

## ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) and

## TALA (Therapeutic Active Listening Assistant)

### A description of the two interventions

This guidance was written by Anna Cox and Kathy Johnston, Educational Psychologists, in 2017 and updated by Anna Cox and Anna Doedens-Plant, Educational Psychologists, in 2021.

True to TALA	True to ELSA
1. In TALA, the adult carefully follows the lead of the pupil.	1. In ELSA, the adult leads the sessions.
2. Pupils experiencing social and/or emotional difficulties are referred for TALA support within schools when it is recognised that the pupil does have emotional literacy skills but is nevertheless not coping well and needs emotional support.	2. Pupils experiencing social and/or emotional difficulties are referred for ELSA support within schools. The referrer (often the teacher or tutor) identifies an area in which the pupil needs emotional literacy support and, with the ELSA, sets a SMART target around the skill(s) the pupil will be supported to develop.
3. TALAs provide an emotionally safe space in which the pupil can explore their feelings and experience being heard on a deep level. TALA empowers pupils to find their own resolutions and build resilience for their future.	3. Sessions are planned by the ELSA to teach the pupil new skills to meet targets related to their emotional well-being.
4. In TALA, no targets or outcomes are set, although regular reviews for ongoing need are carried out.	4. Targets and outcomes are reviewed regularly, and progress monitored.
5. TALAs work weekly with Children and Young People (CYP) for around 30-45 minutes on an individual basis, in a room which is private and confidential, where therapeutic work can take place.	5. ELSAs work with Children and Young People (CYP) weekly for around 30-45minutes, on an individual and group basis in a separate, private space.
6. Parental consent is required unless the pupil is considered 'Gillick Competent'	6. Parental consent is not necessarily sought but it is good practice to involve parents.
7. Minimal session notes are kept in a secure file, which is separate from pupil school records to maintain the CYP's confidentiality.	7. Brief notes about which activities were used in the session are kept with the pupil school records.
8. The initial training course is 3 days. Psychological theory and frameworks are introduced to develop active	8. The initial training course is 6 days covering a range of emotional literacy topics to support ELSAs in building

<p>listening/basic counselling techniques, but there is also an emphasis on skills practice, feedback, and development. The course involves around 16 participants and 4 trainers.</p>	<p>relationships with CYP and in helping pupils to develop skills. Psychological theory and frameworks are introduced and ideas for how these can be applied to work with CYP shared and discussed. The course involves around 35 participants and 2 trainers.</p>
<p>9. TALAs are trained, and supervised within a small group every half term, by the TALA staff team which is made up of EPs, psychotherapists, and counsellors.</p>	<p>9. ELSAs are trained, and supervised within a small group every half term, by EPs.</p>
<p>10. Anyone in a pastoral role in an Infant, Junior, or Secondary school, as well as a college, can train to be a TALA practitioner, although many TALAs have different supporting roles in schools.</p>	<p>10. Most ELSAs are also teaching assistants but there are ELSAs working with CYP in other organisations from pre-school to college age.</p>
<p>11. There are around 130 TALA practitioners within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and this number is growing!</p>	<p>11. There are over 800 ELSAs within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and many more around the country and world!</p>

### **True to ELSA and TALA**

- Both aim to promote emotional wellbeing in CYP.
- Time for both TALA and ELSA sessions need to be protected, so that they can be delivered consistently
- Both TALAs and ELSAs engage in active listening: for TALAs it forms an integral part to their work.
- Both aim to develop capacity within schools to meet the emotional needs of CYP.
- Both facilitate the child or young person's problem solving rather than solve the problem for them.
- Both are grounded in psychological theory and evidence-based practice.
- Practitioners for both can empathise with CYP and have the capacity to work in a non-judgemental way.
- Resources for both are created and chosen to facilitate sessions.
- It is good practice for both to communicate with parents.
- Both attend half termly two-hour supervision sessions with a maximum of 8 practitioners per group.
- Both are led and managed by Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Educational Psychology.
- The effectiveness of both has been researched and evidenced.
- It is possible to be trained in, and deliver, both interventions, in which case supervision needs to be attended for both.

For more information on ELSA please contact Anna Cox ([anna.cox@hants.gov.uk](mailto:anna.cox@hants.gov.uk))

or for TALA contact Anna Doedens-Plant ([anna.doedens-plant@hants.gov.uk](mailto:anna.doedens-plant@hants.gov.uk))