`

Can Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) interventions support positive change in the wider school?

Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology

School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences

June, 2020

Helen Elizabeth Robertson

Overarching abstract

Emotional literacy (EL) is defined within this research as a process of people interacting with each other in a way that supports a shared understanding of our own and other's emotions, which can then be used to build relationships, support decision making and support wellbeing. UK government legislation and policy are increasingly emphasising the need to support the social and emotional development of children and young people in schools. Research suggests that developing EL can support the social and emotional development of children and young people including aspects of: Wellbeing (Roffey, 2008); mental health (Weare, 2004); a positive self-view (Tew, 2007); academic outcomes (Sharp, 2003) and learning capacity (Elias et al., 1997).

Chapter 1

This chapter reports a systematic literature review (SLR) exploring how effective EL interventions are for supporting the development of children and young people. Government guidance has prompted a renewed focus on how education can support the wellbeing of children and young people. One aspect to supporting wellbeing may include the development of EL, as this can enhance the development of relationships and communication to support emotional expression and connection with others. Six quantitative studies met the inclusion and exclusion criteria and therefore a meta-analysis was chosen. Three studies obtained significant results with small to medium effect sizes. All studies cited a range of other factors which appeared to impact upon results positively and negatively and influenced the effectiveness of interventions. These factors became the focus of discussion within this review, as this appeared to offer greater insight into effectiveness. An exploration of how the conceptualisation of EL impacts upon how it is measured was discussed. It was concluded that quantitative approaches are less likely to provide the rich detail required to understand EL and capture the role of relationships, school environment and conceptualisations of EL to understand change effectively.

Chapter 3

This chapter details the empirical research which explores how the implementation of ELSA can support change within the wider school. ELSA (Burton, 1999) is an intervention delivered by EPs and is prominent across the UK. Gaining an understanding of how ELSA supports wider change is likely to support further steps to enhance training planning and delivery, supervision and when sharing ELSA information with schools. Two focus groups of 11 ELSAs were conducted with thematic analysis completed. Findings suggest that ELSA interventions support the EL of schools. The ELSAs shared that school readiness, the community of ELSA and the development of relationships were key supportive factors to this change. It was discussed that ELSA training groups could be a community of practice, whereby they learn and develop together with the support of supervision and the wider ELSA community. The key changes and supportive factors shared by the ELSAs may demonstrate the development of a community of EL practice which facilitates learning, reflection and change within organisations. It is proposed that communities of EL practice could be harnessed further by EPs to support this change effectively using the models proposed by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the wonderful ELSAs who gave up their time to participate in my research with positivity and enthusiasm.

I would like to thank the EPs at my placement, who have inspired, supported and encouraged me throughout this process.

Thank you so much to Billy Peters, my supervisor, who has supported and guided me throughout the past three years. You continually show confidence in me and have helped me develop my own voice and “own it”.

Thank you to Jack, for your patience and understanding throughout the past three years especially when I had to do homework, instead of spending time with you.

Words cannot express my love and gratitude to my partner Chris, who has held my hand throughout this process and believed in me with unshakable faith.

And finally, to my Mam, Dad and brother Jack, who have filled me with love all my life and told me I could do whatever I set my mind to. I would not be the person I am today without them.

Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

This chapter reports a systematic literature review (SLR) exploring how effective Emotional Literacy (EL) interventions are for supporting the development of children and young people. Government guidance has prompted a renewed focus on how education can support the wellbeing of children and young people. One aspect to supporting wellbeing may include the development of EL, as this can enhance relationships and communication to support emotional expression and connection with others. Six quantitative studies met the inclusion and exclusion criteria and therefore a meta-analysis was chosen. Three studies obtained significant results with small to medium effect sizes. All studies cited a range of other factors which appeared to impact upon results positively and negatively and influenced the effectiveness of interventions. These factors became the focus of discussion within this review, as this appeared to offer greater insight into effectiveness. An exploration of how the conceptualisation of EL impacts upon how it is measured was discussed. It was concluded that quantitative approaches are less likely to provide the rich detail required to understand EL and capture the role of relationships, school environment and conceptualisations of EL to understand change effectively.

1.1 Rationale

I chose the topic of emotional literacy (EL) for my literature review due to the growing focus and emphasis on the social, emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people (CYP). Supporting the development of EL is one way in which Educational Psychologists (EPs) can contribute to an understanding of wellbeing. I had an interest in EL and had used assessments and interventions in this area. I could see how a literature review in this area would help to further my understanding and support decision making around which type of interventions or approaches are the most effective.

1.2 Literature Review Question

The question for my Literature Review was as follows:

How effective are Emotional Literacy interventions when used to support the development of children and young people?

1.3 The concept of EL

The link between emotions, relationships and learning has been frequently explored by philosophers, educators and psychologists for centuries. Some examples include Aristotle acknowledging the role of education in developing character (Kristjánsson, 2012). Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on scaffolded support from others to develop. Thorndike (1982) suggested there are several types of intelligence, including emotional intelligence. Humanistic theorists such as Maslow (1954) or approaches such as Human Givens (Griffin & Tyrrell, 2013) highlight the importance of basic human needs, such as safety, love and belonging in order to develop. Attachment theorists such as Ainsworth (1978) suggest that secure emotional bonds provide a supportive base to explore and develop. The broad range of theories and approaches to understanding learning and development mirror the wide range of definitions and terms which apply to the concept of EL.

1.3.1 Key terms which relate to EL

A key aspect to understanding EL is the close relationship it shares with other terms such as emotional intelligence, social and emotional competence or emotional wellbeing (Claxton, 2005). Research interviewing EPs, Inclusion officers and SEN workers suggested that the choice of term varies; some perceived the word 'intelligence' as related to the concept of fixed individual ability, whilst others argued that the term 'literacy' conveyed the same impression (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) .

Comparing different terms may support critical thinking and dialogue around the meaning of EL, which may impact upon the subsequent interventions, strategies or support pursued. If EL is defined as an individual ability, then individualised interventions may be chosen over support for environmental factors. Claxton (2005) states that a singular definition is required in order to provide consistency and clarity surrounding the evidence base and decision-making process. For the purposes of this

review, specific definitions of EL will be explored, with a subsequent definition chosen to coherently frame the arguments within this review.

1.4 Defining EL

There is a broad range of definitions which share the common components of recognising, understanding and expressing emotions (Matthews & Snowden, 2007). Steiner (1984) argued that those who are emotionally literate consciously experience a range of emotions with a knowledge of why they feel them, and the causes. In 1997, Steiner expanded his definition to include an understanding of others' emotions and being aware of how individuals can impact upon each other's emotional states. This definition frames EL as being a set of individual skills and competencies.

Goleman (1996) is often referenced as a key influencer within EL literature as he highlighted that EL is a process of teaching emotional and social competence to CYP. Steiner and Perry (1997) shared Goleman's view that EL can be developed with practise, particularly within emotionally literate environments. Goleman's five areas of emotional intelligence are frequently referenced as the key components of EL, indicating that, for many, these terms are interchangeable.

Weare (2000) added an additional layer to EL definitions; expressing emotions in ways which are "helpful to ourselves and others" (Pg. 59). Weare's definition suggests that EL is about appropriate actions with reasoned decision making. Without this distinction, it could be justified that a child who acted violently out of anger towards a friend who has betrayed him, is emotionally literate. Weare's definition highlights that EL can be context specific and relies upon adapting behaviour in order to make well-reasoned decisions.

Haddon et al (2005) developed a questionnaire for exploring the EL of a school ecology and emphasised the environment as a key role. Roffey (2008) defined EL as a relational and values-based concept which exists within environmental ecologies. Roffey (2008) used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) to highlight the importance of developing school ecologies which promote and foster EL through modelling and connection. Roffey's application of ecological systems theory highlights how the prior experiences, cultural factors and relationships may impact upon how emotionally literate an individual, or an ecology

appears. Wider cultural factors and perceptions may also impact upon how concepts such as EL are conceptualised, such as gender roles or attitudes towards mental health.

I have chosen to define EL in the following manner for the purpose of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR):

A process of interacting with each other in a way that supports a shared understanding of our own and other's emotions, which can then be used to build relationships and support decision making.

My current view is that individuals can have different understandings of their emotions with fluctuating complexity and depth. However EL is greatly impacted by environment, culture, group membership and relational quality. Conceptualising EL as a process rather than an individual ability may result in more comprehensive interventions which target wider ecologies and groups, as opposed to individuals alone.

The arguments surrounding the definition of EL, emphasise a range of key aspects which require consideration when designing and evaluating EL interventions. The philosophical position, values and definitions surrounding EL impact upon the way it is conceptualised and supported.

1.5 EL within UK policy and education

UK policy emphasises the need to support children and young people holistically, as opposed to solely focussing on academic development (Krause, Blackwell, & Claridge, 2020). Table 1 provides a timeline summarising some of this legislation below.

Table 1
A summary of UK policy and government initiatives related to EL.

- 2003 – 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing?' (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) commissioned research to identify the most effective approaches to supporting children and young people.
- 2007 - DfEs released a publication which highlighted Goleman's (1996) 5 areas of intelligence as the key areas a school curriculum should be supporting (p.8)
- 2015 - Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing (Public Health, 2015) emphasises eight principles for supporting emotional wellbeing, one of which includes social and emotional learning.
- 2017 - The Green paper *Transforming Children and young people's mental health provision* (Department for Education, 2017) discussed the key role education plays in providing preventative mental health support to children and young people.
- 2018 – Mental Health and behaviour in schools (Department for Education, 2018) emphasises the importance of schools providing a safe and calm school environment to support the mental health and wellbeing of all pupils.

Table 1 highlights why EL is culturally relevant to the UK at present and can be a key focus for EPs when considering their role in supporting social and emotional development.

1.6 Supporting the development of EL

Research suggests that supporting the social and emotional development of CYP improves aspects of: wellbeing (Roffey, 2008); mental health (Weare, 2010); a positive self-view (Tew, 2007); academic outcomes (Sharp, 2000); learning capacity (Elias et al., 1997); and the reduction of "problem" behaviours. Weare (2003) suggests that interventions are more successful when delivered at an individual, small group and school wide level. This has led to a variety of approaches to developing EL to target these levels. The evidence base is often broadly surrounding social and emotional development, without a specific definition provided.

Matthews (2005) suggests that whilst education settings have a role in the development of EL, comparing the EL of peers in a school setting may have a regular, damaging impact on their self-esteem. Matthews (2005) further argue that exploring emotions may be an intrusive act with pupils having reason for expressing emotions in a perceived unhelpful manner.

Many approaches to enhancing EL use structured activities, dialogue and modelling to target five main areas which appear to be rooted in Goleman's (1996) five domains of emotional intelligence. These areas are endorsed by government policy (DfE, 2003) and other psychologists such as Faupel (2003) and Weare (2000). These include: Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Empathy, Social Skills and Motivation. Boler (1999) commented that categorising emotions in this manner can lead to pupils being pathologized, with a perceived correct way to express emotions imposed upon them. Resources to support EL are typically segmented by age which may lead to an assumption that EL develops at an ideal linear rate. The perceived EL competence of an individual may fluctuate according to their experiences and context (for example their friendships may grow in complexity, or they may lose a loved one).

Matthews (2005) emphasises the importance of dialogue and relationships in the development of EL. Faupel and Sharpe (2003) shared this view, stating that the core function of developing EL should be to develop a community. Park, Haddon, and Goodman (2012) argue that the following core principals were paramount to the successful development of EL: Safety; Openness; Compassion; Connection; Reflection; and Growth Orientation. These elements provide a potential framework for supporting the development of EL.

1.7 Methodology

Petticrew and Roberts (2008) provide a guide to completing a systematic literature review (SLR). They structure the process into stages which are detailed in Table 2 (Please note, some additional stages were included which I have removed due to irrelevance (pg.285).

Table 2
Stages of a systematic literature review

Stage 1	Define the question
Stage 2	Complete an initial search of databases and other source materials (e.g. books or journals)
Stage 3	Screen returned papers to eliminate any clearly irrelevant papers
Stage 4	Apply Inclusion and Exclusion criteria to further refine and identify papers relevant to your question
Stage 5	Extract key information from remaining papers to present in a table form – these papers become your primary studies
Stage 6	Critically appraise the studies, considering a range of factors such as methodological soundness or investigator bias.
Stage 7	Present findings from a synthesis of your primary studies, this may be presented in a variety of forms and include statistical or narrative information.
Stage 8	Discuss emerging findings, along with other factors of interest such as bias, study size or quality of studies.

To ensure the process of this SLR is clear and replicable, I will summarise my progression through stage one to four. I will then move onto a detailed exploration of the primary studies with a critical appraisal (stage 6), presentation of findings (stage 7) and discussion (stage 8).

1.7.1 Define the question (Stage 1)

After exploring the wide-ranging definitions, conceptualisations and interventions to support EL, I developed the following review question:

How effective are interventions when used to develop the Emotional Literacy (EL) of children and young people?

This question was chosen to consider the use of interventions when supporting the development of EL, along with a consideration of how a change in EL is measured or judged.

The application of interventions within schools was chosen as this relates closely to the context of the EP role.

In order to progress to stage two, search terms which related to my review question were refined to ensure the appropriate number of relevant studies was yielded from database searching. The chosen key search terms are included in Table 3 below:

Table 3
Key search terms

Table 3. Key search terms
Emotional Literacy, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Competence, Social Competence.
Intervention, Strategy, Approach, Support, Program
Children, Young people, Youth, Youngsters, Adolescents, Pupils, Students *Please note: the appropriate truncations were used across different databases as appropriate*

1.7.2 The search process (Stage 2)

These search terms were used to search 6 databases with the following numbers yielded (See Table 4).

Table 4
Initial search results yielded using key terms

Database	Number of articles returned
ERIC	65
British Education Index	16
Child and Adolescent Studies	17
Psycinfo	52
Scopus	581

Alongside the searching of databases, several other sources were hand searched. See Table 5 for a summary of these sources.

Table 5
Alternative sources used to identify papers

Resource
Taylor and Francis Online
Educational Psychology in Practice (EPIP) journal
Education and Child Psychology
Open Grey
Open Thesis
Harvest Referencing (Locating papers from the reference lists)

1.7.3 Screen papers and apply criteria (Stages 3 and 4)

Following a search using key terms, abstracts were screened for clearly irrelevant papers (for example studies examining reading literacy or adults).

Inclusion (See Table 6) and Exclusion criteria (See Table 7) were then applied to narrow results and identify relevant papers. The criteria provided more specific detail as to the type of papers which were likely to answer my question.

Table 6
Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria *This identifies the features of papers needed to answer the question effectively*	Reasoning
Empirical research	This ensures that a scientific methodology was employed to consider the results.
Peer Reviewed	To ensure the papers were of an appropriate standard.
Based in school settings	This context directly related to the role of an EP.
Exploration of EL is a clear stated aim, measure and discussion point	This ensured that the papers included would largely focus on my question area.
Involves the implementation of an intervention	This was to ensure the change in EL was a result of some type of chosen action.
Implemented within the UK	This was to ensure the context closely related to the context of an EP within the UK.

Table 7
Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion Criteria *This limits any aspects of the study which do not relate to my question and would likely be less beneficial to the review*	Reasoning
Research based within clinical settings (such as hospitals)	These settings provided less relevance to the context of an EP.
Pilot Studies	These studies are often exploratory studies which are used to support the development of studies.
Papers which focus on adults (such as teacher efficacy)	Including this information made it challenging to synthesise results and impact upon coherence.

1.7.4 Extract Key Information (Stage 5)

Following the application of exclusion and inclusion criteria, a decision was made to undertake a quantitative meta-analysis due to the nature of the papers returned. Whilst there were some qualitative papers which were relevant to my question, there was not enough for a balanced qualitative review; yet there were too many papers for a mixed methods review. In addition, many of the qualitative papers were focussed on experiences of the programme, as opposed to the impact.

6 papers met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. These papers are briefly outlined and presented in tabular form below (See Table 8).

`

Table 8

Extraction of key information

Study	Participants (Age and Number)	Study Aims/ questions	Intervention (Duration and Frequency)	Research Design	Data Collection Methods	Results (significance?)	Effect Size
Clarke, Bunting, and Barry (2014) Evaluating the Implementation of a School Based Emotional Well-Being Programme: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial of Zippy's Friends.	Children (766) Teachers (52)	To investigate the impact of the Zippy's Friend programme on children's emotional literacy	Zippy's Friends emotional well-being programme. One year programme with 45 minute sessions each week.	Cluster randomized Trial (RCT) with pre and post measures.	Teacher rated The Emotional Literacy Assessment and Intervention (ELAI) tool (Faupel, 2003)	Statistically significant results for ELAI for 4 out of 5 subscales. This was not sustained at 12-month follow up.	Small
Humphrey et al. (2016) A cluster randomized controlled trial of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum	Children (4516) 7-9 years old	To explore the impact of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum on social emotional competence To explore the impact of PATHS on Mental Health outcomes	PATHS curriculum (Adapted UK Version) Whole-School programme. Two Years – weekly sessions plus integration into classroom	Cluster randomised control trial (RCT). Pre and Post measures with control groups.	Social and Emotional Competence Change Index (SECCI) Teacher rated Social Skills Improvement	Statistically significant results for social and emotional competence (using the SECCI and SSIS) No follow up on findings.	Medium

			displays/assemblies and dialogue.		System (SSIS) Child rated		
Knowler and Frederickson (2013) Effects of an emotional literacy intervention for students identified with bullying behaviour.	Children (50) 8-9 years old	Trait Emotional Intelligence will increase for those receiving an EL intervention, relative to those on a wait list comparison group. A greater increase for those measuring with low EL initially over those scoring with high EL initially.	Designed by the researcher, based on Faupel (2003). 12 weeks, 45-60 minutes	Pre-Post comparison group design. Between and within participant analysis	Pre ELAI self-report, no post? Self- report pre and post SDQ Self-report post trait intelligence No follow up	Children with initially high EL scored consistently higher than those with low EL. A significant intervention effect was not supported	N/A
O'Hara (2011) The impact of peer mentoring on pupils' emotional literacy competencies.	Children (47) Year 7	Investigate the impact of peer mentoring on EL competencies of year 7 mentees. Hypothesised a greater impact for those with low to average EL levels.	Peer mentoring and befriending resources provided to mentors. 20-minute session twice per week for one academic year.	Quasi-Experimental pre-test post-test control group design	Pre and Post self-report ELAI and SDQ measures from children.	No significant results, EL scores decreased over time No Follow up	Not Applicable
Humphrey et al. (2010) New Beginnings: evaluation of a short social-emotional intervention for primary-aged children	Children (253) (mean age 8, 6-10)	"What is the impact of the NB intervention on social and emotional competence and mental health difficulties?"	Followed the structure of SEAL small group interventions, 7-week period, 45-minute sessions.	Quasi-Experimental, between groups. Unable to randomly assign. Control group	Pre and Post self-report measures ELAI and SDQ, children ratings were obtained.	Significant increase in child ratings who received extra support, parent and teacher ratings did not result in a significant change	Small to medium effect size (Cohens D – 0.44)

		"Is there a difference in reported impact between children selected as role models or for extra support?"		and extra support group		Significant results were not sustained after a 7 week follow up	
Sedgwick (2013) An evaluation of the effectiveness of the R Time and Circle Time intervention in promoting children's emotional literacy and mental wellbeing.	Children (57) Year 2/3 (age 7 and 8)	"What is the effectiveness of the Circle Time intervention in promoting children's emotional literacy and mental well-being?" "What is the effectiveness of the R Time intervention in promoting children's emotional literacy and mental well-being?"	Whole Class Circle Time intervention (Mosely, 1993) 45 minutes to an hour delivered once a week for 8 weeks. R Time intervention (Sampson, 2004) 10-15 minutes once a week for 8 weeks.	Quasi-experimental pre-test post-test non-equivalent groups design (for both interventions)	Pre and Post ELAI and SDQ (for both interventions) Children, Parent and Teacher ratings collected.	For both interventions, Statistically significant changes in ELAI and SDQ. These were not significant in comparison to the control groups. No Follow up on results	N/A

Table 8 that half the primary studies did not find statistically significant results. Those which did produce significant results had medium and small effect sizes. Many of the studies also found statistically significant results for some isolated aspects of EL, or for particular groups.

