Support and Supervision for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs): Gathering ELSAs views about the support offered to them

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Abstract

In this present study I am aiming to gather the views of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) regarding the support offered to them within a specific local authority. In addition to this, I aim to find out about additional sources of support ELSAs may be accessing and what support they feel is or would be beneficial.

The ELSA programme was developed and trialled in Southampton Educational Psychology Service by Sheila Burton (Weare and Gray, 2003). Since then, the initiative was successfully established in Hampshire (Burton 2004) before being rolled out nationwide.

The ELSA programme itself is set up and run by EP Services within a number of local authorities across the UK. They are responsible for providing the initial training which covers emotional awareness, bereavement and loss, self-esteem, friendship, anger management, family breakdown and social communication difficulties (ELSA network, 2017).

It is recommended that those who work in the helping professions receive regular professional supervision to support them in their role (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). Guidelines issued on the ELSA Network advise that ELSAs access supervision from Educational Psychologists in order to use the ELSA title (Osborne 2008). In many authorities implementing the programme, this involves ELSAs attending half-termly group supervision sessions which provide them with opportunities to share resources and engage with problem solving activities relating to their work.

For the purpose of this research, ELSAs working in both mainstream Primary and Secondary schools across the authority were invited to take part in the study. Q-Methodology was identified as an appropriate way of gathering the range of views ELSAs have about the support that is available to them. A minimum of 30 participants have been sought to carry out the Q sort comprised of 39 statements. The Q was developed following a focus group carried out with a group of ELSAs and from a critical review of relevant literature about the ELSA programme. Participants were required to arrange the statements on a pre-arranged frequency distribution which ranged from 'most agree' to 'most disagree'. Participants were then invited to discuss their Q sorts. The completed Q sorts were subjected to factor analysis which identified three shared viewpoints. These highlighted the importance of having a robust network of support in place as well as more

specifically, support from peers and wellbeing workers. The findings are discussed in relation to the literature and implications for EPs and schools are discussed along with suggestions for future research.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The aim of this research is to elicit the views of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) about the support they receive to carry out their role. What I was particularly interested in discovering were the shared and differing viewpoints about whether ELSAs felt well supported and what they valued most about the support they received. I also wanted to learn what ELSAs considered to be their primary source of support for the role.

As the ELSA initiative is relatively new there is limited academic research about the role available. Since the ELSA Programme was first trialled in Southampton Educational Psychology Service (Weare and Gray, 2003) by Sheila Burton in 2003 there have been a number of evaluations of the programme carried out by different authorities. However, a review of the literature highlighted that to date; very little research has been done to explore the effectiveness of the support provided to ELSAs. The literature review identified three studies which looked at ELSA support and supervision as either the primary area of research or as part of a wider exploration of ELSA's views. Two of the studies found that ELSAs valued the support offered to them through half-termly support sessions led by Educational Psychologists (Osborne and Burton, 2014; Leighton, 2015). Another study also highlighted reported benefits of peer support and networking opportunities (Mann, 2014). Whilst these studies are informative, more current research would be beneficial to establish whether – five years on – the current recommended models of ELSA support continue to be fit for purpose.

Within the last three years, the political and economic landscape has shifted in the wake of austerity measures and research into the scale of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues amongst children and young people. As a result, child and adolescent mental health has become more of a focus in government legislation and calls have been made for education settings to play a larger role in tackling issues around mental health. This would hopefully alleviate some of the strain placed on mental health services and

provide much needed support to those with lower levels of need as opposed to only those perceived to be at crisis point (DoH, 2015; DfE, 2017).

There is research which suggests that the number of children and young people (CYP) experiencing SEMH difficulties is increasing (Sadler et al., 2018). This could potentially lead to greater challenges for ELSAs who are often tasked with working with CYP identified as having significant SEMH needs. It therefore seems pertinent as well as timely that the support given to ELSAs is further examined to explore whether it continues to be fit for purpose in light of a potential increase in demand for ELSA support in schools.

As well as addressing gaps in the literature, my rationale for focusing on ELSA support as an area of interest stems from personal experiences of working in various support roles within schools. Working alongside support staff throughout my training to become an EP has also contributed to my interest in this area. Working as a Learning Mentor in a secondary school, I typically worked with young people that were identified has having SEMH needs. Whilst I found this to be a positive and rewarding experience, it was also at times stressful and would frequently carry mentees problems around with me. I would often feel out of my depth and worry about whether I was actually having a positive impact –or worse- having a negative impact. At the time, I found the support from colleagues beneficial but no official arrangements for supervision or support were in place. As a trainee EP, discussions with school support staff have often followed a similar thread; how demanding it can be working with high needs children and how beneficial it was to have conversations around casework. The value of having an opportunity to offload and have their concerns held for them –however briefly -has frequently been highlighted during my interactions with Teaching Assistants (TAs) and other members of staff working in support roles.

In a response to the Governments green paper (2017), the Association of Child Psychotherapists raises concerns about the potential stress and burn-out of staff who are lacking the support structures and supervision from a suitably qualified team (ACP, 2018). I feel quite strongly that if staff are being tasked with supporting and working therapeutically with children and young people with SEMH issues then it is important that they receive adequate ongoing professional supervision from someone who is suitably trained and experienced. I feel that this is an area of research that would also be of interest to local authorities running the ELSA programme (or similar initiatives), ELSAs

themselves and EP services who are often tasked with training and providing supervision for ELSAs.

It is hoped that outcomes of this research could be used to inform the development of support that is provided to ELSAs, and other staff working therapeutically with children and young people in this changing educational climate.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Mental Health in Children and Young People

Improving mental health for children and young people (CYP) has become a priority in the eyes of both government officials and mental health services. The effects of this heightened focus have also filtered down through to education with solutions being sought within schools themselves. The question of how schools can help provide much needed support is an important one with services such as CAMHs becoming increasingly overstretched. Indeed, despite mental health being high on the agenda, there has been little evidence to show that things have improved over the last decade. (Greig et al., 2016)

A wealth of literature including research, legislation and guidelines has been produced in the last 15 years describing a mental health crisis in CYP as well as recommendations and suggestions as to what could and should be done to tackle the problem. As such, we now find the terms mental health/illness/wellbeing being used frequently and interchangeably in schools, within the health services, at governmental level and in the media. A large body of research has begun to amass on the scale of mental health problems facing CYP and present some sobering statistics. For example a study carried out by the Nuffield Institute (2009) analysed data and trends of reported mental disorders over 25 years. They found that one in ten fifteen year olds have been reported as suffering from mental disorders such as depression, self-harm, anxiety, OCD and eating disorders (Nuffield Trust, 2009). The 2012 annual report produced by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) titled, *Our Children Deserve More* discusses the need to create effective systems which will support the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people. The CMO Annual Report echoes the statistical findings produced by the Nuffield Trust (2009) regarding the numbers of children and young people who have a diagnosable mental health condition.

More recently, a survey carried out by the National Health Service reports that one in eight CYP aged five to nineteen were reported as having received a diagnosis of at least one mental health condition in 2017 (Sadler et al. 2017). The survey also reports that 'emotional disorders' were the most prevalent mental health condition amongst this age group increasing from 3.9% in 2004 to 5.8% in 2017 (2017).

Research into potential causes and risk factors for mental health problems have highlighted the strong links between parental mental health problems and the mental health of CYP (Manning and Gregoire, 2009; Murphy and Fonagy, 2012). Parental substance misuse, criminality and domestic violence have also been identified as risk factors (Mayes, 1999; Sabates and Dex, 2012; Hall and Lynch, 1999; Murphy and Fonagy, 2012). Other research into risk factors for adolescent mental health has highlighted links between lengthy social media use and depressive symptoms (Kelly et al. 2018). The biggest risk factor which has been identified however is poor socio-economic status. (Murphy and Fonagy, 2012; Miltsiou and Hodes, 2015) and an increasing disparity in the mental of health of children from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to those from more affluent households (Collishaw et al. 2019).

Despite the number of studies citing data pertaining to an increase in mental health difficulties amongst CYP, there has been some criticism of the narrative that has been created as a result. Potential reasons for the increase in mental health difficulties other than those outlined above have been put forward. One of these is the possibility that there continues to be a developing understanding of mental health difficulties and associated symptoms –such as those linked to depression – which may previously have been under-diagnosed by clinicians (Costello et al. 2006). Horwitz and Wakefield (2006) on the other hand describe how natural reactions to both chronic and acute stressful experiences could also fit clinical definitions of a disorder. This raises questions as to how many people could potentially be mis-diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

Kathryn Ecclestone (2007) describes how there is a powerful cultural narrative emerging around emotional vulnerability which has resulted in perceptions of a 'diminished self' and low expectations regarding peoples' capacity for autonomy and resilience. Ecclestone argues that this in turn has led to a rapid increase in state interest in emotional well-being (2007). To illustrate this, Ecclestone provides the example of teacher's penchant for using such phrases as 'vulnerable learners' and 'low self-esteemers', the latter of which she

argues has become a standard assessment in school reports (2007). The increased use of the phrase 'low self-esteem' is an interesting one – particularly as there appears to be no reliable way of measuring self-esteem (Emler, 2001). Taking this into consideration, it is possible to argue that both the seemingly popular narrative around emotional well-being and the increasing use of labels could be a factor in the reported rise of mental health difficulties in CYP.

Whether or not there is any weight to these alternative views of the reported rise in mental health difficulties, the narrative of it being a 'crisis' or an 'epidemic' is a powerful one which seems set to continue to dominate government policy and popular media. Following the recommendations made in the governments green paper, it seems likely that schools will continue to be asked to do more to support the mental health of CYP.

The result of these figures has been the outpouring of guidelines and legislation regarding mental health and manifestos advising how to effectively manage and navigate what has been described as 'interesting times' (Greig et al., 2016). The most notable of the guidelines and reports produced have been the *Future in Mind* report (2014) and more recently, the government's green paper (2017) on transforming mental health provision for CYP. Both these documents outline the need for greater provision to support the mental health of children and young people. The Green paper also calls for a mental health lead within every school who will be tasked with heading up approaches to mental health within schools (2017).

Much of the literature and research examined so far has been heavily focused on prevalence and increase of poor mental health and well-being. The World Health Organisation defines good mental health as being, 'a state of wellbeing in which every individual realise his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community' (World Health Organisation, 2014). It could be argued that it is perhaps more helpful to use the term emotional wellbeing when referring to problems with children and young people's mental health. However, it seems to be that the dominant discourse on this subject appears to be one which views this subject through a medical lens. This is likely to be due to the role that health agencies have played in increasing awareness of the importance of addressing mental health and well-being needs, particularly in the UK and the voice of health agencies in legislation around this area is a dominant one.

One initiative where this is particularly evident is the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) project which was funded by the Department for Children Schools and Families. According to Monkman (2016), documentation produced by this project (DCSF, 2008) describes the importance of using the term mental health in order to encourage the involvement of health and medical services within education. Furthermore, Monkman also describes how - when talking about specific areas of mental health- the TaMHS project has introduced 'pathologising' language such as 'eating disorders', 'depression' and 'deliberate self-harm' (Monkman, 2016).

Whilst the purpose of introducing medicalised terminology such as this into schools may be to encourage multi-agency working, it also potentially alienates educational practitioners. For example, by pathologising different mental health needs a suggestion is being made that specific medical knowledge and expertise in therapeutic interventions is required in order to support children with mental health needs. There is then a danger of teaching staff feeling disempowered and de-skilled in helping the pupils they work with which is the polar opposite of the aims of the TaMHS project which seeks to utilise teaching staff as an integral part of the team to tackle mental health issues in schools (Monkman, 2016).

During an exploration of teacher's views around supporting children with SEMH, it was found that when using medicalised language to describe problematic behaviours of children, staff were more likely to position themselves as under-confident and apprehensive about their abilities to support children with these needs and felt that the responsibility lay elsewhere (Monkman, 2016). Alternatively, when school staff were asked to talk about mental health in terms of wellbeing they used more positive language around emotions and empowerment. The change in discourse seemed to affect a shift in the teacher's position to one of having responsibility in supporting young people and developing positive relationships with their students (Monkman, 2016). The message here appears to be that medicalised pathologising language is not helpful to school staff in supporting them to help students with mental health or wellbeing. In fact, it suggests that, quite the opposite, it has the effect of disempowering them and encouraging a shift in perceived role and responsibility for children and young people's mental health needs

Neither the Future in Mind Report, the Chief Medical Officers Annual Report or the governments green paper do much to empower schools to support children and young

people's social and emotional wellbeing. The majority of the strategies highlighted in these reports are concerned with changes that need to take place in the health sector which include recommendations to improve children and young people's access to psychological therapies (IAPTS) as well as improving access to CAMHS (Department of Health, 2015). When references are made to support that should be available in schools, these too frequently link back to health. For instance, a recommendation is made regarding the allocation of mental health workers who would be attached to clusters of schools (Department of Health, 2015).

Another recommendation is also made to increase access to professional counselling services within educational services. Again this would be a service most likely linked to the health sector. Neither recommendations appear to promote the use of school staff as a tool to support children and young people's wellbeing. Despite this, the reports published do acknowledge the work that has been carried in schools to support children's wellbeing as well as their potential for providing further support. There does not however, appear to be a clear strategy as yet as to how schools could potentially provide further support.

As mentioned earlier, the government's Green Paper (2017) proposed that mental health leads could potentially be appointed in settings. However this proposal has been met with concern regarding how this would effectively and safely be implemented and managed (ACP, 2018). The Future in Mind report (2015) identified five core principles and requirements which it states are fundamental to create an effective system to support the mental health and well-being of children and young people. These are;

- Promoting resilience, prevention and early intervention
- Improving access to effective support – a system without tiers
- Care for the most vulnerable
- Accountability and transparency
- Developing the workforce

(Department of Health, 2015)

Although schools aren't explicitly identified as being key to promoting these principles, the principles of having a developed workforce and promoting resilience, prevention and early intervention certainly could be seen as key areas where schools could have a

significant impact. As mentioned previously, both reports do acknowledge the work that has already been carried out in schools and the potential benefits of whole school approaches to mental health. Indeed, this has also been the case in previous government initiatives to improve children's social and emotional well-being.

When the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda was launched by the New Labour government, educational settings were considered to be an essential part of the initiative. Published in 2003, ECM (2003) was the governments Green Paper produced in response to the tragic death of Victoria Climbié. This was then followed by the 2004 Children's Act (DfES, 2004) which resulted in the establishment of a Children's Commissioner who was tasked with improving children and young people's well-being and championing their interests. The New Labour Government also published guidance to support schools to promote the health and wellbeing of children (DCSF, 2007a) as well as the Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures, (DCSF, 2007b). The aim of these documents was to create a country that would be "The best place for our children and young people to grow up" (DCSF, 2007b, p7). The plan included five key outcomes which educational settings were considered to be key in delivering. These outcomes; be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve emotional well-being were embedded into the National Curriculum and school's Improvement Plans.

As part of the ECM agenda, the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot was set up and ran between 2003 and 2005. The pilot had 4 strands which include providing developmental opportunities for school staff, focused support for behaviour and attendance, curriculum level support targeting social and emotional learning as well as interventions targeting small groups of children who require further support. (Hallam, 2009). The SEAL programme was initially piloted in 25 schools as part of the strand focusing on curriculum level support which aimed to develop children's skills in five areas of social and emotional aspects of learning. These areas were; self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills (Hallam, 2009). Evaluations of the programme suggest that overall it has helped to increase staff knowledge around children's behaviour and social emotional aspects of learning. This in turn led to a reported increase in staff confidence to support children and young people.

The recent economic downturn and cuts to council's budgets and services has inevitably led to the value of services on offer becoming an important priority. Schools in particular

have been especially hard hit by this and although they now have more control over school spending, the message from many is that there is simply not enough funding to purchase much needed services to support children.

There is now an increasing number of agencies and private companies offering a range of therapeutic training and interventions such as SEAL, ELSA (emotional literacy support assistant) and PATHS (Promoting alternative thinking strategies) which are relatively less complex in comparison to some other interventions and are therefore easier to offer commercially and copyright (Pugh, 2010). With increased competition between training providers, this may offer schools more choice and value for money. Due to the nature of these interventions there is also no requirement to be a highly trained psychologist to access training in these interventions (Pugh, 2010).

This democratisation of therapeutic interventions on offer could potentially lead to a wider range of professionals and school staff being able to access training and this in turn would hopefully lead to an increase in capacity for the number of children benefitting from such interventions (Pugh, 2010). Obviously this would be a substantial improvement in terms of addressing the increase in mental health problems in children and young people.

Many EP services have been able to successfully respond and adapt to the increasing and changing demands the mental health crisis has placed on schools and other educational settings. One of the ways this has been done is through the development of training packages which aim to skill-up other educational professionals to deliver therapeutic interventions within school. Again these are more commonly packages which train support staff in programmes such as SEAL, ELSA and PATHS as well as training which aims to support staff in supporting children identified as having attachment difficulties, bereaved or to develop resilience. Other programmes such as Therapeutic Story Writing courses provide staff with opportunities to have regular timetabled EP supervision as part of the cost to ensure staff are fully supported in running regular sessions.

Whilst the idea of school based interventions may seem appealing in the face of a mental health 'epidemic'. The delivery of therapeutic interventions within educational establishments could also be viewed as problematic. Simply attempting to identify and define exactly what constitutes a therapeutic intervention is a task in itself. It is also one

which yields no clear answers as to what a therapeutic intervention is. Ecclestone and Brunila (2015) use the term 'mainstream therapeutic pedagogies' (p2) to describe individual and group activities that help people "explore, understand and manage emotions" (p2). Examples of such activities include initiatives drawn from positive psychology, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and "individually based diagnoses of emotional needs or behaviour problems" (P2).

Other than the definition provided above, academic research and discourse pertaining to the nature and definition of therapeutic work in schools is scarce. Atkinson et al. (2012) highlight the broad range of activities which fall into the category of therapeutic work and how this makes therapeutic work more difficult to define.

Despite the scarcity of academic literature in defining the nature of therapeutic work in schools, there is an increasing amount of information and research as to the applications and effectiveness of such interventions in schools. Similarly, the use of the word 'therapeutic' is being used with increased frequency, both within the field of academic research and in the popular media more widely. However, as mentioned earlier, the delivery of therapeutic interventions in schools has been met with a degree of criticism by some. In discussions around notions of a 'diminished self', Kathryn Ecclestone (2007) posits that an increasingly powerful narrative of emotional vulnerability has resulted in:

> A therapeutic ethos that encourages preoccupation with emotional
> well-being, and associated constructs of emotional intelligence,
> emotional literacy and self-esteem, creating a huge rise in post-trauma
> counselling, relationship counselling, private individual therapy, local
> therapy centres through the National Health Service, mentoring, life
> coaching, pastoral services, and schemes in schools, colleges,
> universities and workplaces to support people emotionally.
>
> (Ecclestone, 2007, p465)

Here, it is also argued that a therapeutic ethos legitimises cultural beliefs about the 'diminished self'. This in turn may lead to a normalisation of the notion that "everyone needs professionally based interventions" (Ecclestone, 2007, p. 466). Further to this, some individuals more likely to be singled out than others as they are deemed unable to manage their emotions themselves (2007). This raises important ethical questions

regarding the rights and voices of children and families regarding whether they feel they are able to opt out of such interventions. Ecclestone illustrates this dilemma by using the example of whether a child feels able to opt out of disclosing potentially uncomfortable or private thoughts and feelings to others during circle time (2007). This is a powerful example illustrating the potential dangers 'imposing' interventions on individuals and the importance of placing the rights and voices of children and families at the heart of any 'therapeutic' work offered.

The potential for increasing the number and type of therapeutic interventions offered in schools also raises questions about the level of training and skill of those delivering them. It is unlikely, for example, that those delivering therapeutic interventions in schools have the same level of training –and indeed supervision – as those working therapeutically in clinical settings. As previously mentioned, the ACP (2018) have recently voiced concerns regarding how any work around mental health in schools would be safely managed and supervised.

2.2 Beginnings of the ELSA Programme

ELSA has its origins in theories around emotional intelligence and emotional literacy (Wilding and Claridge, 2016). Both discourses are concerned with the skills involved with managing social skills and emotions. However, the concept of emotional intelligence (Gardner, 1983) is viewed as a fixed modality of intelligence whereas emotional literacy is seen as a skill-set which is developed and nurtured through both relationships and the social environment. It is ideas around emotional literacy that are used frequently within educational settings and is the basis for such programmes as SEAL and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) (Qualter, Gardner and Whitely, 2007).

It was an increased interest in the construct of Emotional Literacy that led to SEAL becoming embedded within the primary and secondary school curriculum. The aim was to develop children and young people's social and emotional skills (Britain, 2005). Developed in three waves, it was the third wave that was concerned with the development and implementation of individualised interventions of which the ELSA programme is a major example (Hill et al, 2013). As part of this third wave, the ELSA programme as it exists today was developed and trialled in Southampton Educational

Psychology Service (Weare and Gray, 2003) by Sheila Burton. The initiative was then successfully established in Hampshire (Burton 2004) before being rolled out to authorities nationwide.

The ELSA programme itself is set up and run by EP Services within the local authorities. They are responsible for providing the initial training which covers emotional awareness, bereavement and loss, self-esteem, friendship, anger management, family breakdown and social communication difficulties (ELSA network, 2013).

The training takes place over five days and aims to provide trainees with practical advice and grounding in the psychological theory for the above mentioned areas. Upon completion of the training, ELSAs should be equipped to support children and young people with a range of social and emotional needs (Burton et al, 2009). It is expected that ELSAs will be given time to plan and deliver interventions that generally run for 6-12 weeks. During this time it is hoped that the child involved in the intervention will have learnt a new skill or coping strategy depending on their needs.

2.3 Support and supervision for ELSAs

Guidelines issued by the British Psychological Society (BPS) emphasises the role supervision has in maintaining quality standards of service delivery (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010). These guidelines state that good supervision should also support the professional development and well-being of the supervisee as well as the children and young people they are working with (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010). In a response to the Governments green paper (2017), the Association of Child Psychotherapists raises concerns about the potential stress and burn-out of staff who are lacking the support structures and supervision from a suitably qualified team (ACP, 2018). Discussions around the provision of support for those working with CYP with SEMH needs have become more prevalent in the last few years. Roberts (2017) posits the importance of developing reflective supervision practices within schools to support the wellbeing of staff working with children described as having significant SEMH difficulties. However, research suggests that the potential impact of working with high needs children on the wellbeing of staff is largely ignored (Reid and Soan, 2015). Research also suggests that there is currently a lack of awareness around what supervision is and its potential

benefits for school staff, with many perceiving it to have a monitoring function where staff are scrutinised (Westergaard and Bainbridge, 2014).

In order to use the title of Emotional Literacy Support Assistant and work in this role, it is a requirement that ELSAs not only complete the designated training, but that they also access regular supervision from an Educational Psychologist (Osborne, 2008).This is considered to be an additional level of support to the more general support they receive from a nominated member of school staff such as the SENCo or line manager.

The reason why professional EP support is considered to be so essential to the ELSA role lies in the nature of the issues ELSAs may come up against in their work. ELSAs may frequently work with children and young people who are extremely challenging and/or vulnerable. The children ELSAs work with are likely to have complex emotional needs and may be experiencing considerable difficulties both at home and at school. Groom and Rose (2005) discuss the challenges faced by TAs working with pupils that are described as having Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). Research has shown that ELSAs who receive supervision report feeling more confident and better able to support pupils, manage complex casework and enable them to reflect upon their own practice and skills in supporting children and young people. (Osborne and Burton, 2014). An EP can also work with ELSAs to help them recognise when the nature and extend of a child's needs are beyond the scope of the ELSA's skillset and competency (2014).

The primary aim of the supervision offered to ELSAs is to support their on-going professional development of the role. The guidelines issued on the ELSA network recommend that support is offered through EP - led group supervision taking place every half-term (Osborne, 2008). The purpose of these meetings are to provide support in applying psychological theories and approaches to casework. Opportunities for EP led group problem activities using Solution Circles is also recommended (Burton 2017). These sessions also provide opportunities to share resources and access additional training. The chance to access peer support and networking opportunities is also considered to be an important part of the group supervision sessions.

It is recommended that attendance at any one support group is limited to eight ELSAs in order for them to effectively meet ELSAs needs (Burton 2017). Guidelines also

recommend that EPs are available after sessions or via telephone consultations to offer individual ELSA support regarding casework (2017).

Research carried out by Osborne and Burton (2014) aimed to evaluate the supervision provided by EPs by gathering the views of ELSAs within schools in Hampshire. The findings of this research showed that overall, ELSAs were satisfied with the level of supervision they received from EPs and felt that their supervision needs were being met through their group sessions. More specifically, the research suggested that ELSAs particularly valued the opportunities to problem solve difficult and complex cases and share ideas and resources. (Osborne and Burton 2014). Other research carried out by Mann (2014) and Leighton (2015) also highlight the effectiveness of ELSA supervision.

