



Evidence-Based Intervention: Trauma Aware ELSA

Introduction

Following the success of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme in Suffolk, a need was identified for ELSAs to be able to access specific training related to trauma aware practice, to enhance skills and capacity related to support children and young people who have experienced adversity. The trauma aware ELSA course was therefore developed by Educational Psychologists in Suffolk to a) deepen participants' awareness, understanding and knowledge in this area and b) equip them with practical tools to provide emotional literacy support to children/young people in their setting who have experienced adversity and potential trauma.

Purpose of Intervention

The training aimed to:

to work utilising trauma-aware approaches. The programme aims to:

- Increase knowledge around trauma and resilience and how we can support these within educational settings.
- Highlight the importance of relational support in trauma aware practice and consider ways to offer this support. This includes PACE and Emotion Coaching approaches.
- Introduce a trauma aware model that uses sequencing to consider how to support all our children and young people.
- Discuss environmental adversity and community trauma and how we can buffer against this within the school community.
- Critically review our education systems and consider how trauma-inducing or trauma-reducing our processes can be.

Target Audience

The programme is for existing ELSAs wishing to enhance their skills and approaches in this area.

Who Can Deliver the Intervention

The training course is delivered by Educational Psychologists and the embedding of new ideas is supported through the existing supervisory spaces that Suffolk ELSAs access, facilitated by the Psychology and Therapeutic Services. After the course ELSAs are able to go into their settings and introduce trauma-aware ELSA practice.

Session Structure

As a trauma aware ELSA you will be utilising person-centered and developmentally attuned approaches to your work with children, young people and the setting you are in. Therefore, there is no specific session structure for delivering this work. Intervention can be 1:1, small group or whole cohort, and may involve:

- Utilising a trauma-responsive model to assess what support is developmentally appropriate, and plan a trauma-aware intervention for them.
- Ensuring regulation is prioritised before engaging in any work, consider a child's window of tolerance and engagement zone.
- Embedding creative and sensory methods of intervention to meet a child's needs.



Frequency and Duration

An ELSA intervention will typically be weekly, for at least 30 minutes. ELSA is usually delivered for around 6-12 weeks, with progress and impact on outcomes reviewed at this point. However, as a trauma-aware ELSA you may be working more systemically, considering developmentally appropriate practice for a child or young person across more than one context, alongside other supporting adults.

Key Principles

Trauma-aware ELSA recognises:

- That children and young people can be supported to overcome and grow from adversity, and that adults around them are well placed to contribute towards their resilience and hope for a positive future.
- That children and young people who experience adversity are more likely to have developmental gaps related to psychological, social and emotional skills. Therefore a developmentally sequenced and child-centered approach for intervention is essential.
- All educators have a responsibility to ensure they are utilising knowledge and child development research to offer learners the best chance of being successful.

Training and Implementation

A two-day in person training course utilising presentations, practical activities and group reflection to meet the aims of the course. This covers knowledge building and practical strategies to supporting children and young people.

Evidence and Feedback

The trauma-aware ELSA course utilises the evidence-base related to trauma-informed practice, neuroscience, child development research and ELSA to offer a course including robust theory and evidence-based strategies for support.

Feedback from our 2025 cohort indicated that 100% of participants found the training “very useful” or “extremely useful” (88%). Particularly strong feedback around understanding trauma/adversity, the impacts, & mechanisms for recovery.

Quotes from survey feedback:

“Very informative course with lots of ideas on how to support children, building on work I do as an ELSA.”

“The training has filled in many gaps and given me the confidence to plan and deliver sessions.”

Further Information and Resources

[Emotional literacy support assistant \(ELSA\) training - Suffolk County Council](#)

[Resources for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants - ELSA Support trauma-responsive-practice-guidance-for-schools1](#)