Sedgwick found statistically significant findings across all five domains of EL, using the ELAI (Faupel, 2003) assessment. Although this result was statistically significant, it was not statistically different to the control group scores which results in a need for caution when suggesting a direct impact of the intervention upon the EL of participants.

One other study, Humphrey et al (2016), found a statistically significant impact, with a medium effect size on social and emotional competence as a whole. This was in comparison to a control group and may be considered the 'most effective' study within this literature review. However, the findings from this study were not followed up to explore if the impact was sustained after the intervention and therefore caution is required when interpreting this result. Interestingly, Humphrey did not use the ELAI, preferring to use the SSIS questionnaire which is longer and appears more detailed than the ELAI. This may indicate that Humphrey identified a more suitable assessment tool for exploring EL.

Two studies found statistically significant results for particular groups or individual aspects of EL. Clarke et al. (2014) found statistically significant results for 4 out of the 5 domains of the ELAI with the absence of 'empathy'. These results produced a small effect size and were not sustained at a 12 month follow up. Clarke et al suggested that the small effect size may be due the participants experiencing a "ceiling effect" due to initially high levels of EL, as judged by the pre ELAI measure scores. These results were not sustained after a 12 week follow up.

Humphrey et al (2010) divided their participants into three groups; pupils who were deemed to be role models to the other pupils (these participants were judged as having high levels of EL by teachers) as well as pupils who were considered to need "extra support" (these were judged by teachers as feeling isolated or lacked a sense of belonging in class). There was also a third group of pupils who completed the intervention as normal with no additional label. Humphrey et al (2010) found statistically significant improvements in EL for the "extra support" group; however, this was using child self-report data only, which did not triangulate with the teacher and

parent scores. Humphrey et al (2010) hypothesise that this may indicate that EL cannot always be observed through behaviour and may be mis-judged by those around a child.

1.8 Quality appraisal (Stage 6)

Petticrew and Roberts (2006) cite Gough (2007) as a useful tool for supporting quality appraisal. Reviewing the specific quality of studies supports an understanding of which primary studies are likely to answer my research question most effectively. After assigning a quality level, those studies with a higher level can carry more weight when interpreting results.

Gough (2007) divides review specific quality assessment into three areas: A (high), B (medium) and C (low). The qualitative labels of these areas are then combined to create a final judgement of quality level known as D. The four areas of quality are briefly described in Table 9.

Table 9
Weight of Evidence (Gough, 2007, pg.11)

Evidence	Brief Description
A	Transparency – Clarity of purpose Accuracy – Is it accurate? Accessibility – Is it understandable? Specificity – Method specific quality
B	Is the research fit for purpose (appropriate research design and method)
C	Relevance to review question – Utility and Propriety (legal and ethical)
D	Combination of the above

Quality frameworks are a scaffold for improving reasoned judgements, as opposed to removing researcher bias or influence (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006). Accepting that researcher bias is inherent in research is key to making reasoned judgements about results. Gough (2007) acknowledges a lack of consensus as to how much weight is attributed to the method or coherence of a paper.

I sought further guidance to prompt and support my quality appraisal as Gough (2007) states that quality assessment tools can be incorporated within the Weight of Evidence framework.

The EPPI-Centre (2003) guidance for extracting data and quality assessing primary studies was chosen. The 50 literature reviews undertaken by EPPI inform this guide. I used the quality assessment questions within the guide to support my judgements. See Appendix 1 for this integrated framework completed for each paper.

A summary of the quality appraisal is provided in Table 10 below:

Table 10
Summary of Quality Appraisal

	WOE A (High Medium Low)	WOE B (High Medium Low)	WOE C (High Medium Low)	WOE D (High Medium Low)
Clarke, Bunting and Barry (2014)	High	Medium	High	High
Humphrey et al (2016)	High	Medium	High	High
Knowler and Frederickson(2007)	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
O'Hara (2011)	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Sedgwick (2013)	High	Medium	High	High
Humphrey et al (2010)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium

As shown in Table 2, all studies were judged as medium or high overall quality. Some common themes which led to medium or low-quality ratings included an unclear conceptualisation of EL, confused purpose and aims or some incoherence in methodology. Two studies (Clarke et al., 2014; Humphrey et al., 2010) conducted a follow up to consider if the statistically significant results they obtained were sustained after the intervention (see Table 8 for a summary of the findings). Sedgwick (2013) did

not complete a follow up which may be due to the time constraints of doctoral research. Humphrey et al (2016) make no mention of a follow up which suggests that caution may be necessary when placing value on the results. Knowler and Frederickson (2013) and O'Hara (2011) did not complete any follow up, which the researchers may have deemed appropriate due to no significant results obtained.

The findings from this quality appraisal suggest that more weight should be assigned to the studies by Sedgwick (2013), Humphrey et al. (2016) and Clarke et al. (2014). Although, the lack of successful follow up indicates a need for caution when assuming these interventions have had any lasting effect. The outcomes of this quality appraisal will be considered further as part of the critical appraisal to avoid repetition and ensure the information gathered is appropriately synthesised and understood as an integrated process.

1.9 Critical Appraisal

A critical appraisal explores primary studies to consider any factors which may support an understanding of results. Petticrew and Roberts (2006) highlight the importance of ensuring primary studies are explored critically, as opposed to accepting results at face value. The process of critical appraisal supports the researcher to consider the varying factors which may have influenced outcomes or interpretations.

The following sections discuss key critical appraisal areas which offered insight into how the key features of the studies may have influenced results. Following this, I then critically appraised the interventions adopted within the studies, to further explore the results obtained.

Jüni, Witschi, Bloch, and Egger (1999) explored 25 different checklists and found that results or conclusions were very different in comparison to individually assessing each study in turn. In order to provide an in-depth critical appraisal, I chose to individually explore key questions to be considered when appraising critically, which were highlighted and discussed by Petticrew and Roberts (2006). I found this to be particularly helpful, as many of my primary studies were influenced by individual factors which were difficult to synthesise or categorise. I have summarised some common themes regarding the research methods and study which can be found in Appendix 2.

1.9.1 Critical Appraisal of Interventions

Petticrew and Roberts (2006) suggest that an understanding of the context, content and theory underpinning interventions is an important aspect of evaluating primary studies. Petticrew and Roberts outline some examples of tools to evaluate interventions. These tools relate specifically to the domain of literature reviews (such as mentoring or smoking cessation) which could not be applied to my studies. Petticrew and Roberts do provide a list of key questions to consider when evaluating interventions, these questions have been collated from other tools such as Carter and Dubois (2010) and Normand et al. (2005). This list became a framework for critically appraising the interventions of my primary studies (See Table 12).

Table 11
Intervention Appraisal – Adapted by Petticrew and Roberts (2006; pg.146)

Intervention Appraisal

- Details of intervention activities (what the intervention consists of, where, how, how often, and by whom it is delivered, and for how long)
- Resources: this includes time, money, people, information, technology, and other assets needed to conduct the intervention
- Staffing, and where appropriate to the intervention, the level of skills of staff
- Context (as described above, this may include the political, community, organizational, and other contexts)
- The stage of development of the intervention (whether it is a mature, well-developed intervention, which perhaps has been implemented elsewhere)
- Sustainability (including any measures taken to ensure retention of people in the study)
- Whether any adverse or negative effects were observed or reported by researchers or participants
- The logic model: how the intervention is theorized to bring about change in the desired outcome – that is, by what steps, or by what theorized causal pathway

The criteria in Table 2 were applied to each intervention individually (see example in Appendix 3). I have summarised some of the outcomes of this appraisal according to those which appeared particularly salient or relevant to my review question.

Length and intensity of interventions

Intervention sessions lasted from 15 minutes to an hour and were delivered on a weekly basis (See Table 12).

Table 12
Length and Intensity of Interventions

Study	Length	Impact
Clarke, Bunting and Barry (2014)	One year programme. 45 minute sessions once per week.	Statistically significant results for ELAI for 4 out of 5 subscales. This was not sustained at 12-month follow up. Small effect size
Humphrey et al (2010)	7 week programme. 45 minute sessions once per week.	Significant increase in child ratings in the extra support group. Parent and teacher ratings did not triangulate with significant results. Small to medium effect size.
Humphrey (2016)	Two Year programme. Weekly sessions plus integration into classroom displays, assemblies and classroom dialogue.	Statistically significant results for social and emotional competence (using the SECCI and SSIS) Medium effect size
Knowler and Frederickson (2013)	12 week programme. 45-60 minute session once per week.	No significant findings
O'Hara (2011)	10 month programme. 20-minute session twice per week.	No significant findings
Sedgwick (2013)	8 week programme. 45 minute – 1 hour programme once per week.	Statistically significant results. However, these were not significant in comparison to the control group.

Two of the studies which achieved statistically significant results (Clarke et al, 2014 and Humphrey et al, 2016) were delivered over a 1 and 2 year period. In contrast O'Hara (2011) delivered their intervention for a year, yet significant results were not achieved. The length and intensity of the interventions does not appear to have solely impacted on results but may be a factor which contributes and interacts with other aspects of the intervention and research process.

Who delivers the interventions?

The majority of the interventions were delivered by teachers or teaching assistants who had accessed training or guidance from the researchers. Their prior

understanding of EL or how they typically approach leading interventions or sessions exploring social emotional learning was not reported.

Intervention stage of development

The four studies which achieved some statistically significant results involved structured programmes which had been piloted, with earlier research cited to support the study rationale. The two studies which did not achieve statistical significance at all (Knowler and Frederickson, 2013; O'Hara, 2011) introduced an intervention which was loosely basely on their own resources and had not been piloted.

The logic model – What is the theorized causal pathway

The theorized causal pathway for most interventions appeared to centre around the importance of modelling, reflection and dialogue. This corresponds with the recommendations outlined by Park et al. (2012) who emphasise that engagement in dialogue and reflection is a key process for developing EL.

The majority of the studies considered problem solving to be a key aspect of EL and used this as part of their intervention development. Research was not employed to address why this was chosen or the intended impact this was to have on EL.

1.10 Findings (stage 7)

Below are some key findings which have emerged from the studies. As my question is focussed upon effectiveness, I have included factors which may have impacted upon effectiveness to provide a richer exploration of this.

1.10.1 Overall statistical findings from the studies

Only two of the six studies I explored found statistically significant results across the intended domains of EL, which the studies had aimed to do. Two of the studies found no statistical significance at all, whilst others found pockets of significance for particular groups or individual aspects of EL. In addition, only two studies conducted a follow up and found that the impact of the intervention was not sustained. It was clear that whilst commenting on the statistical findings and comparing them has been helpful to a point, a synthesis of statistical findings and effect sizes is unlikely to provide the insight I aimed to explore around how an intervention can, or cannot, be effective.

Many of the studies have discussed the methodological weaknesses which contributed to these results, as well as a consideration of factors which had influenced the success of the interventions. Whilst the researchers framed these factors as "limitations" or areas of discussion, I decided to synthesise these as additional findings in order to answer my question and support my decision making for empirical research. This means that my review is no longer a meta-analysis, as I have chosen to focus my findings more on the content, rather than the statistical results of these studies.

I have noted the range of factors which the researchers cited as impacting upon the significance of their results (See Table 13).

Table 13
Suggest factors which impact upon study results

Please note – the stars within Table 13 are intended to provide an indication of the most frequently cited factors visually, to support the reader.

Study	**Factors influencing results**
O'Hara (2011)	The impact of entering year 7 in secondary school The level of emotional literacy prior to the study *** Self-report data ***** Program Fidelity **** Lack of supervision from an adult Staff commitment Lack of information regarding extraneous variables
Knowler and Frederickson (2013)	Pupils with high or low EL prior to the study *** Low Sample Size The questionnaire employed – Low reliability coefficients Use of self-report data ***** Acknowledges other wider factors which were not investigated, such as socio-economic and socio-cultural factors How the intervention interacts with wider school SEL programmes

Clarke et al (2014)	Consistent structure and repetition of the programme (positive impact) Universal programme – suggest a targeted intervention would be better High or Low emotional literacy prior to the study *** Programme Fidelity **** Length of the programme – suggest an integrated curriculum model Self-report measures ***** School environment – did the schools which volunteer value EL? Teacher reports only
Humphrey et al (2010)	Triangulating various sources which interact with children in different settings and observe different behaviours Length of the intervention may need to extended The intervention focussed on introspection, meaning the child's development may not have been observable to parents and teachers. Unable to monitor fidelity **** Unable to randomly assign participants Use of typical as opposed to maximal assessment data
Sedgwick (2013)	Participants were part of a single patch of schools within the same area Sample Size Contextual differences across the groups Program Fidelity **** Bias of self report data Length of the interventions
Humphrey (2016)	Participants could not be blinded Use of self-report measures Unable to rule out a placebo effect

Table 13 above demonstrates the wide-ranging factors which can influence the effectiveness of interventions in quantitative research.

Programme fidelity was highlighted as one of the biggest challenges and considerations, as all of the interventions, with the exception of O'Hara (2011), had a clear structure to their programmes with schedules, materials, themes and resources to guide teachers. The main challenges for maintaining programme fidelity were

typically cited as lack of time, planning, or teachers choosing to adapt the programme to fit their own styles. For the purposes of research, programme fidelity is likely to be an important factor for assessing impact. When considering how these programmes are to be enacted in context, it is likely that adaptation from teachers to suit their children's needs and to practically suit their routines and environments will be important. It may be that flexible programmes which support the changing needs of pupils and teaches may be useful within the context of teaching and development.

Two further key findings noted from a synthesis of limitations and discussion included how emotionally literate pupils were at the beginning of the research, as well as the use of self-report data. These findings will be discussed further as part of my overall discussion, as they appear to relate closely to the outcomes of the critical appraisal, as well as my initial introductory arguments surrounding the conceptualization of EL.

1.11 Discussion (Stage 8)

1.11.1 The conceptualisation of EL

All studies conceptualised EL as a set of skills and competencies within an individual, which can be supported and developed. Although many of the studies acknowledged the influence of environmental factors on the development of EL, they did not adapt their studies to account for this. The developmental causal pathway appeared to relate strongly to modelling, reflection and discussion with EL developing as a by-product of these interactions, which is also likely to be influenced by a school's relational values and opportunities for children to engage and learn from each other. Park et al. (2012) advocate for the importance of reflection, modelling and discussion but they emphasise that this should be inherent in behavioural procedures and school culture. The presence of this in the way a school interact and build relationships in schools is suggested to be the difference which makes EL development a "wave which steadily builds or quickly subsides" (pg.100).There appears to be less of a focus on the explicit teaching and practising of skills with individualised target setting. This led me to reflect upon how realistic it is to expect this type of developmental pathway to take hold during the shorter studies and may explain why studies such as Clarke et al (2014) and Humphrey et al (2016) appeared to achieve more success. The introduction of

targeted goal setting and opportunities for individualised approaches to development may enhance the impact of reflection and discussion-based activities.

1.11.2 How do we approach the development of EL?

The interventions which targeted groups or whole classes appeared to be the most successful; however many of these suggested that a more targeted intervention may have produced larger effect sizes. Humphrey (2010) found statistically significant results for pupils who received additional support during the intervention. Sedgwick (2013) suggested that whole class approaches are an effective approach to supporting the development of EL for pupils without targeting a specific need or demographic. All studies within this review commented on the importance of these interventions complementing other strands of support within school. This may suggest that the wider context of a school and the available resource of staff are imperative questions when considering which type of intervention to select and how effective the intervention is likely to be.

The way in which learning, and development are understood from a psychological perspective may also play a role in the selection of an intervention and subsequently, the perception of effectiveness. If the development of EL is viewed as a linear process with stages and expected milestones to achieve, such as with a Piagetian (Piaget & Inhelder, 2008) view of development, then a targeted individual or small group approach may be deemed more suitable. Progress and milestones can be tracked in a linear fashion and judged according to criteria. If adopting a Vygotksian (Vygotsky, 1978) view of development in which scaffolding with learned others and a zone of proximal development is needed in order to develop, then targeted small group or individual support is once again likely to be suited but may incorporate learned others and focus on individualised targets according to the needs of a child.

If taking an ecological systems approach to development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in which learning occurs through the interactions with others and the environment, a whole school cultural approach may be deemed more effective with a focus upon the environment and relationships within a child's system.

Weare (2004) theorises that many of the EL competencies we expect of children are based on a "rational adult" formula (page 21) which many adults would struggle to

successfully achieve. Weare (2004) suggests that it is important to see the development of EL as a continuous process in which we meet children at their own stage of EL development.

The philosophical values of schools and the perspective they take on development is likely to influence how successful these interventions are. It would likely be ineffective to implement a whole class intervention for EL, if teachers have not been supported to lead this confidently, or children prepared to engage with this form of discussion. This may be an area which EPs can support when identifying and preparing schools who wish to adopt a new approach or intervention.

1.11.3 Who do we target EL interventions to?

The studies within this review referred to a 'ceiling' effect with a focus upon children with perceived 'high' EL (this term was used across all of the included papers) benefitting less from the interventions. The use of terms such as high EL may imply a linear relationship between EL and development. Quantitative terms for EL may suggest that there is a certain amount or end point to the development of EL, as opposed to the fluid and dynamic construct suggested by Roffey (2008). Does this suggest that those with apparent high levels of EL would not benefit from support, or that this will remain high? If the notion of an amount or end point to EL development is supported, then an EL intervention may be perceived as ineffective without attention being paid to the subtle changes or continuous peaks and troughs that EL development may be subjected to. As a child matures, their social interactions and emotions may grow in complexity, which may impact on how emotionally literate they appear at a given point. Attempting to support the rich experiences of a child's development may be more effective when using flexible and responsive interventions, which are present at an individual, group and universal level. Research studies may have found more significant results if they employed a class intervention, with a recognition that children may all be at different stages and quantitative data may be less useful. Research studies which aim to use quantitative data only may be better placed for targeting individuals perceived to have particular challenges to address, which can be clearly defined and supported. Overall, a flexible approach to supported EL is likely to stand in conflict with a static quantitative measure such as the ELAI (Faupel, 2003), which may not adequately capture these experiences. This has led

me to question how useful quantitative data can be when attempting to understand the complexities of EL development. This leads me to a second frequently cited discussion point when understanding the effectiveness of interventions, self-report assessment tools.

1.11.4 Which type of data is effective when evaluating EL development?

All studies cited the use of self-report measures as a limitation to the study and questioned if self-report measures could be a reliable source of information. Bywater and Sharples (2012) highlight the methodological challenges of evaluating emotional wellbeing interventions with one of the challenges being the use of self-report data, as participants may choose socially desirable answers. How the researchers explained the purpose of the intervention or the reason for completing the EL scales to children was not reported and therefore, we cannot know what their perception may have been.

Wiglesworth et al (2010) stated that the challenge of social desirability is common across self-report measures, along with the dilemma of asking children who may not be self-aware, to rate their self-awareness (as with the ELAI). Wiglesworth et al (2010) distinguishes between assessments which explore 'typical behaviour' (pg.178) (such as the ELAI which asks children about how they typically behave or feel) and 'maximal behaviour' (this involves completing an activity which taps into the constructs assessed). Assessments which explore maximal behaviour may be a more suitable form of assessing children's EL, as this demonstrates their ability along with asking them to share their perception of their own EL. Wigelsworth et al (2010) highlight that these assessments tend to be longer and can be more complex to score. However, an investment in time from participants and researchers to explore EL with greater depth may be a supportive step for quantitative EL research.