In many authorities, ELSAs are also encouraged to access further support from their link-school EP when appropriate. This may be necessary if an ELSA needs guidance regarding a piece of casework and it cannot wait until the next group supervision session. This may possibly highlight an emerging need amongst ELSA staff. Dodds and Blake (2015) found that ELSAs within schools in Plymouth were accessing other forms of support in addition to that offered by EPs. One school for instance was reportedly receiving support from a Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) whilst ELSAs in other settings had a system of peer support which enabled them to talk through complex cases and share knowledge and resources (Dodds and Blake, 2015). Additionally, SENCOs that were surveyed as part of the Plymouth ELSA programme evaluation requested further training themselves so that they could offer supervision to ELSAs within school. (Dodds and Blake, 2015) This research highlights the possibility of alternative sources of support that could potentially be of benefit to ELSAs. A comprehensive and varied package of support incorporating the options suggested by Dodds and Blake (2015) could ensure that the supervision for ELSAs is robust. It could also relieve some of the reported anxiety felt by ELSAs around complex casework.

With the increasing demands for ELSA training it will be important to consider the impact that this will have on the demands placed on EPs to provide supervision for ELSAs. There is a danger that supervision groups could become too large or EP services finding themselves in a position where they do not have the capacity to support the number of ELSAs working within their authorities. Thought will need to be given as to what other support could be put in place. I have already touched on several possibilities earlier, one

of which was that of peer support provided by other ELSAs. The social support which ELSAs may benefit from as a result of engaging with peer supervision potentially include an increased sense of agency, autonomy, and sense of affiliation (McLean, 2009).Drawing on support from one's social network can also provide a buffer from adverse outcomes (Malecki and Demaray, 2002). Tardy's (1985) Social Support Model is used by Malecki and Demaray (2002) to show how support staff can be supported through different forms of support which include instrumental, emotional, appraisal and informational. These four forms of support and their component parts are summarised below;

Table 2.1: Social Support Model (Malecki and Demaray, 2002)

Type of Support	Components
Emotional	Trust, love, empathy
Instrumental	Resources; money, time
Informational	Information, advice
Appraisal	Evaluative feedback

Heslop (2012) identified factors from Tardy (1985) and Malecki and Demaray's (2002) models that are likely to support school staff. These were primarily empathy and understanding from colleagues (emotional support), information sharing and collaborative decision making (informational support) and feedback from colleagues (appraisal support), (Heslop, 2012). Previous research supports the idea that these factors are conducive in enabling support staff to feel valued and work effectively (Abbott et al, 2011; Balshaw and Farrell, 2002; Blatchford et al, 2009c; Groom 2006; Howes et al, 2003; Lacey, 2001; Wilkinson, 2000). Other research also suggests that peer support from colleagues is also a mitigating factor in reducing work-related stress, (Reid et al, 1999; Kyriacou, 1981). Further to this, talking and developing a shared understanding with colleagues was viewed as being more important than the support provided by line managers, (Boyle et al. 2012). This seems to highlight the important role that peer supervision could possibly play in supporting both ELSA's emotional well-being and their work with children and young people.

2.4 The ELSA Programme in the Present Study

In the local authority where the current research takes place, the ELSA programme was initially introduced to two secondary schools and 6 primaries. It was – and continues to be – run by Educational Psychologists along with support from colleagues in the Specialist Teaching Teams and the Education Development Service.

The commissioning of the ELSA programme in the present study came about through the TaMHS Steering Group – a sub-group of the authority's Social Emotional Wellbeing Group (SEWG). The ELSA initiative became embedded in the 'Early Intervention and Primary Care' element of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) strategy review (2011-2014)

Following on from the TaMHS pilot project, the ELSA initiative was rolled out to schools across the authority. Despite the cessation of government funding, the local authority continued to invest money to sustain the ELSA Project. The initiative in the present study then became part of the ELSA Network and as of 2013 there were over 109 ELSAs trained in 42 schools across the authority. Many schools here now have more than one ELSA, with one primary school having 12 trained in total.

The content of the initial training course follows the original training package developed by Southampton EPs and covers:

- Emotional Literacy,

- Self-esteem,

- Active Listening and Communication,

- Autism,

- Understanding Anger,

- Loss and Bereavement,

- Therapeutic Stories,

- Social Skills and Friendship Groups,

- Circles of Friends

Following feedback from ELSA's, changes to the initial training were made to include content on attachment and trauma, and solution focused conversations. Additional sessions on anxiety and nurturing classrooms were also included to make it a six day course as opposed to five.

Following guidelines issued by the ELSA Network (2017), the initiative in the present study recommend that ELSAs provide evidence-based interventions either at individual or group level. It is recognised that the models operating may vary from school to school, however the interventions recommended during the initial training are all at what would have previously been classed as wave 2 or 3 of the National Strategies three waves of interventions model (DfES, 2003d). Within this tiered model of intervention, Wave 1 involves the use of high quality inclusive teaching, Wave 2 involves time-limited additional interventions and Wave 3 involves targeted, specialist interventions. ELSAs are given input around different evidence-based interventions over the course of the initial six-day training and include how to run friendship groups, Circle of Friends, therapeutic stories and solution focused conversations. Training is also given so that ELSAs can plan, deliver and evaluate the interventions they run.

It is made clear in the training that there is an expectation that SENCOs and line managers would largely be responsible for identifying and referring children for ELSA support. It is however recognised that ELSAs will also have a role in identifying pupils who may benefit. ELSAs are also given training on gathering information around a child's areas of strength and difficulty so that they are able to identify and plan appropriate interventions that can best meet their needs. In the initial training, a process of plan-do-review is emphasised for every intervention an ELSA delivers. ELSAs are given input regarding how to consult with staff and parents when gathering information about a child and around carrying out classroom observations as part of the information gathering process. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Competencies Profile (SEBs) are also recommended within the training. Not only do these support ELSAs to identify needs but also provide a way for ELSAs to establish a baseline and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Finally, input around outcomes and the importance of setting smart targets for children is also given in the training.

When the programme was initially trialled here as part of the TaMHS project, the supervision of ELSAs was provided jointly by EPs and Primary Mental Health Workers.

Once the project had come to an end, support was provided solely by Educational Psychologists with group support sessions taking place once a term. The groups themselves are organised geographically within school patches and are overseen by the link EPs for those patches. Although ELSAs are encouraged to attend the sessions, it is not currently mandatory.

As ELSAs are only offered EP support termly through the support sessions, it is expected that the majority of the support ELSAs receive will be provided by line managers within schools. It is expected that line managers will usually either be SENCOs or a senior member of staff with some experience or knowledge of SEN.

Due to both the demands placed on EP time and the model of service delivery within the authority, EPs are likely to have very little contact with ELSAs other than through the termly support sessions. This means that following the initial six day training, EPs have very little input into how ELSAs are working in the role and lack an overview of how ELSAs are working with children and young people. This is potentially problematic when considering the emphasis which is placed on the importance of EP supervision of ELSAs. During the end of the six day training it is made clear that line-managers within school are responsible for the day –to-day supervision of ELSAs. Line-managers are invited to the final day of the ELSA training, however attendance is not compulsory. Again this raises potential concerns regarding line-managers understanding of the ELSA role and their ability to offer appropriate guidance and support.

2.5 Evaluation of ELSA support

Previous research and evaluations of the impact of the ELSA programme show the positive effects it has had on both supporting children and young people with SEMH and helping support staff feel better equipped and more confident in supporting children (Burton et al, 2009). Previous research has also highlighted that overall, ELSA's feel happy with the level of supervision and support they receive and that this is adequately meeting their needs (Osborne and Burton, 2014). However, there appears to be little research to date which aims to evaluate alternative forms of support that may also benefit ELSAs in addition to that which is offered by EPs. Additionally, there appears to be little research looking at the potential benefits of peer support for ELSAs or –if it is being used – the

perceived effectiveness of this as an additional means of support. I feel that this would be a useful area in which to carry out research, particularly considering the continued increase in the demand for trained ELSAs and the increasing pressures this will place on EPs supporting ELSAs. Alternative means of support should be sought to alleviate this pressure by complementing the support already in place.

2.6 Research Questions

Following the review of the relevant literature I have formulated the following research questions:

- ➢ What are ELSA's views about the termly support sessions?
- ➢ What support are ELSAs able to access in between the group support sessions? (such as EP, line manager and peer support)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Orientation to the Chapter

This chapter begins with a discussion about my epistemological and ontological stance regarding research. I will also briefly discuss the origins of my chosen methodology along with its theoretical underpinnings with the aim of explaining how the methodology fits with the type of research being carried out. It will also explain how the chosen methodology aligns with my own values as a researcher.

3.2 Positionality

The positionality one adopts as a researcher has a significant impact on the methods and approaches one takes to the research itself (Robson, 2002). It also has an important influence on the types of questions one asks and the nature of the answers one expects to glean. It is therefore important that to begin this chapter by providing an outline of my own positionality as a researcher and in relation to previous experience as a professional and how this has influenced both the research itself and my chosen methods.

3.21 Experience as a Learning Mentor

One of the primary drivers for focusing on this area of research is my previous experience as a Learning Mentor working in a mainstream secondary school. The purpose of this role first and foremost was to work with young people to remove barriers to learning. Many of the young people I worked with had been identified as having social and emotional needs which were impacting on their learning and well-being. Invariably, my involvement would be to work therapeutically with them.

Whilst I was able to access training and ongoing CPD to support me in this role - other than peer support from colleagues - there was no official arrangement or requirement for professional supervision. Indeed, at the time, I was not aware of professional supervision as a tool in supporting those working in a therapeutic capacity. I do frequently wonder

what – if any – difference having access to this would have made to the quality of support I was able to offer working in this role. My general experience as a Learning Mentor - whilst positive and rewarding – was also challenging and I often felt out of my depth, lacking the skills and expertise necessary to provide effective support.

3.22 Experience as a Trainee Educational Psychologist

It was not until I became a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) that I developed a real appreciation of professional supervision and its role in supporting not just EPs but anyone who is working therapeutically with children and young people. The knowledge and experience I have gained as a TEP has highlighted for me exactly how 'unconsciously incompetent' (Howell, 1982) I was when working as a Learning Mentor. Now I feel I am able to reflect on the potential dangers of working in this capacity without an appropriate level of skill and regular ongoing guidance from an experienced supervisor. As such, this has become an area of research which I am particularly interested in. As a TEP I have an active, continuing role in training and providing support for the ELSAs in the authority where I am currently on placement.

3.3 Epistemology and Ontology

When considering the philosophical 'position' one takes as a researcher, I am – broadly speaking – referring to the stand we take on how knowledge is created (epistemology) and how we come to learn that knowledge (ontology) (Krauss, 2005). Whilst distinct and separate concepts in their own right, the two are also inextricably connected and considered together, can help one to understand the type of researcher one considers ones-self to be. Similarly, there is an interrelationship between the theoretical stance of the researcher and the methodology selected (Krauss, 2005; Gray, 2006). Having a clear epistemological perspective can be considered to be important for identifying appropriate research design (Easterby-Smith et al. 2002).

3.31 Critical Realism

The epistemological perspective I have been most drawn to when thinking about my research is that of critical realism. As such this has influenced and guided my decisions around planning my research and the methodology to be used. As mentioned previously, the relationship between epistemology and ontology are important when considering methodology. This is particularly true of critical realism (Zachariadis et al. 2013) and the reasons for this will be discussed momentarily. Bhaskar's founding publication on critical realism (1975) has resulted in numerous and varied definitions of this perspective. However, the one I have found to be the most useful for the purposes of providing clarity about my own standpoint is;

> This view of knowledge holds that there is an objective reality, and instead
> of hoping that one day we will somehow have absolute knowledge, the
> expectation is that knowledge claims will continue to better interpretations
> of reality. As knowledge claims are fallible, the best we can do is impose
> our interpretations of reality, rather than seek a definite, finished 'Truth',
> (Cruickshank 2003, p2)

In regards to the present study, I feel I am taking a critical realist view of the knowledge I am trying to uncover. I recognise that there are clear structures and procedures in place regarding how a package of support for ELSAs should "look" as well as stipulation regarding outcomes of the group support sessions.

In keeping with a critical realist position I am also adopting a constructivist, relativist epistemology in that I recognise that there will be a range of views around the purpose and the effectiveness of support provided which will be subjective and affected by a range of factors including previous experience and knowledge, personal constructs of themselves as practitioners, self-efficacy and resilience.

Views will also be affected by understandings of what they perceive to be the purpose of the support offered. Individual participant's views should not be perceived as an absolute truth, rather than a form of knowledge that has been formed and mediated through experiences of the social world. This is a central tenet to critical realist thought;

Critical realists argue that the self is not a decentred contingency...
Rather, selfhood is to be understood in terms of ongoing process,
whereby selfhood is socially mediated but not socially determined. The
self can obtain knowledge of a reality that is separate from our
interpretations of it. (Cruickshank, 2003, p2)

As such, Critical realists accept that there exists an objective reality or truth that
we cannot directly access due to a lack of knowledge constructed around it (Scott
et al. 2010). To better understand this, I found the 'Iceberg Model' (Fletcher, 2016)
useful:

Figure 1: Iceberg Model of Reality (Fletcher, 2016)
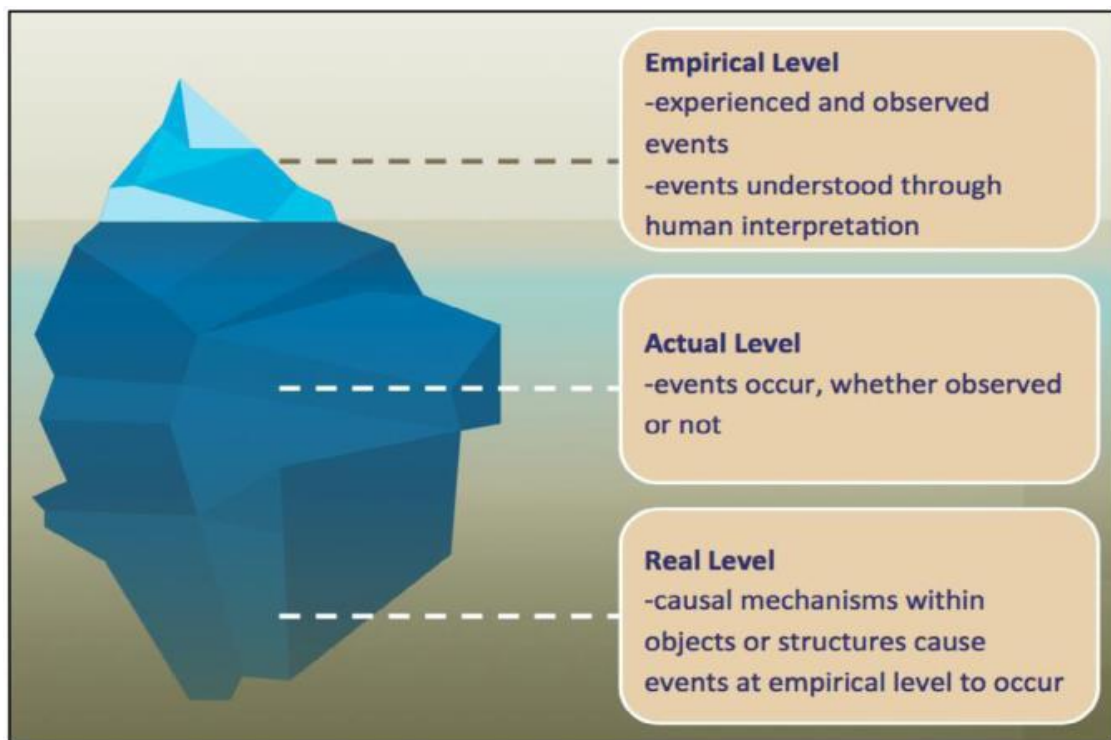
The iceberg metaphor is useful when attempting to conceptualise Bhaskar's view
of realist ontology which is comprised of three distinct layers namely, the
Empirical, the Actual and the Real (1975, 1979). In this ontological model, the
Empirical level pertains to 'the subclass of observable, experienced events and
change,' (Zachariadis et al. 2013, p 3) which are subjective and understood
through interpretation. The second layer in this 'ontological map' (Danermark et
al. 2002; p21) is the domain of the actual. This dimension is distinct from the
empirical as here, events are said to occur whether experienced or not (2002).

Similarly, the actual domain is separate from the real which is considered to be the 'deep dimension' (2002; p22).

> This domain of reality contains objects (or social processes) that possess causal powers resulting in potentially invisible mechanisms that determine actual phenomena (Lawson, 1997; Easton, 2010). This has important implications for selecting an appropriate methodological approach to research. The primary objective when pursuing critical realist research should be to 'use perceptions of empirical events to identify the mechanisms that give rise to these events', (Volkoff et al. 2007, p.835).

3.311 A Critical Realist Approach to the Current Research

When thinking how a critical realist view of reality applies to the exploration of ELSA's views, it is first necessary to better understand how this particular epistemological and ontological stance can be applied to research within the field of social sciences in general. Knowledge, whether pertaining to the natural or social sciences, is considered a social product which is developed through the generation of theories based on the conceptions of observed phenomena (Danermark et al. 2005). However, unlike with 'natural sciences', the application of a critical realist lens to social science research is more nuanced (Danermark et al. 2005), particularly in regards to using the stratified model of knowledge to describe social knowledge structures. Sayer (1992) highlights the differences between knowledge 'facts' in both the natural and social sciences. He asserts that whilst knowledge within the former is socially defined, it is on the other hand naturally produced, making its nature perhaps somewhat easier to understand. This may then in turn make it easier to theorise what the generative mechanisms impacting these were.

On the other hand, the knowledge which is often examined within the social sciences is both socially defined *and* socially produced and involves what Danermark et al. refers to as the 'double hermeneutic,' (2001, p.33). Here the role of the researcher becomes one which involves interpreting the interpretations of

others, "since other people's notions and understandings are an inseparable part of the object of study", (p. 33). I believe that this adds a level of complexity in applying a critical realist lens to my research –particularly in terms of identifying generative mechanisms, (Sayer, 1992). However, despite these differences, Danermark et al. (2001) argue that socially constructed knowledge is just as real as its counterparts in the natural sciences.

To better understand how a critical realist stratified ontology can be applied to my research I found the following definitions of the 'four modes of reality' as outlined by Fleetwood and Ackroyd (2004) useful:

Table 3.1: Four Modes of Reality (Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004)

Mode of Reality	Examples of Entities
Materially Real	Oceans, weather, moon, mountains
Ideally Real	Conceptual discourses, language, genres, tropes, beliefs, meanings, opinions
Artefactually Real	Cosmetics, computers, hole in the ozone layer
Socially Real	Practices, states of affairs or entities such as caring for children, being unemployed, social structures and organisations.

Here, it is argued that which can be considered 'real' is something which has an effect or makes a difference. For the purposes of this research, it is entities within the 'Socially Real' (arrangement and organisation of support groups, other types of support available) and the 'Ideally Real' (ELSA views) which will be the focus of further exploration. Within the definitions of reality outlined above, the 'Ideally Real' refers to entities which exist in the transitive domain (Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004). Here, knowledge is constructed socially through discourse and is

very much subject to change whenever new experiences occur or when new information is discovered. On the other hand, socially real objects-whilst also the subject of discourse-are very much dependent upon human activity for their existence, reproduction and transformation (2004). They have what Fleetwood and Ackroyd refer to as "an extra discursive element," (2004, p.33) and are therefore not reducible to discourse. They further argue that it is this understanding of social structures which sets critical realism apart from social constructionism (2004). Through a social constructionist lens, such entities are understood to be effects of language (Linstead, 2001), or representations of the meanings which are given to experience:

> For poststructuralists, it is the explanation itself that creates order, gives structure to experience. *Structure is the meaning given to experience*. Structure is immanent in the subject not in the object, in the observer not the observed…. Poststructuralists conclude that there are no real structures that give order to human affairs, but that the construction of order— of sense making— by people is what gives rise to structure. *Structure is the explanation itself*, that which *makes* sense, not that which *gives* sense. It follows from this that structure cannot be seen as determining action because it is not real and transcendent, but a product of the human mind. (Jackson and Carter, 2000: p.41 and p.43, emphasis in original)

Critical realists on the other hand argue that if this was truly the case then we could change socially real entities through changing discourse: "we could talk ourselves into a completely different set of social structures," (Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004, p 33). From a critical realist perspective, this solution would not work, as practical activity is also necessary to create change within social structures and organisations (2004).

The different modes of reality as outlined by Fleetwood and Ackroyd (2004) are situated within the deep dimension of the Real level in the context of the stratified model of ontology (2004). As such they can be viewed as entities which are operating below the surface. As mentioned earlier, it is also here where generative mechanisms are to be found, the effects of which cause events both observed and

unobserved in the empirical and actual domains. It is towards the concept of generative mechanisms that we will focus our attention on next. A brief overview of what generative mechanisms are will be provided before examining them more closely in relation to social sciences research and my research in particular.

3.312 Identifying Generative Mechanisms within the Social Sciences

According to Blom and Morén (2011), the concept of generative mechanisms is not nearly as well established within social sciences research as it is in empirical and natural sciences research (2011). When examining mechanisms in social sciences research, they argue that generative *social* mechanisms should be viewed as contextually conditioned and require subjecting to auspicious conditions in order for them to be realised in observable empirical events (2011). Blom and Morén posit that social mechanisms can be seen at the three different levels of micro, meso and macro. At each level, the social mechanisms become active through the mediation of power, social interactions and social structures. The three different levels at which mechanisms operate are summarised in the following table along with examples of the different mediating factors in operation:

Table 3.2: Three Levels of Social Mechanisms (Blom and Morén, 2011)

Three Levels of Social Mechanisms	
Level 1: Micro Social Mechanisms (powers + micro social interaction + structure = micro social mechanisms)	**Powers**: causes, motives, considerations and choices **Micro social interactions**: oral, written and/or sign language, gestures, sound, symbols and bodily contact **Structures**: e.g. role expectations relating to gender, ethnicity, religion, hierarchical position and communication technology
Level 2: Meso Social Mechanisms (powers + meso social interaction +structure = meso social mechanisms)	**Powers**: collective social actions at group and organisational level **Meso social interaction**: social interplay within and between groups, networks and organisations **Structures:** routines, e.g. bodies of regulation, documents, symbols and artefacts
Level 3: Macro Social Mechanisms (powers + macro social interaction and structure = macro social mechanisms)	**Powers**: collective social actions at societal level **Macro social interaction**: social interplay within and between societies **Structures**: e.g. bank systems, political parties, educational system, the church

This conceptualisation of the three levels of social mechanisms will be considered further in relation to processes and mechanisms relating to ELSAs views in the discussion section.

3.313 Identifying mechanisms within the current research

The purpose of the present research is to explore the views of ELSAs regarding the support they receive. In addition to identifying views and hearing the voices of ELSAs, It is also my aim to identify the mechanisms which are impacting these views- and find out what's going on below the surface (Danermark et al. 2005). According to Bhaskar (1998), the process of identifying such mechanisms at a methodological level is challenging as the mechanisms themselves are contextually dependent upon other mechanisms and produce different outcomes within different contexts. As a result, mechanisms can be used to explain phenomena but not predict it. Another potential obstacle in identifying mechanisms is that they are not usually observable (Bunge, 2004) and therefore conjecturing them is more of an art than a method. Bhaskar, offers the following advice for attempting to identify mechanisms;

> Theoretical explanation proceeds by description of significant features, retroduction to possible causes, elimination of alternatives and identification of the generative mechanism or causal structures at work. (Bhaskar, 1989: XVII)

Here Bhaskar refers to a process of retroduction, which can be described as a process of generating hypotheses about potential mechanisms to explain an outcome or observation (Danermark et al. 2005, Sayer, 2004). According to Blom and Morén (2011), the following five steps can be useful in working towards a process of retroduction to identify potential mechanisms:

Table 3.3 (Five Steps to Retroductive Critical Realist Research (Blom and Morén, 2011)

Five Steps to Retroductive Critical Realist Research	
Step 1: Observation/Description	Observe and describe the research object
Step 2: Division and Sorting	Empirical material gathered from step 1 is analysed and divided into smaller entities
Step 3: Abduction/redescription/theoretical reinterpretation	Single events/occurrences are described and interpreted as expressions of more general phenomena
Step 4: Retroduction	Identification and description of generative mechanisms that may explain a phenomena
Step 5: Contextualisation: concretisation	Description of how identified mechanisms become manifest in concrete situations and specific contexts

Danermark et al. (2005) also discuss these steps as a suitable process for identifying mechanisms, however they also emphasise that these "should be seen as a guideline and not a template to be followed to the letter" (2005, p.109). These five steps outlined above have therefore been taken into consideration and used as guide when selecting a suitable methodology for this research. The relationship between the processes outlined above is discussed in relationship to the chosen methodology later in this chapter.

3.4 Q Methodology

The rest of this chapter will focus on the methodology chosen which will include an overview of the methodology itself as well as looking more closely at its suitability for this research. It will then conclude with a brief summary of the strengths and potential problems of using Q methodology.

3.41 Background to Q Methodology

Q methodology can be understood as an evolution of factor analytic theory which was first developed by Charles Spearman. During the 1930's, Stephenson spent time working as an assistant for both Charles Spearman and Cyril Burt and played and together were responsible for the development of psychometric testing (Stainton Rogers, 1995).

However, rather than identifying correlations between variables –as factor analysis (or R methodology) is designed to do – Stephenson was instead interested in identifying correlations between subjects. In this way, Q methodology can be seen as an inversion of factor analytic theory in the way that it examines the relationships between people as opposed to relationships between tests:

> [w]hereas previously a large number of people were given a small number of tests, now we give a small number of people a large number of test-items". Correlation between personal profiles then indicates similar viewpoints, or segments of subjectivity which exist

> (Brown 1993 in Van Exel and De Graaf, 2005 p5)

The individual viewpoints of subjects are elicited through a card sorting activity (Q sort) which requires participants (also referred to as the *P* set) to rank a range of statements about a chosen topic/subject of interest (Q set) according to preference. The set of statements should represent a range of views around the topic. By sorting the statements in this way, participants are imbuing them with subjective meaning and consequently also revealing their viewpoints (Smith, 2001). The individual viewpoints gathered are then reduced to just a few factors using factor analysis to reveal shared viewpoints.

