are happy with the above information and are still happy to take part please sign the attached consent form. If you have any questions about the research you would like to clarify before making your decision, please feel free to contact me by e-mail ([caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk)).

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

#### **Data Protection Privacy Notice**

I am required to tell you that 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 and can be contacted at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk). UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk). Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here:


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The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data will be 'performance of a task in the public interest'. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk).

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Caroline King | 

## K6: ELSA Consent Form

Institute of Education



### Staff and Professionals Consent Form

**Research title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?

**Name of researcher:** Caroline King

**Please read the following statements and date and sign the form if you agree they are correct.**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| I have read and understood the attached information sheet about the research project  |  |
| I have had the opportunity to ask Caroline any questions that I have about the project and can do at anytime  |  |
| I understand my role in the project   |  |
| My decision to give consent to participate is entirely voluntary  |  |
| I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and that if I choose to do so the data I have contributed will not be used   |  |
| I understand that any participation will be confidential, and that Caroline won't be able to share the information that is shared outside what has been agreed  |  |
| I understand that if I disclose any information which suggests that I or others are at risk of significant harm, Caroline will need to pass this information on to an appropriate adult/professional  |  |
| I understand that any interviews I complete will be audio recorded  |  |
| I understand that the information gathered in this project will be used to form the basis of a thesis and that the findings may be used in future reports and presentations   |  |
| I understand that my name will not be used in any report, publication or presentation, and that every effort will be made to protect my confidentiality   |  |
| I agree for the data will be kept securely in accordance with UCL Data Protection Policy. I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form |  |
| I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form   |  |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Caroline King | 

## K7: Parent Information Sheet

Institute of Education



### Parent/Carer Information Sheet

**Research title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?

**The researcher:** Caroline King

I'm a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Education University College London. I previously worked as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant in a secondary school and am passionate about researching this intervention to explore the impact it has on children.

#### Purpose of this research

I am undertaking research to examine the impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme on pupils. I intend to research how progress towards a personalised target can be tracked as part of the ELSA and what this can tell us about the impact ELSA has. In other settings, Goal Based Outcomes have been used as a way of exploring progress, this is the method that will be used here.

#### Why has my child been asked to take part?

Your child has been identified as possibly benefitting from support from the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant. This will be the member of staff who has provided you with this information sheet. Any questions you have about the intervention itself should be directed towards the ELSA. The study hopes to achieve the above aims through tracking their progress towards a bespoke target. This target will be set collaboratively between your child and the ELSA.

#### What will my child be asked to do?

##### Phase 1:

- Your child will be invited to take part in an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant intervention at school. This will be delivered by the member of staff who has sent you this consent form. For further information about this intervention please contact this member of staff.
- As part of the intervention your child will target to work towards.
- They will complete a brief questionnaire before and after the intervention.
- Weekly data will be taken to track progress towards the identified target.

##### Phase 2:

- Following the intervention, your child may be invited to take part in an interview with the researcher via Zoom. This will take place while they are at school and will be supported by a member of staff from the schools setting.

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Caroline King |



### What will happen to the information?

The data from both phases of the study will be stored electronically on a password protected computer. The interviews will be audio recorded on a password protected device. Once the interview has been transcribed and anonymised, the audio recording will be permanently deleted. I will analyse the result of the questionnaires, weekly tracking data and interviews. I may occasionally share anonymised data with my research supervisor. Once the data has been analysed, this will be written up as part of my thesis report and submitted as a requirement of the Doctorate I am presently studying for. The final report will be anonymised and only pseudonym codes for each participant will be used. The results may be published in an academic journal later on and will be stored securely for up to 10 years. Please see the Data Protection Privacy Notice below for a summary of the UCL policies that will be adhered to as part of this research.

### Do they have to take part?

It is entirely up to you and your child whether they take part. This will not impact on whether they receive the intervention at school. I hope if you do choose for them to take part then this will be a valuable experience. There will be no negative repercussions if you decide you do not want your child to take part.

### What do I do now?


If you are happy with the above information and for your child to take part please sign the attached consent form. If you have any questions about the research you would like to clarify before making your decision, please feel free to contact me by e-mail ([caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.king.19@ucl.ac.uk)).

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

#### Data Protection Privacy Notice

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The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data will be 'performance of a task in the public interest'. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk).

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Caroline King 

## K7: Parent Consent Form

Institute of Education



### Parent Consent Form

**Research title:** What can be learnt about the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in secondary schools using Goal Based Outcome measures?