The potential journey which children or adults may experience when embarking upon EL interventions was not discussed by the researchers. It is important to note that as Gough (2007) points out, this does not mean the researchers have not considered this as they are bound by word count restrictions. A child may rate their ability as high pre-intervention, then develop a better understanding of their own EL through intervention. This may result in a lower score or with scores remaining the same. This was demonstrated by O'Hara (2011) in which EL scores for pupils entering Year 7 reduced after one academic year. O'Hara (2011) suggested that the negative experiences of

year 7 had led to a reduction in EL. It may be the case that the participants had new views or understandings of their EL causing them to rate their EL differently, as opposed to regressing.

When considering teacher ratings, a teacher may develop an improved understanding of a child's EL and therefore rate their skills lower at post-intervention. Self-report assessment tools may not gather the rich information about the experiences of an intervention to fully explore the effects it produces.

1.12 Conclusion

This review has explored the effectiveness of EL interventions in relation to improving the EL of CYP.

EL has been conceptualised as a set of individual skills which can develop and change whilst also relying upon the relational quality of interactions and ecologies. School can play a key role in supporting CYP's EL and this appears to support learning and social emotional wellbeing. EL has been endorsed through government policy and research as an important aspect of development, with initiatives such as SEAL and Every Child Matters emphasising the importance of a holistic approach to child development.

The process of an SLR, as outlined by Petticrew and Roberts (2006) was employed with key search terms used across databases using key terms and criteria until six papers which directly addressed my question were identified.

The studies were quality appraised with the majority of studies rated as high or medium overall quality. The effectiveness of these interventions was evaluated through a comparison of results/effect sizes, as well as a critical appraisal of the study methodology and interventions used.

I had planned to use a quantitative meta-analysis to synthesise study results, but the findings from this review came to rely more upon the qualitative discussion and evaluation of interventions, as half the studies did not find statistically significant results and those who did, had small effect sizes. The majority of studies, with the exception of O'Hara (2011) reported positive observations and ratings, as well as pockets of statistical significance for particular groups or aspects of EL. This may

suggest the study design and assessment tools were unable to capture these changes effectively.

Various aspects of the study methodologies and interventions were explored in an attempt to identify which aspects of the interventions impacted upon results. Length and intensity appeared to play a role, as well as the causal pathway, selection of participants and programme fidelity. Whilst these factors were clearly influential in the success of interventions, I was unable to pinpoint a clear pattern which would provide a guide to ideal factors (e.g. it was unclear how long interventions should last or how to ideally select participants).

1.12.2 Implications

The findings from this literature review highlight the importance of gathering rich information to understand a CYP's understanding of EL and the context in which the interventions take place prior to starting an intervention. The self-report measures were not able to capture the journey of developing EL and the complexities of understanding EL in context. The way in which researchers conceptualised EL appeared to impact upon their chosen interventions and interpretation of results, with a focus on EL developing in a linear fashion, with less emphasis on the role of context.

Questions as to who we target interventions to and how remained unclear and, as previously discussed, closely related to EL conceptualisations. There also appeared to be a clear conflict between the requirements for quantitative research to evaluate impact, held in tension with the need for flexibility and individualisation when implementing interventions in context.

It appears that evaluating EL interventions with quantitative methods may produce a limited understanding, particularly with the use of typical, rather than maximal, assessments and without a wider understanding of contextual factors.

Chapter 2: Bridging Document

2.1 Bridging Document

I will consider how the process of completing the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) informed my rationale and decision making for my empirical research. This will include a commentary on the process of conceptualising EL, the use of quantitative approaches to measuring EL, the importance of coherence and some comparison between the SLR interventions and ELSA. I will also explore my evolving ontology and epistemology, as well as how this informed my methodology. A key decision within my thesis was to move away from exploring effectiveness to considering change. The reasons for this shift will be discussed in order to bring some clarity and coherence to this area.

2.2 Why ELSA interventions?

I observed ELSA training and supervision sessions when shadowing EPs at my placement local authority. I became interested in the training as a potential aspect to my future role as an educational psychologist. I found ELSA to be different to other training packages or programmes offered by EP services which often comprised of one or two sessions. The training was balanced with emphasis on the complexities of EL and open discussions regarding the challenges of supporting young people in this area. It appeared to reflect a more dialogic approach, whereby discussion played a key role in development and learning. The training I observed encouraged ELSAs to reflect upon their evolving understanding of EL, as well as the needs and opportunities within their own settings. This appeared to offer an alternative approach to the interventions within my literature review, whereby some provided structured sessions to be followed, or were less structured. There was little training or exploration with those delivering the training beforehand.

The extensive training provided by ELSA also aims to maximise the resources within schools and provide interventions which are relevant to the needs and contexts of schools. This appeared to be coherent with the conceptualisation of EL discussed earlier, as well as more supportive of my philosophical position. When reading the training manual and accompanying materials. I was interested in how ELSA's best

practice guide appeared to recognise the wider context of the school and provided a flexible approach to exploring EL according to the pupil needs, priorities, and wider context of the interventions.

2.3 Conceptualising EL

Undertaking this literature review was a useful process for defining my perception of EL. My initial understanding of EL was that it was an individual skill which could be supported to improve communication, relationships and reflection. Researchers framed EL as being an individual skill set (Steiner & Perry, 1997) influenced by context (Matthews & Snowden, 2007) or a relational concept (Roffey, 2008). These perspectives led me to reframe EL as both an individual and organisational concept which is underpinned by relationships and communication.

As I progressed through the SLR process, it appeared that many of the studies framed EL as an individual skill set which was influenced by context. These quantitative study approaches did not appear coherent with their conceptualisations of EL, as they focussed on individualised scores. I wondered if the approach of the studies reflected the individualistic and performative culture within schools which are often discussed in relation to academic achievement (Wilkins, 2015). It may be that an individual's perceived ability to manage and regulate their emotions was being viewed in a performative sense, with some pupils having 'better' or 'more' EL than others. This was reinforced by the use of the ELAI (Faupel, 2003) scales with an ideal EL score. Whilst this is a speculation on my part, it exemplifies how taken for granted assumptions or beliefs may indirectly impact upon research decision making, further highlighting the importance of research coherence.

Roffey (2008) used an ecological systems framework to exemplify how EL evolves in organisations from an individual to wider societal level. These systems interact with each other and influence the perception of EL and the relationships which support development. Adopting ecological systems as a framework for understanding EL appeared to contradict with the approach of the studies within my review, as they focussed on student or teacher scores only, with less focus on the wider contextual factors. It is important to note that this may have been due to various time, financial or sample pressures. This critical exploration of conceptual coherence led to an interest

in how interventions interact with their wider school and how they bi-directionally influence each other.

Exploring conceptualisations of EL influenced my development as a writer and researcher in relation to attending to the philosophical coherence of my research, practice and writing. This was something I had previously explored as part of my university sessions. The processes of completing a research review and attempting to synthesise the various concepts of EL further enlightened me to the importance of coherence for my empirical research.

2.4 Philosophical position

Throughout my studies, placement experiences and research I have explored my emerging understanding of ontology and epistemology. In addition, I have considered how this can influence and support decision making in relation to my thesis and overall practice. McLachlan and Garcia (2015) state that a clear philosophical stance is necessary in order to support the validity and coherence of research.

Ontology refers to a researcher's assumptions about what constitutes reality and the nature of human beings (Grix, 2002). Ontological positions are broadly placed by researchers across a continuum between Realism and Relativism (Willig, 2008). Realism suggests that reality exists independent of human perception or interpretation. Relativism is often positioned in opposition to realism (Bryman & Bell, 2001), whereby reality is constructed through our social interactions and perception which continually change and develop according to experiences or context. My developing ontology involved an understanding that reality exists independently of human perception with some aspects being measurable, for example, physical aspects of our health. In contrast to this, there were other aspects of reality which I perceived as being constructs which had become considered as 'truths' through language and social convention, such as our social roles. With this emerging ontology I perceived EL as a theory used to describe and explore more measurable behaviours such as social skills or emotional vocabulary. As previously mentioned, this changed over time.

Exploring the EL literature enabled me to critically consider the theory and recognise the different assumptions which underpin it, such as comments shared by Matthews

(2004) who stated that expectations of 'good' EL tend to be modelled on adults rather than children and can lead to those on a development journey to be pathologised. I was also aware of how cultural or social expectations may define what is seen as appropriate EL. I acknowledged that relationships, context and experiences support and shape EL at an individual, group and wider organisational level at any given time. This led me to re-consider my ontology as closer to relativism in relation to EL, which supported my consideration of epistemology for my empirical research.

Epistemology explores our understanding of knowledge and our assumptions as to how we can pursue and understand it. As with Ontology, Epistemology is often considered to be a continuum between positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2001). Positivism advocates that our reality can be understood with the 'truth' available for humans to understand. Interpretivism states that knowledge is subjective and context dependent (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010). I recognised the limits of a positivist paradigm in relation to EL, as the studies within my literature review had struggled to gather the rich information required in order to explore the subjectivity of EL. I felt an epistemology such as critical realism (Scott, 2005) corresponded with my ontology more effectively. Critical realism acknowledges that there is a reality which exists independently of human perception. However we understand this reality through the lens of our own assumptions, experiences and beliefs (Maclaughlin and Garcia, 2015). This approach corresponded with my recognition that there may be some aspects of reality which are observable or measurable although they are subject to interpretation, as noted throughout my conceptualisation of EL. With an evolved ontology and epistemology, albeit with the tentative use of critical realism as a label, I attempted to develop a coherent methodology.

2.5 Moving to a qualitative methodology

Six out of Nine studies which met the inclusion and exclusion criteria for my literature review were quantitative. The use of quantitative approaches to research was coherent with my philosophical position at the time, in which I acknowledged that some reality existed independently of humans, although this may be interpreted and perceived according to our interpretations, experiences and beliefs.

I found the process of synthesising and critically appraising the studies to be a challenge, as key aspects surrounding the context of the interventions and the

perspectives of the participants were less clear. I acknowledged that this was no fault of the researchers and in fact demonstrated that I valued qualitative information as pertinent to understanding interventions and effectiveness. Many of the researchers appeared to share this view, stating that a greater understanding of their participants and the school contexts would likely support the interpretation of results. This led me to embark upon a qualitative approach for my empirical research to seek the perspectives and rich descriptions participants could share.

The researchers discussed the challenge of self-report measures when exploring EL. I had broader questions as to how a quantitative approach to measuring EL could coherently explore it. I questioned whether assigning numbers to EL and attempting to measure individual 'amounts' of EL was coherent with my conceptualisation of development and how this interacts with relationships and organisational contexts. This led me to acknowledge the importance of qualitative research when exploring and acknowledging the complexity of EL.

As my doctorate pertains to applied psychology, I also acknowledged that adopting a qualitative approach was more coherent with my practice as an Educational Psychologist. I valued conducting research which could be applied to my practice and further my development. Whilst quantitative methods will have a place in my practice and I may draw on quantitative research in the future, I am aware that qualitative information is more likely to be a pillar of my practice.

2.6 Selecting participants

Establishing that I would explore the wider school to address a gap in the literature narrowed some of my options in relation to participants and method. Children, parents or teachers may not have had a wider overview of ELSA training, planning and implementation as well as the evolving change within a school. This meant that the most appropriate participants were those who had been involved in the process from its inception, such as ELSAs or senior leaders.

I considered researching ELSA with senior leaders and support assistants together. However, the consideration of power dynamics (Guinote & Vescio, 2010) made this a challenging prospect. I was conscious that whilst ELSA is a training and intervention approach developed by EPs, for support assistants this becomes their role and

livelihood. Whilst research with ELSAs and senior leaders may have offered a rich and diverse exploration, it may have also descended into a discussion about the support assistant as an individual. I was also aware that comparing the perspectives of leaders and support assistants may lead to conflicting findings which I anticipated may have ongoing ramifications for the individuals involved. This supported my reflection and understanding around my ethical duty as researcher and psychologist (British Psychological Society, 2018) in which the social ramifications of conducting research must be considered and approached with a consideration of risk to participants. Research does not occur within a vacuum and can be a transformative experience for those involved. I was determined to ensure that my research was a positive experience for participants whereby they felt comfortable to speak without participation negatively influencing their roles in school.

I explored the possibility of having two separate groups of senior leaders and support assistants which came from entirely separate schools and therefore could not be compared or reduced to individual traits. Attempting to locate senior leaders and ELSAs from separate schools proved to be a logistical challenge, whereby it was unlikely I would be able to recruit from more than 20 schools. In addition, I wondered how valued an ELSA would feel if their leadership team were invited to take part in research about their role, without them also being able to contribute. I therefore arrived at the decision to research with ELSAs only. I would like to conduct more collaborative research in the future, with a single school whereby ELSA can be explored by a range of school community members.

2.7 The move from effectiveness to change

My systematic literature review examined effectiveness, as I perceived this to be a central question to how we support the development of EL. The term effectiveness was particularly relevant to my review as I was keen to explore how interventions impacted upon emotional literacy, as opposed to other outcomes associated with EL. Effectiveness was a term widely used within Educational Psychology in relation to interventions, although I was unable to locate studies which defined the term. A lack of definition is likely due to the widespread and accessible use of this term in research. When exploring the literature surrounding intervention effectiveness, several studies stated that the evaluation of intervention programs was a key aspect of the EP or

school psychologist role (Christenson, Carlson, & Valdez, 2002; Gresham, 1989; Kratochwill & Stoiber, 2000)

Isolating the effectiveness of an intervention without an understanding of the wider context and the range of other factors which influence change has been a reoccurring theme throughout my literature review. This was also acknowledged by Lipsey and Codray (2000) and Wigelsworth et al (2010) who state that these contextual factors prove a challenge to understand for each participant to great depth within the timeframes and pressures of research. Roffey's (2008) use of the ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) model to understand the development of EL led me to question how appropriate it was to pursue the notion of intervention effectiveness for a subjective and complex topic such as EL. I was unable to unite the concept of effectiveness with EL if I viewed it as something which evolves within contextual systems and is part of a network of relationships. In addition to this challenge, an ethical discussion led to further questions about the use of the term effective, which I will summarise next.

When discussing the potential ethical challenges of my research with a university tutor, it was raised that support assistants may find it challenging to discuss the effectiveness of their ELSA role with a balanced perspective. We agreed that ELSAs may feel uncomfortable about discussing effectiveness or may feel reluctant to share negative opinions about an intervention as it contributed to their role and value in a school. In order to mitigate the sense that this may be a performative exploration, I considered changing the word effective to change.

When exploring the terms change and effectiveness, I found no academic literature which defined or compared these terms, that it not to say they are not available, as I had a limited window of time to research the terms before making the decision. There were several student forums where the same question had been asked and discussed. When attempting to search for studies with these terms using a database, both terms were often used together. Through exploring papers which only used the term effectiveness or change in the titles, I formed the view that exploring effectiveness appeared to involve an attempt to rate, quantify or place value upon an isolated factor deemed to create change. This term appeared more prevalent in studies exploring interventions, strategies, or approaches. The term change appeared to be defined as

an ongoing process whereby behaviour, attitude or organisations transform, become different and improve. The term change appeared more prevalent in journals discussing psychotherapy, attitude development and organisational psychology.

I came to realise that in addition to choosing the term change on ethical grounds, this term would also support my coherence as a researcher. As previously discussed, my perception of EL was that of an individual and organisational concept, which develops within complex systems, relationships and experiences. Adopting the term change appeared to reflect how ELSA can support or influence change as part of a school organisation whereby various factors contribute. I became interested in how ELSA can support change, with a recognition that it functions as part of a community and relational system.

2.8 Summary and Conclusion

This document has explored the process of moving from my literature review to a coherent and informed empirical research project. An exploration of Ontology and Epistemology supported my understanding of EL as a concept, as opposed to a 'truth'. Exploring the coherence and assumptions of the review studies enabled a critical reflection of how I could strive for coherence within my research. This process supported a critical reflection of my wider practice outside of this research, which I will continue to apply as I develop my role as an Educational Psychologist.

I explored the quantitative approaches of studies as part of my literature review and recognised the limitations of measuring or quantifying a subjective and contextual concept such as EL. I found that the use of rating skills limited an understanding of wider context or understanding of EL. This led me to adopt a qualitative methodology and acknowledge that my philosophical position and approach to practice will likely mean that I continue to seek a holistic picture where possible, with an exploration of other's perspectives and interpretations to support my understanding.

My understanding of ontology and epistemology continues to develop and is regularly challenged by new experiences. Throughout this process I became increasingly able to articulate my research paradigm, which enabled me to develop a coherent methodology. The process of reflecting upon decision making, keeping a research journal and reflecting upon ethics when decision making will continue to be important

aspects of my practice. I will endeavour to continue challenging my own, and other's assumptions, questioning my decisions and critically evaluating my practice.

Chapter 3: Empirical Research

Abstract

This chapter details the empirical research which explores how the implementation of ELSA can support wider change within the wider school. ELSA is an intervention delivered by EPs and is prominent across the UK. Enhancing an understanding of how ELSA supports wider change is likely to support further steps for EPs when delivering training, supervising and sharing ELSA information with schools. Two focus groups of 11 ELSAs were conducted with thematic analysis completed. Two focus groups of 11 ELSAs were conducted with thematic analysis completed. Findings suggest that ELSA interventions support the EL of schools. The ELSAs shared that school readiness, the community of ELSA and the development of relationships were key supportive factors to this change. It was discussed that ELSA training groups could be a community of practice, whereby they learn and develop together with the support of supervision and the wider ELSA community. The key changes and supportive factors shared by the ELSAs may demonstrate the development of a community of EL practice which facilitates learning, reflection and change within organisations. It is proposed that communities of EL practice could be harnessed further by EPs to support this change effectively using the models proposed by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002).

3.1 Introduction

Emotional Literacy (EL) has been discussed by Goleman (1996), Matthews (2005), and Weare (2004) as a key process in development as it supports children to reflect, apply learning concepts and build effective communication and relationships to learn from others. UK government policy and guidance emphasises the role of schools in supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Some examples include 'What works? Developing children's social and emotional competence and wellbeing (DfES, 2003), 'Promoting children and young people's emotional and mental health' (DfES, 2015) and the green paper 'Transforming children and young people's mental health provision' (DfE, 2017). Educational Psychologists (EPs) are well placed to support social and emotional wellbeing in schools, (Roffey,

Williams, Greig, & MacKay, 2016) through school consultation, training, research, intervention, and assessment (Department, 2002). One aspect of the support offered by EPs includes the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme (ELSA) which offers training and guidance for how to support the EL of children and young people.

3.1.1 Emotional Literacy

As part of my Systematic Literature Review (SLR) I explored the wide-ranging conceptualisations of EL and developed the following definition for the purpose of this research:

A process of interacting with each other in a way that supports a shared understanding of our own and other's emotions, which can then be used to build relationships and support our decision making.

EL can be conceptualised as an individual skill or ability which is shaped by experiences and can be developed following support and modelling from others. Roffey (2008) and Haddon et al (2005) emphasise that EL is greatly impacted by environment, culture, group membership and relational quality.

The ELSA programme aims to enhance school resources by sharing theory and approaches which can be applied and used to understand and support children and young people.

3.1.2 ELSA

The ELSA training program (Burton, 1999) is delivered by EPs to school support staff, such as teaching assistants across 6 days (typically spread across a term). The training explores psychological theory and research to support an understanding of children and young people's EL development. This training includes an exploration of practical resources or approaches, such as circle time (Mosely, 1996) and motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2012) which can be used to support EL development for children and young people.