3.42 Why Q Methodology?

My reasons for selecting Q methodology in the first instance were primarily based on personal preference. The fact that this method combines both quantitative and qualitative data and analytical techniques I found to be particularly appealing. This combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches can be attractive to those who may have a background in quantitative, positivist research (Zabala et al. 2018).

 In considering my own background regarding academic research, quantitative approaches which utilise multivariate data reduction techniques are what I am most familiar with. This therefore made Q research an appealing choice. In addition to this the clear structure and systematic steps which need to be adhered to –a little like a recipe- also made this attractive. Q research's epistemological and ontological non-positivist

premises (Watts and Stenner, 2005) also drew me to the approach as this was very much in line with my positionality regarding this piece of research. I very much wanted to use a person –centred approach and gain access to and reveal participants subjectivity which Q methodology is able to facilitate (Parker and Alford, 2010). Subjectivity, 'in the lexicon of Q methodology, means nothing more than a person's communication of his or her point of view,' (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 12).

During the initial stages of planning my research I also considered thematic analysis and phenomenological approaches. However I also wanted to gather as many viewpoints as possible. Q research therefore seemed to be an ideal choice as it is 'A rich and attention-demanding technique, yielding information which has depth and breadth' (Stenner and Stainton-Rogers, 2004, p216).

3.43 The Stages of Q research

In this section I give a brief account of the sequence of stages which are typically carried out when conducting Q -methodological research. In order to better conceptualise and get an overview of the different stages I found the following diagram useful (Zabala et al, 2018):

Figure 2: Overview of Q Research (Zabala et al., 2018)
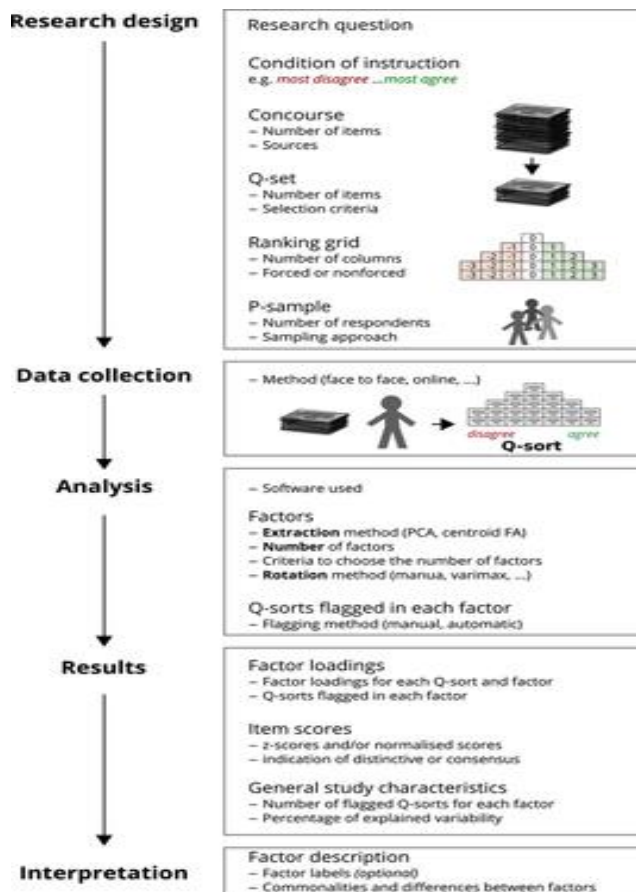
3.431 Stage One: Research Design

The first stage of Q research is concerned with the design of the research itself. This typically involves conducting a review of the literature on your chosen area of study in order to identify key themes. This information gathering process can be time consuming; however the researcher will be rewarded with a thorough understanding of the topic as well as helping in the formulation of research questions (Rhoads, 2014). Once the key themes have been identified they can then be used to inform the creation of statements that will be used in the concourse. In addition to carrying out a literature review, conducting focus groups and interviews can also be used to further identify key themes related to the topic (McParland et al. 2011).

The term *concourse* was coined by Stephenson to 'mean the totality of things that could be said regarding any topic, a potential that is theoretically infinite', (Rhodes, 2014, p3). When creating the statements that will make up the concourse, the aim is to gather as complete a range as possible on the chosen topic. It is worth noting at this point that the

statements making up the Q sort can either be structured or unstructured. Structured sorts are usually informed by themes from the literature and have the advantage of ensuring a broad and comprehensive sort (Rhoads, 2014). The next step will then be to refine the number of statements in the concourse so that the researcher ends up with a final set of statements that will cover the range of views and perspectives on the topic (McKeown and Thomas, 2013).

Although Watts and Stenner (2012) say there is no right or wrong answer in deciding how many statements to use in the final sort, they also suggest that 40-50 statements is usually satisfactory (2005). Danielson et al. (2009) meanwhile recommend using the rule of three to five statements for every participant. Kline (1994) proposes a numerical formula to calculate the required number of statements, whilst Hughes (2016) recommends 40-60 statements as being a manageable number.

3.4311 Selecting participants

When selecting the group of participants for the research (known as the P set), purposive sampling techniques should be employed to identify and recruit groups who are linked to the chosen area of research (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The ideal group of participants should ideally reflect the range of views identified for the chosen topic (Stenner et al. 2008).

3.432 Stage Two: Collecting Data

In this next stage of the research, participants are invited to complete the Q sorting activity. They are first presented with a condition of instruction which provides information as to how to complete the Q sort (McKeown and Thomas, 2013). Participants are then given an opportunity to read through and examine the set of statements before arranging them onto a forced choice frequency grid. This dictates to participants exactly how many statements can be placed within specific ranks on a continuum of agree-disagree. An alternative to this is to instead use a free distribution grid which will allow for the placement of as many statements as they desire along the continuum (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Once the Q sort has been completed it is recommended that the researcher conducts a post-sort interview which will provide participants with the opportunity to discuss the placement of statements should they wish.

3.433 Stage Three: Data Entry and Analysis

In order to analyse the data, a suitable statistical software package is required, examples of which include PQMethod (Schmolck, 2003) or PCQ for Windows (Stricklin, 2004). These examples are considered to be popular programs and enable the researcher to carry out the identification, extraction and rotation of factors (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

Once the data from the Q sorts has been entered into the program a factor analysis can be carried out to reduce the data to just a few factors. A decision will need to be made at this point whether the analysis carried out is a Centroid Factor Analysis (CFA) or a Principal Component Analysis (PCA). There are advantages and disadvantages to both methods. PCA is the most commonly used method as it considers both specificity and commonality (Webler et al. 2009). On the other hand, CFA is often recommended and cited as the most popular amongst Q researchers as it allows for hand rotation of factors at a later stage in the analysis. This provides the researcher with an opportunity for a more detailed exploration of the data and an abductive engagement with the process of factor rotation. (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

A decision will also need to be made regarding the number of factors to be extracted. There are a number of recommendations made as to the ideal number. For example, Brown speaks of "The magic number 7" (Brown, 1980, p.223). Watts and Stenner (2012) agree that this may be a good place to start, however they also suggest selecting one factor for every six to eight participants as a rule (Watts and Stenner, 2005).

The next stage is then to rotate the factors. This can be likened to changing the viewpoint from which the results are observed (Zabala, 2018). Once again, the researcher is faced with a choice here regarding whether to employ a varimax rotation, hand rotation or a combination of both. Both varimax and hand rotation methods have their advantages. Varimax is cited as being the most suitable for the novice researcher, however, hand rotation 'reserves a key place for the substantive reality,' (Watts and Stenner, 2012, p123)

3.434 Stage Four: Interpretation of Factors

The final stage of Q research involves creating a narrative around the viewpoints that have been elicited.

3.44 Strengths and Limitations of Q Methodology

Although ultimately, the final decision to use Q methodology was a matter of personal preference, I found it was helpful to compile a list of the strengths and weaknesses of this methodology to aid my decision.

3.441 Strengths of Q

➢ In comparisons to other methodologies which aim to measure attitudes and subjective opinion, Q can be considered to be a robust and far-reaching technique that incorporates the concepts and principles of positivist, scientific research methods bridging both quantitative and qualitative paradigms of enquiry.

➢ It is a flexible approach to research which can be used in a range of settings covering an unlimited range of subjects (Stainton Rogers, 1995).

➢ It allows for the elicitation and collection of multiple voices which include the marginalised as well as dominant ones and does so anonymously thus respecting the integrity of participants.

➢ Opportunities for post-sort interviews and discussions during Q-sorts can aide interpretation as well as add richness to the final extracted factors

➢ 'Even a less than ideal Q-set, because it invites active configuration by participants ('effort after meaning') may still produce useful results (Watts and Stenner, 2005, p76).

➢ Q-sorts can be flexible and differentiated to meet the needs of participants as required, e.g. with the use of short phrases, pictures or single words rather than longer worded statements (Hughes, 2016).

➢ There are clear processes and guidelines to follow for both data collection and analysis providing a structure for expression.

3.442 Limitations of Q

➢ Participants can only respond to the research questions using the statements provided which could potentially result in limited accounts. The creation of broad and balanced range of statements through a thorough review of the literature is therefore essential in order to represent the full range of possible viewpoints.

➢ As the interpretation of factors lies solely with the researcher, an appropriate level of analytical skills is required in order to formulate hypotheses from the data whilst being mindful for the potential for bias (Pope et al., 1995).

➢ It is not the aim of Q methodology to generate results that are generalisable to large populations (Stenner, 2012) and therefore, viewpoints can only be attributed to the study sample (Wright, 2013).

➢ Participants responses may be influenced by perceptions of what is socially and culturally acceptable (participant response bias) as opposed to being true reflections of subjective views (Butler-Coyne et al. 2011). However it could also be argued that this is also true of any qualitative approach which involves interviewing.

3.5 Q Methodology and Critical Realism

Q research is commonly cited as being a method very much associated with constructivism (in the US), and constructionism (in the UK and Europe) due to its ability to identify "social viewpoints and knowledge structures relative to a chosen subject matter," (Watts and Stenner, 2012, p42). Additionally, the process of factor analysis which is undertaken allows for the understanding and explication of the main discourses and knowledge structures underpinning the data rendering them "empirically observable," (2012, p44). I would argue that it is these same merits of Q that make this particular methodology a suitable choice for exploring ELSA's viewpoints from a critical realist stance. By gathering and exploring the range of viewpoints, I would hopefully be able to uncover and make observable the socially real structures and potential mechanisms at the micro, meso and macro levels of the deep dimension.

The abductive processes involved in Q research also align well with the suggested five steps of critical realism research outlined earlier. To illustrate this, I have created a visual

map which shows how the steps within my Q methodological research correspond with the five steps recommended by Blom and Morén (2011) (see Figure 3). It should be noted here that the steps relating to Q in the diagram should be read sequentially in numerical order:

A Retroductive Model of Q Research

Step1:Observation/description

1) Review of literature/focus groups

4) Conduct individual Q sorts

Step 2: Division/ sorting

2) Generation of general categories/important themes for ELSA support

5) Factor analysis

Step 3:Abduction/redescription

2) Generation of general categories/important themes for ELSA support (continued)

3) Creation of final Q sort statements pertaining to themes

6) Description of factors

Step 4: Retroduction

7) Identification of mechanisms impacting ELSAs views of support

Step 5: Contextualisation

8) How these mechanisms impact ELSA views. Also implications for ELSAs, EPs and schools in the future

As you can see from the above diagram, steps 1, 2 and 3 of the five step process correspond not only with steps 1, 2 and 3,of the Q research procedure, but also with steps 4, 5 and 6. An abductive process had been used to identify key themes and ideas arising from the literature and the focus groups pertaining to ELSA support. These then were then used to create the final set of statements.

It was then necessary to return to the first of the five steps (observation, description) to gather the views. Once the factor analysis and creation of resulting final factors had been identified in step 2 (division and sorting), abduction was again used to identify the key viewpoints and create a narrative around them in step 3. Step 4 then involved identifying knowledge and social structures (ideally real and socially real) and attempting to uncover the mechanisms which were potentially mediating these to impact ELSA views.

The final stage - step 8 – involved "connecting tentative assumptions about mechanisms to concrete examples in the empirical material" (Blom and Moren, 2011 p.73). More specifically for this research, it would involve connecting identified mechanisms and socially real structures to ELSA views and opinions and the potential impact they may have had. It would also mean examining them in terms of their implications for ELSAs, schools and EPs in the future.

3.6 Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

When thinking about the criteria with which to measure the quality and integrity of this research, it is important to remember that a divide exists between qualitative and quantitative approaches. It has been argued that the traditionally used criteria of validity, reliability and generalisability cannot be applied to qualitative research in the same way as it can with quantitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Morrow, 2005). Unfortunately however, common understanding of what makes 'good' research is still very much bound up with scientific measures and criteria arising from positivist paradigms (Tracy, 2010).

Just as there are difficulties in applying such criteria to qualitative research, problems also arise when attempting to evaluate Q methodological research, which contains elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches;

Despite being statistically identical to many other forms of psychometrics, for us, Q methodology lays no claim to be measuring anything, and hence adopts a completely different relationship to questions of validity and reliability (it makes no sense to ask if you are measuring what you intend to be measuring if measuring is not your intention). (Stenner and Stainton-Rogers, 2004, p102)

When discussing the issues in using the above mentioned criteria for measuring qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (2005) they describe the process as being akin to having 'Catholic questions directed to a Methodist audience' (p. 202). Instead, they offer a parallel set of criteria involving assessing research against transferability, dependability and confirmability (2005). Many qualitative researchers have argued that criteria for judging quality and integrity should be defined according to specific paradigms, qualitative methods or theories (Denzin, 2008; Ellingson, 2010; Golafshani, 2003; Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Building on this, Cresswell (2007) puts forward unique sets of criteria for five different qualitative methods.

Navigating through and deciding on an appropriate set of criteria to use with the current research has on this occasion led me to the Eight "Big Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research as outlined by Tracy (2010) as an additional measure of integrity (see appendix A). This alternative set of evaluative criteria is proposed by Tracy to be 'eight universal hallmarks for high quality qualitative methods across paradigms' (Tracy, 2010 p. 837). Through the application of these hallmarks, I hoped that I would be able to successfully answer the following question;

Are these findings sufficiently authentic…that I (and research participants) may trust myself in acting on their implications? More to the point, would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them? (Guba and Lincoln, 2005 p205)

In addition to using the criteria outlined by Tracy (2010), I also considered how the traditional criteria of validity, reliability and generalisability could still be applied to evaluate the present research. It is these that we will turn to next.

3.61 Validity

When discussing the validity of research, we are usually referring to 'The accuracy of a result' (Robson, 2002, p100) which is very much focused on concepts such as skewed responses and bias. Again this set of criteria is geared very much towards the measurement of results within quantitative research and not Q methodology. However, there are some steps which can be taken towards assessing and ensuring validity in Q studies. For example, Akhtar-Danesh et al. (2008) suggest checking the readability of statements to increase the level of face validity. Similarly, conducting both a thorough review of the literature and pilot studies can enhance concept validity (2008). Taking a reflexive approach conducting Q sorts and its subsequent analysis could also successfully minimise the influence of the researcher or researcher bias.

3.62 Reliability

According to Van Exel and De Graaf (2005), replicability of similar viewpoints and factors is the most important type of reliability for Q studies. Assertions have been made that test-retest procedures can be used to measure the reliability of Q studies, (Amin, 2000). From a critical realist (or even a social constructionist) standpoint, it could be argued that this would not necessarily be a suitable method as participants viewpoints could potentially change over time and in different contexts due to their transient nature as 'ideally real entities'. Brown (1980) however is commonly cited due to his findings of a high correlation coefficient of 0.80 between tests and retests in Q research. Similarly, Watts (2009) reported a correlation of 0.86 between the results of studies on love carried out in 1997 and 2005.

3.63 Generalisability

Like many other qualitative methods, generalisability is not an important consideration in Q methodology (Goldman, 1990). Instead, the aim of Q sorting is to sample a range of perspectives and views rather than sampling populations of people (Ted Klooster et al, 2008; Darwin and Campbell, 2009; Cross, 2005). An alternative evaluative criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is that of transferability. Here "the burden of proof

lies with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere," (p 298). To ensure transferability, it is therefore my responsibility to ensure sufficient information is provided so that others are able to successfully apply this to their own research on different populations and within different contexts.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed my position as a researcher adopting a critical realist approach to the nature of the information and knowledge I am trying to uncover. The aim of this study is to gather the views of ELSAs regarding the support they receive for their role. It is hoped that an exploration of the views gathered will allow the identification of the generative mechanisms underlying them. This chapter also explores Q methodology and includes a brief overview of the methodology and its origins as well as the rationale for why it was chosen. Finally, this chapter explored the evaluative criteria of validity, reliability and generalisability. It briefly explored some of the difficulties in applying such criteria to qualitative methods before looking at how these may be addressed in Q methodology to produce a high quality piece of research.

The focus of the next chapter will be to give a more detailed, step-by-step account of how the research was designed, carried out and analysed.

Chapter 4

Procedure

The following chapter will describe the steps undertaken in this Q methodological study as identified by Stenner et al., (2008):

1. Formulate the research question
2. Generate the Q set
3. Select the participants
4. Collect the Q sort data
5. Analyse the Q sort data
6. Interpret the factors

In addition to the above steps, quality issues, ethical considerations, time management and logistics as well as dissemination of results will also be considered briefly. I have chosen to omit step 1 at this point as this has already been addressed within the literature review prior to deciding upon the methodology.

4.1 Generating the Q set and Q sort Grid

The generation of the Q set was achieved by collecting data from multiple sources. Firstly, a thorough review of the relevant literature concerning ELSA support was conducted. This gave me a broad set of overarching themes and potential viewpoints. Once I had received ethical approval (see Appendix B) I was able to explore these viewpoints further with a focus group of ELSAs using questions developed from the identified themes (see Appendix C).

By developing the concourse using both the relevant literature and consulting with ELSAs I felt that I was able to achieve saturation point with the range of views on this topic. The information gathered from the focus group and the literature review was then used to develop categories concerning the different aspects of ELSA support. These were achieved by grouping together the viewpoints gathered into distinct themes as much as possible. This resulted in six distinct categories which were as follows:

- Group attendance and influencing factors

- Content of support sessions

- Size and dynamics of the group itself

- Benefits of support sessions

- External support

- The role of the EP

Potential Q statements were then assigned to the different categories after which the final statements were selected from each category. By assigning statements to the categories in this way, I was able to ensure there was no duplication or omission of possible viewpoints. I was also able to ensure there was a good balance in the number of statements within each category and that the important aspects of the concourse were represented in the final set.

Watts & Stenner (2012) recommend that opinion statements are continued to be gathered until saturation point has been reached, at which point any new statements added to the concourse will not add further diversity. Once this point has been reached my next step was to reduce the number of statements down to a more manageable number. Brown (1980) wrote that a Q sample of 40 – 60 items is usually sufficient.

The next stage was to carry out a pilot study with the aim of trialling the Q set to identify any potential issues. I was particularly interested to know whether there were any issues with the wording of the statements and coverage and balance of the sample items. The pilot was conducted with two ELSAs and two EPs so that I could gather views about the Q set from both perspectives. Following the pilot study I was able to reduce the number of statements down from 60 to 39 (see Appendix D) as feedback suggested that the initial number of statements was overwhelming and many of the statements were very similar in nature. The end result was a refined Q set that would leave participants feeling that they had been able to model and express their viewpoints successfully.

Once the final Q set was complete my next task was to create the distribution grid which would be used to sort and rank the statements. I made the decision to use a forced choice distribution as this provides a convenient and practical way for participants to rank items (Watts and Stenner, 2012). This is also the style of distribution grid most commonly used in Q research (2012).

When creating the Q grid, a near-normal, symmetrical distribution was used in which negative values were assigned to the left side of the grid (most disagree) starting at -6 at the extreme left and positive values to the right (most agree) starting at +6. The final design for the distribution grid can be seen in figure 4;

Figure 4: Q Sort Grid

Most disagree
(least agree)

Most agree

(-6) (-5)   (5)   (6)

      (-4) (-3) (-2)   (2)   (3)   (4)

                  (-1)   (1)

                      (0)
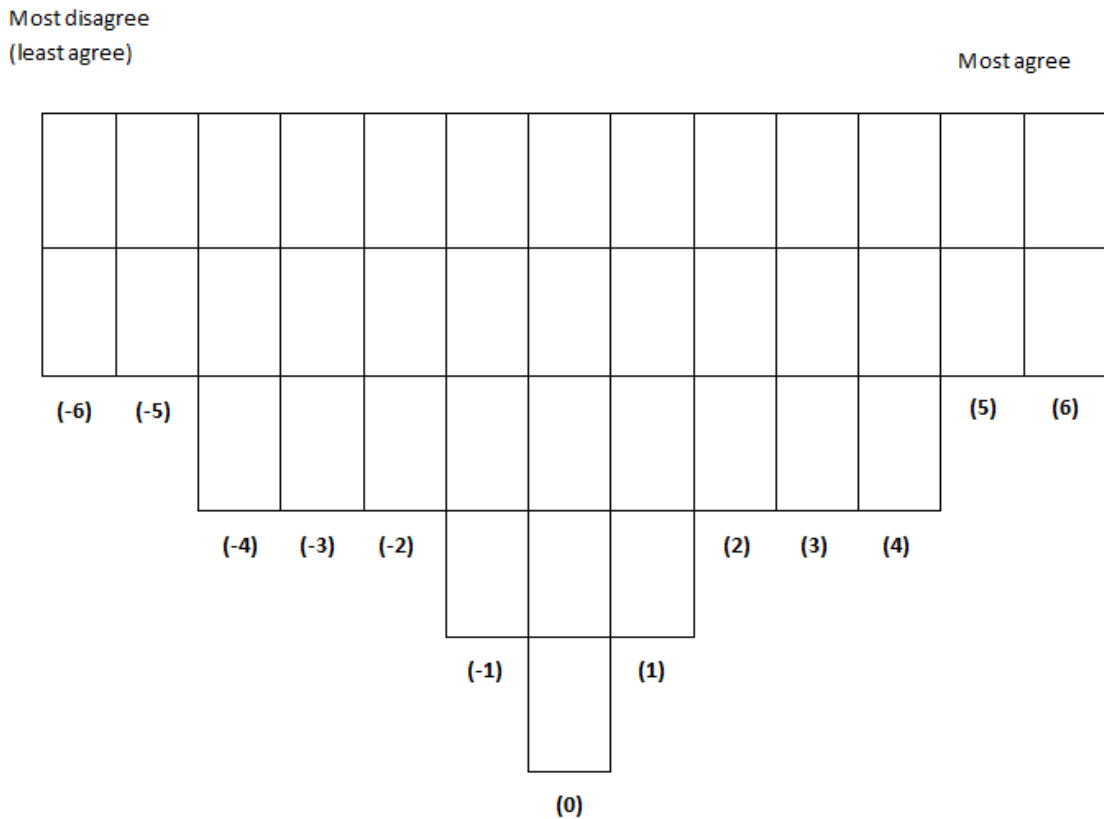
A decision was taken not to assign numerical values to the distribution grid used by participants. My reason for this was to avoid a situation where participants potentially felt uncomfortable about negatively ranking statements. As such, the distribution grid used in the sorting activities is simply labelled 'most disagree' and 'most agree' at either poles of the grid.

4.2 Selecting Participants

The participants for this research were purposively sampled and drawn specifically from trained ELSAs working within a specific local authority. All of the ELSAs who took part in this research had been trained within the chosen local authority and were female.

I was able to recruit a total of 30 ELSAs to complete the Q sort activity. I felt that this was the minimum number I needed to ensure an adequate range of viewpoints. I had hoped to recruit participants from both primary and secondary schools settings; however I found it difficult to get participants from the latter group. As a result, the majority of participants who took part were based in primary school settings.

When recruiting participants for the Q sort I contacted ELSAs directly via email (see Appendix E) and subsequently arranged suitable dates and times to visit settings and meet with participants. Information sheets providing further details about the research (see Appendix F) were also sent out to ELSAs along with participant consent forms (see Appendix G) which needed to be completed prior to taking part in the research.

4.3 Collecting Q sort data

Before engaging with the Q sort, participants were again briefed about the purpose of the research and completed consent forms were collected. Participants were then asked to generate their unique identification code which was recorded on the Q sort record sheet (see Appendix H) and the pre – sort questionnaire (see Appendix I). The purpose of the pre-sort questionnaire was to gather data about the following:

- ➢ Length of time trained as an ELSA
- ➢ Approximate number of hours a week spent working as an ELSA
- ➢ Qualifications/Educational background
- ➢ Type of setting and age range working with
- ➢ Number of years worked in education
- ➢ Previous/additional roles within current setting
- ➢ Gender

To aid the participants in successfully completing the Q sort, a Conditions of Instruction sheet was provided (see Appendix J). I made the decision to carry out the Q sorts either individually or in groups of two where there were a number of ELSAs in one setting. This allowed for time to question participants during and after the sort to gather additional information about their views. I had previously considered carrying out the Q sorts in groups of five or six; however after further consideration I felt that this could potentially make post –sort interviews more difficult and have a negative impact on the quality and richness of information gathered.