**Name of researcher:** Caroline King

**Please read the following statements and date and sign the form if you agree they are correct.**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| I have read and understood the attached information sheet about the research project   |  |
| I have had the opportunity to ask Caroline any questions that I have about the project and can do at anytime   |  |
| I understand my child's role in the project  |  |
| My decision to give consent for my child to participate is entirely voluntary.   |  |
| I understand that I am free to withdraw my child at any time without giving a reason, and that if I choose to do so the data they have contributed will not be used.   |  |
| I understand that my child's participation in the interview is confidential and that Caroline won't be able to share the information that is shared outside what has been agreed.  |  |
| I understand that if my child discloses any information which suggests that they or others are at risk of significant harm, Caroline will need to pass this information on to an appropriate adult/professional.   |  |
| I understand that the interview my child participates in will be audio recorded.   |  |
| I understand that the information gathered in this project will be used to form the basis of a thesis and that the findings may be used in future reports and presentations.   |  |
| I understand that my child's name will not be used in any report, publication or presentation, and that every effort will be made to protect their confidentiality.  |  |
| I agree for the data my child provides to be archived at the UK Data Service. I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. |  |
| I understand that other genuine researchers may use my child's words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.                         |  |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Caroline King |

## Appendix L: Goal Based Outcome data for each student

Table L1

### *Pupil 1 Goal Based Outcomes Data*

| Session | Goal Rating | Descriptor of GBO   | Description of Activities  |
|---------|-------------|---|--|
| 1       | 2           | Feels that they would like to get back to their old self. Feels that they can't speak or be themselves around others.     | Mind map of her life. Talked about 'old me'. Decided by Xmas 21 would like to raise hand in class and answer of questions, outcome of session. Rated how likely now. 0/10 – no chance.   |
| 2       | 3           | Had to walk back into class after careers interviews, had to walk back into class – 'wasn't so bad'                       | 'Something about me' worksheet<br>Discussed what friends 'think' of me.<br>Discussed sensations when walked back into the room.  |
| 3       | 2           | Favourite member of staff has left which makes them feel alone. 'She understands me'.                                     | Referred back to mind map – discussed how Mrs X made her feel, but now she has gone.<br>Discussed prom and prom dresses – look at dresses on the internet and planned for prom. Saved items to 'wish list' – forward planning and moving forward.                          |
| 4       | 4           | Walked into class late three times. Emailed staff over concerns, made her own decisions about work.                       | Catch up conversation – xmas gifts, PJs.<br>Timeline of the week highlighted the 'peaks' and when they took responsibility.<br>Affirmations prom dress.<br>Gave an 'anxiety manage it' booklet.<br>Laughed at the 'just as I am' children book. Positive sessions today.   |
| 5       | 3.5         | Addressed an issue in the friendship group which was not resolved. Health and Social care coursework still not completed. | Catch up chat.<br>Discussed challenging a friend<br>Fire bell went off during our sessions.  |
| 6       | 4           | Tough week. Parents have both been in hospital. However, decision to avoid 'friends' has had a positive impact.           | Catch up chat. Week map. Positive thinking sheet. Affirmations prom dress – didn't complete the task.<br>Talked around the issue of 'now knowing' what is wrong with Dad.<br>Used emotions to address how this made the student feel. Positive session, really open today. |
| 7       | 3.5         | Friends more positive, removed self from negative   | School of life cards.  |



|    |     |   |  |
|----|-----|---|--|
|    |     | influenced. Worried about Christmas holiday – food is a concern, Dad has been poorly.   | Colouring in Christmas decks whilst talking about how the holidays are exciting but the big focus is food.   |
| 8  | 5   | Friendship group more positive. Looking at Sixth Form, moving forward.  | Looked at exam timetable. Planned revision times. Took control 'positive feelings.'<br>Discussed Christmas and highlighted positives.<br>Laughter today, lovely to see.<br>Recognising self-worth. |
| 9  | 3   | Received vile text message. Given the wrong exam paper and had to resit exam.   | Weekly catch up<br>Mind map<br>Looked at poem – Not by Erin Hanson   |
| 10 | 4   | Workload in school has increased. Friendship group dynamic has changed.   | Mind map review (XX up in October)<br>Talked about weight and body image.<br>Talked about plans for prom<br>Weekly catch-up chat.  |
| 11 | 4   | Rollercoaster week. Mock results in. Dad commented on weight loss, worried he will take her to the doctors. Doesn't feel good enough. | Discussed results – this was a change to our plan. Results were stressful so we talked about prep for prom. Self-worth, you are good enough!   |
| 12 | 4.5 | Would have been a 5 but friend is in hospital. Better, more positive week. Business teacher is off ill.                               | Took a walk together, catch up chat.<br>Did our questions review. Made a plan for half term.   |