Upon completion of the training, the support assistants become known as ELSAs with the expectation that they will deliver individual or small group sessions to pupils

within their school. The ELSAs have access to two hours of supervision facilitated by an EP on a half termly basis; this provides an opportunity to share practice, problem solve and access emotional support. The ongoing supervision and support from EPs appear to be unique to ELSA within the context of Educational Psychology (McEwen, 2019; Osborne & Burton, 2014).

Burton (2019) shares a code of practice which highlights the importance of having outcomes or aims discussed and planned in collaboration with those who know a pupil/group. Burton adds that whist sessions may end after targeted support is completed, children may benefit from regular check-ins with ELSAs after the sessions end. Further guidelines include the importance of obtaining parental consent, respecting privacy as well as having a supportive line manager for prioritization and planning. Burton also acknowledges the importance of developing a wider school understanding of the ELSA role.

3.1.3 Research exploring ELSA

A large majority of this research is currently unpublished doctoral thesis (Balampanidou, 2019; Barker, 2017; Grahamslaw, 2010; Mann, 2014; Rees, 2016). Barker (2017) highlights that this provides a very rigorous and detailed body of literature. There is a small number of published journal articles (Hills, 2016; Krause et al., 2020; McEwen, 2019; Pickering, Lambeth, & Woodcock, 2019; Wilding & Claridge, 2016). I will summarise both types of publications to support an understanding of ELSA.

The effectiveness of ELSA from the perspective of children and young people highlighted the importance of relationships, confidentiality, fun and the personable qualities of the ELSA . Children reported reductions in feelings of worry, anxiety, and loneliness after completing ELSA intervention sessions (Balampanidou, 2019; Krause et al., 2020; McEwen, 2019). Parents reported similar findings to children, with an emphasis on relationships, fun and skill development (Barker, 2017; Wilding & Claridge, 2016). Parents also acknowledged the importance of communication with a shared understanding of the intervention aims (Barker, 2017; Grahamslaw, 2010; Hills, 2016).

ELSAs who had completed the training reported an increased sense of self-efficacy and confidence as well as enhanced knowledge, skills and support networks (Grahamslaw, 2010; Mann, 2014; McEwen, 2019; Rees, 2016). ELSA's also shared the importance of supervision, relationships and wider school support as key factors in the success of ELSA interventions. McEwen (2019) suggested the implementation of ELSA may also impact upon the wider school environment providing EPs with an opportunity for wider, indirect impacts upon school environments.

It is important to note that whilst there is a body of research exploring ELSA, the content and approach to delivery can vary across psychology services. Burton (2019) encourages ELSAS to adapt their interventions to ensure they are appropriate and relevant to the needs of each child or group. Pickering et al. (2019) state that caution should be taken when describing the ELSA programme as evidence based, as these variations make it challenging to identify what makes ELSA effective in research.

3.2 Rationale

The rationale for my empirical research was shaped by my own experiences of shadowing ELSA, my literature review and reading previous papers exploring ELSA.

Some research findings summarised in my introduction suggested that ELSA may rely upon wider school support and may have an indirect impact upon the wider school. To my knowledge there has been no research which has fully explored this area.

My interest in the wider school impact of ELSA was influenced by the scoping stage of my literature review, in which Haddon et al (2005) and Roffey (2008) discuss how EL can be viewed as a relational concept which is context and relationship dependent. This led me to consider how the perceived positive impact of ELSA is influenced by the wider school context and in turn, how the implementation of ELSA may influence the wider school.

My literature review highlighted that a broad range of factors influence the success of an intervention, many of which were in relation to the wider school context. The ELSA

Network (2020) also emphasises on the importance of a supportive line manager and a wider school understanding of ELSA.

This led me to focus my research aims on how ELSA may influence the wider school, particularly with regards to the school ethos, climate and support for the social and emotional needs of their pupils.

3.3 Research Aims

Below are the research aims:

1. To explore how the planning and introduction of ELSA interventions may support positive change to the wider school. This may include the ethos, culture and understanding in relation to EL.
2. To explore and discuss the rich perspective that ELSAs can bring to the research aim.

Below are the research questions:

1. **How does the planning and implementation of the ELSA intervention impact upon the wider school?**
2. **Which factors have influenced or supported positive change in the wider school when implementing the ELSA intervention?**

Research question two was developed during data analysis which is discussed further on page 51.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Design

A qualitative methodology was employed with a focus group approach (this is discussed further in the 'method' section) as my question was largely exploratory with little prior research within the area. A qualitative methodology is coherent with my philosophical approach, in which the views, experiences and perceptions of others shape understanding and are influenced by context, language and interpretation (see

bridging document for further details of this area). I positioned myself as a researcher who facilitates an exploration with participants and brings psychological interpretation as part of the analysis process.

The findings from my systematic literature review suggest that a quantitative approach to exploring EL is unlikely to provide the rich detail required to fully understand the impact of interventions. In addition, it was unlikely that I would be able to develop or locate a quantitative tool which could capture the ELSAs' views without dictating the direction of the findings and lose sight of the exploratory aim.

3.4.2 Method

A focus group approach provides a semi-structured method with a small number of prompt questions and minimal direction from the researcher (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Through discussing prompt questions together as a group, participants can consider possibilities and various directions of discussion. It was intended that my participants would build upon each other's comments and scaffold each other to consider how their wider school had changed following the planning and implementation of ELSA sessions.

As part of the focus group, I developed three key questions to provide a flexible structure and serve as a prompt for the participants (See Table 14). These questions were chosen as a neutral list of different aspects of a school and were not sourced from prior research or rooted in any theoretical perspective. These questions were intended to be a scaffold to prompt the original thoughts of the ELSAs. I attempted to limit the possibility of my questions leading the discussion with prior expectations.

Table 14
Focus Group Questions

Question 1: Please could you share any positive changes to your wider school, which you feel are a result of planning and implementing ELSA interventions? You may wish to think about: · School staff · Wider groups of children/classes/staff · Wider approaches to supporting children · School policy/ethos · School relationships/culture · Physical structure or environment within school · Parental or family relationships **Question 2:** Has the planning or implementation of ELSA resulted in any challenges or what may be considered as less desirable impacts upon the wider school? You may wish to think about: · School staff · Wider groups of children/classes/staff · Wider approaches to supporting children · School policy/ethos · School relationships/culture · Physical structure or environment within school · Parental or family relationships **Question 3:** Do you feel there are any particular features of the ELSA training or intervention which have contributed to the changes we have discussed?

These questions were intended to support dialogue and provide a focus for the sessions. Vaughn et al. (1996) suggests that a focus group ideally balances a focussed structure with space and time for ideas to flow. The prompts were chosen to capture the different aspects of a school, they were not chosen based on research or

theory. Some participants found the prompts useful, they often prompted additional discussion towards the end of each question.

3.4.3 Participants and Sampling

ELSAs were chosen as participants, as they would likely have a useful overview of their interventions across the school, as well as an understanding of the training and aims of ELSA. ELSAs were also likely to have a greater sense of the wider school before, and after the planning and implementation of ELSA.

Through opportunity sampling, I was able to recruit 11 ELSAs, all of whom had completed their ELSA training as well as two supervision sessions as a minimum. The majority of ELSAs were from primary schools. Three secondary schools took part. The experience of the ELSAs varied from six months to a year.

3.4.4 Procedure and Materials

My Procedure provides a chronology of the steps I have taken throughout this empirical research, the steps are detailed below in Table 15.

Table 15
Procedure Summary

1. Following project approval and ethical approval, I shared the aims of my research and invited any participants who may be interested during ELSA supervision.
2. Shared study information and consent form (See Appendix 3), one for the ELSA and one for a school senior leader (see ethics section for further details about consent). Answered any questions via email and phone calls.
3. Organised two focus groups after the ELSA supervision, as this was a prearranged date the ELSAs could attend and would cause minimal disruption.
4. Answered any questions and confirmed that participants were still happy to participate and collected consent forms. I reminded them of the various points within the consent form, such as the right to withdraw and data handling.
5. Acknowledged that although participants already know each other and meet for supervision, this a separate process. Shared agreements, such as supporting everyone to share and respecting that ELSA work can be delivered differently.
6. Shared the three questions and allowed the ELSAs to agree which order they would like to address them.
7. Started the recording equipment and read each question in turn.
8. Upon agreement with the participants, proceeded to end the recording.
9. Thanked ELSAs for their participation, debriefed and provided sheet, invited any question or queries, ensured contact details were available and encouraged ELSAs to get in touch if they had any questions or concerns.
10. Completed thematic analysis and commenced written report.
11. Feedback findings in supervision sessions with the opportunity to member check and answer any questions.

Focus groups were digitally audio recorded and stored on an encrypted memory stick. The digital recording was deleted following submission of this thesis. The questions were presented on A3 paper for participants to refer to as and when required.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval from Newcastle University's Ethics committee was obtained before commencing with this research. Informed consent was secured from the ELSAs as

well as a member of senior leadership within school, with research information and debrief information presented (See Appendix 3). Multiple opportunities to ask any questions were provided prior to consent, as well as before and after the focus group sessions.

The British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2018) and the Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2014) were used to support a consideration of ethics within this research. These publications highlight the importance of ensuring that the participant's rights and dignity are respected. It also highlights that research should contribute to positive outcomes, with efforts taken to minimise any detrimental impacts which may occur as a result of research.

Although this research is examining the ELSA intervention, schools are likely to also view ELSA as a person or set of people. I was conscious that for those delivering the intervention, it is their job and livelihood. I therefore chose not to include other members of the school in this research, in order to avoid the possibility of this becoming a performative exercise. I was concerned about how safe the ELSAs would feel when sharing their views if they were then to be compared with senior members of staff or colleagues.

A focus group method was also chosen in part, due to ethics. It was hoped that a focus group approach may enable the ELSAs to support and scaffold each other when discussing their roles. However, this also presented other ethical challenges, as some of the ELSAs had prior relationships with one another. It is unclear if prior ELSA relationships impacted upon the focus group. The ELSAs appeared comfortable with one another and all ELSAs contributed to discussion.

All data was stored in accordance with the GDPR and University policies. When transcribing data, no identifying information was documented within this written thesis.

Appropriate support mechanisms for group dynamics were considered. A discussion at the beginning of the focus group was facilitated to reiterate the importance of valuing and respecting the different opinions and views of others. I provided space, encouragement, and questions when appropriate to support all members of the focus group to contribute.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using a thematic approach after exploring a range of possible analysis techniques, such as Grounded Theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007); Interpretive Phenomenological analysis (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999) and Discourse Analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Thematic analysis provided the flexibility required to analyse the data without imposing a specific theory (Braun & Clarke, 2013) during analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that theory can be used after analysis to support the interpretation of results.

I chose to explore inductive themes, as this was likely to produce themes which were linked closely to the data set, rather than my theoretical interests or preconceptions (Patton, 1990). This enabled the analysis to correspond with my evolving philosophical position, in which the perspectives of the participants were valued as a contribution to a new understanding, as opposed to confirming my own beliefs. It is important to note that my philosophical understanding unavoidably played a role in the data analysis process. It was hoped that inductive analysis would support me to strive for a more balanced interpretation.

Analysis was completed at the Latent level, in order to ensure that psychological theory and application is a key aspect to analysis, as opposed to a semantic level. This means that underlying conceptualisations and assumptions will be explored to support a theoretical consideration of the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

I adopted the stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) which are detailed in Table 16 below. This was chosen to support a rigorous and consistent approach.

Table 16
Stages of Thematic Analysis

1. Familiarisation with the data – this supports the researcher to understand the depth and breadth of the data. Transcribing the audio data was a key aspect of this stage, as well as repeated listening and reading of the recordings.

2. Generating initial codes – this is a list of ideas about what the data is saying, what aspects are interesting and how can they be summarised into concise words or statements.
3. Searching for themes – Collating the codes into potential themes, gather all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes – Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a 'thematic map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes – Ongoing analysis to refine the specific of each theme and overall story the analysis tells. Clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report – Selecting vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis relating back to the research question and literature.

To illustrate stages 2-5, thematic maps have been developed for each theme with sub themes and codes (See **Error! Reference source not found.**).

During data analysis I developed a range of codes and potential themes which explored how ELSA supported change. As my analysis was inductive, I decided to add a second research question, in order to capture this rich information. Braun and Clarke (2006) comment that the inductive process of analysis can lead to the addition of research questions.

3.7 Presentation of findings for Research Question 1

I developed six themes which will be presented as my findings for this research. The three themes in relation to Research Question 1 were developed along with sub themes to exemplify the components of each theme. These are presented as a whole in Table 17 and further discussed within the remainder of this findings section.

Table 17
Themes for Research Question 1

Theme	Sub-Theme
	1.1 The link between EL and learning

1. Staff understanding of Emotional Literacy	1.2 The link between EL and behaviour
	1.3 Increased teacher referrals
2. A holistic approach	2.1 School policy/strategy
	2.2 Increased prioritisation
3. A collaborative approach	3.1 Planning with others
	3.2 Preventative support in school

I will now describe and explore each of these themes with selected quotes to represent the views of the participants. I will also consider how these findings correspond with prior research or psychological theory.

Within some of the themes ELSAs discussed a challenge or a negative influence on the positive change which have been included in the discussion of each theme.

3.7.2 Theme 1: Understanding of Emotional Literacy

Teachers appeared to have developed an awareness of how the support of EL can impact upon learning engagement and academic progress. Teachers were described as increasingly more willing to release children from core subjects, as they began to see the impact of the intervention on learning and behaviour.

Sub-theme 1.1 The link between EL and Learning

School staff appeared to develop an understanding that children's emotional state, social development and regulation skills can impact upon their ability to engage with learning and development. This relates closely to Vygotsky's theories of development which conceptualise learning as a social process in which learned others scaffold development (Vygotsky, 1978) relying upon communication and relationships.

Teachers were able to observe the changes in children and young people as they accessed ELSA support, which is likely to have reinforced this awareness.

"I think the thinking behind things now, is that we need to get that (emotional literacy) right before they learn. That is a big shift to how it used to be."

The focus group discussions seemed to reflect humanistic psychology models, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954) or Human Givens (Griffin & Tyrrell, 2013). ELSAs highlighted the basic needs that children have in order to develop. Whilst these theories can support an understanding of learning, they are theories as opposed to 'truths'; there may be children who are coping with challenges and are still able to engage with learning.

Sub-theme 1.2 The link between EL and behaviour

ELSAs shared that school staff were increasingly considering the wider context of a child and how this relates to their actions. Staff attempted to understand unwanted behaviour, as opposed to reducing it with punitive approaches.

"I think I have definitely noticed a change in the staff in the way that they react to incidents and looking outside of the school not just in class for why this is happening or why they (children) are behaving like that, I have definitely seen a change"

This sub-theme highlights the importance of building effective communication about children and young people to avoid incidents of communication breaking down and adopting punitive approaches to behaviour.

It is important to note that two schools had implemented restorative practice prior to commencing ELSA. This may demonstrate how ELSA can interact positively with other initiatives and approaches within school.

Sub theme 1.3 - Increased Referrals

ELSAs interpreted the increase in referrals as an acknowledgement from staff that they understood the value of supporting EL. It also appeared to demonstrate that teachers were beginning to recognise students who may benefit from this support. This may be an indirect effect of the increased understanding teachers had gained.

"I do find that teachers recognise that they (children) need that time for emotional support and now say that and pass over to us"

Whilst the increase in referrals demonstrates a positive change, some ELSAs noted that teachers came to rely too heavily on ELSAs for EL interventions and viewed EL development as something which occurred outside of the classroom with trained professionals. It may be interesting to explore how teachers perceive their role in supporting children's EL when they have a school ELSA available.

1.4 Theme 1 Summary

Theme 1 as a whole appears to reflect many of the key psychological theories and perspectives which are shared as part of ELSA training, such as the humanistic models (Abraham, 1954; Griffin & Tyrrell, 2013) which highlight needs. There also appears to be an emphasis on the role of environment, social interaction and relationships in understanding children's behaviour and development. This relates closely to theories of development and learning such as Bandura (1977), Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), and Vygotsky (1978).

3.7.3 Theme 2: A holistic approach

The ELSAs perceived a shift within their wider school with regards to the key goals and purpose of education. This is frequently debated within publications as to who is responsible for supporting children's SEMH needs and development (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). Goleman (1996) and Steiner (1984) argue that whilst children ideally develop EL through the quality of their relationships with their primary caregivers as models, schools can play a supporting role in this development.

Sub Theme 2.2 - School policy/strategy

The ELSAs recognised that in addition to staff showing that they value ELSA, this was also evident in school policy and strategy documentation. ELSAs appeared to see this as a further acknowledgement that holistic support is a key aspect of school strategy and is openly shared as part of the wider school.

"On our policy about behaviour support, it would have just been consequences and stuff but now it says that we (ELSAs) can offer other things. It's proactive

more than reactive which is a shift, although we try to say that we are not "behaviour management" we support emotions"

It is important to note that this research has come at a time when the government is placing emphasis on how schools support the mental wellbeing of children and young people through strategies such as ensuring each school has a mental health lead (Department for Education, 2017) It may be that some of the changes to the wider school are in response to government legislation as well as the ELSA intervention. This may demonstrate how ELSA can support wider initiatives in school, as the development of EL has been linked to supporting the mental wellbeing of young people (Sharp, 2000).

Sub Theme 2.3 – Increased Prioritisation

The ELSAs shared how the prioritisation of their interventions had gradually increased over time, particularly after school staff began to see the positive impact. Many of the ELSAs were unable to work with children during core subjects, as content-based learning was deemed to be more important; for many this prioritisation has changed. This is not to suggest that learning and social emotional support are now equally prioritised in schools; the majority of ELSAs discussed the ongoing challenge of having the time, rooms and resources they need to address waiting lists.

"When I first started doing this (ELSA) I was doing other things before that were a bit like ELSA, but I wasn't allowed to take anyone out of the core subjects, whereas now I do ELSA all day long."

3.7.4 Theme 3: A collaborative approach

ELSAs frequently discussed and referred to collaboration with other members of the school community and how this supported the implementation of ELSA.

Sub Theme 3.2 - Planning with others

The ELSA code of practice guidelines (The ELSA Network, 2020) emphasise the importance of planning, target setting and reviewing progress with others. ELSAs are encouraged to develop referral processes in which the needs of children are discussed

in advance of ELSA to ensure those who know a child have a shared understanding of needs and goals.

“We have two counsellors who come in every week so support staff so if we need to pass onto more specialist advice, so we can refer between each other and work together.”

The ELSAs also discussed the tension of planning ELSA with others and how this could lead to conflicting views as to what needs prioritisation and how to effectively set manageable goals for pupils.

Sub Theme 3.3 - Preventative support in school

The ELSAs shared how school resources and approaches to support had been enhanced by the ELSA training with less reliance on outside agencies or seeking immediate external referrals. This relates closely to research which demonstrates how in many cases, support from those who know and understand a pupil can at times be as effective as outside professional support (Bombèr, 2011).

“I think our school is less likely to go straight to (named an outside agency) now. It’s not in the behaviour policy but they are looking more at what to do to support pupils struggling with emotional wellbeing and recognising that there is a need in school to help in this way, rather than going straight to outside agencies”

3.7.5 Presentation of findings for research question two

The three key themes to address research question two, with sub themes are presented in Table 18 below.

Table 18
Themes for research question two

Theme	Sub-Theme
4. School Readiness	Time and Resource Planning

	School Climate
	Senior Leadership Support
5. ELSA as a community	Support
	Resources
	Problem Solving
6. Relationships	Consent
	Feedback
	Check Ins

I will now describe and explore each of these themes with selected quotes to represent the views of the participants. I will also consider how these findings correspond with prior research or psychological theory.