Post –sort interviews were carried out in order to gather further information about participant's interpretation and views of the sort. This information was then used to support the interpretation of factors during the data analysis.

4.4 Analysis of Q sorts

Once all the Q sorts had been completed the data was then analysed using software specifically designed for the analysis of Q data. For the purpose of this study I used PQMethod as suggested by Watts & Stenner (2012).

The first step of the analysis was to calculate a correlation matrix of all the Q sorts completed. The purpose of this is to get an overview of the level of (dis)agreement between the individual Q sorts (Van Exel & de Graf, 2005). Once this had been carried out, the next step was to run a factor analysis on the data. The purpose of the factor analysis is to examine the (dis)similarities to participants sorting of the Q statements (Herrington and Coogan, 2011). There are several options to choose when considering running a factor analysis which were described in Chapter three. After careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages for both PCA and CFA I decided to proceed using the latter option.

Once the factor analysis was complete, the factors were rotated in order to view the range of perspectives from different angles, the end result being a set of factors that will be highly (un)correlated with each other (Van Exel & de Graf, 2005). To carry out the factor rotation, I decided to use the Varimax algorithm followed by a slight hand rotation. My rationale for this is the reported suitability of this method for the inexperienced Q researcher (Van Exel & de Graf, 2005).

When deciding on the number of factors to use in the interpretation of the data I referred to the criteria of clarity, simplicity, stability and distinctness, as outlined by Webler et al. (2009). Whilst there is no strict rule as to how many factors to use, there are some points that do need to be considered. For example, Van Exel & de Graf (2005) state that it can be advantageous to take more factors through to the next stage than planned as this will help to preserve a high level of variance (2005). Brown specifies the number 7 as being the "magic number" of factors to take through. (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

The final set of factors were then further examined by looking at the normalised factor scores (Z scores) and identifying both high and low ranking statements. This subsequently led to the identification of primary, secondary and tertiary themes which could then be interpreted so that a narrative around the themes could be constructed.

4.5 Quality Issues

I anticipated that there would be potential problems due to the following factors:

> Positionality; my positionality within the research may have potentially impacted the quality and validity of the viewpoints expressed by ELSAs. Whilst I would not class my research as "insider research" I do have some involvement with the supervision of ELSAs working in schools where I am the link-EP. As a result I also have responsibility for running one of the ELSA support groups along with another EP. I initially had some concerns that my position may affect the views of the participants within my link schools to particularly in regards to them potentially feeling unable to honestly express their views about the support they receive. However, I believe that the Q Sort process is not immediately revealing and the factoral results not foreseeable. This could potentially reduce the feelings of disclosure the participants may experience – making the Q Method respectful of the participants integrity of opinion (Peritore, 1989). By using Q, participants were provided with a safe space that enabled them to express their opinions about a full range of views without being unduly influenced by my position as a trainee EP working within the authority. Another potential benefit of using this particular group of participants is that both the EP and I have "insider knowledge" regarding both them and their supervision sessions. It is hoped that this knowledge will facilitate a deeper analysis and understanding of

the data. Additionally, it may also prove to be a useful tool for my colleague and I to evaluate the support we are providing. In light of these arguments I decided not to exclude this group of ELSAs from the research.

➢ Understanding of "supervision". After both reviewing the relevant literature about the ELSA programme and working within an authority running it, I became aware that the term "Supervision" is used frequently to describe the support offered by EPs to ELSAs. It is at present unclear as to what ELSAs understanding of supervision is, whether this is conceptualised as *Professional Supervision* as defined by BPS Guidelines (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) and how this compares to the support offered to them through the group sessions. With this in mind I feel it would be more appropriate to use the term *support* when referring to ELSA supervision although I did explore participants understanding of *supervision* during post –sort interviews. Again, this was then used to support the interpretation of factors during the data analysis.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

My research did not require participation from any vulnerable or at-risk groups, nor were there any participants for whom taking part would be problematic. There was also no collection of any sensitive information.

To ensure all data remained anonymous, participant consent forms (see Appendix G) were stored separately from completed questionnaires and Q sorts. There was also no identifying information on any of the questionnaires or Q sorts themselves. Participants were however asked to generate a unique code made up of the initials of their mother's maiden name and numbers from their date of birth which were then linked to their completed Q Sort as well pre and post sort data.

This was to ensure the correct data can be removed should any of the participants choose to withdraw from the study.

To guarantee confidentiality, all hard data was stored securely in a locked filing cabinet that only I have access to. Electronic data was stored on a password protected computer. The only people handling the data at any point was my research supervisor and myself.

To avoid any issues of coercion, participants were informed that taking part in this research was voluntary. They were also given full details regarding the purpose of the study and informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point up until three weeks prior to the project's submission date (see Appendix F). Upon completion of the research, participants received detailed feedback about the findings from the research.

It was anticipated that there would be no reason why participation should cause any distress. However, the contact details of my supervisor, the chair of the ethics committee, my fieldwork supervisor and myself were made available should any of the participants have had any concerns or queries about the study.

Time constraints on participants was also another issue. I am confident however, that the impact on participant time was minimal. The focus group took place during one of the group support sessions. To ensure that ELSAs did not miss out on support during these sessions I arranged to extend the support session to account for time dedicated for the focus group discussion. The Q sorts themselves took between 30-60 minutes to complete on average. This included time allocated for pre-sort questionnaires and post sort interviews. To minimise the impact on ELSA's time I travelled to the different settings to meet with the ELSAs for the purpose of carrying gathering the data. I also endeavoured to arrange the sorting activity during a time of the participant's choosing.

4.7 Time Management and Logistics

Once ethical approval had been given, developing the Q Concourse-and the subsequent set of statements was relatively straightforward and there were no setbacks during this initial stage. I did however recognise that the creation of the concourse and Q set would be a time-consuming process as is typical with Q studies. I also anticipated that carrying out the Q sorts themselves would also take a considerable amount of time, particularly as I had planned on carrying out the majority of the Q sorts with participants on an individual basis. I had originally hoped to be in a position of having completed the data collection using the Q sort by the end of the Autumn term 2018 however this took slightly longer than anticipated due to delays caused by postponements and rescheduling of appointments. As a result, I did not finish collecting the data until February 2019.

4.8 Dissemination of Results

I hope to provide feedback regarding the research findings to ELSAs via email as well as giving them the opportunity to discuss the findings during future ELSA support groups in the summer term. I have also arranged to feedback and discuss the results of the research to the EP Team during an upcoming EP Team development day in June 2019.

Chapter 5

Results

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will describe the process of analysis which was necessary to obtain my final three Factor solution. The Factor arrays are presented along with a more detailed interpretation of each factor.

5.2 Analysis

The Q-sort interviews resulted in 30 Q-Sorts completed by ELSAs of whom 29 were based in primary settings and one in secondary. Although a concerted effort was made to recruit participants from secondary schools I found this very difficult to achieve. The potential reasons and implications for this will be explored further in the Discussion section of this research.

When conducting my data analysis I used Schmolck and Brown's 'PQMethod' software, (Schmolck, 2003). Before beginning to analyse the data it was first necessary to enter each of the 30 completed Q-sorts into the programme before performing an initial analysis of the data using CFA. When deciding how many factors to extract, Watts and Stenner (2005) recommend extracting one factor for every six to eight participants. Using this guidance, I decided to run the initial factor analysis using five factors based on the fact that I had thirty participants in total. By analysing the un-rotated factor matrix (see Appendix K) I was able to look more closely at the data to find the ideal number of factors to extract. To do this I used the following three guiding principles outlined by Watts and Stenner (2005):

- ➢ Each factor should have an Eigenvalue greater than 1:00
- ➢ Two or more significant sorts loading on to each factor. The significance level for this data set was calculated using the following formula:

= 2.58 x (1 ÷√no. of items in Q set)

= 2.58 x (1 ÷√39)

= 2.58 x (1 ÷ 6.2449)

= 2.58 x 0.1601

=0.41

- ➢ Humphreys Rule which states that a factor can be considered significant when the total of the two highest loadings for that factor exceed twice the standard error.

Only four out of my five un-rotated factors met the above criteria so my next step was to run the factor analysis again with only four factors, the resulting matrix can be seen in Appendix L.

The next step in the analysis was to carry out a varimax rotation of the four factors to identify the number of sorts which were loading onto each factor. Rotating the factors allows the researcher to view the expressed viewpoints from different angles and perspectives but does not change the relationships between the Q Sorts (Van Exel & de Graf, 2005). A slight hand rotation was then carried out to ensure the maximum number of participants loaded onto as few factors as possible. The final output was then produced showing a three factor solution in which a total of twenty eight participants loaded on to three factors as can be seen in Appendix M.

5.3 Factor Arrays

Before embarking upon the process of describing and interpreting the factors, it was first important to create factor arrays for each of the final three factors (See table 5.1) as these would form the basis of subsequent factor interpretations (Watts and Stenner, 2005). A factor array can be best described as "A single Q sort, configured to represent the viewpoints of a particular factor," (Watts and Stenner, 2005 p140). The purpose of the factor array is to show what an idealised Q sort for that factor would look like based

on the average weighted score (Z score) for each of the statements that define that particular factor (Van Exel & de Graf, 2005).

Whilst Watts and Stenner (2005) argue that producing factor arrays is not essential, they can be useful in supporting factor interpretation. They can also be helpful for the audience in that they can make it somewhat easier to understand the results as they "Conform to the format in which the data were originally collected." (Brown, 1980, p.243). Upon further consideration of this, I also created idealised Q sorts for each individual factor to further support their interpretation. These can be seen in Appendices O, P and Q).

Table 5.1 Factor Arrays for Final three factors

Statement number	Statement	F1	F2	F3
1	Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs	-1	1	2
2	Each support session is long enough to meet my needs	0	-2	1
3	It is essential to attend every ELSA support session	-3	-4	-4
4	I find time allocated to sharing resources in the sessions useful	2	0	4
5	I find time allocated to group problem solving in the sessions is useful	3	1	4
6	I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development	4	1	3
7	ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions	1	4	5
8	The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me	2	4	4
9	I am able to attend each support session	-6	-4	3
10	It is difficult for me to be released for each support session	6	0	-5
11	I would like to attend each support session	6	-3	5
12	The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs	4	0	-3
13	I feel comfortable with the size of my support group	0	0	1
14	The size of my support group is big enough to work well together	0	-2	-1
15	I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support sessions	-2	-3	2
16	It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used	5	6	6
17	I feel that the EPs running my support sessions are monitoring my performance as an ELSA	-4	-6	-4
18	The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working	0	-1	0
19	The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the sessions	-3	-2	-1
20	The EPs running my group are easily contactable outside of the sessions	-2	-1	2

21	The support sessions have helped me to develop my skills as an ELSA	-1	2	3
22	The support sessions have helped me to develop my confidence as an ELSA	1	3	0
23	The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness	-1	-3	-2
24	The sessions encourage me to develop different viewpoints about issues that we discuss	3	4	-1
25	The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour	3	2	1
26	The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach difficult situations	4	5	1
27	I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group	-4	-4	-3
28	I feel like an outsider within my support group	-4	-5	-5
29	The other members of my support group are supportive	0	3	0
30	I feel I always have an opportunity to get support in the sessions about any issues I have	-1	1	0
31	Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution in the sessions	-3	-1	0
32	The sessions are sometimes dominated by one or two individual members	2	3	-3
33	I find it useful to access support from my line manager to help me in my role as ELSA	-6	6	-4
34	I find it useful to access support from other ELSAs in my school area to help me in my role as ELSA	1	2	-2
35	I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA	1	-1	-2
36	I find it useful to access support from the school wellbeing worker to help me in my role as ELSA	5	5	6
37	I find it difficult to access support to help me in my ELSA role	-5	-5	-6
38	I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school	-5	-6	-6
39	I would welcome more input from the EPs in the support sessions	-2	0	-1

Once the Factor arrays for the final three factors had been created, it was then important to examine the correlations between each of the factor arrays to examine how (un)correlated to each other they are (see table 5.2)

Table 5.2: Correlations between factor arrays

	1	2	3
1	1.0000	0.5164	0.5229
2	0.5164	1.0000	0.5000
3	0.5229	0.5000	1.0000

As can be seen from the above correlation matrix the factor arrays are all highly correlated with one another. This is not considered desirable as it can suggest that they do not necessarily show three distinct viewpoints but rather one or two very similar ones. (Watts and Stenner, 2012). However, Webler et al. (2009) argue that whilst low correlations are preferable, high correlations can be acceptable in some instances. For example, it may be that despite a level of agreement on some statements within the concourse, it may be that there are important points of disagreement which form important aspects of the viewpoint of each factor. With this in mind, I felt that a closer inspection of my data was necessary. Crib sheets were therefore then produced to identify the highest/lowest ranking statements for each factor (see Appendix N) and allow for a more holistic interpretation of factors (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

In addition to identifying highest and lowest ranking statements, the crib sheets were also used to categorise and inspect distinguishing and consensus statements for each factor. Distinguishing statements are those which have a significantly different ranking in one factor compared to the others. Conversely, consensus statements are those which have been identified as having a similar ranking across two or more factors. Both distinguishing and consensus statements are useful in supporting the identification of similarities and differences between factors (Van Exel, 2005). The distinguishing factors for each factor can be seen in Appendix N. Consensus statements for the three factors are discussed further in chapter six. Further exploration of the statement rankings for each factor showed there were in fact distinct viewpoints emerging and despite the high correlation between factors I felt it was acceptable to continue with the three factor solution.

5.4 Interpretation of factors

Upon completion of the numerical analysis I began the task of looking qualitatively at the statements themselves in order to identify a coherent theme or distinct point of view running through each factor. Once this had been achieved I was then able to construct a narrative informed by the statements. The narratives are presented in the first person with the aim of 'bringing to life' the viewpoints for each factor. Statements from the Q sorts are referenced with brackets indicating the statement number and its placement on the grid. Direct quotes from participants recorded during post-sort interviews have also been included in italics along with a corresponding participant code.

For each factor interpretation the first number in each set of brackets refers to the statement number, whilst the second number corresponds to its ranking. Direct quotations from post-sort interviews appear in italics.

5.41 Factor 1: Summary

Peer support is vital in helping me in my role, without which I would feel isolated.

5.411 Statistical Summary and Contextual Information

Eight participants significantly loaded on to Factor 1. Factor 1 has an Eigenvalue of 4.5 and explains 15% of the total variance. The participants varied significantly in the number of hours per week they had allocated to the ELSA role, ranging from 'no official allocated time', to 4.5 hours per week. All of the participants had other primary roles in school with three working as general Teaching Assistants (TA), four working as Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA), and one who worked as a Pastoral Lead. The mean number of hours regarding number of hours spent on ELSA work for participants loading on to Factor 1 is 4.5 per week. The number of years since participants had completed their ELSA training ranged from three to eight. All of the participants had a least five years' experience working in education. The mean number of years' experience for this group of participants was 11.

5.412 Viewpoint (First Person Narrative)

The support sessions I have been able to attend have been really useful. I would really like to attend each session (11, +6) but I'm not able to unfortunately (9, -6). I find it very difficult to be released (10, +6) as *I'm usually having to cover a class or supporting children in lessons when the sessions are on* (BR25). When I have been able to attend, I've really valued the advice and support offered (26, +4). *They're a good opportunity to off-load and ask for support about what direction to go with ELSA support. It's also validating to realise that actually I am doing a good job!* (MA21)

The group problem solving activities are quite useful (5, +3). I think they have helped me to develop different viewpoints (24, +3) and changed the way I think about a child's behaviour (25, +3). However because I can't attend regularly I find it most useful when the sessions are used for information giving and development (6, +4). I couldn't really say that they've made a massive difference to my skills as an ELSA (21, -1) or that the EPs have encouraged me to develop new ways of working (18, 0). *I think that's because I haven't been to enough of the sessions though* (MA21). I also couldn't say for sure whether the ELSAs are consulted about the content of future sessions (7, +1). *They probably are – I seem to remember being asked whenever I've been – but I wouldn't know if this happened every time* (BA16). I do think they should be consulted though, absolutely (16, +5). I wouldn't say I always have an opportunity to get support (30, -1) or an equal chance to make a contribution (31, -3). *Again I am just basing it on the few sessions I've been to so don't know if this is always the case. I think there's a lot to cram in to the sessions so if there are a lot of ELSAs there this would be really hard and impossible for the EPs to check I get everything I need from the sessions* (RE17), (19, -3.) I also think the sessions are valued by other ELSAs (12, +4). *I think the other ELSAs in schools would value them anyway but I don't really know any of the other ELSAs who go to the sessions and haven't made any good links here (WI19)*, (27, -4).

I don't find it difficult to access support (37, -5) which is why I don't think it's essential to attend every support session (3, -3). *There has been a lot of discussion on the ELSA Facebook page recently about whether you are able to call yourself an ELSA if you're not having supervision. It seems like a bit of a grey area* (MA21). On a day-to day basis, I find it really useful to access support from the school well-being worker (36, +5). *I've built up a good relationship with her and*

I email her a lot. She sends me some really useful information and resources (MA21). *I think my biggest source of support though is being able to talk to the other ELSAs in school. I think it's because of this that I don't feel isolated* (BR25), (38, -5). *I think I would if I was the only ELSA in school. We catch up whenever we can and talk about how things are going. This job can be really hard and it's good to talk things through with someone who knows what you're going through. We could really do with an hour or so every week to meet and talk through how everything's going with the ELSA work!* (MA21). *The ELSA Facebook group is also a really good place to get support. I don't think there is anywhere else that I'm able to get support* (MA13). *I don't really know the EPs running the support group very well* (15, -2) *and wouldn't know how to contact them (TA08),* (20, -2). I also don't find it useful to access support from my line manager (33,-6) *as I don't feel she has a good understanding of the ELSA role* (RE17).*I don't feel anyone in school really knows what ELSAs do other than the well-being worker and the other ELSAs* (MA21). *People will say to you, "can you just do a bit of ELSA with that child" and I don't think they understand how we work* (BR25). *It definitely feels like it's getting harder. There seems to be more and more children being referred to us that have so much going on and lots of difficulties* (BE16).*The ELSA time feels like it's getting squeezed though. I have to juggle a lot of different hats!* (BR25).

5.42 Factor 2: Summary

Robust and effective support networks in place from different sources

5.421 Statistical Summary and Contextual Information

Ten participants load onto Factor 2. Factor 2 has an Eigenvalue of 6.00 and explains 20% of the total variance. Participants reported having an allocation of two to six hours a week with an average of 4.5hrs. All ten participants had other primary roles within school; nine reported working as TAs and one reported working as a cover teacher and providing support for the Pastoral Lead in school. The number of year's participants reported since receiving their ELSA training ranged from two to six. The participants had between four and 18 years' experience working in education with the average being 12.5. The completed array for Factor 2 can be seen in Appendix P.

5.422 Viewpoint (First Person Narrative)

I think it's very important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used (16, +6). I think they are really useful when they are used to provide advice and support in how to handle difficult situations (26, +5) and I definitely feel they have encouraged me to develop different viewpoints (24, +4). Overall I do think the sessions have helped me develop my confidence as an ELSA (22, +3) but I don't think it's essential to attend every session (3, -4) *I do think it's more important for the newer ELSAs to go to the sessions as it helps build confidence. We've been in the role a while now and I think we're quite confident* (SO06). I don't think I would necessarily want to attend each session either (11, -3). *I guess it would depend what the focus of the sessions were* (PI17). *If I had more ELSA time then it would be good to attend every session* (DA29). *I don't have much ELSA time currently so it's more important to spend my time in school working with the children* (PI17). *We usually have to take it in turns to go to the sessions and feedback. It would be impossible for us all to go to the sessions together* (SO06). *Maybe we need to get better at feeding back or have our own meetings in school after the session?* (DO24). I certainly don't feel isolated as an ELSA (38, -6) and it's not difficult for me to get support for my role (37, -5). On a day-to-day basis I find it really useful to access support from my line-manager (33, +6). *She's always there if we have any issues* (DO24). *We have a lot of pastoral support in school and there's a big focus on mental health* (SO06). The school-wellbeing worker is also really supportive (36, +5). I'm also able to talk through casework with other ELSAs (34, +2) both in school and in the support sessions *as we often have similar cases* (DO29). *We talk to each other in school a lot – sometimes on a daily basis. With some of the things children share with us it can be hard and sometimes just giving each other a hug when needed can be helpful* (PU29). I don't think I would ever approach our EP for support (35, -1), *not because she's not approachable –she is, she's lovely- but because I know she has a big workload* (PI17). *I also don't think she knows the children we work with like we do so it makes more sense to get support from someone in school* (DA29). I don't feel like an outsider in the group (28, -5) but I don't think I've really made any good links with other ELSAs from the group either (27, -4). *That might be because I haven't been to a lot of the sessions* (WE21). The other ELSAs in the group are supportive (29, +3) but the sessions can sometimes be dominated by one or two individual members (32, +3) *that just want to talk about their own cases* (DO24). As a result, I don't think that everyone necessarily has an equal chance to get the support they need in the sessions (31, -1). *When the sessions have been dominated by*

certain people it's still been useful as the cases discussed have been interesting (PU29). *I do think it might put some people off speaking up though when the sessions are being dominated, especially if they're new to the role or don't feel confident but they come across as having done it all and know it all* (DO24). *I like to sit back and just listen. You often hear some talking about how much time they have and all these complicated plans and I think "I don't have all this time or all these plans so I'll just keep quiet!"* (SO06). *I do think that if I brought a problem though it would get listened to* (DA29) and generally speaking I think I have opportunities in the session to get support with any issues I might have (30, +1) *but I couldn't necessarily say this was the case all the time* (WE21). I think it might be better if the sessions were longer (2,-2) or the size of the group wasn't as big (14, -2). *It's tricky because we only have a limited amount of time so can only focus on one or two issues. If we had a smaller group we might be able to focus more on problem solving and it might make some people more confident to speak up* (DA29). I don't think the EP could necessarily check whether everyone has gotten what they need from the session (19,-2) *as I just don't think there's enough time, it would be far too difficult!* (PA16). I honestly don't know whether the other members of the group think about the sessions so I couldn't say either way whether they valued them or not (12, 0).

5.43 Factor 3: Summary

The school wellbeing worker is my primary source of support

5.431 Statistical Summary and Contextual Information

A total of nine participants load onto Factor 3 which has an Eigenvalue of 5.1 and explains 17% of the total variance. Participants report having between 2.5 and 18 hours allocated for their ELSA role with the average being 5.8 hours a week. All nine participants reported having other primary roles in school; four of which were HLTAs, two were working as TAs, one reported working in a SENCo role, one who worked as a Children's Champion and one having role in safeguarding. The number of years participants reported since receiving their ELSA training ranged from three to nine with an average of 4.3. The participants had between three and 33 years' experience working in education with the average being 10.4. The completed array for Factor 1 can be seen in Appendix Q.

5.432 Viewpoint (First Person Narrative)

I enjoy going to the support session and would really like to go to each one (11, +5). I don't find it difficult to be released to go (10, +5) so I generally am able to attend (9, +3). I don't however think it's essential to attend each one (3, -4) *as they're not what I would call my main source of support (BR20)*. I do think they've helped me develop my skills (21, +4) and I think they're useful for sharing resources (4, +3) and for information giving (6, +3), *but I generally think they're more of a social thing than anything else. It's a good opportunity to catch up with the other ELSAs (TI01)* although I wouldn't necessarily say that I've made many good links with other ELSAs from the group (27, -3) as I don't see them outside of the sessions. I also don't feel like an outsider in the group though (28, -5) *as everyone is really friendly and welcoming. I think it's more that other ELSAs don't go to the sessions regularly so it's different faces every time (KE11).* I do think I've made good relationships with the EPs who run the group however (15, +4) and I find them easily contactable outside of the sessions too (15, +4). I think my main source of support for the ELSA role comes from the school well-being worker (36, +6). *I wouldn't go to my line manager as I think we're both coming from very different places in terms of roles (BR20). I think I get all the support I need from the well-being worker (WI08). I'm able to access regular supervision sessions with her and I find these to be really useful opportunities to talk through my casework and reflect on my practice (KE11). I think the support I get from the well-being worker is very different to what we get in the support sessions (WI31)* I think the purpose of the support sessions is quite clear (8, +3) and they're useful for networking and definitely helpful for more general group problem solving (5, +5). *It's definitely not the same as supervision and I don't think the group sessions could be called supervision. I think the groups are too big for this and not really suitable for discussing complex and sensitive cases (WI31). I wouldn't feel comfortable bringing my cases to the group. The well-being worker knows most of the children I work with which makes it easier to discuss them (TI01). I just don't feel that there's enough time for everyone to get what they need so they have to be more general (KE11).* It might be better if the group was smaller as I think it might be a bit too big to work well together (14, -1). I don't really have a problem with the size of the group though and I am comfortable with it (13, +1). No-one really dominates the session, (32, -3) *apart from maybe me! (*KE11). We do get asked about the content of future sessions (7, +4) which I think is important (16, +6) *as the whole purpose of the sessions are to help us-it makes sense to ask us what we need from them (BR20). I think there's always been a*

good mix in terms of focus (KE11), I really like sessions where there is information giving on a specific topic (6,+3) and it's useful when time is used for sharing resources (4, +4). I would say that these sessions have definitely helped me develop my skills as an ELSA (21, +4). I wouldn't say they've developed my confidence though (22, 0) *as I think this has developed naturally over time and with experience doing the role (GR12).* I also don't think they've developed my self-awareness either (23, -2) *as I think I'm already quite self-aware (MC27).*

5.5 Non-Loading Participants

Out of a total 30 participants who completed the Q-sorting activity, there was only one who did not load significantly onto any of the three factors. The extract from table 5.2 reproduced below shows how the completed sort from participant SN21 has very little in common with the three factors above:

Table 5.3: Final Rotated Factor Matrix for Participant SN21

articipant	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
SN21	0.1116	0.1181	-0.2332

Participant SN21 was the only person taking part who works as an ELSA in a secondary school setting and so it is interesting that this participant did not load onto any of the factors. After looking more closely at SN21's completed sort (see Appendix R) the views that appeared to emerge were ones expressing feelings of isolation as an ELSA within her school (38, +4). I was able to discern that statements 10: *It is difficult for me to be released for each support session* and 37: *I find it difficult to access support to help me in my ELSA role have* been placed at +6 which suggests that being released for the support sessions and getting support for the ELSA role may be a big concern for this participant. This is also mirrored in the placement of statements 27: I *have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group* and 9: *I am able to attend each support session.* Both of these statements were placed at -6. This participant was also unable to access support from the school wellbeing worker (36, -3), however she was able to access support from her line manager, (33, +3). During the post-sort interview, participant SN21 described how she felt that much her ELSA role was about firefighting with little chance for time to reflect on her practice. She described how she felt there was a lack of understanding and awareness amongst school staff around the ELSA role and the support she could offer. She also

spoke of how the ELSA sessions seemed to have a primary school focus and often didn't feel relevant for staff working in secondary schools. This is perhaps somewhat reflected in the participant's more neutral placement of statements relating to the helpfulness of the sessions for developing skills (21, -1), confidence (22, 0) and different viewpoints (24, -1), understanding behaviour (25, 0) and sharing resources (4, +1).