**Table L2***Pupil 2: Goal Based Outcomes Data*

| <b>Session</b> | <b>Goal Rating</b> | <b>Descriptor of GBO</b>  | <b>Description of Activities</b>   |
|----------------|--------------------|---|--|
| 1              | 3                  | I was really (missing) and I didn't know how to deal with my emotions in a healthy way. | Self-esteem booklet<br>Identified self esteem healthy and unhealthy thoughts of myself from the perspective of healthy and unhealthy   |
| 2              | 6.5                | Clicked that I was getting help for things and have felt better since                   | Identified the positives about myself<br>Blob tree   |
| 3              | 6.5                | There's so much going on its hard to concentrate on one thing                           | Family tree of personality traits<br>How these relate to me and my self esteem   |
| 4              | 7                  | Thought about it more   | Blob tree<br>Check in about family<br>Reflected on wider society messages that have influenced us  |
| 5              | 3.5                | Don't know  | Designed ideal society, builds healthy self-esteem<br>Wrote out healthy self-esteem messages to read out loud to ourselves.  |
| 6              | 4.5                | Just feels like a 4.5   | Blob tree<br>Young vs old picture<br>Listed bodily changes<br>Notes what parts of body grateful for<br>What do you want to be remembered for?<br>Is it your looks? Positive change?        |
| 7              | 2.5                | Going backwards somehow   | Blob tree<br>Chatting about recent struggles<br>Reframing – positive thoughts for mistakes<br>Comparison – work sheet, how does our value/compassion for ourselves change when we compare? |
| 8              | 4                  | Good day  | Authentic self<br>How your friends influence you<br>How close are you to your authentic self around your friends?  |
| 9              | 5                  | Good day  | How close to your authentic self are you with your friends?  |

|    |     |                                     |  |
|----|-----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 10 | 4   | I had a bad week                    | Likes and dislikes, wishes and dreams session. |
| 11 | 4.5 | Long week!                          | Likes and dislikes, the power of attitude      |
| 12 | 3   | H/W situations made it hard to cope | Designed a managing feelings booklet           |

**Table L3***Pupil 3: Goal Based Outcomes Data*

| <b>Session</b> | <b>Goal Rating</b> | <b>Descriptor of GBO</b>  | <b>Description of Activities</b>  |
|----------------|--------------------|---|---|
| 1              | 5                  | Still had self-loathing issues and I've been getting a little bit more physical | Red/amber/green timetable<br>Chatted and introduced ourselves   |
| 2              | 5                  | We had just got to know each other (me & Miss Edmonds)                          | Scale of anger and listening different scenarios under each column of 'annoyed/anger/furious'                                 |
| 3              | 5                  | Nothing changed much  | Volcano of anger<br>Identify bodily sensations around the build up  |
| 4              | 5                  | We haven't thought of many strategies   | Check in<br>Anger quiz<br>Anger profile – how we express anger  |
| 5              | 6                  | I voiced my opinion.  | Anger profile<br>Family patterns of anger<br>What did we notice?  |
| 6              | 5                  | Had a break   | Ring of emotions<br>Fight/flight/freeze   |
| 7              | 4.4                | Due to recent incident, my anger issues increased                               | Emotion and feeling risk (how they connect)<br>Master of disguise   |
| 8              | 4.6                | After weekend activities I felt better  | Master of disguise<br>How does expressing true feelings help?<br>Draw yourself a mask that represents the feelings you 'mask' |
| 9              | 5.5                | I didn't get angry at (Name).   | Thought distortions   |
| 10             | 5                  | A slight thing happened this morning  | Using anger for the positive, values (hand outline)   |
| 11             | 5.5                | I managed to stay calm more recently  | Relaxation techniques (Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1)  |
| 12             | 5                  | I managed to stay calm in most situations                                       | Visualisation exercise – drawing a special place, to feel safe  |