3.7.6 Theme 4: School Readiness

School readiness is a term often used when considering how ready a pupil is to engage with school and access the curriculum (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006). In a similar manner to the concept of school readiness, the ELSAs discussed how prepared their school and staff were to engage and support the ELSA interventions. Several factors contributed to school readiness, with discussions including school climate, resources, time and the level of support from the senior leadership team. The school readiness of ELSA schools appeared to vary, with some ELSAs overcoming significant challenges; others described their schools as more supportive or ready to implement interventions. I will explore these factors with an exploration of each sub theme.

Sub Theme 4.1 – Time and Resource Planning

The majority of the ELSAs shared that their line managers allocated protected time in advance of beginning the interventions; this supported their opportunities to undertake the intervention, as well as ensure this time did not become lost or redirected to other tasks. Different resources were also allocated in various forms and amounts across schools; some received a small budget with a room or space to work whilst others were required to make use of the resources they already had, or work in less than ideal areas of the school.

“We’ve got our own room and it’s all been done out with goldfish and lovely lights and games, sand, a beautiful carpet. We’ve also got a summer house built. Lots of investment has gone into it.”

Many of the ELSAs commented that time and resource was an ongoing challenge which was not unique to ELSA interventions within their schools.

Sub-theme 4.2 – School Culture

Some ELSAs described their school’s values, beliefs, attitudes and relationships (sometimes referred to as school climate) as conducive to developing ELSA interventions in school. This appeared to relate to how motivated staff were to support ELSA and engage with discussions surrounding the needs of pupils.

“I think our school understanding of emotional literacy is really high, before we started they had a little understanding and that got us through the door, restorative practices helped with it too”.

Sub-Theme 4.3 – Senior Leadership Support

ELSAs shared how support from Senior Leadership had enabled them to access the resources with many presenting to wider school staff to promote understanding and encourage support. Support from senior leadership also appeared to provide a sense of value and appreciation for the role of an ELSA.

“We were lucky because our SENCO did a full staff presentation, so they know what we are doing and that if we need to take a child, it’s important.”

3.7.7 Theme 5: The ELSA community

The ELSAs shared different aspects of support and confidence building they had received during training and supervision. This support came from their fellow ELSAs, the EPs who trained and supervised them, as well as the wider ELSA community through websites, online groups and forums.

Sub-theme 5.1 – Support

Support was frequently cited as the factor which set ELSA apart from other training previously undertaken. The ELSAs shared how their confidence had increased when planning, explaining and warranting their chosen activities.

“It gives you the confidence on how to approach things and think about what you’re doing and why, like you feel like with help from EPs you can justify what you’re doing. “

Sub-theme 5.2 – Problem Solving

Considering the approach of ELSA’s and overcoming challenges was a further benefit of accessing support from the ELSA community. This appeared to relate to individual ELSAs confidence in problem solving independently, as well as drawing upon support from others to support their problem solving.

“You learn how to do it, go away and do interventions, you get stuck and feel stuck, if you’re the only one you blindly go through, whereas with these supervisions you bounce off other people and you have EP expertise there to kind of know you’re doing the right thing.”

Sub-theme 5.3 – Resources

Support to share and adapt resources was a further benefit gained from the community of ELSA. The ELSAs explained that this enabled them to personalise their approach or search for new and different resources.

“There is a lot of resources and they are very different, there is a big toolkit to ELSA and it helps you personalise it for a child.”

3.7.8 Theme 6: Relationships

The ELSAs discussed how many of the best practice guidelines such as obtaining consent, feedback and having regular student and staff ‘check ins’ appear to have supported ELSAs to strengthen relationships within school.

Sub-theme 6.1 – Consent

ELSAs are encouraged to develop a school process for informing and obtaining consent from parents as a best practice guideline.

“It is nice to find out what is happening at home, they can tell you more about what they see at home and it can be different to school”.

Sub-theme 6.2 – Feedback

The ELSAs discussed how feeding back information regarding their intervention sessions supported the development of relationships as well as supporting an increased understanding, as discussed in Theme 1.

“When you feedback to the teacher you are building relationships with people you wouldn’t usually work with and you’re helping to build lots of different staff understanding”

ELSAs also shared that this understanding had been achieved through encouraging teachers to acknowledge the additional challenges which may arise for children attempting to concentrate or engage with class activities, whilst also attempting to process and manage complex or ‘big’ emotions and life events.

Sub-theme 6.3 – Check-Ins

When asking the third question of what makes ELSA different to other interventions, a large majority of the ELSAs discussed the importance of having a “check in” with pupils and staff to provide ongoing monitoring and support after intervention has taken place.

“I think the checking in with children just for a quick update is really important, I would never do that usually but I have child now who I see every Friday afternoon just for 5 minutes to check in. Not being rigid about how you support them and go with what works”

3.8 Discussion

The themes from this research appear to suggest that whilst ELSA is intended to be an individual and small group intervention, it can lead to wider positive impacts within

the school. This discussion aims to explore psychology to support an understanding of the research findings. A change in EL within school environments is discussed as the potential overarching change highlighted by ELSAs. The emphasis which ELSAs placed on their school communities and the community of ELSA practitioners also led me to explore the theory of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). This is proposed as a possible model for how ELSA training and interventions can support change.

3.8.1 Research question 1: How does the planning and implementation of the ELSA intervention impact upon the wider school?

The themes discovered for research question 1 suggest that ELSA interventions can impact positively upon the wider school and support positive change. The themes suggest that the introduction of ELSA interventions develops staff understanding of EL, promotes a holistic understanding of children and young people as well as encourage a collaborative approach to supporting pupils. The discovered themes suggest that planning and implementing ELSA interventions positively impacts upon the connectedness of school members as well as the overall perception and belief regarding learning and behaviour.

The development of staff understanding as discussed in theme 1 may suggest that a conceptualisation of EL and the link between learning and behaviour has changed or developed for school staff with an acknowledgement of how contextual factors and relationships can impact upon EL, and subsequently, on learning. The impact of prior experiences, skill development, relationships and emotional states on learning are highlighted by psychologists such as Goleman (1996), Matthews (2005) and Steiner (1984). The link between EL, learning and behaviour are discussed throughout the ELSA training materials, with a focus on the individual needs of children when learning and developing. This may demonstrate that ELSAs have shared and disseminated their learning from the course and scaffolded school staff to develop a similar understanding. The ELSAs also suggest that an understanding of EL has developed through seeing positive change as an outcome of ELSA intervention, appearing to offer evidence, as well as theory, for school staff.

Themes 2 and 3 demonstrate positive changes observed by the ELSAs, such as changes to school policy, increased prioritisation and opportunities to plan with others. The impact of these changes have likely varied depending upon the school context,

as all schools have different resources, cultures and relationship. When considering the increased holistic focus and collaboration between staff, it may be that the EL of the organisation has improved, presenting a key overall change to the wider school. This is discussed further in section 3.8.2

3.8.2 Does the introduction of ELSA enhance the EL of a wider school?

The first three themes developed from the research question may suggest that the EL of the school culture has positively changed. The themes within this research correspond with the core matrix for organisational EL, which was proposed by Haddon et al (2005). This matrix comprised of relationships, communication and organisational factors as the components which support emotionally literate environments. In addition to these theories, it may be argued that the enhanced communication, collaboration and improved understanding of EL may have improved relational quality, suggested by Roffey (2008) as that which supports wellbeing within schools. Roffey's (2008) exploration of relational quality involved an eco-systemic analysis of relational quality which was not completed as part of this research. The relational quality is likely to have varied across the 11 schools involved with this research and caution may be required when assuming this to be the case without an in-depth analysis.

It is suggested that whole school approaches are best placed to enhance wellbeing and support learning engagement (Roffey, 2015) . However, Roffey (2015) argues that single interventions can scale up and influence change over time along with a top down approach. In contrast to this, Wyn, Cahill, Holdsworth, Rowling, and Carson (2000) argue that resources should be targeted to larger scale approaches for supporting wellbeing within schools as opposed to a focussing on individual needs. Supportive school leadership was cited as a key aspect to change within the themes of this research, which is cited within the literature as a key aspect for organisations to improve their EL (Haddon et al., 2005; Roffey, 2008; Weare, 2000). ELSA may offer a multi-faceted approach to supporting the development of EL, with top down support from school leadership, the supervision and guidance from EPs along with the bottom up learning from ELSAs who interact with staff and pupils every day. It may be argued that this would be a significant amount of pressure to place upon ELSAs. However, this would be with the supervision and support of EPs, school leadership, fellow ELSAs and the wider school staff.

3.8.3 Research question 2: Which factors have influenced or supported positive change in the wider school when implementing the ELSA intervention?

Whilst research question 1 explored the positive changes which have occurred in school as a result of implementing ELSA interventions, research question 2 was developed to explore how this change had occurred. Themes 3-6 demonstrate a range of factors and processes which help us to understand how positive change has developed. The importance of relationships, communication and school climate have been cited as integral processes for how schools can support the wellbeing of students and staff (Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters, 2016; Noble & McGrath, 2012; Sulkowski, Demaray, & Lazzarus, 2012) . Within the context of this research, these factors appear to act as processes for supporting positive change in addition to being an end goal or aim for an organisation.

All of the subthemes for question 2, perhaps with the exception of school climate, demonstrate tangible processes which the implementation of ELSA appear to enhance or directly create. Gaining consent, feeding back and checking in have been cited in previous research as enhancing impact of ELSA interventions (McEwen, 2019). Time and resource management, problem solving and senior leadership support are further aspects of the ELSA role which have been cited as supportive to the role of the ELSA (Krause et al., 2020).

The themes developed within this research demonstrates key broad changes which can be influenced by ELSA intervention in schools. These concepts are complex and may be interpreted differently by individuals. However, the subthemes offer a practical element to understanding these changes with possible tangible actions which can be addressed by EPs, ELSAs and school leaders.

Whilst each of these themes were previously discussed in turn as part of the results section, I will now consider how theory or psychological frameworks may support an understanding of how these processes interact and support wider change.

3.8.4 How has positive change occurred within the context of this research?

This discussion aims to explore how psychology can support an understanding of how the processes from themes 4-6 interact to support the wider changes experienced by the ELSAs. Whilst a range of psychological theories could be applied to understand

change, such as school readiness (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006), Social Capital (Helliwell & Putnam, 2007), a psychological sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) or social intergroup theory (Tajfel, 1982), I chose to apply the theory and model of communities of practice (COP) (Wenger & Lave, 1991). This theory offers insight into an overall process which may have occurred within school and supported change at a wider level. The theory of COP appears to unite a large number of the themes within the research findings.

This theory could also be applied to the groups of ELSAs who trained together, along with the wider ELSA community, which was frequently referenced as a key factor to the success of ELSA. Identifying ELSA as a potential opportunity for developing communities of practice in schools may be a useful concept for EPs to apply and contribute to school development. However Engeström (2007) criticised COP and the challenges of applying this theory to large interconnected organisations, such as the wider ELSA network. Engeström shares an example of how software developers often engage in peer reviewed activities which strengthen product development and occur as additional parallel processes to their traditional working roles. Engeström's discussion of collaborative learning may mirror the process of group supervision, whereby ELSAs engage in reviewing tools or approaches alongside the development of knowledge in their school communities. This may suggest that ELSAs engagement with supervision and online resource forums enable the development knowledge with the approach Engeström suggests. This collaborative learning provides a less traditional approach without a hierarchical structure imposed upon them (such as learning from a more experienced other or following the direction of management).

Engeström's (2007) discussion of a COP helpfully explores some aspects of organisational development which a COP may not accurately capture. This may suggest that the wider network of ELSAs across a region or country may represent effective collaborative learning, as opposed to a COP.

3.8.5 Applying Communities of Practice to Schools

Communities of practice (COP) was first conceptualised by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave (Wenger & Lave, 1991) as a process for how the members of a community learn

together as practitioners. Wenger and Lave state that communities are comprised of new members with peripheral participation, and older members with full participation. Legitimate participation refers to the sharing of skills, knowledge and activities between members of the community to strengthen learning. New members of communities gradually become full members through ongoing interactions, activities, and the development of a community identity. This process appears to be reliant upon newcomers seeking to learn and interact with older members.

Wenger (1998) developed this concept further to support an understanding for organisational knowledge and change. Wenger emphasises that COPs have always been an inherent part of organisations but have not been labelled or referenced.

Wenger (1998) shares social learning theory as his conceptual framework for understanding COPs. Wenger frames social learning theory within his assumptions about learning. These assumptions include a recognition that humans are social beings and learning provides meaningful experiences and engagement in their world. This engagement sits with respect for valued enterprises, such as commonly accepted norms and traditions. Wenger summarises his learning theory as social participation with integrated processes of knowing and learning.

Wenger states that the concept of communities of practice is an overarching term for the process of social participation which is characterized by interlinking components. These components form a conceptual framework for the process of learning.

The components of Wenger's conceptual framework include:

- Community – Learning as belonging – acknowledging that our actions are within the context of social configurations which support a sense of competence and worth;
- Identity - Learning as becoming – who we are changes as we learn with personal histories developing with the contexts of our communities;
- Experience - Learning as experience – talking about our ability individually and collectively to view our life and experience as meaningful
- Practice - Learning as doing – acknowledging the shared historical and social resources which support a mutual engagement in action.

This conceptual framework may support an understanding of how the themes discovered may represent interlinked processes which have supported the changes highlighted in themes 1-3. For example, The ELSAs highlighted school readiness as an influential context to their practice, which could be applied to the community aspect of the framework. The ELSAs also discussed the importance of observing change in order to value the contribution of ELSA, which may pertain to the experience aspect of this theory. Finally, the ELSAs shared practical tasks such as consent and feedback as supportive to the process of learning. Members of the school community mutually discussed and reflected upon the ELSA intervention, which may relate to the practice factor within this framework.

Learning as 'becoming' is one aspect of this theory which has been less explored within this research, as the focus has been on the wider school as opposed to the individual experiences and development for ELSAs or school staff. It may be suggested that the changes in staff understanding of EL may relate to becoming, with the development of new perceptions and practices.

Wenger et al (2002) applied his conceptual framework to organisations and developed a model which can be used to understand and intentionally develop a COP. The aim of this model was to organise learning processes and knowledge into a supportive approach which harnessed the interests and drives of groups to share knowledge, explore possibilities, and subsequently enhance outcomes. The COP model and approach has been used across a range of organisational contexts, including some studies within schools to support change and development.

Wenger (2002) summarises three key characteristics which identify a COP. These characteristics have been summarised below:

1. A shared domain of interest to focus the group.
2. A community in which the members of the COP interact and complete activities
3. The development of resources which support improvement in practice

In the context of this research some of the shared domains could be labelled as EL, supporting children and young people or enhancing learning. The domain labels may

vary across ELSA schools with a slightly different focus according to the shared language and aims of the community. It may be argued that when ELSAs interact with teachers, senior leaders, parents, EPs and other agencies which are part of their school community, a COP is formed. The ELSAs within this research shared how they experienced increased collaboration, planning, shared knowledge and feeding back about approaches in class to improve the engagement, behaviour and wellbeing of children and young people. Wenger (2004) stated that the resources developed within a COP could be anything which improves and supports practice. Within the context of this research resources may include a new classroom technique or tool, the presentations to staff to share awareness or the changing holistic perspective and collaboration between staff. It appears that the ELSAs within this research have unintentionally developed a COP. EPs may be well placed to support a planned COP when negotiating and inviting schools to participate in ELSA training. This may create a supportive network for the ELSAs when planning and implementing interventions, whilst also supporting wider change across the school over sustained time. This may refer to the change discussed by Wyn et al (2000) in which changes within one system can impact upon others.

The groups of ELSAs and EPs who train together, attend supervision and access the ELSA online resources may also share the characteristics of COP. This may refer to the community aspect which ELSAs highlighted within this research. Viewing ELSA as a COP in which professionals learn from each other, share the interest of EL and continue to develop shared resources and approaches as part of supervision may be a useful consideration for EPs and have further impacts upon practice.

3.8.6 Cultivating a Community of Practice

When exploring how to cultivate a COP, Wenger et al (2002) argue that the development of relationships and “evoking aliveness” (pg. 50) are key drivers to supporting a sustained impact with longevity and creativity. Wenger et al (2002) developed seven principles to support the development of effective COPs (Pg. 51-74). Wenger stated that these principles are not a recipe for success, but rather a supportive reflective framework to consider how to support a COP. The seven principles are summarised below. These principles are not intended to be viewed as chronological steps.

Design for Evolution

COPs must be enabled to evolve the ideas and contributions of the members. Wenger et al. (2002) suggest that in order to support this principle, regular meetings should be organised with a focus on supporting the cohesiveness of the group. Wenger et al (2002) add that attention should be paid to the meeting environments, ensuring members feel comfortable to share and build upon ideas.

Create a rhythm

Wenger et al. (2002) recommend that routines and structures are established which members can assimilate into their working week. Knowing what to regularly expect at meetings with familiar roles will likely enable members to feel comfortable and secure.

Combine familiarity with excitement

This principle relates to the balance between familiar routines which contribute to the rhythm of the group, along with excitement to reinvigorate the members. This may include the public events or interactions with outsiders. In the context of a school, this may also include presenting to senior leaders, sourcing new resources/funding, holding information events or sharing any developed resources or approaches with online forums to receive feedback from others.

Different levels of participation

This principle emphasises how a COP is likely to require a coordinator and leadership roles with a consistent core group of members. There may also be active members who contribute but attend less often, along with peripheral members and outsiders. Wenger et al. (2002) suggest that members can flow across these roles and contribute at points when their skills can be maximised or when they have more time to give. Wenger et al highlight that open reflection about these roles with an acknowledgement that they can change is likely to encourage the flow of participation and support longer term engagement.

Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives

Whilst the design for evolution stage focus' on in-group cohesiveness, outsider communication is also emphasised as a regular feature of a successful COP. Wenger

et al suggest that sharing the COP with outsiders regularly can foster new dialogue, fresh perspectives and a consideration of possibilities.

Developing public and private community spaces

This principle highlights the important balance between public and private spaces for a COP. Wenger et al. (2002) highlight that too many public events may reduce opportunities for group members to connect and openly discuss activities within the COP. However, too much focus on private events may result in a lack of focus with less opportunities to articulate to others the aims of the COP and the progress achieved.

Focus on value

Wenger et al. (2002) suggest that an articulation of values within the group can provide opportunities to unite the members with an overarching vision for the COP. Encouragement to explore, articulate and revisit values may enthuse members to feel a sense of purpose and meaning in the work achieved.

How can EPs support the cultivation of a COP?

In order to consider the how EPs can support COP, a likely first step would be to consider the level of involvement an EP can sustain. It may be unlikely that an EP can sustain regular core group attendance. However, they may attend for some initial meetings and reduce their involvement over time. Alternatively, an EP may remain in a peripheral/outsider role from the beginning and contribute indirectly. When exploring each of the principles in turn, many of the ways in which EPs could support COPs overlapped.

When initially embarking upon a COP, EPs may be in a position to share the cultivation principles with the initial coordinator of a COP and support a consideration of the appropriate environment, frequency of meetings and cohesiveness of the group. This may involve supporting early dialogue and initial meetings.

Many of the principles relate to maintaining a balance of appropriate activities and interactions in order to foster the ‘aliveness’ of a COP. For EPs who are positioned as peripheral outsiders, a supportive role may be to encourage outsider participation, attend public events and bring new or different perspectives. There may also be some

discreet pieces of involvement for an EP, such as support to articulate values, problem solving activities and offering a critical friend approach to tools or resources develop by a COP.