It is beyond the scope of this research to explore whether this is a viewpoint which is shared amongst other ELSAs working in secondary schools. However, the fact that I was unable to gather the views of other secondary ELSAs is interesting in itself and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of this research in relation to the Literature Review and the subsequent research questions developed. The results will also be discussed in relation to the critical realist model outlined in Chapter 3 in order to identify the structures and candidate mechanisms which have potentially impacted ELSA views. The mechanisms identified will be classified in terms of being at the micro, meso and macro levels of social reality and used to inform the implications of the findings for EP practice and schools.

6.2 Summary of Results

The aim of this research was to gather ELSA's views about the support they receive. Using Q Methodology, three factors were extracted which expressed different viewpoints about ELSA support. These views are as follows:

Factor 1: Peer support is vital in helping me in my role as ELSA. Without this I would feel isolated

Factor 2: I have effective support in place from a number of sources

Factor 3: The school well-being worker is my primary source of support from who I receive regular supervision

The discussion in this chapter will first of all focus on the consensus statements between the three factors before further exploration of the viewpoints in relation to how they answer the research questions.

6.21 Consensus Statements

15 Consensus statements identified in the analysis which do not distinguish between any pairs of factors:

Table 6.1: Consensus Statements

No	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
5	I find time allocated to group problem solving in the sessions useful	3	1	4
6	I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development	4	1	3
13	I feel comfortable with the size of my support group	0	0	1
14	The size of my support group is big enough to work well together	0	-2	-1
16	It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used	5	6	6
17	I feel that the EPs running my support sessions are monitoring my performance as an ELSA	-4	-6	-4
18	The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working	0	-1	0
19	The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the sessions	-3	-2	-1
23	The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness	-1	-3	-2
25	The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour	3	2	1
30	I feel I always have an opportunity to get support in the sessions about any issues I have	-1	1	0
35	I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA	1	-1	-2
37	I find it difficult to access support to help me in my ELSA role	-5	-5	-6
38	I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school	-5	-6	-6

39	I would welcome more input from the EPs in the support sessions	-2	0	-1

These statements can be considered to demonstrate broad areas of agreement between the three factors. Out of the fifteen consensus statements, six related to viewpoints around the content of the support sessions. The similarities in rankings across factors for these statements suggests that there is an agreement that time allocated to problem solving and info giving is useful (statements 5 and 6). There was also agreement that the sessions support ELSAs to understand a child's behaviour (statement 25). These shared viewpoints reflect findings by the authors Osborne and Burton (2014) in their evaluation of ELSA support.

Statements 23, 30 and 39 were generally ranked more negatively suggesting a shared viewpoint that the sessions haven't improved self-awareness (statement 23) and that ELSAs do not feel they always have the opportunities to get individual support in the sessions (statement 30). Despite this, ELSAs did not seem to want further EP input in the sessions (statement 39).

Four of the consensus statements relate to the role of the EP in providing ELSA support. There seemed to be an overall agreement that EPs are not perceived to be encouraging ELSAs to find new ways of working (statement 18) or checking to see ELSAs are getting everything they need from the sessions (statement 19) or a useful source of support outside of the sessions (statement 35). In post sort interviews, it was noted that EPs are perceived as being extremely busy and the limited time available in sessions was also acknowledged. It is possible therefore that the ranking of these statements is a reflection of these views to an extent. The highly negative ranking of statement 17 suggests that ELSAs do not feel that EPs have a role in monitoring the performance of ELSAs. This shared viewpoint should be viewed positively as research suggests that perceptions of 'supervisors' as having a monitoring role can be detrimental to the development of a trusting and supportive relationship (Barden, 2001; Webb, 2001).

Statements 13 and 14 are concerned with the size of the support groups. The overall rankings of these statements suggests there is generally a neutral to negative shared viewpoint about the size of the groups and how well they work together suggesting that groups may be perceived to be slightly too large to work well and would benefit from being slightly smaller.

Consensus statements 38 and 37 relate to views around support available for ELSAs in general. These statements suggest there is a shared viewpoint that there is support available in some form or another and that they do not feel isolated.

The final consensus statement related to ELSA voice and input into how the support sessions are run (statement 16). The highly positive ranking of this statement across factors suggests that ELSAs feel very strongly that they should have some input into how the sessions are used.

In addition to the consensus statements identified in the final output, there were other statements which had been ranked similarly in two or more factors that were not identified as being consensus statements. Reference to these will be made during discussions of the factors in relation to the research questions.

6.3 Discussion of Factors in Relation to Research Questions

6.31 What are ELSA's views about the termly support sessions? (Q1)

This question had the potential of being very broad in scope and so was organised into three further categories. The viewpoints expressed in each of the factors will therefore be discussed in reflection of this.

6.311 Do ELSAs think it is essential to attend every termly support session? **(Q1a)**

> After a close examination of the three factors it appears that overall there is a general consensus (although not technically a consensus statement) that it is not essential to attend the EP support sessions held every term (Item 3, -3, -3, -4 for factors 1,2 and 3 respectively). Guidelines issued by the ELSA network however state that "The ELSA initiative was set up with recognition from the outset that ELSAs should receive regular professional supervision from an educational psychologist," (Burton, 2017, para. 1). It is recommended that ELSAs receive half-termly group supervision from an EP with each session being a minimum of two hours in duration (Osborne, 2008). It is also recommended that attendance at half-termly supervision sessions is a requirement for

practising ELSAs to ensure the safety of themselves and the pupils they work with (2008). The definition of what supervision for ELSAs should be is provided on the ELSA Network website:

> In the ELSA context supervision involves understanding the psychological development of children and young people, considering the meaning behind children's behaviours and applying psychological principles to the process of supporting change... it is essential for them to receive regular ongoing support that develops their knowledge and understanding in these areas. Without this they may be left floundering as they seek to support children with a complex range of needs. There is also a risk of them being asked to deal with issues beyond their level of competence which in reality require much more specialist professional input. (Burton, 2017, para. 2)

The guidance provided by Burton contrasts with the viewpoints that have been expressed in all three of the factors and raises questions regarding the perceived importance of the sessions. It also raises questions as to whether ELSAs are aware of the guidance regarding EP supervision and the ELSA role. During the post sort interviews, participant MA21 referred to an online discussion on the ELSA Facebook page which talked about the importance of ELSAs receiving EP supervision. This participant was not however clear herself whether this was accurate, referring to it as a 'grey area'. It would seem therefore that there may be a growing awareness of the importance of support for ELSAs however generally this does not seem to fit with the viewpoints that have been expressed.

I feel it would be useful to explore ELSA's perceptions of the purpose of EP support further in relation to Burton's guidelines to uncover the reasons behind the possible lack of awareness. It is possible for example that the message about the importance of attending each session is not being given or being taken on board either during the initial training itself or in the support sessions. It is also possible that the message isn't being filtered down to line managers within schools. It would also be interesting to discover whether ELSA's views of the support sessions are linked in any way to how the sessions are 'sold' to ELSAs, for example, if they are being presented as being optional. Guidelines issued on the ELSA Network website recommend that ELSAs are not awarded certification until the ELSA has attended four supervision sessions following completion of the initial

training (Osborne, 2008). At present, there is no such requirement within the local authority within the present study and ELSAs are awarded their certificate after completing the training. Further to this, the guidelines also advise that a register is kept which logs the attendance of ELSAs at the support sessions (Burton, 2017). It should be noted here that registers are indeed taken at the termly support sessions however, there is currently no follow-up or repercussions for regular non-attendance.

It could be argued that by adapting practice within this local authority, attendance of ELSAs at the sessions could be increased. However, consideration also needs to be given regarding the impact of this on the numbers of ELSAs working in schools. Difficulties in attending and being released for sessions was a defining viewpoint for Factor one in particular, despite also expressing a distinctive viewpoint about wanting to attend each session. Reasons given by participants for non-attendance at support sessions ranged from them being held on non-working days to conflicting with time spent working in other roles (e.g. covering classes). The majority of the responses however suggest that they aren't being released from settings to attend the sessions either because there are a number of ELSAs in school or because it is felt they are needed in class to support other children. This message, whilst predominantly seems to be coming from line-managers, was also echoed by one or two of the ELSAs taking part in the study. Participant (PI17) stated that she had very limited time allocated for the ELSA role and subsequently felt that time given over to support sessions would be better spent in school doing ELSA work.

 Capacity and staffing issues within settings seemed to emerge as an important theme. It is possible that tensions between capacity and staffing issues within schools (a factor which will be returned to shortly) may mean that settings feel that they cannot afford to have ELSAs practicing in schools if attendance at support sessions is made mandatory for every ELSA, particularly if there are a number of ELSAs in one setting who also have additional roles. Many of the participants taking part in this study stated that when there was more than one ELSA in school an arrangement was in place whereby one ELSA was released at a time on a rota basis to attend the support sessions (SO06)). Any information given at the sessions would then be cascaded back to other ELSAs in school (DO24). Whilst this may seem a practical and effective way of enabling ELSAs to access information disseminated in the sessions, evidence suggests that the process of filtering

and cascading training and information in this way is not effective (Sterling-Turner et al. 2002; Durlak and DuPre 2008).

The capacity of the support groups would also need to be considered if all practising ELSAs need to attend the sessions. The ELSA guidelines recommend that groups should aim to support a total of approximately eight ELSAs per session. Any more than this would likely become unmanageable (Burton, 2017, para. 9). Consideration would need to be given as to whether extra support sessions would need to be arranged which would consequently have implications for EP time and capacity.

It is interesting to note that the sessions for ELSAs in this EP service are labelled 'ELSA support sessions' rather than ELSA supervision and it would be interesting to find out what effect this has on perceived purpose and importance. Post-sort interviews highlighted that the majority of ELSAs lacked awareness regarding the term supervision and its relation to the ELSA role. It may well be that discussions between the EP team and ELSAs need to take place to clarify this, particularly in light of reported online discussions between ELSAs on this subject on social media.

6.312 What are ELSAs views regarding the frequency and duration of the sessions? (Q1b)

Viewpoints regarding both the frequency and duration of the sessions were slightly more varied across the three factors and were generally placed more towards the middle of the distribution grid which suggests that frequency and duration aren't seen as particularly important. Participants who loaded significantly onto Factors two and three slightly agreed that once a term was adequate (+1, +2) whilst participants slightly disagreed in Factor one (-1). It is interesting to note that viewpoints expressed in Factor one suggest that there is little support available for this group of ELSAs other than peer support as they found it difficult to be released for the support sessions.

Several of the participants loading onto this factor expressed that they would like to see extra support sessions offered to give them a greater chance of being released for one of them. However – as mentioned earlier- there are potential difficulties here due to EP time and capacity. The participants who loaded onto factors two and three reported receiving

support from other sources which may explain why they felt the frequency of the sessions was less of an important issue. The viewpoints expressed regarding the frequency of the sessions are also interesting when considered in relation to Burton's guidance around ELSA support from EPs. Burton recommends that ELSAs attend half termly supervision sessions, each one lasting two hours. Evaluations of this model within Hampshire EP service (Osborne and Burton, 2014) suggest that ELSAs in this service were happy with the level of support offered and felt that the offer met their support needs to carry out the role effectively.

The offer of support recommended by Burton (2017) differs from the one offered within the authority in this research Certainly, from a review of the literature, many of the authorities running the ELSA programme offer support using a similar model recommended in the ELSA guidelines. It is beyond the scope of this research however to explore whether ELSAs and settings in this authority would benefit from support arrangements more in-line with Hampshire's

Similarly to frequency of the sessions, there were no strong viewpoints expressed pertaining to the length of the support sessions (0, -2, +2). Participants who loaded onto Factor two slightly disagreed and in the post sort interviews it was noted that the sessions may benefit from being longer as they can only focus on one or two issues (during the problem solving activities) in the time they have, (DA29) It could be argued therefore that ELSAs may benefit from longer sessions, extending the current arrangements from 1.5 hours to two, particularly as they only take place termly as opposed to half termly as recommended.

6.313 What are ELSA's views about Purpose of Support Sessions (Q1c)

Participants across all three of the factors felt relatively clear about the purpose of the termly support sessions (+2, +4, +4). Participants loading onto factor one appeared to be slightly less clear about the purpose. It is feasible to suggest that this could be partly due to them finding it difficult to attend the sessions and therefore not familiar enough with them to be clear about their purpose. During post-sort interviews, participants commented that they understood the group's purpose as opportunities to share resources, ideas and network with ELSAs from other settings. In fact, networking

appeared to be a common viewpoint expressed in Factor three with one participant commenting that the sessions were a good opportunity to catch up with other ELSAs (KE11).

6.314 Content and Benefits of Support Sessions (Q1d)

In regards to content of the termly support sessions, there appeared to be some commonalities in viewpoints around what was useful, all of which appear to correspond with the findings from Osborne and Burton's results (2014). Factors two and three both positively ranked sharing resources (+2, +4), problem solving (+3, +4) and information giving and development (+4, +3). Conversely, Factor one ranked the same statements less positively.

Viewpoints around perceived benefits of attending the support sessions were more varied between each of the factors. Participants across all three factors valued – to varying degrees- support and opportunities to think about a child's behaviour (+3, +2, +1), difficult situations (+4, +5, +1). Factors one and two valued opportunities to develop different viewpoints (+3, +4) and participants in factors two and three felt that the sessions had helped them develop key skills (+2, +3). Interestingly, all three factors held similar, less positively ranked viewpoints regarding having opportunities to get support on any issues they had, (-1, +1, 0). During post-sort interviews, a common view emerged that it would be difficult to get individual support in sessions due to time constraints. Again this corresponds with the findings from Osborne and Burton's (2014) research.

An interesting viewpoint that was consistent from all three factors was how ELSAs did not feel the sessions helped raise self-awareness (-1, -3, -2). Post-sort interviews revealed that participants felt they were already 'self-aware'. What's interesting is how this contrasts with what the literature says is one of the benefits of supervision (Osborne and Burton, 2014, Wheeler and Richards, 2007). This, along with the viewpoints concerning purpose suggests that ELSAs may have very different perspectives of what the purpose of the support sessions are.

6.315 Role of the EP in the Support Sessions (Q1e)

As part of this research, ELSAs were also asked to sort statements which looked at the role of the EP in the termly support sessions. Participants loading onto factors one and two did not appear to feel that they had built up a good relationship with the EPs leading their support groups (-2, -5, +2) or that they were easily contactable outside of the sessions (-2, -1, +2). These slightly negative views around relationships and availability contrast with Osborne and Burton's findings in which participants described generally positive relationships with EPs running sessions and that they were generally easily contactable outside of sessions (2014). Factor three on the other hand, held a more positive view about relationships with both EPs running the sessions and link EPs outside of sessions.

All three factors negatively ranked the statement asking whether the EPs check to see if they're getting everything they need for the sessions (-3, -2, -1). In post-sort interviews, participants commented that they believed the EP would not have time to do this for every individual. According to the authors (Osborne and Burton, 2014), the majority of ELSAs felt that there were few disadvantages to their supervision sessions. The most commonly cited disadvantage was not having enough time to discuss casework. However, this seemed to be balanced somewhat by EPs being available to give support around specific cases either immediately after a support session or over the telephone (Osborne and Burton, 2014).

As mentioned previously, participants also felt strongly that the EPs running the sessions weren't monitoring their performance as an ELSA (-4, -6, -4). This statement was included to try and uncover what they felt the EP role was in the group support sessions. Although the sessions themselves have explicitly not been labelled supervision, I wanted to find out what ELSA's perceptions were (if any) about what supervision was. According to Roberts (2017) the concept of supervision amongst school staff has negative connotations of surveillance and monitoring. A perceived monitoring function of the supervisor can conflict with the need for a relationship that has a supportive and open function (Barden, 2001; Webb, 2001). I was therefore interested to uncover whether the ELSAs held views of the EP in a monitoring role when providing ELSA support.

In regards to having an understanding of professional/clinical supervision, the majority of ELSAs did not demonstrate an awareness of what this was, and its relevance to the ELSA role. As mentioned previously, post sort interviews had revealed an emerging discourse around supervision developing through a social media forum. One particular ELSA (KE11) loading onto factor 3 also demonstrated a good level of understanding about supervision and was accessing regular supervision from the school wellbeing worker. This participant recognised that the supervision she received from the well-being worker was very different to what was offered in the group support sessions.

6.316 Group Dynamics and Relationships (Q1f)

The final area I wanted to explore was participant's viewpoints about relationships with other members of the support groups and the dynamics of the group itself. None of the participants felt they had developed good links with other members of the group. Post-sort interviews suggested that participants felt this was either because a) they weren't able to attend sessions frequently enough or b) other group members were inconsistent in their attendance. Despite this however, there was a general consensus amongst participants that they were always made to feel welcome at the sessions and never felt like outsiders. In regards to group size, there was an overall agreement that the size of the group would benefit from being smaller.

Participants loading onto factors one and two also felt that the sessions were often dominated by one or two individuals. This, they said could potentially discourage other ELSAs from contributing and actively taking part –particularly if they were new to the role or did not feel confident. Again, this appears to be in-line with the findings from Osborne and Burton's research regarding the benefits and disadvantages of group supervision sessions (2014).

In a pilot study of the ELSA Programme, Burton (2008) described how ELSAs working in secondary schools were grouped together and attended supervision sessions separately from primary colleagues. This decision was made upon recognition of the complexity of secondary school systems and the unique challenges faced in working with adolescent and pre-adolescent pupils (2008). Unfortunately, it is impossible to comment further about the views of ELSAs from secondary settings as it was difficult to recruit participants

from this group. It is possible that there are currently fewer ELSAs working in the role in secondary settings. It is also possible that demands placed on secondary ELSAs are such that it was difficult for them to find time to participate in this research. I do think that the lack of representation from this group is in itself interesting and raises important questions about how ELSAs work and are perceived in secondary schools.

6.32 Other than the support sessions, what support are ELSAs able to access? (Q2)

I felt that the Q sort data revealed some interesting and revealing viewpoints which pertain to this particular research question. A number of viewpoints emerged across all three factors relating to peer support, line management support and well-being worker support. As a result I felt it would be more appropriate to discuss each of these separately.

6.321 Importance of peer support (Q2a)

Out of all three factors, factor one appeared to express the strongest viewpoint regarding how important peer support is in helping them in their role as ELSAs. Although there was no statement which looked specifically at peer support within school, views were expressed that participants did not feel isolated in their roles (38 -5). In post-sort interviews, participants also highlighted how valuable peers support was to them when talking about their reasons for not feeling isolated. Participants loading onto factor two also noted the importance of peer support however this was not viewed as importantly as other sources of support within school. Participants for factor one also talked about the usefulness of accessing peer support via the ELSA Facebook Group.

Referring back to the literature, peer support has been identified as being beneficial to school staff, particularly in regards to providing a buffer from difficult situations (Malecki and Demeray, 2002). When considered within the framework of Tardy's Social Support Model (1985), peer support can provide emotional support (trust, love, empathy), instrumental support (resources, money, time), informational (input and feedback) and appraisal (evaluative feedback) Malecki and Demeray, 2002). The viewpoints expressed within factors one and two seem to suggest that participants may be drawing upon the

information and emotional components of the model. Although not stated, it might also be possible that peer support in the context of ELSA support is providing instrumental support as well.

As mentioned earlier, for factor one, difficulties in being released was ranked highly (+6). Again, as mentioned earlier, it is possible that financial constraints are an important factor in ELSA attendance at the support groups and thus, peer support-however informal-is an effective and valued way for ELSAs to receive additional emotional and informational support that does not have the same implications of cost that releasing ELSAs and providing cover for them to attend groups may have. However, this will likely only partially fulfil ongoing support needs for the ELSA role. As highlighted on the ELSA network website, it is recognised that ELSAs likely do not have a background or grounding in psychological theory other than that provided in the initial six day training. It would therefore be important that an EP or similarly qualified professional provides regular support in this area.

6.322 Importance of Line Manager Support (Q2b)

Viewpoints relating to line management support varied between the three factors. The difference was noticeably marked between factors one and two (-6, +6 respectively). Participants loading onto factor two placed a high value on the support they received from this source, whilst conversely, factor one did not. It is worth comparing other differing viewpoints between factors one and two and exploring these in relation to the differences in views expressed around line manager support. For example, not only did participants on both factors differ significantly on views around line manager support, they also ranked very differently the statement about being released to attend the support sessions. In fact, difficulties in being released for the sessions, along with line-manager support were distinguishing statements for both factors.

When theorising about the underlying mechanisms and structures 'at work' here it could be argued that there are issues at organisational level interacting with financial constraints and increased demand which are impacting ELSAs experiences of receiving support in school. It is also possible that many line managers may not have a thorough understanding of the ELSA role, or their support needs and requirements as stipulated in

the guidance. At present, SENCos and line managers are invited to attend the final day of the initial ELSA training where information about ELSA support is provided. However it is my current understanding that very few do actually attend. Comments made during post sort interviews suggest that some ELSAs are very much aware that their line managers lack an awareness of their role and that this is also often reflected in the attitude towards the ELSA role in school more generally:

> I also don't find it useful to access support from my line manager (33,-6) *as I don't feel she has a good understanding of the ELSA role* (RE17).*I don't feel anyone in school really knows what ELSAs do other than the well-being worker and the other ELSAs* (MA21). *People will say to you, "can you just do a bit of ELSA with that child" and I don't think they understand how we work* (BR25)

6.323 importance of Wellbeing Worker Support (Q2c)

A common viewpoint that was ranked positively by all three factors was that of accessing support from the well-being workers (+5, +5, +6). As mentioned in the literature review, the Wellbeing Workers are part of the school well-being service; an initiative jointly commissioned by CAMHS and the local authority. As the service is part funded by settings, all schools in the authority have access to Wellbeing Worker support. Although they are not able to offer structured supervision as part of their role, they are able to offer some supervision to support staff in schools as needed and they in turn receive supervision themselves by Primary Mental Health Workers in CAMHS.

The vast majority of participants taking part in this study expressed the view that support provided by the school Well-being Worker was extremely useful in helping them in the ELSA role. This was particularly true of participants loading onto factor three. In post-sort interviews, several participants referred to accessing regular supervision with the well-being worker to talk through casework, problem solve and reflect on practice. They also highlighted that the well-being workers usually had a general overview or some knowledge of the children being discussed and that this was also helpful when discussing casework. Other comments made were that the well-being workers were easily contactable and provided the ELSAs with useful resources or were able to signpost them

to other information and resources. What was particularly interesting about the views of factor three was the understanding of supervision that some of the ELSAs were able to demonstrate. These closely matched definitions and descriptions of supervision as defined in the literature review.

Participants loading onto factor three also felt that having an ELSA support session once a term was sufficient and ranked this higher (+2) than factors one (-2) and factor two (+1). This suggests that it is possible the regular supervision from the well-being worker combined with the termly support sessions are viewed as being effective in meeting the needs of ELSAs for participants in factor three.

6.33 ELSA Voice and Participation

The final viewpoint I had hoped to gather was whether ELSAs felt they had any input into the content of the support sessions. This was something that was consistently ranked positively across all three factors both for feeling it is important for them to have a say(+5, +6, +6) and that they feel they do have some input around this (+1, +4, +5). It is interesting to note that participants loading onto factor 1 ranked the statement about being consulted around sessions less positively than the other two factors. Again, as with many of the other statements, this is likely reflected by the fact that they generally appear to have far less experience of attending the sessions.