**Table L4***Pupil 4: Goal Based Outcomes Data*

| <b>Session</b> | <b>Goal Rating</b> | <b>Descriptor of GBO</b>                  | <b>Description of Activities</b>  |
|----------------|--------------------|---|---|
| 1              | 3                  | Half my friends had left me.              | Chatted about school and friends<br>Outlined ELSA   |
| 2              | 4                  | Started talking to my friends             | Blob tree<br>Self esteem workbook (activity 1)<br>Identify healthy self-esteem, think about myself from two perspectives (healthy and unhealthy)                          |
| 3              | 4                  | Don't hang out with them as much anymore  | Family tree of personality traits<br>How these influenced my self-esteem<br>Explicit/implicit messages from my family I have heard  |
| 4              | 6                  | Because it's what I put last time         | How things we've heard from other people have effected us<br>Ripped up negative self-esteem messages in our own mind  |
| 5              | 6                  | Because it's what I put last time         | Social messages<br>Created a society with healthy self-esteem messages  |
| 6              | 6                  | Same as last time                         | Blob tree<br>Healthy self-esteem messages to say to self<br>Young self vs old self<br>Bodily features we like and what we want to be remembered for                       |
| 7              | 6                  | Same as last time, since I hate decisions | Blob tree<br>Positive reframing of thoughts (mistake making)  |
| 8              | 6                  | Same as last time                         | Blob tree<br>Recapped last week, 'making mistakes'<br>Today focussed on comparing ourselves to others, what would it be like without comparing? Healthier vs unhealthier. |
| 9              | 6                  | Same as last time                         | Authentic self – circle words that others may describe you as, circle words that you used to describe you<br>Influence of friends   |
| 10             | 6                  | Same as last time.                        | Managing feelings poster<br>Labelling the feeling and accepting it.   |

**Table L5***Pupil 5: Goal Based Outcomes Data*

| <b>Session</b> | <b>Goal Rating</b> | <b>Descriptor of GBO</b>  | <b>Description of Activities</b>   |
|----------------|--------------------|---|--|
| 1              | 0                  | No data.  | Welcome talk. What is ELSA. Watched video and completed strengths and difficulties questionnaire.<br>Completed young person consent forms.<br>Looked at the Goal Based Outcomes – what would be a good goal for you.<br>Played lego and talked about what we may do next week.   |
| 2              | 0                  | No data.  | Check in, 'How are you feeling today?'<br>Squido identified they was a 5. Asked what made them a 5 and they didn't know or want to say.<br>What makes you happy – we did each one and discussed it, similarities and difficulties.<br>Talked out a goal and that next week we will make a decision.<br>Played a getting to know each other game (Tell me about...) which prompted further discussion |
| 3              | 5.5                | No data.  | Check in, 'How are you feeling today?'<br>Finished our 'Getting to know you game.'<br>Sentence completion cards.<br>Talked about positive thinking as a strategy.<br>XX shared they are good at basketball.  |
| 4              | 5                  | No data.  | Check in, 'How are you feeling today?'<br>Talked out feelings being visitors that come and go.<br>XX talked about their taxi being early so we talked about how this made them feel and how well they coped with it.<br>Talked a little about strengths mainly. Good at Basketball.  |
| 5              | 0                  | Didn't want to engage with the session this week and didn't want to score the target. High anxiety. | Check in with XX. They didn't want to say how they were feeling.<br>Played with therapy putty instead of Lego.<br>XX said they 'Can't comprehend the feeling of sadness'.<br>Ended the session talking about Christmas and which is better, therapy putty or slime.  |
| 6              | N/A                | Would not engage – avoidant did   | The selfie challenge, take a selfie or draw your facial expressions. Emotion quiz,   |

|    |     |   |   |
|----|-----|---|---|
|    |     | play with Therapy Putty we were in another room.          | emotion fan, fortune teller, therapy putty, check in.   |
| 7  | N/A | Didn't want to rate their target, chatty but not on topic | Pictures of basic emotions – snap. Fortune teller activity coloured. XX finds looking at facial expressions very difficult and to decide what the emotion is, becomes confused for example they said sad could be scared. |
| 8  | 4   | Not completed.  | Check in – strength cards, I'm good at. How music can make us happy or sad. Talked about a scenario that happened at school and how that made them feel. Strategy 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Slow down, calm down.                    |
| 9  | 4.5 | Not completed.  | Check in. Karaoke, two songs to get us to a happy place. To use words to say how they are feeling instead of growling at staff. Talked about what they could say instead laminated cards feeling fans.                    |
| 10 | 4.5 | Not completed.  | Talk about our break. Check in. Emotion fan talked about how it could be used – S to put them in their top pocket. Talked about a 'pushy reversible octopus mood toy they had got and wanted to bring to show us all'     |