EPs may be in a position to offer review sessions with the core group of a COP, whereby members could share their experiences, consider the impact of the group and re-establish goals or values. In these instances, an EP may adopt a facilitator role and use psychological frameworks to scaffold reflection.

It may be that EPs come across COPs which have naturally evolved within schools and in which case, can offer reflective activities which highlight the COP and support the processes to become more conscious and possibly move to a planning phase to maximise the impact.

The seven principles shared by Wenger et al. (2002) emphasise the importance of connecting members of a COP with values, shared experiences and flexible participation. Reflection and open communication appear as key features to the principles, along with regular interactions with COP outsiders. It is likely that EPs can use their facilitative skills, consultation frameworks and developed relationships in schools to engage flexibly with COPs to plan, share perspectives, support dialogue and reflect.

3.9 Limitations

The changes shared by the ELSAs are from a single perspective, inviting the perspective of other members of a school, such as senior leaders, teachers or parents may have offered a greater insight into the changes within a school and offered some triangulation to the results.

As discussed within the ethics section of this research, ELSA interventions form part of support assistant's livelihoods and may contribute to how effective they are perceived by senior leaders and peers. This may have understandably resulted in socially desirable answers from the ELSAs. In addition, the ELSAs may hold bias towards their interventions due to their investment and effort. This further highlights the need to triangulate views from various members of the school community to gain a wider encompassing understanding of ELSA interventions.

As many of the themes discovered within the research relate to communication and relationships, it may be that the personal qualities of the ELSAs have played a role in these findings. Professionals who value collaboration and relationships may positively impact upon wider school communication and aim to share practice with peers.

Whilst this research has highlighted a range of changes discussed by the ELSAs, the amount or impact of these changes is likely to vary across the participants. This research cannot estimate the size or value that introducing ELSA has on the wider school.

This research took place during a time when UK policy was discussing the importance of mental health support and prevention in schools. This means that the changes shared may have been influenced by this agenda as well as the support from ELSA. This research may demonstrate how ELSAs can support mental health initiatives in schools and possibly collaborate with mental health leads or complement mental health interventions. This may be a possible further avenue for research.

3.10 Implications for EP practice

This research has highlighted how the introduction of ELSA training and intervention can support positive wider school change in relation to the themes developed. This may be a useful perspective which EPs can share with school leadership and ELSAs when discussing the potential benefits of implementing ELSA.

Themes 3-5 which explored what has supported ELSA implementation may highlight further considerations for EPs when delivering ELSA training and supervision. When engaging schools with ELSA training it may be supportive to explore the available resources, school climate and aims of school leadership before commencing with ELSA. The themes within this research may support EPs when discussing the benefits of ELSA training with schools. An understanding of ELSA as part of the wider school may enable school leaders to prepare and inform school staff.

The ELSAs shared that the support, resources and problem solving which came from being part of a community were a key aspect to supporting change within their schools. This may highlight the opportunity for EPs to reflect upon the group dynamics of their training and view cycles of ELSA training as a group. This may also impact upon the number of ELSAs chosen for each training group as well as making space within the training for ELSAs to discuss and share their views and experiences in order to unite the group.

Whilst Burton (The ELSA Network, 2020) emphasises the good practice guidelines surrounding ELSA such as those within the sub themes for theme 5, this research has further highlighted the additional benefits which come from consent, feedback and checking in as building blocks for building and maintaining relationships in the wider school.

Developing a COP may be an approach EPs can share prior to, or during training with ELSAs and Senior Leaders. EPs working within schools who have ELSAs may find a COP to be a beneficial project within a school which can bring together senior leadership, ELSAs and wider school staff.

EPs may support the cultivation of a COP after delivering training within schools to integrate and prolong new learning.

References

Abraham, M. (1954). Motivation and personality. *Nueva York: Harper & Row, Publishers*.

Ainsworth, M. (1978). The Bowlby-Ainsworth Attachment Theory. *Behavioral and brain sciences, 1*(3), 436-438.

Allen, K., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2016). What Schools Need to Know about Fostering School Belonging: a Meta-analysis. Educ Psychol Rev, 30, 1-34. *Educational Psychology Review, 30*, 1-34.

Balampanidou, K. (2019). *Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme: Child-centred approach, building trust, listening and valuing children's voices: A grounded theory analysis. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis.* University of Essex & Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust,

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Barker, H. (2017). *The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant Intervention: An Exploration from the Perspectives of Pupils and Parents, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis.* Newcastle University,
Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling power: Emotions and education*. New York: Psychology press.
Bombèr, L. M. (2011). *What about me?: Inclusive strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day*. Brighton: Worth Publishing.
Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. London: Sage.
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: Sage.
Brinkmann, S., & Tanggaard, L. (2010). Toward an epistemology of the hand. *Studies in philosophy and education, 29*(3), 243-257.
British Psychological Society. (2014). *Code of human research ethics*. Leicester British Psychological Society
Code of Ethics and Conduct, (2018).
Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. USA: Harvard University Press.
Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The Ecology of Developmental Processes. *Handbook of Child Psychology, 1*(5), 993-1028.
Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. Wiltshire: Sage.
Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2001). The nature of qualitative research. *Social research methods*, 365-399.
Burton, S. (1999). *ELSA Trainers' Manual*. Routledge.
Bywater, T., & Sharples, J. (2012). Effective evidence-based interventions for emotional well-being: Lessons for policy and practice. *Research papers in Education, 27*(4), 389-408.
Carter, M. A., & Dubois, L. (2010). Neighbourhoods and Child Adiposity: A Critical Appraisal of the Literature. *Health & place, 16*(3), 616-628.
Christenson, S. L., Carlson, C., & Valdez, C. R. (2002). Evidence-based interventions in school psychology: Opportunities, challenges, and cautions. *School Psychology Quarterly, 17*(4), 466.
Clarke, A. M., Bunting, B., & Barry, M. M. (2014). Evaluating the implementation of a school-based emotional well-being programme: a cluster randomized controlled trial of Zippy's Friends for children in disadvantaged primary schools. *Health education research, 29*(5), 786-798.
Claxton, G. (2005). *An Intelligent Look at Emotional Intelligence: a publication commissioned by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers*: Association of Teachers and Lecturers.
Department for Children, S. a. F. (2007). *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning for Secondary Schools*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications
Department for Education. (2017). Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper. In: Department of Health and Social Care.
Department for Education. (2018). *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*. London: DFE Publications

Department for Education and Skills. (2003). *What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing?* (1844780546). Nottingham: DfES Publications

Department, S. E. E. (2002). *Review of Educational Psychology Services in Scotland*. Edinburgh: SEED Publishing

Elias, M. J., Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Frey, K. S., Greenberg, M. T., Haynes, N. M., . . . Shriver, T. P. (1997). *Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators*. Virginia, USA: Ascd.

Engeström, Y. (2007). From Communities of Practice to Mycorrhizae. In J. Hughes, N. Jewson, & L. Unwin (Eds.), *Communities of practice: Critical perspectives* (pp. 41-54). London: Routledge.

EPPI-Centre. (2003). *Guidelines for Extracting Data and Quality Assessing Primary Studies in Educational Research (Vol.2)*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit.

Faupel, A. (2003). *Emotional Literacy: Assessment and Intervention: User's Guide*. London: NFER-NELSON.

Faupel, A., & Sharpe, P. (2003). *Promoting Emotional Literacy: Guidelines for Schools, Local Authorities and Health Services*. Southampton: Southampton City Council.

Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Gough, D. (2007). Weight of Evidence: A Framework for the Appraisal of the Quality and Relevance of Evidence. *Research papers in Education, 22*(2), 213-228.

Grahamslaw, L. (2010). *An evaluation of the Emotional Literary Support Assistant (ELSA) project: what is the impact of an ELSA project on support assistants' and children's self-efficacy beliefs. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis.* Newcastle University,

Gresham, F. M. (1989). Assessment of treatment integrity in school consultation and prereferral intervention. *School psychology review, 18*(1), 37-50.

Griffin, J., & Tyrrell, I. (2013). *Human givens: The new approach to emotional health and clear thinking*. Croydon: HG Publishing.

Grix, J. (2002). Introducing students to the generic terminology of social research. *Politics, 22*(3), 175-186.

Guinote, A. E., & Vescio, T. K. (2010). *The social psychology of power*. New York: Guilford Press.

Haddon, A., Goodman, H., Park, J., & Crick, R. D. (2005). Evaluating emotional literacy in schools: The development of the school emotional environment for learning survey. *Pastoral Care in Education, 23*(4), 5-16.

Helliwell, J. F., & Putnam, R. D. (2007). Education and social capital. *Eastern Economic Journal, 33*(1).

Hills, R. (2016). An evaluation of the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) project from the perspectives of primary school children. *Educational and child Psychology, 33*(4), 50-65.

Humphrey, N., Barlow, A., Wigelsworth, M., Lendrum, A., Pert, K., Joyce, C., . . . Woods, K. (2016). A cluster randomized controlled trial of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum. *Journal of school psychology, 58*, 73-89.

Humphrey, N., Kalambouka, A., Wigelsworth, M., Lendrum, A., Lennie, C., & Farrell, P. (2010). New Beginnings: Evaluation of a short social–emotional

intervention for primary-aged children. *Educational psychology, 30*(5), 513-532.
Jüni, P., Witschi, A., Bloch, R., & Egger, M. (1999). The hazards of scoring the quality of clinical trials for meta-analysis. *Jama, 282*(11), 1054-1060.
Kiernan, K. E., & Mensah, F. K. (2011). Poverty, family resources and children's early educational attainment: the mediating role of parenting. *British educational research journal, 37*(2), 317-336.
Knowler, C., & Frederickson, N. (2013). Effects of an emotional literacy intervention for students identified with bullying behaviour. *Educational psychology, 33*(7), 862-883.
Kratochwill, T. R., & Stoiber, K. C. (2000). Empirically supported interventions and school psychology: Conceptual and practice issues—Part II. *School Psychology Quarterly, 15*(2), 233-253.
Krause, N., Blackwell, L., & Claridge, S. (2020). An exploration of the impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme on wellbeing from the perspective of pupils. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 36*(1), 17-31.
Kristjánsson, K. (2012). *Aristotle, emotions, and education*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
Lipsey, M. W., & Cordray, D. S. (2000). Evaluation methods for social intervention. *Annual review of psychology, 51*(1), 345-375.
Mann, D. (2014). *A mixed methods evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) project, Unpublished doctoral thesis.* University of Nottingham,
Mashburn, A. J., & Pianta, R. C. (2006). Social relationships and school readiness. *Early education and development, 17*(1), 151-176.
Matthews, B. (2005). *Engaging Education: Developing Emotional Literacy, Equity And Coeducation*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw Hill Education.
Matthews, B., & Snowden, E. (2007). Making Science Lessons Engaging, More Popular, and Equitable through Emotional Literacy. *Science Education Review, 6*(3), 1-16.
McEwen, S. (2019). The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme: ELSAs' and children's experiences. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 35*(3), 289-306.
McLachlan, C. J., & Garcia, R. J. (2015). Philosophy in practice? Doctoral struggles with ontology and subjectivity in qualitative interviewing. *Management Learning, 46*(2), 195-210. doi:10.1177/1350507615574634
McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of community psychology, 14*(1), 6-23.
Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2012). *Motivational Interviewing: Helping people change*. New York: Guildford Press.
Mosely, J. (1996). Quality circle time. *Cambridge: LDA*.
Noble, T., & McGrath, H. (Eds.). (2012). *Well-being and resilience in young people and the role of positive relationships*. The Hague, Netherlands: Springer.
Normand, S.-L. T., Sykora, K., Li, P., Mamdani, M., Rochon, P. A., & Anderson, G. M. (2005). Readers guide to critical appraisal of cohort studies: 3. Analytical strategies to reduce confounding. *British Medical Journal, 330*(7498), 1021-1023.
O'Hara, D. (2011). The impact of peer mentoring on pupils' emotional literacy competencies. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 27*(3), 271-291.

Osborne, C., & Burton, S. (2014). Emotional Literacy Support Assistants' views on supervision provided by educational psychologists: what EPs can learn from group supervision. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 30*(2), 139-155.
Park, J., Haddon, A., & Goodman, H. (2012). *The emotional literacy handbook: A guide for schools*. London: Routledge.
Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2008). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (2008). *The psychology of the child*. New York: Basic books.
Pickering, L., Lambeth, J., & Woodcock, C. (2019). The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Programme: Can you develop an evidence base for an adaptive intervention? *DECP Debate, 170*, 17-22.
Public Health England. (2015). *Promoting Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing*.
Rees, C. (2016). *The impact of emotional literacy support assistant training on teaching assistants' own trait-emotional intelligence and self-efficacy and their perceptions in relation to their future role, unpublished doctoral thesis.* Cardiff University,
Roffey, S. (2008). Emotional literacy and the ecology of school wellbeing. *Educational and child Psychology, 25*(2), 29-39.
Roffey, S. (2015). Becoming an agent of change for school and student well-being. *Educational & Child Psychology, 32*(1), 21-30.
Roffey, S., Williams, A., Greig, A., & MacKay, T. (2016). Mental health and wellbeing in schools: Concerns, challenges and opportunities. *Educational and child Psychology, 33*(4), 5-7.
Scott, D. (2005). Critical Realism and Empirical Research Methods in Education. *Journal of Philosophy of education, 39 (4)*, 633-646.
Sedgwick, L. (2013). *An evaluation of the effectiveness of the R time intervention and the circle time intervention in promoting children's emotional literacy and mental well-being, unpublished doctoral thesis.* University of Nottingham,
Sharp, P. (2000). Promoting emotional literacy: emotional literacy improves and increases your life chances. *Pastoral Care in Education, 18*(3), 8-10.
Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., & Osborn, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis*. Wiltshire: Sage.
Steiner, C. (1984). Emotional literacy. *Transactional Analysis Journal, 14*(3), 162-173.
Steiner, C., & Perry, P. (1997). *Achieving emotional literacy*: Simon & Schuster Audio.
Sulkowski, M., Demaray, M., & Lazzarus, P. (2012). Connecting students to school to support their emotional wellbeing and academic success. *NASP Communique, 40*(7), 6-8.
Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual review of psychology, 33*(1), 1-39.
Tew, M. (2007). *School effectiveness: Supporting student success through emotional literacy*: Sage.
The ELSA Network. (2020). Code of Practice. Retrieved from https://www.elsanetwork.org/about/code-of-practice/
Thorndike, R. L. (1982). *Applied psychometrics*: Houghton Mifflin.

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus Group Interviews in Educational Psychology*. London, UK: Sage Publications Inc.
Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. *Readings on the development of children, 23*(3), 34-41.
Weare, K. (2000). *Promoting mental, emotional, and social health: A whole school approach*. New York: Routledge.
Weare, K. (2010). Mental health and social and emotional learning: Evidence, principles, tensions, balances. *Advances in school mental health promotion, 3*(1), 5-17.
Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). *Social and emotional learning: Past, present, and future*. New York: Guildford Press.
Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems thinker, 9*(5), 2-3.
Wenger, E., & Lave, J. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, USA: Harvard Business Review.
Wigelsworth, M., Humphrey, N., Kalambouka, A., & Lendrum, A. (2010). A review of key issues in the measurement of children's social and emotional skills. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 26*(2), 173-186.
Wilding, L., & Claridge, S. (2016). The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme: parental perceptions of its impact in school and at home. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 32*(2), 180-196.
Wilkins, C. (2015). Education reform in England: Quality and equity in the performative school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19*(11), 1143-1160.
Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw Hill.
Wood, L. A., & Kroger, R. O. (2000). *Doing discourse analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text*. USA: Sage.
Wyn, J., Cahill, H., Holdsworth, R., Rowling, L., & Carson, S. (2000). MindMatters, a whole-school approach promoting mental health and wellbeing. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 34*(4), 594-601.

Appendix 1: Integrated Weight of Evidence Framework

WOE A – Generic non review specific judgement about coherence and integrity of the evidence						
WOE/ EPPI Question	**Humphrey et al (2016)**	**Clarke, Bunting and Barry (2014)**	**Knowler & Frederickson (2013)**	**O'Hara (2011)**	**Sedgwick (2013)**	**Humphrey et al (2010)**
Transparency – Clarity of purpose	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the study informed by, or linked to an existing body of empirical and/or theoretical research?	Yes. A range of empirical research referred to, very little theoretical literature explored.	Yes – linked to existing body of literature about the intervention and social emotional learning	Yes, reference to other interventions and emotional intelligence theory	Yes clear summary and discussion of prior literature exploring EL and peer mentoring	Yes, emotional literacy, systematic literature review, previous literature cited indepth.	Yes, research and theory explored and discussed
Is the context of the study adequately described?	Commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research,	Coordinated by the health service executive (HSE) in Ireland in partnership with the department of education and skills.	No specific discussion, occasional mention of university ethics committee and a suburban school district	Following on from a pilot from the mentoring and befriending foundation.	Yes – doctoral thesis with schools who trade with EP service	Yes – previously commissioned by the DFES to conduct research which formed basis of rationale.
Are the aims of the study accurately reported?	Yes, to explore PATHS in the uk, with older children and with 'at risk' children	Aim to assess effectiveness stated in abstract. No aims section or clear distinction in body of text.	Yes – clear aims to explore a change in EL and to see how this influences bullying behaviour	Clear aims and hypothesis stated	Yes, to explore class interventions and explore outcomes directly related to EL	Yes, clearly stated with a rationale
Were students or parents consulted in the design?	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Accessibility – Is it understandable?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Specificity – Clear method	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Is there adequate description of the methods used to collect data?	Yes, detailed with procedure and background to measures	Yes, clear procedure and flow diagram	Yes, procedure and method section	Yes	Yes, detailed with procedure and reference to other use of measures	Yes, clear procedure for data collection and for intervention
Is the study replicable from this report?	Yes, procedure and flow diagram	Yes	Yes	Somewhat – a 'matching questionnaire' was used but not referenced or in the appendix.	Yes – detailed procedure	Yes
Is there an adequate description of the methods of data analysis?	Yes- with reference to use in other studies and theoretical background	Yes clear explanation of different analysis methods	Yes	Yes clearly described methods with procedure table	Yes – with reference to theory and use in other studies.	Yes
Is there an adequate description of the sample used in the study and how the sample was identified and recruited?	Yes- demographics provided for children and schools as well as schools which were discounted	Table reporting gender, school location and class. Randomised control trial.	Yes	Somewhat, description of how they were recruited, all in year 7, no demographics	Participants and school demographics provided and methods of recruitment.	Adequate description of participants. Unclear how some were recruited, based on teachers perception of who needed "extra support".
WOE A Overall Rating	High	High	High	Medium	High	Medium

WOE B: Review specific judgement about the appropriateness of this evidence for answering your review questions						
WOE/Question	**Humphrey et al (2016)**	**Clarke, Bunting and Barry (2014)**	**Knowler & Frederickson(2013)**	**O'Hara (2011)**	**Sedgwick (2013)**	**Humphrey et al (2010)**
Purposivity – Fit for purpose method	Yes	**Yes**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do the authors avoid selective reporting bias? (e.g. do they report on all variables they aimed to study as specified in their aims/research questions?)	Reported on all variables and reported limitations.	Yes report on all variables	All variables reported	Report on all variables and relate to aims	All variables reported according to aims	Yes , report on all variables and relate back to aims.
Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the reliability of data collection methods and tools?	Yes, reliability reported and discussed.	Yes, Reliability reported	Yes – reliability reported	Yes, reliability reported and discussed	Yes, reliability reported and discussed	Yes, reliability reported
Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity of data collection tools and methods?	Yes, factorial and convergent validity.	Yes, validity reported	No Validity reported	Yes, validity reported and discussed	Yes, validity reported and discussed	Yes, validity reported and discussed
Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity of data analysis?	Reference to prior research, pvalues, effect sizes.	Yes, randomised controlled trial, p values and effect sizes	Yes P values, use of comparison groups	Use of P values and comparison with control group	P Values, effect sizes and comparison with control group.	P values, effect sizes and comparison group
To what extent are the research design and methods employed able to rule out any other sources of error/bias which would lead to alternative explanations for the findings of the study?	Randomized controlled trial, within groups comparison. Limitations discussed.	Randomised controlled trial, limitations discussed, limitations discussed.	Use of control group, limitations discussed. Use of child and teacher ratings for comparison. No mention of prior relationships with schools. Participants	Use of control group, limitations discussed, lots of variables difficult to control, such as mentoring relationship, outside context etc.	Control groups, and within subjects. Use of self-report measures without triangulation. Acknowledged that the sample was schools researcher	Use of a comparison group, intervention delivery variables difficult to control. Discussion of limitations.