6.4 Discussion of findings in relation to models/levels of real and identification of generative mechanisms

Potential generative mechanisms were identified after careful consideration of the final three factors and the narratives built around them. As stated in the Methodology section, generative mechanisms are the potentially invisible mechanisms which determine actual phenomena and cause events experienced at the empirical level of reality (Lawson, 1997; Easton, 2010; Fletcher, 2016). For the purposes of the present research, this meant identifying potential mechanisms which may be responsible for the viewpoints expressed in each of the final three factors. In order to achieve this, a process of retroduction was employed as outlined by Blom and Moren, (2011) which involves posing transfactual

questions in relation to the phenomena being explained. The purpose of transfactual questions are to discover what is, "Fundamentally constitutive for the structures and relations (X*)* that are studied. How is *X* possible? What properties must exist for *X* to be what *X* is?" (Blom and Moren, 2011, p70).

For the purposes of this research, transfactual questions were asked of the viewpoints which have emerged from the three factors, particularly in relation to how they answer the research questions. For example, Question 1a sought to explore whether ELSAs felt it was essential to attend every support session. The viewpoint which emerged from the final three factors suggests that ELSAs did not believe it was essential. In order to identify generative mechanisms which may potentially result in ELSAs holding these viewpoints, the following transfactual questions were asked:

➢ What changes would need to occur for ELSAs to view the termly support sessions as being essential to attend?

➢ What might be the possible reasons for ELSAs currently not recognising the importance of attending every support session?

Through the process of exploring this question I was able to hypothesise potential reasons why ELSAs hold their current viewpoint around the ELSA support sessions and what could potentially change this. This then led me to identify the following potential generative mechanisms:

➢ Line Manager understanding of ELSA role and support needs.

➢ Guidelines and policy around ELSA support

➢ Dissemination of knowledge around ELSA role and requirements for support

➢ EP monitoring of attendance at support sessions

The above mechanisms were identified as being significant as they could have a significant impact on whether or not ELSAs viewed the support sessions as being essential to attend.

This retroductive process of identifying generative mechanisms was repeated with the remaining research questions and their answers in light of the viewpoints expressed in each of the three factors. This resulted in a list of potential mechanisms which could be said to be operating at the 'deep' level of reality and impacting the experiences - and therefore viewpoints – of the ELSAs loading on to each of the three factors.

Once the list had been generated, I then wished to explore the potential mechanisms further and identify which level of reality they were operating at. In Chapter 3 I briefly discussed the notions of micro, meso and macro levels of social reality as outlined by Blom and Moren (2011) who described a set of criteria by which mechanisms could be categorised according to a corresponding level of social reality (see Table 3.2). Using this criteria, I was able to identify which of the mechanisms were operating at an individual (micro) level, e.g. relationships between ELSAs; group/organisational (meso) level, e.g. allocation of school resources; and societal (macro) level, e.g. government austerity measures.

Table 6.2 lists all the mechanisms identified at the three levels of reality along with aspects of the research questions they relate to. I have also indicated the factors each of the mechanisms relate to:

Table 6.2: Identified mechanisms

| Mechanism | Level of Operation | Question | | | | | | | | | ELSA Voice & Participation | Factor |
		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	2.1	2.2	2.3		
Line manager understanding of ELSA role and support needs	Micro	X		X					X			1,2,3
Relationships between ELSAs	Micro					X	X					1,2,3
Space and time in school for peer support	Micro							X				1,2
Relationships between ELSAs and line managers	Micro								X	X		1,2,3
ELSA voice and input about session content	Micro			X	X							1,2,3
Relationships between ELSAs and EPs	Micro			X	X	X					X	3
ELSA understanding of EP role	Micro					X					X	3
Relationships between ELSAs	Micro									X		1,2,3

and Wellbeing Workers												
Guidelines and policy around ELSA support	Meso	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	1,2,3
Dissemination of knowledge around ELSA role and requirements for support	Meso	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	1,2,3
EP monitoring of attendance of ELSAs at support sessions	Meso	X				X						1,2,3
Availability and allocation of school funding	Meso	X				X		X	X	X		1,2,3
Alternative ELSA support in place	Meso	X	X			X						2,3
Local authority funding to EP service	Meso		X			X						1,2,3
Online media support groups	Meso			X		X		X				1
Multiple ELSAs in settings	Meso							X				1,2
Demands and expectations placed on staff	Meso								X			1
Multi-agency working	Meso									X		2,3
Understanding of professional/clinical supervision	Meso			X		X				X		3
Training and background of Wellbeing Workers	Meso									X		2,3
Attendance at support sessions	Meso			X	X	X					X	1
Structure of support sessions	Meso				X	X						1,2,3
Frequency of support sessions	Meso				X	X						1,2
Increased demand on schools to provide SEMH support	Macro	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1,2,3
Reported increase of	Macro	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1,2,3

SEMH difficulties amongst CYP												
Increasing awareness of SEMH difficulties	Macro	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1,2,3
*Government austerity measures	Macro	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1,2,3

- Pertaining to funding cuts to services – particularly Local Authority Funding

As can be seen in table 6.2, many of the mechanisms at meso level can be seen as having a potential impact on viewpoints in all three factors and a number of the research questions. This is particularly true of the mechanisms operating at the macro level. The processes and structures engaged at this deep level can be seen to have a potential impact at multiple levels and in multiple contexts. A causal loop diagram – adapted from Papachristos and Adamides (2016) - was used (see Figure 5) with the aim of mapping the identified candidate mechanisms to support the generation of a clear picture detailing how they could potentially interact and create change at the actual and empirical levels of reality:

Figure 5: Causal Loop Diagram
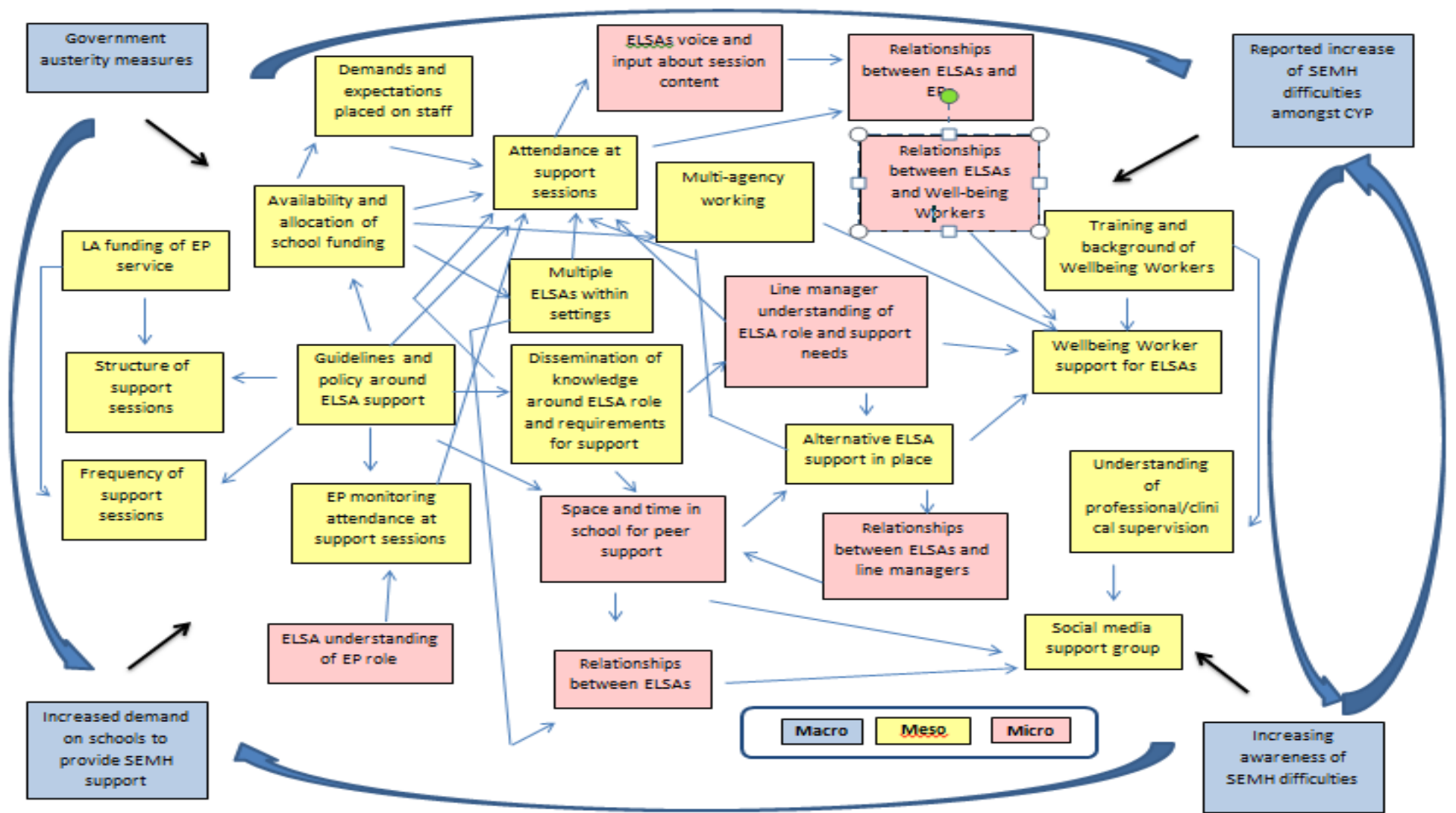
As can be seen here, the mechanisms identified interact on multiple levels and contexts. It is important to note that the mechanisms proposed here have the potential to impact both negatively and positively. For example, a line manager's understanding of the requirements for ELSA support can either positively or negatively affect the likelihood of ELSAs being released to attend support sessions depending on the level of understanding itself. It should also be noted that the potential power of mechanisms to create an impact or change should never be considered as stable or as a constant but is dependent upon the interactions of other structures and mechanisms in different contexts (Danermark et al. 2002).

The nature of the mechanisms identified is also multi-faceted and can exist as both mechanisms and the product of other mechanisms within different contexts (2002). The issue around ELSA attendance at support sessions is a good example of this. Whether or not an ELSA reports being able to attend the sessions could be said to be a result of other mechanisms at work (multiple ELSAs in settings, demands and expectations placed on staff, allocation of school funding etc.). However, regular attendance could also be considered to be a mechanism impacting views and experiences around purpose, content and benefits of support sessions, as well as group dynamics and ELSA voice and contribution. The complexity –and indeed uncertainty - around mechanisms and their interactions and impact may beg the question of "what's the point?" when thinking specifically about their usefulness and application to the research. The identification of mechanisms and their impacts are undeniably complex and remain at all times 'potential'. However, critical realists (and I) adopting this approach to research would argue that the purpose of identifying mechanisms is not to provide a clear and definitive explanation of X occurring because of *Y.* Indeed this is arguably not possible in any research relating to social reality (Danermark 2002). Unlike scientific, empirical research, claims (rightly or wrongly) cannot be made as to definitive causes/explanations. Instead the purpose here is to explore phenomena and experiences occurring within the social world and equally the social structures and mechanisms that may potentially be causing them.

The fact that the identified mechanisms are social ones does not make them any less real, however it does make them unpredictable as the impact they have is very much

dependent upon the presence and interactions of other structures and potential mechanisms. For this reason, it is not possible to predict all of the potential outcomes of mechanisms and structures working together. However, again this is not the purpose. Instead, by identifying candidate mechanisms and the potential impact they may have, we can gain a better understanding of what *might* be going on below the surface of events and experiences (in this instance the views and reported experiences) and identify what mechanisms might be useful to focus on with the aim of instigating positive or desirable change/outcomes. It is the identification of these which we will turn to now when looking at implications for both EP practice and schools.

6.5 Implications for EP Practice

The results of this Q methodological research has highlighted some key viewpoints and potential causal mechanisms that have implications for EP practice, both within the local authority (meso level) where the research took place and in a wider context (macro level). As a result, it will be primarily the candidate mechanisms at the meso level of the socially real that we focus on as it is here I feel that the most impact can be potentially made in regards to creating change in the support ELSAs receive. Closer examination of the biggest impacting causal mechanisms at the meso level with implications for EP practice are as follows:

> ➢ Guidelines and policy around ELSA support
> ➢ Dissemination of knowledge around ELSA role and requirements for support
> ➢ EP monitoring attendance at support sessions

In light of this I feel it would therefore be useful for the EP service in the present study to re-evaluate the policy and guidelines for ELSA support and supervision in relation to the recommendations made by Osborne and Burton (2014) and guidelines on the ELSA Network (Burton 2017). Further thought may need to be given as to how these guidelines may be adapted to suit the organisation and capacity of the service. As mentioned previously, the guidelines issued by Burton (2017) recommend that ELSAs attend two hour EP led supervision sessions every half term in addition to being offered additional support through weekly phone calls with their link EP to discuss casework.

It is also recommended that ELSAs are encouraged to contact their link EPs as and when required to discuss any issues arising from casework. I think it is useful to draw attention to these recommendations when thinking about alternative forms of support that could be offered. I don't however feel it is appropriate here to make recommendations as to whether the EP service offers the same package of support. Every EP service faces specific challenges regarding pressures on time and capacity and these also need to be taken into consideration. It is also not clear from the research how well attended extra/longer sessions will be, given that many ELSAs already experience difficulties in attending regularly. Looking again at the causal mechanisms identified, it can be hypothesised that any improvement in attendance at sessions could be achieved through the manipulation of a number of different candidate mechanisms. One such possibility is that increased efforts to disseminate information about the requirements and importance of ELSA support may support both ELSAs and line managers to develop a clearer understanding of the importance of attending the sessions. This, along with closer EP monitoring of ELSA attendance may possibly have a positive impact upon the number of ELSAs attending.

It is interesting that there are in fact issues around the numbers of ELSAs attending support sessions considering that there continues to be a demand for ELSA training within the authority. At present, the ELSA programme is the biggest income generating training package within the EP traded service offer. Run twice yearly, there is a consistent level of demand for places on the initial six day training course which means that there are approximately 40 ELSAs trained every year. However, despite the demand for places and increasing numbers of ELSAs working in schools there continue to be issues with ELSAs attending sessions and issues around ELSAs being allocated sufficient time and space for the role. To explore possible reasons for this disparity, I have found it useful to consider Evans et al's. (2015) adaptation of Rogers (2003) Diffusion of Innovation theory, which they used as an overarching framework for their Conceptualising reinvention points model (2015). Their adapted model of Rogers (2003) framework was used to explain the process in which educational establishments adapt and implement interventions only to subsequently discontinue them:

Figure 6: Intervention Reinvention Points (Evans et al., 2015)
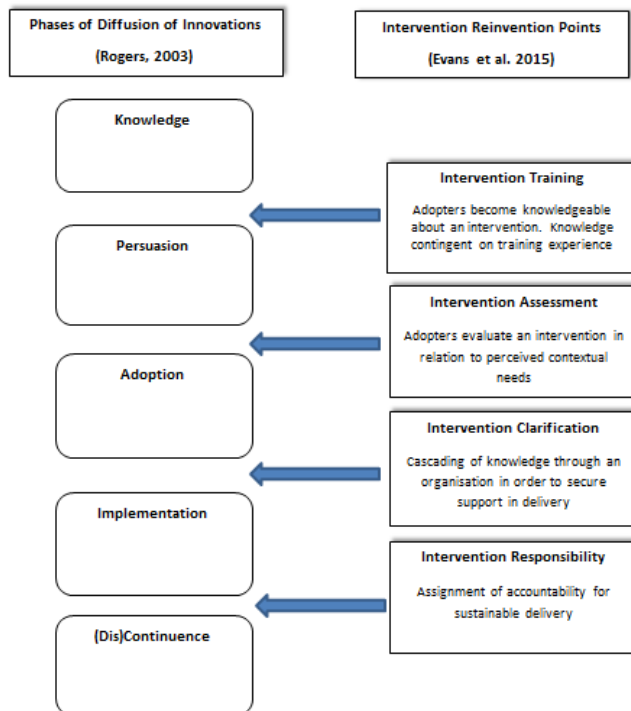
Rogers' (2003) original model aims to show how innovations and interventions are, "Communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a society," (2003, p.5). The five different stages suggested (see above) map the processes which are typically followed. Using this model as a means of exploring the implementation and establishment of ELSAs in schools, I feel that it is phase four (implementation) where difficulties are possibly being experienced. The first phase (knowledge) involves becoming aware of an intervention and its "compatibility, complexity, relative advantage, trialability and observability," (Evans et al. 2015, p.755). The second and third phases (persuasion and adoption respectively) are self-explanatory and relate to schools being convinced by the perceived benefits of the intervention and making the decision to adopt it. In regards to the ELSA programme, I feel that the successful completion of the first three phrases is evident in the continued demand for places on the initial ELSA training. The fourth phase (implementation) is concerned with the process involved in embedding an intervention within an organisation to create real change (Evans et al. 2015). In order for this to be successful however, ongoing assistance and continued skill development is required from the intervention developers (Evans et al. 2015; Wandesman et al. 2008; Zins et al. 2004). Finally, in the fifth phase ((dis)continuance), the adopter makes the decision whether or not to continue with an intervention or discard it altogether.

Evans et al. (2015) identified four significant points (reinvention points) within Rogers' (2004) model where interventions are adapted. If we look briefly at reinvention points three and four (see above), these correspond with the final two phases in Rogers' model which I think are likely the points at which ELSA support may be failing in some settings. Evans et al. (2015) posit that the tenet of reinvention point three (intervention clarification) is the importance of organisation leaders and line managers being provided with enough knowledge and information in order for them to support the successful implementation of interventions in settings. The role of management here is to ensure the intervention is prioritised and privileged within the setting (Evans et al. 2015). I would argue that this is particularly relevant to the three meso level mechanisms identified earlier in this section.

In regards to their implications for EP practice I feel that providing clarity about the ELSA role and specific guidelines about their support needs is essential and that this needs to be communicated clearly to both ELSAs and line managers. During post-sort interviews, several ELSAs also reported that they feel that the ELSA role has been 'squeezed' within their setting, with some reporting having to run interventions in the corridor and others being asked to "just do a little bit of ELSA with X" on an ad hoc basis. The view presented here is one of the ELSA role not being given priority or privilege and this is something that could be potentially addressed using Evans et al's suggestions at phase three.

The final reinvention point (intervention responsibility) relates to intervention burnout. Evans et al. (2015) highlight the need for "sustainable intervention practice" (p.762) and the need to distribute responsibility and support evenly. Whilst I feel that this is also a phase where difficulties are being experienced with ELSA support arrangements, this is an area which is primarily related to mechanisms with implications for schools. As a result, further discussion pertaining to this will be discussed later in the chapter. However, I do feel that there are elements of this phase that are relevant to EP practice. For example, a role for EPs in supporting settings to distribute support would be to equip line managers with skills to enable them to provide effective support that would be more tailored to an ELSAs needs. This could be achieved through the offer of additional training sessions geared towards line managers. Other possible solutions would be for further exploration of both peer and wellbeing worker supervision for ELSAs, both of which will be discussed momentarily.

Returning now to the mechanisms underlying views around ELSA support, further examination of figure 5 shows that there are additional mechanisms and systems potentially impacting ELSA attendance:

- ➢ Multiple ELSAs within settings
- ➢ Availability and allocation of school funding
- ➢ Demands and expectations placed on staff

Whilst I feel that these mechanisms have more implications for school than EPs I do think it is important to give these some consideration in relation to EP practice. For example, EP monitoring and encouraging ELSA attendance could potentially have a negative impact when interacting with the above mechanisms. In order to clarify my thinking here I will give the following example; if settings already have a number of staff members working in the ELSA role, then it is possible that they feel unable to fulfil the requirements around releasing them to attend every session, particularly in light of issues with school budgets and demands of other roles staff may have. As a result it is possible that settings may decide to reduce the number of staff they have working as ELSAs or not continue to have ELSAs in school at all. This, I feel would be an unfortunate outcome given the perceived increase in SEMH difficulties amongst CYP and the role schools are now being asked to play in supporting them.

To return to the issue of how guidance around ELSA support can best be disseminated, possibilities include ELSA support guidelines being produced specifically in mind for ELSAs and line managers. A requirement could also be introduced making it mandatory for line managers to attend the first or last day of the initial ELSA training so that this information could be given verbally. A more extreme solution entails having line managers and ELSAs sign some form of agreement which stipulates that practising ELSAs attend support sessions in order to continue using the ELSA title.

Another candidate mechanism identified as being important for ELSA support is that of peer supervision. I feel that this is another key area which has important implications for EP practice. When used appropriately, peer supervision has been shown to be effective at providing support at multiple levels. Many of the views that have emerged through this study (see factor 1) show that at an informal level, peer support is already important for

several ELSAs who may otherwise feel isolated without it. It may therefore be useful for EPs to work with ELSAs to develop knowledge and skills in using evidence-based models of peer supervision to be used as an additional form of support alongside the attendance at the support sessions.

One final candidate mechanism which has possible implications for EP practice is the support offered to ELSAs from the school Wellbeing Worker service. Many of the ELSAs in this study expressed the viewpoint that the Wellbeing Workers were providing an important source of support. Reports of the nature of this support ranged from regular email contact and conversations to seek advice and resources, to having regular scheduled supervision sessions. Whilst I feel it is important to recognise the usefulness of the support being provided by this service it should also be noted that this is not a service that is necessarily accessible to all ELSAs. Access to wellbeing worker support is currently available to schools within the authority, however not all Wellbeing Workers seem to offer the same levels and types of support. In some settings, the Wellbeing Workers work quite closely with ELSAs whilst in others they do not. The Wellbeing Workers come from a variety of backgrounds, some having had prior experience in offering supervision. Others however have not and so it is less likely that they would be able to offer this level of support to ELSAs. If a decision was to be made regarding wellbeing workers contributing to the package of support offered to ELSAs I feel it is important that this is equitable. It would therefore be necessary for further discussions between the EP service, the wellbeing worker team and possibly schools to further explore options around this.

In regards to the term 'supervision', I feel that this research has made clear that there needs to be further discussion and clarification around what this means in relation to ELSA support. Within the service where this research was conducted, the term 'supervision' is eschewed and instead, the word 'support' has been chosen to describe the EP service's offer to help those working in the role as ELSA. Within this service it is felt that the word 'supervision' refers to a very specific type of support which may not necessarily fit with what is being currently offered. Despite this, views expressed within this study suggests that a minority of ELSAs do have some understanding of what supervision is with many more becoming more aware that ELSAs are required to access 'supervision' as a result of discussions taking place on social media. In light of this, I feel that it would be useful for further discussions around this to take place both with ELSAs

and line managers with the aim of clarifying what supervision is and highlighting the importance of ELSAs accessing appropriate support. If (following discussions within the EP service) a decision was made to rename the ELSA support sessions as supervision sessions, it would be then necessary to review the structure and content of the sessions to ensure they are aligned with an approach that fulfils the requirements of supervision. One implication of this would be the numbers of ELSAs attending the sessions. According to Osborne (2008) the ideal number for the group supervision sessions is around eight ELSAs, with numbers exceeding this deemed as unwieldy. Views expressed in this research suggest that at present, the size of support groups is not a concern for most, although some ELSAs did express the view that their groups would benefit from being smaller. Again, consideration would need to be given regarding how ideal numbers of ELSAs at sessions could be maintained if attendance at sessions was made mandatory. One possibility would be the creation of additional support groups to manage an increase in attendance.

6.6 Implications for schools

The results of this Q methodological research has also highlighted some key viewpoints and potential causal mechanisms that have implications for schools. These are predominantly at the organisational (meso) level, however there are also implications resulting from mechanisms and structures operating at the individual (micro) level. Again, as with the implications discussed in relation to EP practice, all the mechanisms discussed here can also be viewed in the wider context of other structures and bodies of knowledge operating at societal (macro) level.

As with the previous section, we will begin with a closer examination of the biggest impacting causal mechanisms at the meso level with implications for schools:

- ➤ Demands and expectations placed on staff
- ➤ Availability and allocation of school funding
- ➤ Multiple ELSAs within settings
- ➤ Wellbeing Worker support for ELSAs
- ➤ Alternative ELSA support in place

In addition to this, I have identified the following mechanisms at the micro level which may also have implications for schools:

- Line manager understanding of ELSA role and support needs
- Relationships between ELSAs and line managers
- Space and time in school for peer support

In regards to the above mechanisms at meso level I feel that senior management (including line managers) within settings are well placed to explore the way funding is currently being allocated in terms of providing appropriate provision to support CYP with SEMH needs. For example, settings could evaluate the number of ELSAs that are trained and working in the role alongside any other roles they are currently performing. If we return now to Evans et al's. model of reinvention points (2015), at phase three, it is important that consideration is given to resources and support to ensure organisational capacity is adequate (2015). With this in mind, consideration should therefore be given as to how provision within school could be changed in order to ensure ELSAs can be released to attend support sessions. Many of the ELSAs taking part in the study reported commitment to other roles as primary reasons for not being released (e.g. HLTAs covering classes). However, it is my opinion that releasing ELSAs for 1.5 hours once a term as per the current arrangements is certainly achievable if staff are given sufficient time and warning to plan appropriate cover.

Many of the ELSAs in this research reported that current arrangements in their schools allow for one or two ELSAs being released at a time to attend sessions on a rota basis. ELSAs are then asked to relay information back to the remaining ELSAs in school upon their return. Whilst this may seem like a practical and economical solution to the problem it is not necessarily the most effective. In phase four of the reinvention points model, Evans et al. highlights the importance of staff being involved directly with ongoing support and training as evidence suggests that cascading information is less effective than direct methods of training (Sterling-Turner et al. 2002; Durlak and DuPre 2008).

In the previous section, the importance of a supportive leadership which prioritises an intervention was highlighted as a central tenet to the third phase of Evans et al's. (2015) model. In relation to generative mechanisms and implications for staff, this is primarily linked with line manager's understanding of the ELSA role and their needs and the relationships between ELSAs and line managers. Developing a greater understanding of ELSA's needs could be achieved through the successful dissemination of ELSA guidelines as well as line manager attendance at the initial training. In regards to developing

relationships, one possible way forward would be for line managers to engage with further training from EPs specifically aimed at equipping them with skills to provide support to ELSAs.

Another mechanism which schools are well placed to address is the possibility of arrangement for Wellbeing Workers to provide additional support for ELSAs where this is currently not already in place. As mentioned in the previous section, it would be useful for settings to have discussions with the EP and Wellbeing Worker services to explore whether this is a form of support that could be opened up to ELSAs across the authority. One possibility here is that an arrangement is made whereby schools purchase an allocation of Wellbeing worker time specifically for supervising ELSAs. Again, this is also in line with Evans et al's. fourth and final intervention reinvention points (2015) which highlights the importance of ensuring that individuals implementing interventions avoid burnout by receiving appropriate support to maintain sustainable practice (2015)

6.7 Implications for the ELSA Network

It is hoped that the findings of this research- particularly in regards to the importance of Wellbeing Worker support will be considered further in any future evaluations or further development of guidelines about ELSA support issued by the ELSA Network.

Since its inception in 2003, the ELSA Programme has been successfully rolled out by EP services in a number of local authorities within the UK. When the ELSA Programme was initially developed, guidelines issued recommended that EPs should be responsible for providing ELSAs with the support needed to successfully and safely work in the role (Osborne, 2008). However, since then, increasing demands placed upon services coupled with funding cuts means that many frontline services providing support to CYP are being squeezed. EP services are just one example of this and it could be argued that the level of EP support recommended in the guidelines is not feasible in a changing landscape of increased SEMH needs and austerity.

In this particular authority, the development of the Wellbeing Worker service has been welcomed by schools and settings and it is fast becoming an important source of support for children with SEMH needs. It is unlikely that a service such as this would have been in

place in any local authority ten years ago. However, proposals from the government Green Paper (2017) point towards similar services being trialled and introduced at national level. In light of these changes, I feel it would be beneficial for further evaluation and development around ELSA support on a larger scale.

6.8 An Evaluation of conducting Q research using critical realist approaches

This following section is concerned with reflecting upon the methodology and ontology used when conducting this piece of research. Just to give a short recap – I set out with the intention of using Q methodological approaches to elicit the views of ELSAs about the support offered to them, both through the medium of the EP led termly support sessions and through any additional support in place outside of this. I have also taken a critical realist epistemological and ontological stance which has been influential in guiding my thinking regarding the nature of knowledge and its construction. It has also been equally influential in guiding my decisions regarding the design of my research, how it is conducted and the treatment of knowledge and information discovered in the process.

Overall, I do feel that the approaches I have chosen have been effective in fulfilling the aims of this research. I also feel that the combination of the unique systems employed in this research have been relatively successful. I will now look briefly again at Q methodology, the use of a stratified ontology of reality and Blom and Moren's (2015) model of retroduction each in turn in order to further examine the benefits and disadvantages of using these methods in this research.

6.81 Reflections of using Q methodology

The use of Q methodology in this research facilitated the expression of ELSA's views about the support they receive to support them in their role. I had initially wondered whether providing participants with a pre-determined set of statements would restrict the viewpoints expressed. However, instead I found that participating in the Q sorting activities focused ELSA's thinking about aspects of their support which had been identified as being important. In addition to this, post-sort interviews also provided me with opportunities to further explore their views – particularly in regards to aspects of

their support which had not been addressed in the Q set. The view around the use of social media support groups are a good example of this.

I felt that participants responded positively to engaging with the Q sorting activity with many ELSAs expressing an interest in the method and how it works. Observations of participants completing the Q sort suggests that the activity challenged ELSAs thinking about the support they receive. Feedback given by ELSAs following completion of the activity suggested that the statements in the Q set successfully represented the range of views ELSAs might have about the support they receive. One participant in particular reported that the statements reflected everything she had ever thought about her experiences of ELSA support stating that it was almost as though I had "read her mind," – high praise indeed for the effectiveness of Q methodology!

Finally, I feel that using Q methodology to explore ELSA's viewpoints has not only given a voice to ELSAs in the authority, but facilitated the revelation of potentially marginalised voices. Many of the ELSAs involved in this research had difficulties in being released and little contact with the EP service. As such, it is likely that their views around ELSA support would not ordinarily be heard. By ensuring that this group had the opportunity to take part in the research I was able to use Q methodology to reveal the distinct viewpoint held by participants loading onto Factor one and communicate this back to the EP service.

6.82 Reflections of using Bhaskar's stratified model of reality; is the identification of mechanisms necessary?

The stratified ontology of reality was first described by Bhaskar (1975) and has become a central tenet to critical realist ontology. As discussed in the methodology chapter, Q research is far more likely to be associated with social constructionism and constructivism in the UK and the USA respectively as opposed to critical realism. In my exploration of other Q methodological studies I have found very little evidence of Q methodology being used within the context of a critical realist framework. As such, my endeavours have felt akin to entering uncharted territory as I began to explore the approaches I had aligned myself with to see how they could be applied successfully to Q research.

There were a number of points during the early stages of this research where I wondered whether the act of identifying mechanisms would be useful and what –if anything- this would bring to the research. According to Blom and Moren (2011), the identification of generative mechanisms serves different purposes for different individuals. However, they also stipulate that the drive to identify mechanisms is created by the researchers own desires to develop a greater understanding of underlying factors behind phenomena (2011). Reflections of my own interests in this research topic have led me to agree with this assertion. I felt that at a personal level, simply gathering ELSA's views was not enough – it was also important to understand what factors were potentially underpinning their views and reported experiences.

My desire to explore this further was driven by both simple curiosity and the need I felt to identify possible ways to improve and develop support available to ELSAs. Having an understanding of both the potential enabling and disabling mechanisms in operation provides an effective way of achieving this goal (Blom and Moren 2011). Further to this it is posited that knowledge of mechanisms is important for implementing adaptations and developments to interventions under a variety of contextual conditions (Blom and Moren 2011):

> This kind of knowledge offers special possibilities to provide answers about questions concerning how and why some things work in different contexts (Blom and Moren 2011, p.77)

As my understanding of a tiered reality grew I began to understand in greater depth how this could be applied to Q methodology. I began to see how the expression of ELSA's views about their experiences of support could be located within the empirical level of reality, whilst the actual experiences could be said to exist at both the empirical level and the actual level. Many (but not all) shared similar experiences of ELSA support (empirical level) however, support systems were in place and were creating impact whether they were experienced or not (actual level). Subsequently, by exploring and unpicking what was going on below the surface (real level) using notions of potential generative mechanisms and structures, I felt I was better able to identify possible factors which were affecting the support systems and ELSAs experiences of these. Further to this, I found that the notion of a tiered model of social mechanisms as described by Blom and Moren

(2015) proved to be helpful when trying to identify and define candidate mechanisms and social structures. Classifying these in terms of whether they operate at a micro, meso or macro level was integral to supporting my formulations about what and how they could potentially impact and affect events and experiences.

The act of mapping these mechanisms within the context of their levels also helped me to think about how they interacted with each other. They also helped me to consider their impact on other social structures so as to identify where there was potential to create positive change and the implications of this for EPs and schools. I will admit that working through this process was costly in terms of time and energy expenditure. However I feel that the end results justified the effort, not least because of the clarity I feel this process has provided in identifying key potential mechanisms which could be acted upon to create positive change.

6.83 Q methodology and the five step process of retroduction: A (successful?) marriage of two systems

The act of attempting to map Blom and Moren's five step process of retroduction (2011) on to the steps involved in carrying out Q research has been yet another learning curve requiring me to venture even deeper into uncharted territory. Upon reflection I am not entirely certain as to how much of a perfect fit this ended up being. The model used by Blom and Moren (2011) is itself an adaptation of Bhaskar's (1975, 1989) process of resolution, redescription, retroduction, elimination and identification (RRREI). According to Blom and Moren, (2011), the processes involved in the steps towards retroduction are such that they are compatible with a diverse range of methodologies and approaches. This is primarily due to the fact that both Blom and Moren's and Bhaskar's model are considered to be guidelines which can be adapted to different research processes as opposed to a rigid template (Danermark et al. 2002). Upon reading this I felt that this was quite a bold statement to make (and still do) and the temptation of taking up this challenge and attempting to apply it to Q research was great.

 When considering how the two separate processes of retroduction and Q research could be used together I created a retroductive model of Q research (see Figure 3) to exemplify how I envisaged an adapted hybrid model would work in this research. This Model of Q

research which was created for the purposes of this study, the first three phases of observation, division and abduction were repeated once the process of finalising the Q sorts had been completed. The first phase in this process (observation/description) typically involves some form of identification of what is intended to be studied (e.g. formulation of research questions). It also involves the initial generation and collection of data. In the first stages of the Q research, I would argue that carrying out a review of the literature and conducting focus groups fits with the criteria outlined for the first phase of retroduction.

The second phase (division/sorting) is concerned with sorting through the data that has been collected with the purpose of refining and categorising the information. At this stage of my research, I followed a process of sorting through the information I had gathered both from the literature review and the focus groups and categorised these into distinct themes that I felt were pertinent to ELSA support.

The third phase (abduction/redescription) refers to transforming single events into expressions of more general phenomena (Blom and Moren 2011). I had initially felt that the creation of the final concourse and Q set would correspond with this phase, as the process of abduction can be seen as "relating studied phenomena to some form of classification." (Jenson, 1995, p.158). However, after further reflections of the processes I followed I feel that this process did in fact begin slightly earlier at the point where I had begun to generalise and categorise the individual aspects of ELSA support   (see figure y). According to Collins (1985), abduction can be seen as the "move from a conception of something to a different, possibly more developed or deeper conception," (p.188). In consideration of this definition, I do think that it is more difficult to identify the point at which abduction begins than I had originally thought. To some extent, I feel that this is more of an ongoing process which continues to be in operation throughout the research process to some degree or another. I don't necessarily perceive this to be a downside to the proposed method however.

In describing their use of the five step method in social work research, Blom and Moren describe how the process of abduction can actually be seen to begin in the second phase of retroduction (2011).

Once the final Q set was complete, the retroductive process can be seen to begin again (see figure y) with the gathering of data via Q sorting activities. As figure y shows, the processes of observation/description and division/sorting are repeated through the completion of Q sorts and their analysis. Once the factor analysis has been conducted, we again returned to the third phase of abduction. At this stage of the Q research, the process of abduction relates to the redescription of the final three factors. Here a narrative is created around the predominant views that have emerged. The process of interpretation which takes place here results in a transformation of one set of ideas into a new one throughout the process of narrative.

The final three factors and their narratives are then further explored through the fourth phase (retroduction). It is during this phase that data is further explored in an attempt to identify candidate mechanisms – ones which have the potential to either enable or disable processes and events. When beginning this process, Blom and Moren recommend using transfactual questions to help identify generative mechanisms (2011). Transfactual questions are described as questions which help us to "understand what fundamental constitutive elements must exist if human change is to be possible." (2011, p.71) These include questions such as "what makes X possible?" and "what properties must exist for x to exist and to be what x is?" (Danermark et al. 2002, p.97).

According to Danermark et al. (2002), the fifth and final phase involves examining how the identified mechanisms are manifested in specific contexts and how they could be applied in the future to create change (Blom and Moren, 2011). It is during this stage that the implications of potential mechanisms for both EPs and schools were explored along with recommendation for developing the package of support for ELSAs.

The issues I felt have arisen from using the retroductive method are not that this process is at odds with Q research per se, but that there are elements which are at odds with this particular piece of research. The final phase suggested by Blom and Moren (2011) is one which involves evaluating the impact of any recommendations implemented as a result of identifying mechanisms. However I feel that in the instance of this piece of research, there was not the opportunity to do this. As a result, it is beyond the scope of this research to implement and evaluate recommendations based on identified mechanisms. It is therefore impossible to examine the application of these final steps to Q research specifically.

6.9 Limitations of the current research and ideas for future study

I feel that this Q research study was successful in eliciting ELSA's views about the support they receive. However there are still some questions which I do not think were sufficiently answered, either because I was not able to gather sufficient information, or because further questions arose during the research process which I was unable to examine further at this time. These are questions which I feel could inform further ideas for future research.

One of the biggest gaps within this research is a lack of representation of views from ELSAs working within secondary school settings. It had been my aim to collect equal numbers of views from both primary and secondary school ELSAs and I feel that appropriate measures were taken to try and achieve this. Whilst disappointing, I do think that the lack of representation from this group is in itself interesting and raises important questions about how ELSAs work and are perceived in secondary schools. It is important to acknowledge that the systems operating within these settings can be of a far more complex nature compared to those operating in primary schools. I feel that the exploration of ELSA views specifically in these settings and the examination of potential mechanisms and structures which may be at work is certainly worthy of further study in the future.

Another question which I feel has not been fully answered relates to the use of social media as a source of support for ELSAs. Unfortunately, this was not something that emerged either from reviewing the literature or from the focus group. As a result, views around social media were not gathered directly through the Q sort process as this theme was not included in the concourse. The notion of social media groups being a source of support for ELSAs only emerged during post-sort interviews and as a result, only tentative speculations can be made at present as to how important a source of support this is for the ELSAs in the study.

Another area which I feel would be worth further study is the evaluation of any recommendations implemented as a result of this research. I think it would be useful going forward to explore whether any of the suggestions made have impacted ELSAs views and experiences of the support they received. My interest in this as future research

is twofold. Firstly, I believe that any positive impact would potentially be useful to other EP services running the ELSA programme. It is highly likely that the mechanisms identified at macro level are also having an impact on services and educational settings within other authorities. As a result there may also be similar meso and micro level mechanisms at work in other services which are impacting systems around ELSA support and access to them. In light of this, it also follows that any successful implementations of change within this particular local authority may also be equally successful when applied in other authorities.

My second reason for being interested in evaluating changes made to ELSA support is to explore whether the retroductive model of Q methodology used in the current study continues to be an effective one in terms of the applicability of the final stage. I also feel that the use of this model, along with the stratified model of ontology and critical realist approaches in general are worthy of further study in relation to how they can be incorporated into Q research. Although attempts have been made in the present study – with largely positive results – I don't think that this piece of research afforded the time or space to fully explore this. As a result I do think that further examination of this as a distinct methodology is worthy of further study in the future.

6.10 Conclusion

To conclude, the purpose of this research was to gather the views of ELSAs regarding the support they receive to help them in their role. The research primarily focused on the termly EP led support sessions offered to ELSAs as well as exploring other sources of support they were accessing. After an analysis of the data was carried out, three factors emerged which highlighted three significant viewpoints about ELSA support. These factors were further examined in order to identify candidate generative mechanisms which were then discussed in relation to their potential implications for EP practice and schools. Overall, the viewpoints which emerged suggest an uneven landscape of support for ELSAs working within the local authority. Many ELSAs reported feeling well-supported as a result of having a robust network of support in place. Other ELSAs however, felt that they lacked support within school and found it difficult to be released to attend support

sessions. For this group of ELSAs, informal peer support provided by other ELSAs in school was a lifeline, without which they would potentially feel isolated in the role.

A common viewpoint which seemed to run through all three factors was that it was not essential to attend every support session. This view is somewhat at odds with the guidelines provided by Osborne (2008) which recommend that ELSAs should be regularly attending support sessions in order to use the title of ELSA. This raises questions about ELSA's understanding of their own support requirements and needs, as well as the understanding of line managers. Recommendations were suggested in relation to implications for EP practice and schools. These included evaluating ELSA guidelines within the service to make attendance at support sessions mandatory and EP monitoring ELSA attendance at sessions more closely. It was also suggested that further thought could be given as to how this information was disseminated to both ELSAs and settings so as to increase awareness of the importance of attending sessions and accessing adequate support. Finally, suggestions were made regarding options for increasing the levels of additional support for ELSAs both through the further training around peer supervision models and the possibility of increasing the role of school Wellbeing workers.

All of the suggestions so far have ultimately focused on ensuring ELSAs receive a package of support that will effectively meet their needs. I feel that the use of the phrase 'package' here is key as it seems clear that the current offer of termly support in isolation is likely not enough to meet the needs of ELSAs. I feel it is important to emphasise this point as it makes clear that improving ELSA support should not be seen as the responsibility of the EP service alone. It will require collaborative working between services and settings to put together a robust offer of support that is equitable for all.

The rationale for this research was to discover ELSAs views about the support they receive to help them with their role, particularly in regards to the termly EP led support groups. The research also wanted to gather ELSA's views about what other support they were able to access in addition to the sessions. By engaging with ELSAs to complete a Q-sort I was able to identify some key views about what support ELSAs found useful. The three factors which were extracted all expressed the view that the support sessions were a useful source of support, particular for sharing resources, problem solving and for gaining knowledge and information to help them develop in their role. Benefits of the sessions include developing confidence and support to understand difficult situations.

Finally, the sessions were also described as being good opportunities to catch up with other ELSAs and talk about the role. However, although viewed as useful, the research appeared to show that ELSAs didn't feel it was essential to attend the sessions. This is interesting as this goes against Burton's recommendations that regular EP 'Supervision' should be mandatory in order to use the term ELSA.

The research also shows that for one group of participants, attending the sessions is difficult either due to working patterns, not being released from other roles or simply because of the number of ELSAs in a particular setting. For this group, peer support was vital as it was the only source of support they had and without this they were at risk of being isolated. The picture that emerged from the viewpoints expressed was that the termly support sessions were not the primary source of support for any of the participants loading on to the three factors. One of the main reasons for this appears to be the fact that the support sessions only take place once a term. As a result it was felt that there was a limit to the support that could be offered.

The frequency of the sessions was also mentioned as a contributing factor as to why ELSAs weren't able to develop links with ELSAs in other settings, or develop relationships with the EPs running the groups. There were differences in what support was being accessed and how this affected ELSA's feelings about the role. As well as peer support, line manager support and wellbeing worker support were all cited as being extremely important forms of regular support for ELSAs to talk through casework, reflect on their practice and gain emotional support. The one exception to this is the single viewpoint expressed by the one participant who did not load onto any of the factors. The fact that this was the only secondary school based ELSA I was able to recruit is interesting in itself. However it is beyond the scope of this research to explore further why this may be the case, nevertheless, I do think this is worthy of further investigation.

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Appendix A: Eight "Big Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research (Tracy, 2010)

Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research		
Criteria for quality (end goal)	**Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve**	**How the criteria has been met in the current research**
Worthy Topic	The topic of research is: • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting	• Issues around supporting children and young people with mental health issues is part of the wider government agenda on mental health • Current research coincides with EP service review of its role in providing ELSA support
Rich Rigor	The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex: • Theoretical constructs • Data and time in the field • Sample(s) • Context(s) • Data collection and analysis processes	• A thorough review of the literature was conducted alongside consultations with ELSAs to identify a range of viewpoints about ELSA support • Participants sampled from the population whose views were being sought. Measures taken to recruit ELSAs who were attending support sessions as well as those who were not. • Rigorous and process driven analysis of data using Q methodological procedures and software designed specifically for factor analysing Q data
Sincerity	The study is characterised by: • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s) • Transparency about the methods and challenges	• Decisions to use Q methodology have been discussed within the methodology section along with the Methodology chapter along with how this fits with my values, epistemological and ontological stance

		• Recognition of the level of subjectivity in interpreting viewpoints. Attempts made to minimise influence of researcher values and beliefs • Reflections about the effectiveness and success of using Q methodology included in the discussion
Credibility	The research is marked by: • Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling • Triangulation or crystallisation • Multivocality • Member reflections	• Statements created following a review of the literature and consultations with ELSAs to ensure a good range of views were represented in the concourse • Crib sheets were used to ensure viewpoints were examined holistically. Consideration given to distinguishing and consensus statements as well as those ranked towards the middle –not just highest and lowest ranking statements • Pilot studies carried out with both ELSAs and EPs to ensure the language used in statements was appropriate • Crystalisation achieved through post-sort interviews to gain clarification and further details about participant views and rankings of statements • Multivocality facilitated through the use of Q methodology and attempts to gather views of ELSAs who were not attending support sessions as well as those who were
Resonance	The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through:	• Attempts made to write and present findings in a way that is clear and accessible to the reader

	• Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalisations • Transferable findings	• Descriptions of factors written using a first person narrative in an attempt to make presentation of findings more naturalistic, resonate with the reader and bring ELSA voice 'to life'. • Findings of research reported back to EP service, ELSAs and settings to allow voices to be heard. Findings were also used to inform discussions around further development of ELSA support in the current authority
Significant contribution	The research provides a significant contribution: • Conceptually/theoretically • Practically • Morally • Methodologically • Heuristically	• Results of research contributing to review of support offered to ELSAs by the EP service • Heuristically, it is hoped that the research may inform further research and discussion about guidelines around ELSA support at local and national level. Since the inception of the ELSA Programme and evaluations of ELSA support conducted, the demands placed on services have increased and there have been changes to the ways CYP are supported in schools (e.g Wellbeing Worker) which are reflected in the current research • It is hoped that the research has helped raise awareness of the use of Q methodology to hear multiple voices-including those which may be marginalised. It is also hoped that awareness has been raised about the

		compatibility of Q methodology with Critical Realist approaches to research
Ethical	The research considers: • Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research)	• Full ethical approval given by university board of ethics following a review of research proposal • Q methodology facilitated participants to become actively involved with the research process, subsequently reducing power differentials between researcher and participant • Participants informed of results of the study. Results shared with EP Service.
Meaningful coherence	The study: • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other	• Reflections and evaluation in the discussion about the effectiveness of Q methodology in current research and its compatibility with Critical realist methods • The research aimed to relate findings and identified viewpoints back to the literature review and relevant research

Appendix B: Ethical Approval letter

Lisa Atkin
Registration number: 160102338
School of Education
Programme: Doctor of Educational & Child Psychology

Dear Lisa

PROJECT TITLE: Support and Supervision for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs); Gathering ELSAs views about the supervision offered to them
APPLICATION: Reference Number 018741

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 18/05/2018 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 018741 (dated 25/04/2018).
- Participant information sheet 1042953 version 1 (25/04/2018).
- Participant consent form 1042954 version 1 (25/04/2018).

The following optional amendments were suggested:

please see specific comments above

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Appendix C: List of Questions for Focus Group

Initial questions for ELSAs regarding views of EP led group support sessions

It is intended that these questions will be posed to ELSAs during the next support session. The aims of these are to facilitate discussions around support needs and views around the perceived benefits and disadvantages of the termly support groups.

Possible questions

What are ELSAs views on:

> ➢ The frequency of support sessions?
> ➢ Size of the support group?
> ➢ How helpful the support sessions are?
> ➢ How do the sessions impact their work as an ELSA?
> ➢ What support do they access outside of the support sessions?

More specific questions around the support sessions:

> ➢ How many support sessions (out of a total of 3) do they attend a year?
> ➢ What reasons might an ELSA give for not attending a group support session?
> ➢ Do they feel they are offered the right number of sessions?
> ➢ How do they feel about the duration of the support sessions?
> ➢ What support do ELSAs look to gain from the support sessions?

Appendix D: Identified Categories and Corresponding Statements

Final Set of Statements grouped by theme

Group Attendance and Influencing Factors: (6)

- Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs
- The duration of each support session is adequate to meet my needs
- It is essential to attend every ELSA support session
- I am generally able to attend each support session
- It is difficult for me to be released for each support session
- I would like to attend each support session

Content of Support Sessions: (7)

- I find that time allocated to sharing resources during the sessions useful
- I find time allocated to group problem solving during the sessions is useful
- I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development
- ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions
- It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used
- The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me
- I feel I always have an opportunity to get support in the sessions about any issues I have

Size and Dynamics of the Group Itself: (7)

- I feel happy with the size of my support group
- The size of my support group is big enough to work well together
- I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group
- I feel like an outsider within my group
- The other members of my group are supportive
- The group is sometimes dominated by one or two individual members
- Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution in the sessions

Benefits of Support Sessions: (7)

- The support sessions have helped me to develop my skills as an ELSA
- The support sessions have helped me to develop my confidence as an ELSA
- The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness
- The sessions encourage me to consider multiple perspectives on different issues
- The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour
- The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach difficult situations
- The Support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs

External Support: (6)

- I am able to access support from my line manager to help me in my role as ELSA
- I am able to access support from other ELSAs in my school to help me in my role as an ELSA
- I am able to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA
- I am able to access support from the school wellbeing worker to help me in my role as ELSA
- I find it difficult to access support to help me in my role as ELSA

- I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school

The Role of the EP (6)

- I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support group
- I The EPs running my support group are monitoring my performance as an ELSA
- The EPs leading my support group encourage me to find new ways of working
- I would welcome more input from the EP in the group sessions
- The EPs running my group are easily contactable outside of the sessions
- The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the sessions

Appendix E: Participant Recruitment Email

Hi XXX

My name is Lisa Atkin and I'm a trainee EP currently working in XXX. I'm currently carrying out research for my doctoral thesis which involves doing a sorting activity to gather ELSAs views about the support they receive. This is primarily focusing on the termly support sessions offered by the EP Team. I was wondering if it would be possible for me to come in to school to meet with you to do the sorting activity (if you're interested in taking part obviously!) It would be brilliant if I could bob in on one of the following days over the coming weeks:

Friday 25th January – PM
Tuesday 29th January AM/PM
Thursday 31st – AM/PM
Friday 1st Feb – AM
Monday 4th Feb– AM
Thursday 7th Feb - PM

If you would be interested in taking part I would really appreciate it if you could let me know if any of the above days would be suitable. Each card sort activity takes approximately 60 minutes and I can either do them individually or in groups of two. I've attached a copy of the research info sheet and the consent form for information.