			were randomly assigned.		already worked with.	
How generalizable are the results of the study?	American intervention adapted by 'Barnados' charity to UK norms. Large diverse sample. Assessed for primary and secondary effects.	Larger sample Limited variation of participant demographics.	Small sample size with children between 8-9 years old, from a small numbers of schools in the same locality.	Small sample size of pupils in one year group and all attended the same school.	Small sample, little information regarding teaching variations. One single year group of participants.	Large sample size and across 37 schools. Limited variation is participant demographics.
WOE B Overall Rating	High	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Medium

WOE C and D – Review specific judgement about the relevance of the focus of the evidence for the review question.						
WOE/ Questions	**Humphrey et al (2016)**	**Clarke, Bunting and Barry (2014)**	**Knowler & Frederickson(2013)**	**O'Hara (2011)**	**Sedgwick (2013)**	**Humphrey et al (2010)**
Utility – Does it provide relevant answers?	Yes, results are linked to hypothesis and aims	Somewhat, clear aims would have supported this.	Yes, results and discussion are structured to explore each aims.	Yes, results and discussion are linked to aims	Yes, results are linked to aims and discussed	
Have sufficient attempts been made to justify the conclusions drawn?	Clear conclusions with links to prior research and wider context discussed.	Discussion of conclusions and reference to statistics. No reference to existing or prior research.	Conclusions triangulated with other research or journals. Considered results critically.	No, very little prior research or theory drawn upon in discussion of conclusions.	Clear conclusions with reference to other research and acknowledgement of limitations.	
Propriety – Is it legal and ethical?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Are there ethical concerns about the way the study was done?	No, Ethical approval gained from Manchester University	No, Ethical approval from National university of Ireland Galway	No. Ethical approval gained from university – does not state which university.	No, consent gained from participants, teachers and parents.	No Ethical concerns apparent. Ethical approval gained from Nottingham University.	
WOE D Overall Rating	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	

Appendix 2: Critical appraisal of methodology

Methodological quality

All studies provide clear aims and/or hypotheses for the studies; they also clearly link their findings back to their aims or hypothesis when reporting results. The majority of the papers provide a detailed procedure with a clear chronology and detailed steps. These studies would likely be replicable.

As the studies were evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention, the chosen method of implementing an intervention and reviewing the impact logically appeared to be the most suitable method chosen. This was not explicitly discussed within the papers, no alternative approaches to evaluating an intervention were considered. The rationales of the papers focussed more on why they had selected their intervention or chosen aims, as opposed to their method.

Two of the studies (Clarke, Bunting and Barry (2014); Humphrey et al 2016) were Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT's); this meant that participants were randomly assigned to intervention or control groups in order to reduce the effects of bias from the researchers. Knowler and Frederickson (2013), O'Hara (2011) and Sedgwick (2013) acknowledged the desirability to randomly allocate participants. Due the sample collection procedures they were unable randomly allocate. It is important to note that the two randomised control trials involved whole class interventions, which meant randomising participants was simpler to achieve as they were able to randomise by class.

All studies explored how comparable the control and intervention groups were in terms of basic demographic information, no significant differences between the groups were identified. Knowler and Frederickson (2013); Humphrey et al (2016) and Sedgwick, (2013) collected data as to who received free school meals, although the reasoning behind this decision was not clearly stated. It is unclear whether a difference in EL for those with free school meals was anticipated, this may relate back to the conceptualisation of EL as well as research which discusses how poverty may have a direct impact on the development of children, including their social emotional skills and school readiness (Kiernan & Mensah, 2011).

Participants

The rationale for which children were selected to be participants as well as any information collected at the pre stage of the study varied. Humphrey et al (2010) requested that schools support the allocation of participants by indicating which pupils may have required "extra support" when taking part in the intervention. How the teachers came to conclusions about the children was unclear. Schools which had existing relationships with educational psychology services (Knowler and Frederickson, 2013; O'Hara; 2011 and Sedgwick, 2013) may have inputted a greater investment in the EL support they provide. With prior support from EPs, schools may have been more 'ready' to support students or may have school ecologies which support EL. Whilst this would not be a reason to exclude schools, it could be

highlighted when reporting bias or considering wider factors which may be supporting the success of EL interventions.

Studies did not appear to explore their schools prior understanding of EL, which may have supported a further understanding of the scores obtained in context. This may relate to the conceptualisation of EL, in which school context may not have been valued as a key contributor to EL development. Many of the studies were class or school interventions, suggesting they may not have valued the role of school context in development. The absence of this discussion within the primary study papers does not necessarily mean that the researchers were not aware of this, as they are bound by time constraints and word counts. This may have been information the researchers were unable to discuss in a thorough manner.

Data collection methods

All studies chose quantitative assessment tools as pre and post measures, the rationale for adopting this approach was broadly described as a way to evaluate effectiveness over a period of time.

The Emotional Literacy Assessment and Intervention (ELAI) (Faupel, 2003) tool was used across five out of six of the studies. The rationale for the use of this tool was clearly defined by all studies, aiming to measure 5 domains of EL and clearly related to their aims. All studies reported the validity and reliability statistics from Faupel (2003) as well as measuring their own internal reliability and consistency in relation to this assessment. Humphrey et al (2016) used one other measure, which was reported to have acceptable reliability and validity and in a similar manner, relied upon Likert scale reporting from pupils, teachers and parents.

Bias

When considering potential researcher bias, the researchers were not affiliated with any organisations which may have resulted in a conflict of interests. Clarke et al (2014) were commissioned by the Health promotion service. Humphrey et al (2010) were commissioned by the department for children and families. These commissioners would likely be neutral parties and were not involved in creating the intervention explored. Knowler and Frederickson (2013), Sedgwick (2013) and O'Hara (2011) mention prior involvement with schools or come from Educational Psychology services. This may imply a desire for these interventions to be successful due to positive relationships with schools. Whilst this may have impacted on results, opportunity sampling may be the only resource available to researchers at the time of the study.

All studies gathered information from self-report or likert ratings from teachers, parents or the children involved in the study. All studies acknowledged the potential bias which can be inherent in such results. Some bias was cited as potentially coming from the teachers who are invested in the intervention or children answering in a socially desirable way. Humphrey (2010) attempted to limit some of this bias through triangulation between parent, teacher and children ratings. This led to a disparity between results.

Attrition rates were reported by some of the studies, none of which were deemed high enough to have an impact upon the bias of the study. Sedgwick (2013) noted that for the circle time intervention, 14 out of 28 pupils did not consent to the collection of data, which may have impacted upon the outcomes of this study.

Petticrew and Roberts (2006) indicate that blinding is important for quantitative studies, particularly for RCT's. All studies had control groups in other schools, meaning the control groups were unknown to the intervention groups. It would be challenging for the researchers or those involved in delivering the intervention to be blinded, as they required training and the intervention being delivered. Although a placebo intervention may have been one option, this would involve a great deal of additional time and resource.

Table 19 below highlights some of the key factors which was shared by researchers as having a potential impact upon results. These factors appeared to be common and typical threats to bias that occur in studies, for this reason I chose to focus on more unique aspects of the studies as these may offer a richer understanding of effectiveness.

Table 19

Key factors which may influence the bias within studies

- All studies were not affiliated with organisations which may have a conflict of interest
- Two of the studies (Knowler and Frederickson, 2013; O'Hara, 2011) had established relationships with schools prior to the research being undertaken.
- All studies stated that self-report or likert ratings may have produced social desirable responses.
- All studies employed control groups to serve as a comparison to intervention effects
- Blinding was unrealistic to achieve for these studies, as researchers were required to meet and liaise with teachers for training.
- A placebo intervention was a further unrealistic option, due to the additional time and resource it would require.

Appendix 3: Critical Appraisal of Interventions Framework

Intervention Appraisal Questions with example information from Clarke et al (2014)	
Details of intervention activities: what the intervention consists of, where, how, how often, and by whom it is delivered, and for how long	24 sessions implemented over 1 year, once a week by teachers. Centred around six illustrated stories about a group of children and their families. Varied games, drawings, role plays, discussions, and activities to support reflection Targeted to “disadvantaged schools” as these pupils are more ‘at risk’ within the area of wellbeing due to negative life events impacting on coping skills.
Resources: this includes time, money, people, information, technology, and other assets needed to conduct the intervention	Cost for materials, unclear if training is at a cost. No technology required. Time required to attend training and to implement within school timetable.
Staffing and where appropriate to the intervention, the level of staff skill	Two-day training workshop with ongoing support throughout the study (this did not appear to be part of the intervention training package)
Context: this may include the political, community, organizational, and other contexts	Discusses a broader agenda within the UK to support social and emotional learning in school. Considered to be a universal programme, not targeted to particular needs.
The stage of development: is it a mature, well-developed intervention, which perhaps has been implemented elsewhere?	Mature intervention which discusses theory around the interaction between negative life events, coping skills and wellbeing. Used across 27 countries with prior research conducted.
Sustainability: including any measures taken to ensure retention of people in the study	Considered to be a class or small group approach, Sessions are suggested as replacements for subjects such as a PSHE curriculum. Delivered over a year, may be challenges for teachers to maintain.
Whether any adverse or negative effects were observed or reported by researchers or participants	None reported
How is the intervention is theorized to bring about change in the desired outcome –by what steps, or by what theorized causal pathway?	Aims to improve “coping skills”, reflecting on different ways to cope. Change occurs through discussion, reflection, modelling and direct teaching from adults. Children are supported to identify, and practice coping skills.

Appendix 4: Information, Consent and Debrief forms.

Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in research entitled: Exploring the impact of an Emotional Literacy intervention on the wider school from the perspective of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs).

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

- The research is conducted by Helen Robertson, Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist, as part of her DAppEdPsy studies at Newcastle University.

- This research is supervised by Billy Peters and Dr Fiona Boyd from the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences at Newcastle University.

- The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of ELSA interventions when in the wider school environment, from the perspective of ELSAs.

- If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in a focus group. This will involve a group of ELSA's who are asked to discuss and share together their experiences of ELSA interventions. The researcher will provide some broad questions to use as a prompt if required.

- Your participation in this research will take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

- The focus group will be digitally audio recorded and any responses you share will be not be identifiable at any time and kept confidential. All data will be stored with a securely encrypted and password protected memory stick.

- All data recorded will be deleted following completion of the research

- In any research report that may be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you individually or your school. There will be no way to connect your name to your responses at any time during or after the research.

You are free to decide whether you would like to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time during the data collection period (Before 1st January 2020).

If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding this research, please contact Helen Robertson direct at h.e.robertson2@newcastle.ac.uk by telephone at 0191 208 6569. Alternatively, please contact Billy Peters at billy.peters@newcastle.ac.uk or Dr Fiona Boyd at Fiona.Boyd@newcastle.ac.uk.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences Ethics Committee at Newcastle University (date of approval: 21st May 2019)

Participant Declaration of Informed Consent

Please read the following statements before signing to declare your informed consent for taking part in the research.

- I agree to participate in this research, which is a focus group, with the purpose of researching the impact of ELSA intervention on children or young people and the school environment.
- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the information provided.
- I have been informed that I may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the research without penalty of any kind.
- I have been informed that the focus group will be digitally audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher for analysis.
- I have been informed that my responses will be kept confidential and secure, and that I will not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.
- I have been informed that the investigator will answer any questions regarding the research and its procedures before, during or after the research has taken place.
- I will be provided with a copy of this form for my records.

The researcher's name is Helen Robertson and can be contacted via email at H.e.robertson2@newcastle.ac.uk or by telephone on 0191 208 6569. Alternatively, please contact Billy Peters at billy.peters@newcastle.ac.uk or Dr Fiona Boyd at Fiona.Boyd@newcastle.ac.uk.

.

Participant Name (please print):

Participant Signature:

Date:

Any concerns about this study should be addressed to the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences Ethics Committee, Newcastle University at ecls.researchteam@newcastle.ac.uk

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant and secured his or her consent.

Name of Researcher:

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Senior Leader Information Sheet

Your school ELSA has been invited to take part in research entitled: Exploring the impact of an Emotional Literacy intervention on the wider school from the perspective of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs).

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to support this research.

- The research is conducted by Helen Robertson, Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist, as part of her DAppEdPsy studies at Newcastle University.

- This research is supervised by Billy Peters and Fiona Boyd from the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences at Newcastle University.

- The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of ELSA interventions when supporting the wider school, from the perspective of ELSA's.

- ELSA's will be asked to participate in a focus group. This will involve a group of ELSA's who are asked to discuss and share together their experiences of ELSA interventions. The researcher will provide some broad questions to use as a prompt if required.

- ELSA's will be approached to provide their own consent, they will be under no obligation to take part in the research.

- Participation in this research will take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

- The focus group will be digitally audio recorded and any responses shared will be not be identifiable at any time and kept confidential. All data will be stored with a securely encrypted and password protected memory stick.

- In any research report that may be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify individuals or schools. There will be no way to connect any names or settings to responses at any time during or after the research.

If an ELSA decides to participate, they are free to withdraw at any time during the data collection period (Before 1st January 2020).

If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding this research, please contact Helen Robertson direct at h.e.robertson2@newcastle.ac.uk by telephone at 0191 208 6569. Alternatively, please contact Billy Peters at billy.peters@newcastle.ac.uk or Dr Fiona Boyd at Fiona.Boyd@newcastle.ac.uk.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences Ethics Committee at Newcastle University (date of approval: 21st May 2019).

Senior Leader Declaration of Informed Consent

Please read the following statements before signing to declare your informed consent for taking part in the research.

- I agree to release our school ELSA to participate in this research, providing it is arranged at a suitable date and time.
- I understand that separate consent will be obtained from the school ELSA, they are not obligated to take part.
- I understand that this research is a focus group, with the purpose of exploring ELSA interventions and any changes experienced within the wider school environment.
- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the information provided.
- I have been informed that the focus group will be digitally audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher for analysis.
- I have been informed that responses will be kept confidential and secure, and that individuals will not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.
- I have been informed that the investigator will answer any questions regarding the research and its procedures before, during or after the research has taken place.
- I will be provided with a copy of this form for my records.

The researcher's name is Helen Robertson and can be contacted via email at H.e.robertson2@newcastle.ac.uk or by telephone on 0191 208 6569. Alternatively, please contact Billy Peters at billy.peters@newcastle.ac.uk or Dr Fiona Boyd at Fiona.Boyd@newcastle.ac.uk.

Name (please print):

School role (e.g SENCO, Headteacher):

Signature:

Date:

FOR RESEARCHER
I certify that I have presented information to the participant and secured his or her consent.

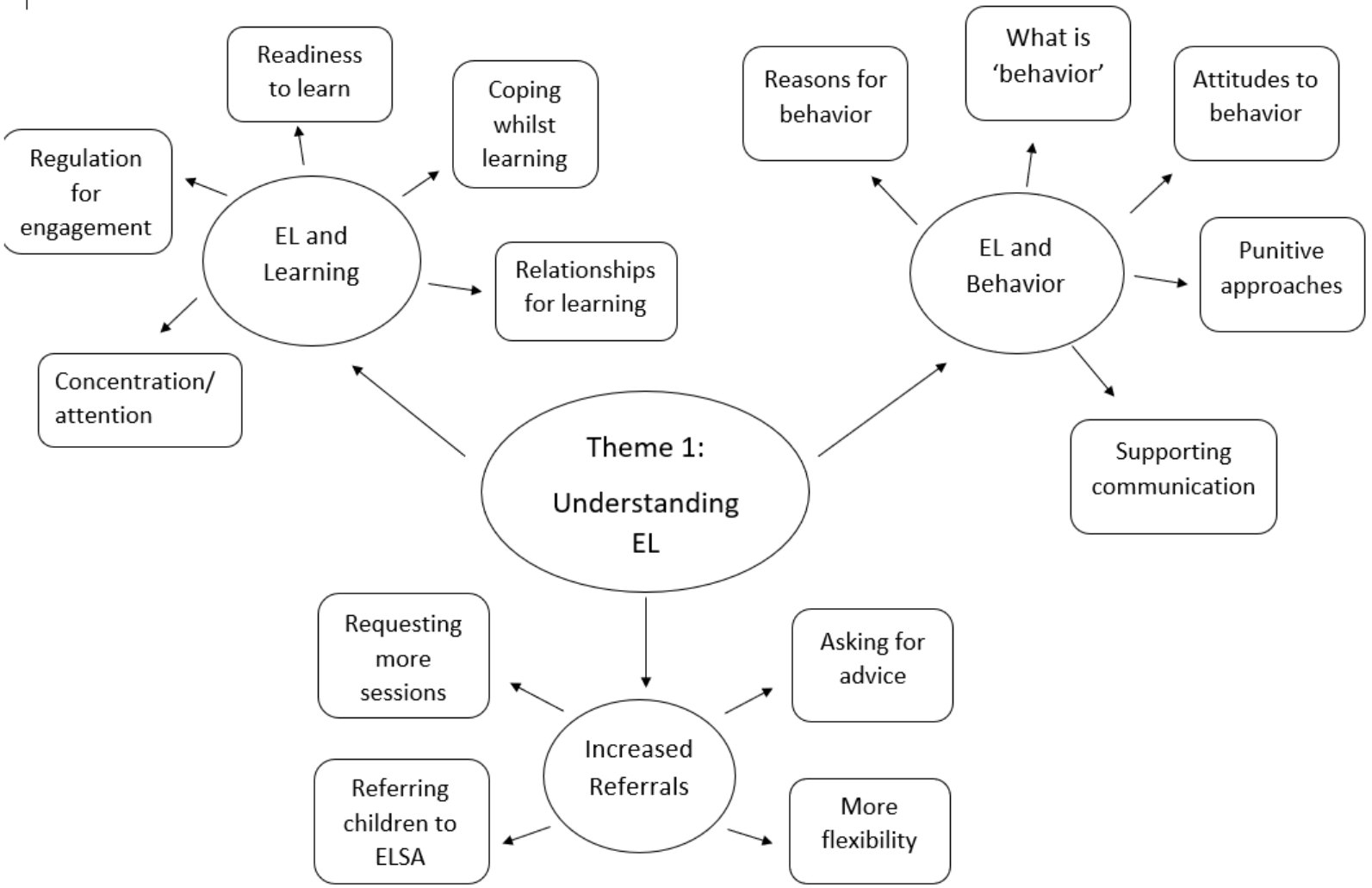
Name of Researcher:

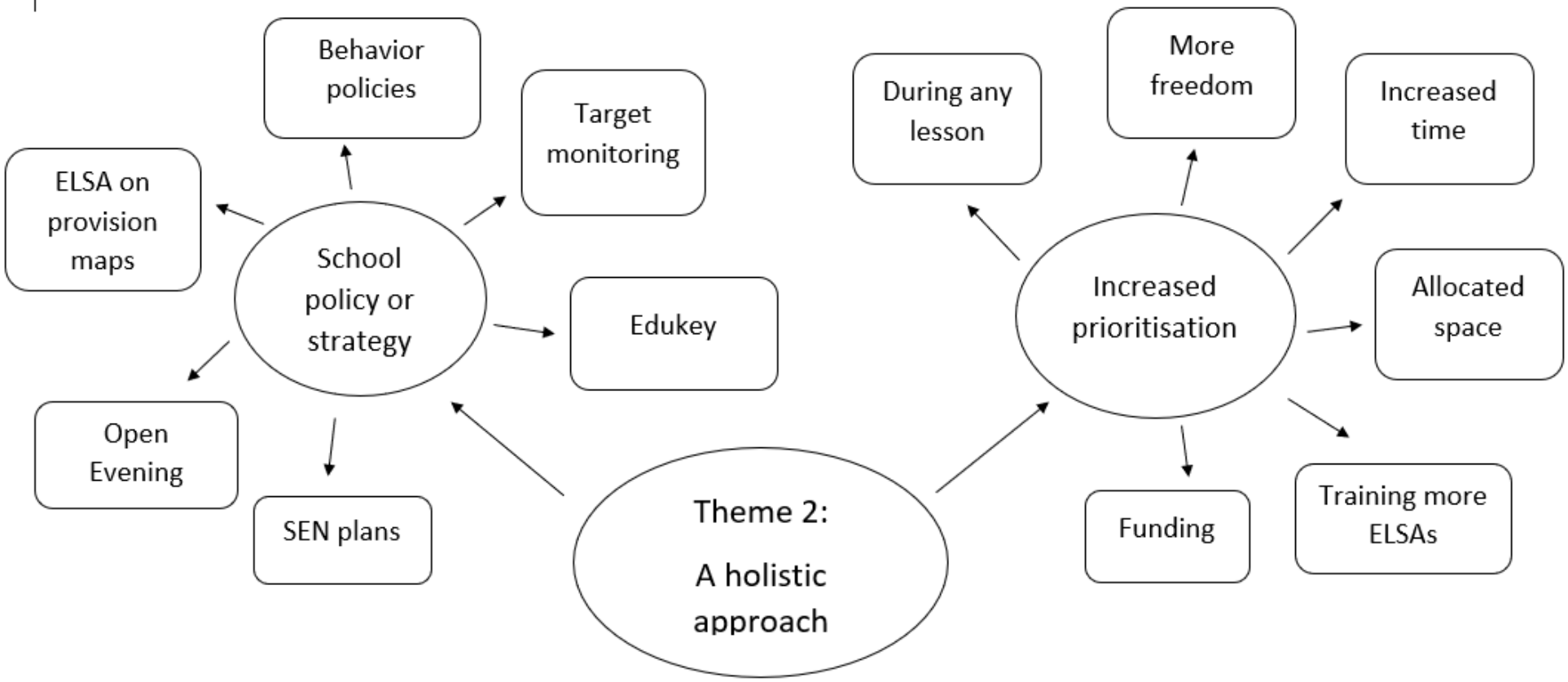
Signature of Researcher:

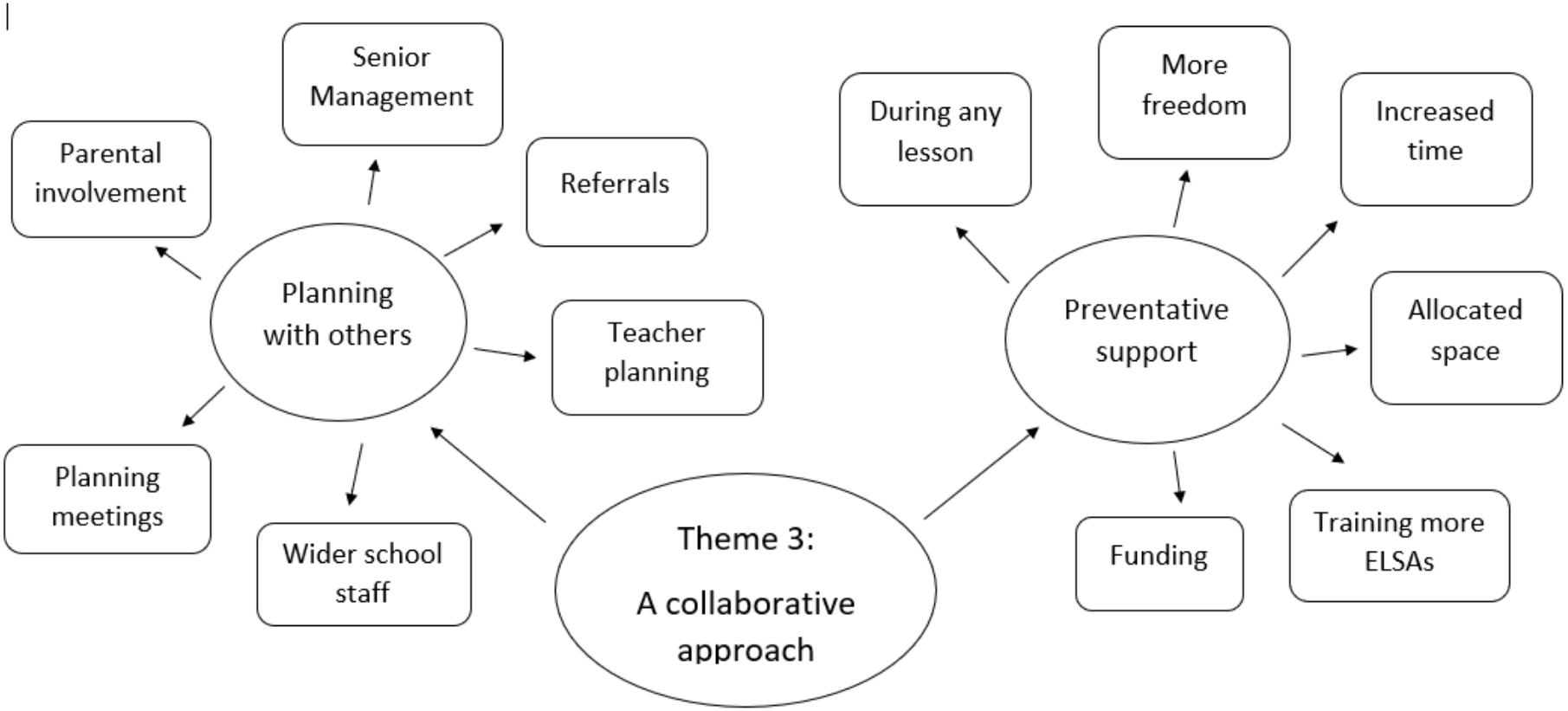
Date:

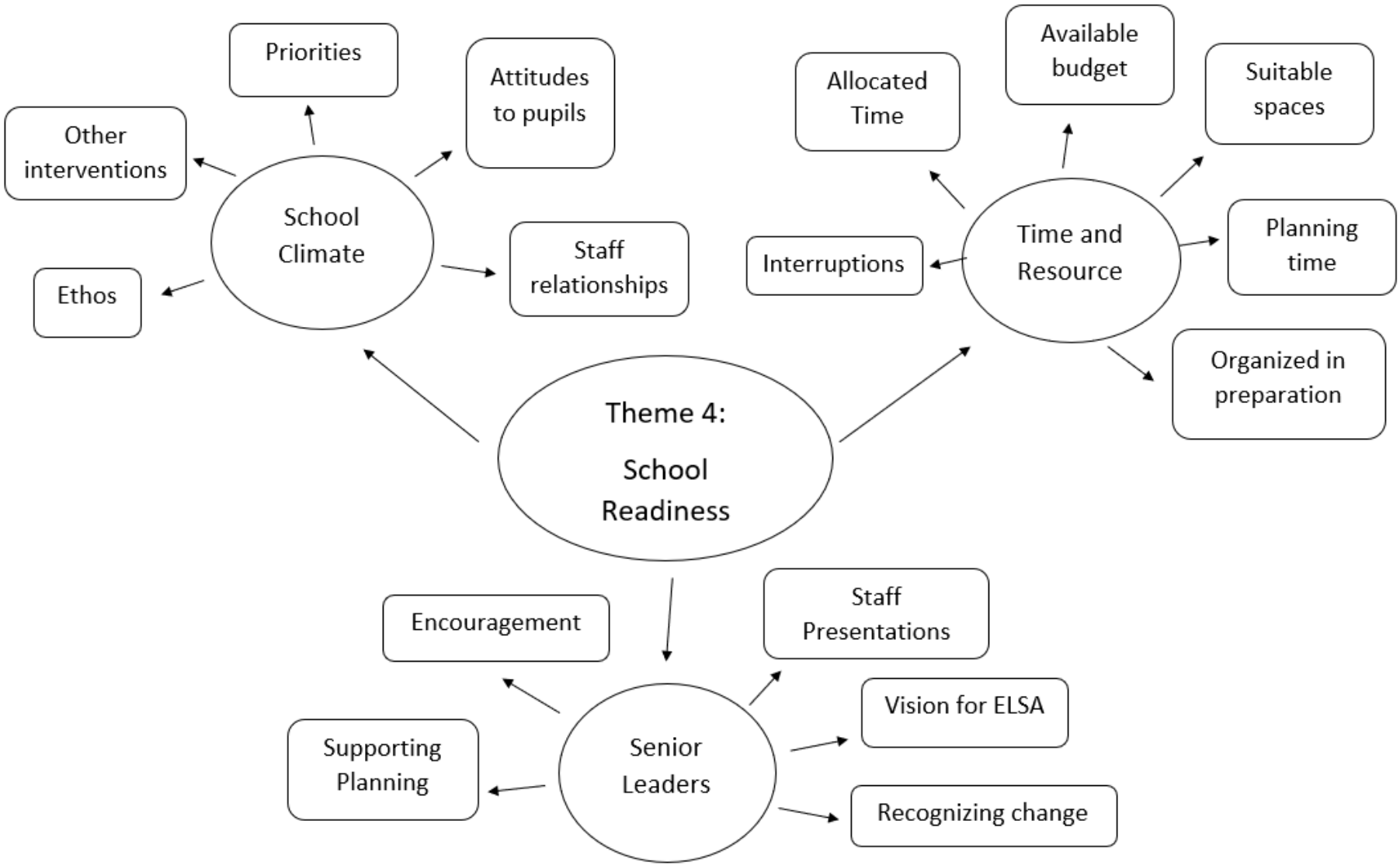
Any concerns about this research should be addressed to the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences Ethics Committee, Newcastle University at ecls.researchteam@newcastle.ac.uk

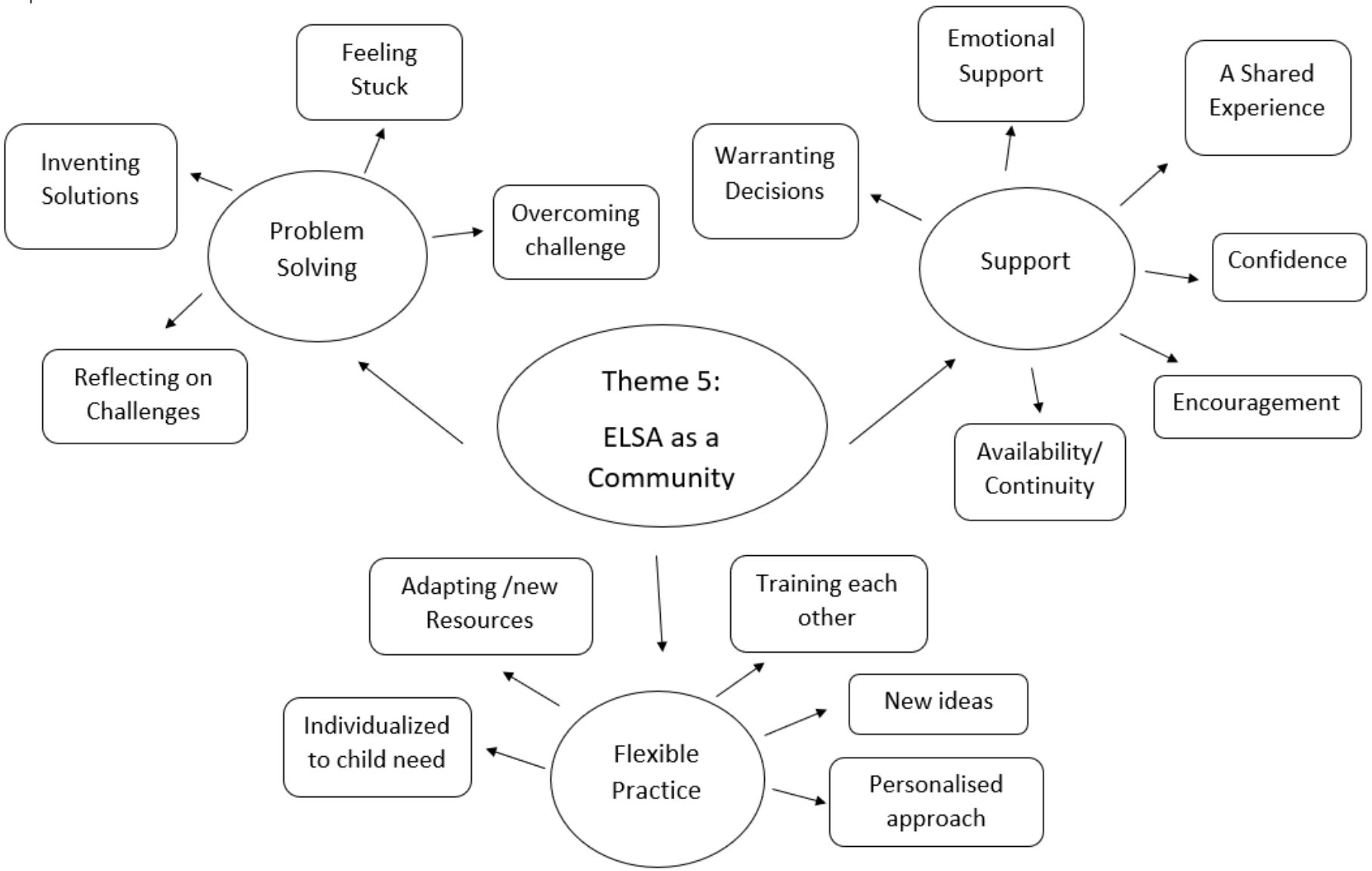
Appendix 5: Thematic Maps

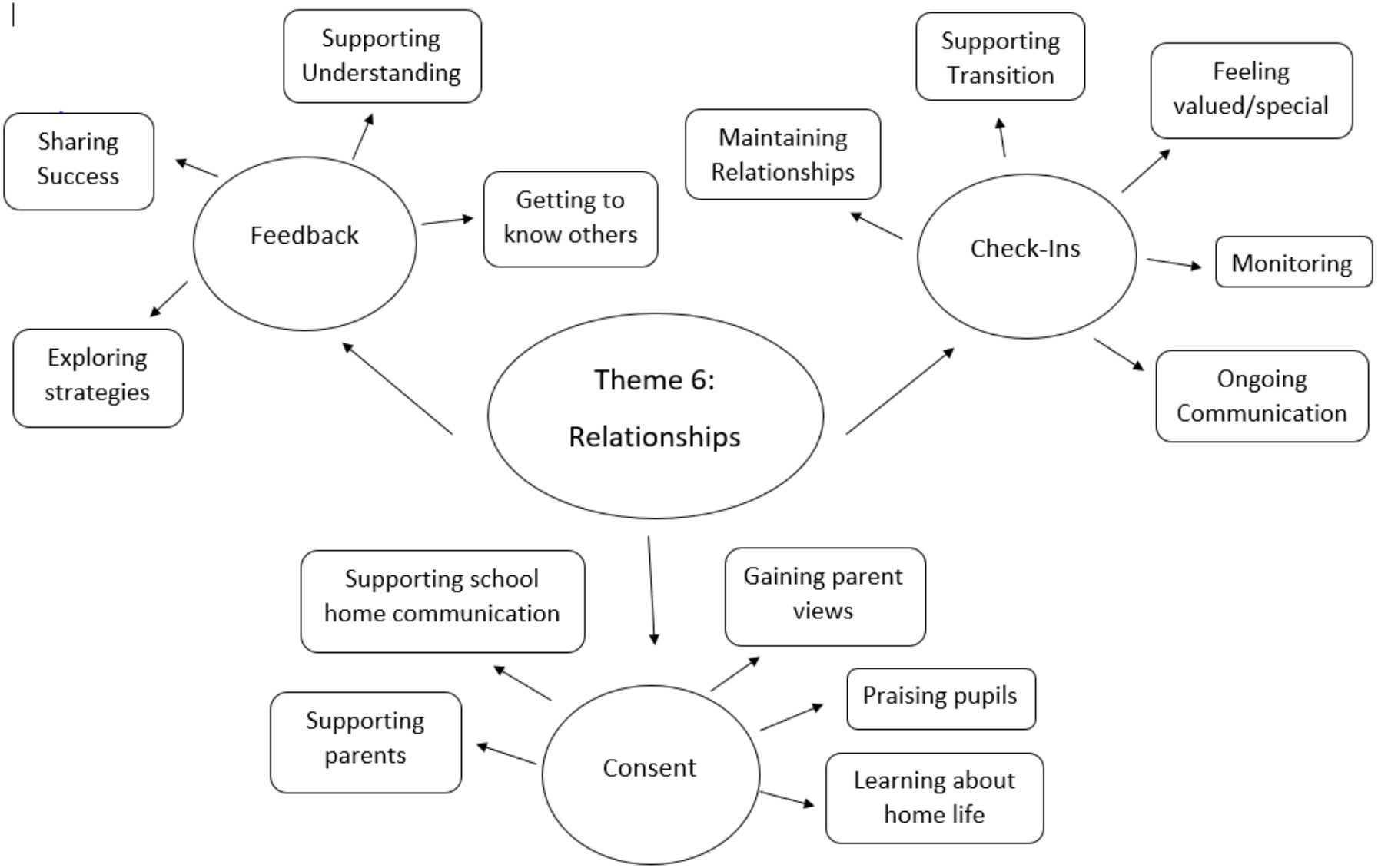



Behavior policies
Target monitoring
ELSA on provision maps
School policy or strategy
Edukey
Open Evening
SEN plans
Theme 2:
A holistic approach
During any lesson
More freedom
Increased time
Increased prioritisation
Allocated space
Funding
Training more ELSAs


Senior Management
Parental involvement
Referrals
Planning with others
Teacher planning
Planning meetings
Wider school staff
Theme 3:
A collaborative approach
During any lesson
More freedom
Increased time
Preventative support
Allocated space
Funding
Training more ELSAs


Theme 4:
School Readiness
School Climate
Priorities
Attitudes to pupils
Other interventions
Staff relationships
Ethos
Time and Resource
Available budget
Allocated Time
Suitable spaces
Planning time
Interruptions
Organized in preparation
Senior Leaders
Encouragement
Staff Presentations
Vision for ELSA
Supporting Planning
Recognizing change


Feeling Stuck
Inventing Solutions
Problem Solving
Overcoming challenge
Reflecting on Challenges
Emotional Support
A Shared Experience
Warranting Decisions
Support
Confidence
Encouragement
Availability/ Continuity
Theme 5:
ELSA as a Community
Adapting /new Resources
Training each other
Individualized to child need
Flexible Practice
New ideas
Personalised approach


Theme 6:
Relationships
Feedback
Supporting Understanding
Sharing Success
Getting to know others
Exploring strategies
Check-Ins
Supporting Transition
Feeling valued/special
Maintaining Relationships
Monitoring
Ongoing Communication
Consent
Supporting school home communication
Gaining parent views
Supporting parents
Praising pupils
Learning about home life