Best Wishes

Lisa

Lisa Atkin Trainee Educational Psychologist (Tuesday to Thursday)

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet

<u>**Participant Information Sheet**</u>

EXPLORING WHAT EMOTIONAL LITERACY SUPPORT ASSISTANTS THINK ABOUT THE SUPPORT THEY ARE OFFERED

INVITATION TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study which is part of my Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Sheffield. The research is being supervised by tutors at the School of Education, University of Sheffield, and by members of the Educational Psychology Service in xxx (see below for details)

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This research aims to explore the views of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) regarding the support available to them as part of their role. This will include views about the Educational Psychologist led group support sessions, as well as support provided by line-managers and colleagues.

You will be asked to take part in a 'Q-sorting' exercise. You will be presented with 39 cards with statements printed on them. You will then be asked to rank the statements from 'most agree' to 'most disagree' by placing the cards into a grid. The arrangement of these cards will be recorded by the researcher. You will have the opportunity to talk about the activity and how you found it. The discussion may be recorded so that the researcher can take careful notes of your ideas. This recording will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher.

By being involved in this research you can hopefully help to improve the support that is offered to ELSAs to help them carry out their role effectively. Participation in this research will also benefit me as a student researcher.

TIME COMMITMENT

The 'Q-sorting' activity and discussion should last no longer than 90 minutes and will likely take less time than this (approximately one hour)

TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION

You may decide to stop being a part of this research study at any time up until 15th May 2019 without explanation. There will be no penalty for withdrawing at any stage.

RISKS

There are no risks for you in this study.

COST, REIMBURSEMENT AND COMPENSATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will not be reimbursed for your time. Refreshments will be provided.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data I collect will contain some personal information about you: the name of the school where you work as an ELSA, length of time worked as an ELSA, previous roles/experience working with children and young people, age, gender and level of education.

No one will link the data you provided with your identity and name. A space on the pre-sort Questionnaire is allocated for you to write down a unique participation code; this unique code will be required to withdraw the data if needed. Codes should be in the form of: First two letters of mother's maiden name, two numbers of birth date. Please write your code on the front of the pre-sort Questionnaire, in the space provided.

The results of this research will be shared with members of the York Educational Psychology Service via a presentation. Paper copies will be available on request. The final research thesis will be published and submitted as part of my studies. All names (participants, places and organisations) will be removed to preserve anonymity.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY

If you want to find out about the final results of this study, or if you have any questions about this study at any time you should contact Lisa Atkin either by phone or email, details below.

KEY CONTACT DETAILS

Lisa Atkin	Xxxxx xxxxxx	xxxxxxxxxxx
Lisa.atkin@xxx	xxx Council n, Education and Communities ional Psychology Service	

Supervisor at The University of Sheffield	Dr Martin Hughes	0114 222 8165
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Consent Form

EXPLORING WHAT EMOTIONAL LITERACY SUPPORT ASSISTANTS THINK ABOUT THE SUPPORT THEY ARE OFFERED

Researcher*: Lisa Atkin*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Martin Hughes*

Please indicate your agreement by ticking the following boxes after each of the statements and sign where indicated below:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and understand what is expected of me. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. ☐

3. I understand that I am free to stop the study at any time and I am free to withdraw my data from the study until 15th May 2019. ☐

4. I confirm that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study, and if asked, the questions were answered to my full satisfaction. ☐

Data Protection Act

I understand that data collected from me during this study will be stored on computer and that any computer files containing information about me will be made anonymous. I also understand that this consent form will be stored separately from any data that I provide.

I agree to the University of Sheffield recording and processing my data and that these data will be used as part of a Doctoral Thesis, and may be presented in other academic forums (e.g., academic journals, at conferences, or in teaching). I understand that my data will be used only for these purposes and my consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act.

Your name (print)   …………………………………

Your signature   ……………………………………   **Date** ………………..

Researcher's name (print)   …………………………………

Researcher's signature   ……………………………………   **Date** ………………..

Thank you for this information. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions

Appendix H: Q Sort Record

Most Disagree   Most Agree   ## Q-Sort Record Sheet

| (-6) | (-5) | | | | | | | | | | (5) | (6) |

(-4) (-3) (-2)   (2) (3) (4)

(-1)   (1)

(0)

Participant Identifier
Date
Gender
Type of Setting (Primary/Secondary)

Pre –Sort Questionnaire

How long ago did you train as an ELSA?

Approximately how many hours a week do you work in the ELSA role?

What other roles/duties do you perform in school?

What was your role in school prior to training as an ELSA?

How long have you worked within education?

Conditions of instructions for ELSA Q Sort

Here are some statements about the termly support sessions that are offered to ELSAs. As an ELSA, which statements do you agree with the most?

Start by making 3 piles of cards:

Most Disagree	In Between	Most Agree

Starting with the 'most Agree' pile, arrange the cards into the grid. Take the two statements that you most agree with and place them in the grid at the far right hand side. It does not matter what order they are in from top to bottom. Cards can be moved if you are not happy with where you have placed them.

Take the 'Most Disagree' pile; place the two statements that are the least important to you in the column on the far left hand side. It does not matter what order they are in from top to bottom.

Most disagree
(least agree)

Most agree

| (-6) | (-5) | | | | | | | | | | (5) | (6) |

| (-4) | (-3) | (-2) | | | | (2) | (3) | (4) |

| (-1) | | (1) |

(0)

Take the 'In between pile' and place these statements in the remaining places

Appendix K: Unrotated Factor Matrix for Five Factors

Unrotated Factor Matrix

Factors

	1	2	3	4	5
SORTS					
1 BI23	0.7037	-0.3278	-0.1436	0.0480	0.1466
2 KE11	0.2997	0.2517	-0.3279	0.0830	-0.2549
3 MC27	0.5863	-0.0018	-0.4114	0.0757	0.2279
4 SO06	0.5968	-0.1890	0.1998	0.0277	0.0751
5 DO24	0.5463	-0.3929	0.3872	0.1264	0.1485
6 PU29	0.6394	-0.4377	0.3516	0.1304	-0.2268
7 WE21	0.4344	-0.3774	0.0988	0.0570	-0.0062
8 WI31	0.5109	0.1379	-0.3973	0.0828	-0.0243
9 SN21	0.0164	-0.1057	0.2653	0.0323	0.3982
10 MA21	0.2133	0.2705	0.3797	0.1036	0.2772
11 BR25	0.3584	0.2502	0.2185	0.0544	0.2948
12 RE17	0.4118	0.3868	0.2758	0.1109	-0.2131
13 WI08	0.6681	0.0681	-0.0706	0.0060	0.1658
14 LO02	0.5522	0.1360	-0.1137	0.0172	-0.2820
15 PL17	0.7587	-0.4702	-0.0737	0.0888	0.0625
16 DA29	0.6133	-0.3138	-0.2368	0.0604	-0.0657
17 PA16	0.6375	-0.2633	-0.0525	0.0247	-0.1019
18 STI60	0.5076	-0.2808	0.3434	0.0793	-0.4726
19 BE16	0.7384	0.2675	0.3903	0.1066	-0.1504
20 BA08	0.6956	-0.2287	-0.4212	0.0975	0.2287
21 JA29	0.3693	-0.4775	-0.2929	0.1299	-0.4440
22 WI19	0.7269	0.2200	0.3198	0.0717	0.1503
23 AL19	0.6878	0.2151	-0.3285	0.0744	0.0830

24 GR12	0.7461	0.2994	-0.4175	0.1280	-0.0521
25 MA13	0.7226	0.2206	0.4130	0.1031	0.0673
26 WI26	0.6694	0.2714	0.2283	0.0619	-0.1363
27 WA13	0.3492	0.2799	0.2903	0.0787	-0.4964
28 TA08	0.6716	0.1887	0.1098	0.0253	0.2603
29 BR20	0.7269	0.1851	-0.4547	0.1141	0.2050
30 TI01	0.6080	0.1594	-0.5250	0.1420	0.0824

Eigenvalues	10.3176	2.3336	2.9185	0.2239	1.6252
% expl.Var.	34	8	10	1	5

Appendix L: Unrotated Matrix for Four Factors

Participant	Factors 1	2	3	4
1.BI23	0.7037	-0.3278	-0.1436	0.0480
2.KE11	0.2997	0.2517	-0.3279	0.0830
3.MC27	0.5863	-0.0018	-0.4114	0.0757
4.SO06	0.5968	-0.1890	0.1998	0.0277
5.DO24	0.5463	-0.3929	0.3872	0.1264
6.PU29	0.6394	-0.4377	0.3516	0.1304
7.WE21	0.4344	-0.3774	0.0988	0.0570
8.WI31	0.5109	01379	-0.3973	0.0828
9.SN21	0.0164	-01057	0.2653	0.0323
10.MA21	0.2133	0.2705	0.3797	0.1036
11.BR25	0.3584	0.2502	0.2185	0.0544
12.RE17	0.4118	0.3868	0.2758	0.1109
13.WI08	0.6681	0.0681	-0.0706	0.0060
14.LO02	0.5522	0.1360	-0.1137	0.0172
15.PL17	0.7587	-0.4702	-0.0737	0.0888
16.DA29	0.6133	-0.3138	-0.2368	0.0604
17.PA16	0.6375	-0.2633	-0.0525	0.0247
18.ST160	0.5076	-0.2808	0.3434	0.0793
19.BE16	0.7384	0.2675	0.3903	0.1066
20.BA08	0.6956	-0.2287	-0.4212	0.0975
21.JA29	0.3693	-0.4775	-0.2929	0.1299
22.WI19	0.7269	0.2200	0.3198	0.0717
23.AL19	0.6878	0.2151	-0.3285	0.0744
24.GR12	0.7461	0.2994	-0.4175	0.1280
25.MA13	0.7226	0.2206	0.4130	0.1031
26.WI26	0.6694	0.2714	0.2283	0.0619
27.WA13	0.3492	0.2799	0.2903	0.0789
28.TA08	0.6716	0.1887	0.1098	0.0253
29.BR20	0.7269	0.1851	-0.4547	0.1141
30.TI01	0.6080	0.1594	-0.5250	0.1420
Eigenvalues	10.3176	2.3336	2.9185	0.2239
% expl. var.	34	8	10	1

Appendix M: Final Rotated Factor Matrix

Participant	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Notes
1.BI23	0.1148	**0.6950x**	0.3571	
2.KE11	0.1036	-0.0156	**0.5047x**	
3.MC27	0.0638	0.3519	**0.6246x**	
4.SO06	0.3454	**0.5531x**	0.0828	
5.DO24	0.3152	**0.6991x**	-0.1528	
6.PU29	0.3195	**0.7902x**	0.0933	
7.WE21	0.0868	**0.5799x**	0.0144	
8.WI31	0.1137	0.2006	**0.6257x**	
9.SN21	0.1116	0.1181	-0.2332	No significant loading
10.MA21	**0.5005x**	-0.0155	0.0821	
11.BR25	**0.4716x**	0.0744	0.1057	
12.RE17	**0.6116x**	0.0184	0.1418	
13.WI08	0.3640	0.3803	**0.4192x**	
14.LO02	0.3113	0.2507	**0.4191x**	
15.PL17	0.1070	**0.8475x**	0.2835	
16.DA29	0.0153	**0.6174x**	0.3898	
17.PA16	0.1712	**0.6103x**	0.2733	
18.ST160	0.3313	**0.5818x**	0.1026	
19.BE16	**0.7955x**	0.3316	0.1757	
20.BA08	-0.0056	0.5934	0.6089	Confounding sort
21.JA29	-0.2480	**0.5805x**	0.2575	
22.WI19	**0.7200x**	0.3495	0.2048	
23.AL19	0.2974	0.2648	**0.6886x**	
24.GR12	0.3205	0.2365	**0.8224x**	
25.MA13	**0.7744x**	0.3581	0.1329	
26.WI26	**0.6612x**	0.2638	0.2642	
27.WA13	**0.5267**	0.0555	0.0578	

28TA08	**0.5441**	0.3120	0.3251	
29.BR20	0.2235	0.3041	**0.7997**	
30.T101	0.0994	0.2411	**0.7874**	
Total number of participants	9	10	**9**	28 loading participants
%exp. Var.	16	20	17	53%
Eigenvalues	4.8	6	5.1	

Appendix N: Crib Sheets for Final Three Factors

Factor interpretation crib sheet for Factor 1

Blue = Distinguishing Statements

Red = Consensus Statements

Items ranked at +6

10: It is difficult for me to be released for each support session

11: I would like to attend each support session

Items ranked higher in factor 1 array than in any other factor arrays

3. It is essential to attend every ELSA support session (-3)

6: I find it useful when the sessions are used for information giving and (+4)

12: The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs (+4)

14: The size of my support group is big enough to work well together (0)

(17) I feel that the EPs running my support sessions are monitoring my performance (-4)

(18): The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working (0)

28: I feel like an outsider within my support group (-4)

(37): I find it difficult to access support to help me in my ELSA role (-5)

(23): The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness (-1)

25 The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour (3)

35: I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA (1)

(38): I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school (-5)

Items ranked lower in factor 1 array than in other factor arrays

1: Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs (-1)

7: ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions (1)

8: The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me (2)

16: It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used (5)

20: The EPs running the groups are easily contactable outside of the sessions (-2)

21: The support sessions have helped me develop my skills as an ELSA, (-1)

(29) The other members of my support group are supportive (0)

30: I feel I always have an opportunity to get support within the sessions (-1)

31: Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution (-3)

(13): I feel comfortable with the size of my support group (0)

16 It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used (5)

19: The EPs running my group check to see if I'm getting everything I need (-3)

(27): I have made good links with other ELSAs who attend my group (-4)

(36): I find it useful to access support from the school well-being worker (5)

39 I would welcome more input from the EPs in the support sessions (-2)

Items ranked at -6

33: I find it useful to access support from my line manager to help me in my ELSA role (-6)

9: I am able to attend each support session (-6)

Other statements

4 I find time allocated to sharing resources in the sessions useful   (2)

2 Each support session is long enough to meet my needs   (0)

5 I find time allocated to group problem solving in the sessions useful   (3)

24 The sessions encourage me to develop different viewpoints ab   (3)

26 The group sessions provide advice and support in how to appr   (4)

Factor interpretation crib sheet for Factor 2

Blue = Distinguishing Statements

Red = Consensus Statements

Items ranked at +6

16: It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used

33: I find It useful to access support from my line manager to help me in my role as ELSA

Items ranked higher in factor 2 array than in any other factor arrays

(8) The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me (+4)

22: The support sessions have helped me develop my confidence as an ELSA (+3)

24: The sessions encourage me to develop different viepoints (+4)

26: The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach (+5)

29: The other members of my support group are supportive (+3)

(30): I feel I always have an opportunity to get support In the sessions (1)

32: The sessions are sometimes dominated by one or two individual members (+3)

34: I find it useful to access support from other ELSAs (+2)

(37) I find it difficult to access support to help me in my ELSA   -5

39: I would welcome more support from the EPs in the support sessions (0)

Items ranked lower in factor 2 array than in other factor arrays

2: Each support session is long enough to meet my needs (-2)

(3): It is essential to attend every ELSA support session (-4)

4: I find time allocated to sharing resources in the sessions useful (0)

5: I find time allocated to group problem solving in the sessions useful (1)

6: I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development (1)

11: I would like to attend each support session (-3)

(13): I feel comfortable with the size of my support group (0)

14: The size of my support group is big enough to work well together (-2)

15: I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support group (-3)

(18): The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working (-1)

23: The support sessions have helped me improve my self-awareness (-3)

(27): I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group (-4)

(28): I feel like an outsider within my support group (-5)

(36): I find it useful to access support from the school well-being worker (5)

Items ranked at -6

38: I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school

17: I feel the EPs running my support group are monitoring my performance

Other statements of note:

10: It is difficult for me to be released for each support session (0)

12: The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs (0)

25: The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour (+2)

(35): I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA (-1)

19: The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need (-2)

Factor interpretation crib sheet for Factor 3

Blue = Distinguishing Statements

Red = Consensus Statements

Items ranked at +6

16: It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used

36: I find it useful to access support from the school wellbeing worker

Items ranked higher in factor 3 array than in any other factor arrays

1: Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs (+2)

(2): Each support session is long enough to meet my needs (+1)

4: I find time allocated to sharing resources in the sessions useful (+4)

5: I find time allocated to group problem solving in the session useful (+4)

7: ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions (+5)

(8): The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me (+4)

9: I am able to attend each support session (+3)

13: I feel comfortable with the size of my support group (+1)

15: I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support group (+2)

17: I feel that the EPs running my support group are monitoring my performance as an ELSA (-4)

(18) The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working (0)

(19): The EPs running my support group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the support sessions (-1)

20: The EPs running my support group are easily contactable outside of the sessions (+2)

21: The support sessions have helped me to develop my skills as an ELSA (+3)

 27: I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my support group (-3)

Items ranked lower in factor 3 array than in other factor arrays

(3): It is essential to attend every support session (-4)

10: It is difficult for me to be released for each support session (-5)

12: The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs (-3)

(14): The size of my support group is big enough to work well together (-1)

22: The support sessions have helped me develop my confidence as an ELSA (0)

24: The sessions encourage me to develop different viewpoints (-1)

25: The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour (+1)

26: The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach difficult situations (+1)

32: The sessions are sometimes dominated by one or two individuals (-3)

(34): I find it useful to access support from other ELSAs in my school area (-2)

35: I find it useful to access support from my link EP o help me in my ELSA role (-2)

39 I would welcome more input from EPs in the support sessions (-1)

Items ranked at -6

37: It is difficult for me to access support to help me in my ELSA role

(38) I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school

Other statements:

 (23): The support sessions have helped me develop my self-awareness (-2)

31: Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution (0)

(6): I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving (+3)

Appendix O: Factor 1 Array

I am able to attend each support session	I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school	I feel like an outsider within my support group	The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the sessions	I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support sessions	I feel I always have an opportunity to get support in the sessions about any issues I have	I feel comfortable with the size of my support group	I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA	The sessions are sometimes dominated by one or two individual members	I find time allocated to group problem solving during the sessions is useful	The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs	It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used	I would like to attend each support session
9	**38**	**28**	**19**	**15**	**30**	**13**	**35**	**32**	**5**	**12**	**16**	**11**
I find it useful to access support from my line manager to help me in my role as ELSA	I find it difficult to access support to help me in my role as ELSA	I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group	It is essential to attend every ELSA support session	The EPs running my group are easily contactable outside of the sessions	The support sessions have helped me develop my skills as an ELSA	Each support session is long enough to meet my needs	I find it useful to access support from other ELSAs in my school area to help me in my role as ELSA	I find time allocated to sharing resources during the sessions useful	The sessions encourage me to develop different viewpoints about issues that we discuss	I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development	I find it useful to access support from the school wellbeing worker to help me in my role as ELSA	It is difficult for me to be released for each support session
33	**37**	**27**	**3**	**20**	**21**	**2**	**34**	**4**	**24**	**6**	**36**	**10**
		I feel that the EPs running my support sessions are monitoring my performance as an ELSA	Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution in the sessions	I would welcome more input from the EPs in the support sessions	Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs	The other members of my group are supportive	The support sessions have helped me to develop my confidence as an ELSA	The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me	The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour	The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach difficult situations		
		17	**31**	**39**	**1**	**29**	**22**	**8**	**25**	**26**		
					The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness	The size of my support group is big enough to work well together	ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions					
					23	**14**	**7**					
						The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working						
						18						

Appendix P: Factor 2 Array

I feel that the EPs running my support sessions are monitoring my performance as an ELSA **17**	I feel like an outsider within my support group **28**	I am able to attend each support session **9**	I would like to attend each support session **11**	The size of my support group is big enough to work well together **14**	The EPs running my group are easily contactable outside of the sessions **20**	I feel comfortable with the size of my support group **13**	Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs **1**	The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour **25**	The support sessions have helped me to develop my confidence as an ELSA **22**	The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me **8**	The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach difficult situations **26**	I find it useful to access support from my line manager to help me in my role as ELSA **33**
I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school **38**	I find it difficult to access support to help me in my role as ELSA **37**	It is essential to attend every ELSA support session **3**	The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness **23**	The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the sessions **19**	I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA **35**	The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs **12**	I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development **6**	The support sessions have helped me develop my skills as an ELSA **21**	The sessions are sometimes dominated by one or two individual members **32**	The sessions encourage me to develop different viewpoints about issues that we discuss **24**	I find it useful to access support from the school wellbeing worker to help me in my role as ELSA **36**	It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used **16**
		I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group **27**	I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support sessions **15**	Each support session is long enough to meet my needs **2**	Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution in the sessions **31**	It is difficult for me to be released for each support session **10**	I feel I always have an opportunity to get support in the sessions about any issues I have **30**	I find it useful to access support from other ELSAs in my school area to help me in my role as ELSA **34**	The other members of my group are supportive **29**	ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions **7**		
					The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working **18**	I find time allocated to sharing resources during the sessions useful **4**	I find time allocated to group problem solving during the sessions useful **5**					
						I would welcome more input from the EPs in the support sessions **39**						

Appendix Q: Factor 3 Array

I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school	It is difficult for me to be released for each support session	I feel that the EPs running my support sessions are monitoring my performance as an ELSA	I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group	The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness	The size of my support group is big enough to work well together	The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working	Each support session is long enough to meet my needs	The EPs running my group are easily contactable outside of the sessions	The support sessions have helped me develop my skills as an ELSA	The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me	I would like to attend each support session	It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used
38	10	17	27	23	14	18	2	20	21	8	11	16
I find it difficult to access support to help me in my role as ELSA — 37	I feel like an outsider within my support group — 28	It is essential to attend every ELSA support session — 3	The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs — 12	I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA — 35	The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the sessions — 19	The support sessions have helped me to develop my confidence as an ELSA — 22	I feel comfortable with the size of my support group — 13	Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs — 1	I am able to attend each support session — 9	I find time allocated to group problem solving during the sessions useful — 5	ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions — 7	I find it useful to access support from the school wellbeing worker to help me in my role as ELSA — 36
		I find it useful to access support from my line manager to help me in my role as ELSA — 33	The sessions are sometimes dominated by one or two individual members — 32	I find it useful to access support from other ELSAs in my school area to help me in my role as ELSA — 34	I would welcome more input from the EPs in the support sessions — 39	I feel I always have an opportunity to get support in the sessions about any issues I have — 30	The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach difficult situations — 26	I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support sessions — 15	I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development — 6	I find time allocated to sharing resources during the sessions useful — 4		
					The sessions encourage me to develop different viewpoints about issues that we discuss — 24	The other members of my group are supportive — 29	The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour — 25					
						Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution in the sessions — 31						

Appendix R: Completed Sort for SN21

I have made many good links with other ELSAs who attend my group **27**	The sessions are sometimes dominated by one or two individual members **32**	I find it useful to access support from other ELSAs in my school area to help me in my role as ELSA **34**	Each support session is long enough to meet my needs **2**	The support sessions have helped improve my self-awareness **23**	I feel I always have an opportunity to get support in the sessions about any issues I have **30**	I find it useful to access support from my link EP to help me in my role as ELSA **35**	I would welcome more input from the EPs in the support sessions **39**	I feel like an outsider within my support group **28**	I feel comfortable with the size of my support group **13**	I feel isolated as an ELSA within my school **38**	It is important for ELSAs to have a say in how the sessions are used **16**	It is difficult for me to be released for each support session **10**
I am able to attend each support session **9**	I feel that the EPs running my support sessions are monitoring my performance as an ELSA **17**	The EPs running my group are easily contactable outside of the sessions **20**	The size of my support group is big enough to work well together **14**	The group sessions provide advice and support in how to approach difficult situations **26**	I would like to attend each support session **11**	The group sessions provide support to understand a child's behaviour **25**	I find time allocated to sharing resources during the sessions useful **4**	The EPs running my group check to see if I am getting everything I need from the sessions **19**	The other members of my group are supportive **29**	ELSAs are consulted in regards to the content of future sessions **7**	Everyone in the group has an equal chance to make a contribution in the sessions **31**	I find it difficult to access support to help me in my role as ELSA **37**
		Having an ELSA support session once a term is sufficient to meet my needs **1**	I find it useful to access support from the school wellbeing worker to help me in my role as ELSA **36**	I have developed good relationships with the EPs running my support sessions **15**	The support sessions have helped me develop my skills as an ELSA **21**	The support sessions have helped me to develop my confidence as an ELSA **22**	It is essential to attend every ELSA support session **3**	I find time allocated to group problem solving during the sessions is useful **5**	I find it useful to access support from my line manager to help me in my role as ELSA **33**	I find it useful when sessions are used for information giving and development **6**		
					The sessions encourage me to develop different viewpoints about issues that we discuss **24**	The support sessions I go to are valued by other ELSAs **12**	The purpose of the support sessions is clear to me **8**					
						The EPs leading my support sessions encourage me to find new ways of working **18**						