

**A study of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death,
bereavement and loss in schools**

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Abstract

This thesis provides an account of how reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2019) was used to analyse data from interviews with school staff, along with additional school data, to examine school staff's experiences of and thoughts about proactive and systemic approaches to death and bereavement in schools. The literature review considers the prevalence and impact of childhood bereavement; psychological theories about children and young people's (CYP's) experiences of death and bereavement; and schools' proactive work in this area. This includes the development of training; the creation of bereavement policies; the utilisation of external professionals to support schools to develop practice; and the provision of Death Education. The examination of the impact of cultural variation on practice was also considered. A critical realist (CR) ontological framework was employed to guide the research, which utilised a case study design frame. Semi-structured staff interviews, school data gathering and school visits were undertaken in five primary schools and one special school. RTA and a force field analysis were used to analyse the data. The data suggested that there was a complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches, with reaction to events driving proactive practice, and that consideration of contextual information about time, place and culture was key to developing effective, proactive practice. Other key themes related to the tendency for school processes to be mostly reactive and generic in the ways they address death and bereavement; the importance of schools providing empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families to inform child-centred practice; and the need for appropriate support for staff, given the complex and emotionally-demanding nature of the work. Potential implications for school and EP practice are discussed.

Dedication

Mum and Dad, who have appreciated only too well the importance of many of the issues raised within this volume, and without whose incredible inspiration, love and support, I wouldn't have been able to get to the point of completing this work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Summary of study remit

This is the first volume of a two volume thesis undertaken as a requirement of a doctoral degree in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. The purpose of this research is to explore school staff's attitudes to and implementation of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death, bereavement and loss in schools. The research was undertaken within a local authority based in a shire county in the UK. It considers the views of senior school leaders, teachers and support staff on school bereavement policies; bereavement training; addressing death and bereavement within the curriculum; and multi-agency working in this area, including consideration of the role of educational psychologists. The research aims to offer illumination regarding the types of systemic approaches that some schools currently employ; staff perceptions of their effectiveness; the factors that promote and inhibit such approaches; and the impact of cultural variation on practices. In doing so, it intends to provide evidence to help improve professional practice, both by school staff and by the external agencies that support them, which will in turn help staff to support pupils more confidently and effectively in their understanding and experiences of death and loss, and to minimise the risk factors for the development of academic, social, emotional and mental health difficulties when experiencing bereavement.

1.2 Rationale

My personal motivation for undertaking this research originated in my professional experiences working as a learning mentor and a link learning mentor, coordinating professional development opportunities for a group of twenty learning mentors. Many of

them regularly supported CYP who had been bereaved, but also reported a lack of established bereavement policies and procedures, despite the existence of school pastoral policies on a wide range of other topics, and stated that the work in this area was ad hoc and not integrated to wider school systems. They also commented that support was short-term in the immediate aftermath of bereavement, and that there were no structures to ensure that children were prepared and educated in advance of bereavement, or received longer-term acknowledgment of its effects in its aftermath, such as support during anniversaries or significant life transitions, for example, when leaving school.

I was aware of the Mexican Day of the Dead festival – Dia de los Muertos – and was fascinated to learn from attendance at my university’s Mexican Society events about how children are actively involved in these festivities in schools, which recognise death as an inevitable human experience and collectively celebrate the lives of the dead. Some Society members expressed surprise that death education is not a routine part of children’s experiences in UK schools. This encouraged my interest in the possibilities of school events that simultaneously acknowledge death and celebrate the lives of deceased loved ones, and of cultural variation regarding addressing death.

This learning, along with my personal experiences of the profound effects of the deaths of family members and friends, led me to a desire to research schools’ proactive approaches to death and bereavement. In addition to my personal experiences, literature searches suggested the following reasons to undertake research in this field (further detail is provided in Chapter 2):

- The relatively high prevalence of bereavement amongst CYP (Parsons, 2011);

- Bereavement presenting as a risk factor for the development of academic, social, emotional and mental health difficulties (Penny and Stubbs, 2015);
- Schools being well placed to support CYP in this area (Howard Sharp *et al.*, 2018), yet most not having policies and proactive measures in place (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015);
- The limited amount of research regarding proactive, pre-bereavement support (Penny, 2020), with little research on the role of schools (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019);
- Gaps in the literature regarding how bereavement is construed and addressed from different cultural standpoints (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019).

The Covid 19 pandemic, ongoing at the time of writing, shaped this research, both by the increasingly great presentation of death and bereavement in people's lives in the UK, and by the ensuing need for flexible research processes, given the impact on participants' and my working practices. Grief and mourning rituals have been severely disrupted, with poor, underprivileged and minority communities being disproportionately affected (Buheji *et al.*, 2020; Simpson *et al.*, 2021). In the UK, periods of school closures have affected children's access to academic and pastoral support. All these factors have increased the need for consideration of how schools address death and bereavement.

1.3 Overview of the methodological framework

A detailed account of the methodological approach and the rationale for adopting it is detailed in Chapter Three. In brief, the study is grounded in a Critical Realist (CR) ontology and draws on a weak constructivist epistemology, which is consistent with a CR approach

(Bhaskar and Danermark, 2006). The research employed an exploratory case study design and used reflective thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2019) and force field analysis (Lewin, 1951) to analyse data from semi-structured interviews and documents gathered from six participating schools.

1.4 Overview of this volume's content

This volume comprises five chapters. Chapter One provides the context and rationale for the study, a summary of the methodology, and an overview of the volume. Chapter Two encompasses the critical literature review, which discusses CYP's experiences of death and loss, including cultural variation, schools' strategies to address these experiences, and the research questions. Chapter Three provides the methodology, containing the rationales for the study's ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives, details of the implementation of the study, and measures taken to address reliability, validity and trustworthiness. Chapter Four describes the results and a critical discussion of them, and Chapter Five concludes this volume with an analysis of their implications for practice, limitations of the study, areas for future research, and my personal reflections on my learning whilst undertaking the research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter provides detail of the research and literature informing this study. It begins by considering the prevalence and potential impacts of childhood bereavement; outlines the search strategy for investigating reactive and proactive approaches to addressing bereavement in schools; provides a summary of research regarding these approaches; considers the nature of cultural variation when addressing bereavement; and finally explains the rationale for this research.

2.1 Children's experiences of death and bereavement

2.1.1 Definitions and prevalence

'Bereavement' has been defined in various ways, with some definitions describing it as the loss of someone significant through death and others referring to experiences of broader losses (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019). However, unlike other concepts associated with death, the concept of bereavement always involves a relationship of some sort, as there can be no bereavement without this (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) describes 'Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder' (PCBD) under the broader category of 'Other Specified Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders', as one of several conditions requiring further research (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The diagnostic criteria include experiencing the death of a close other, and a number of factors that cause clinically significant distress or impairment, such as persistent yearning and intense sorrow, which are inconsistent with cultural norms. This medical account of complex bereavement therefore limits 'bereavement' to the experience of loss through death. Previous editions of the DSM

included a bereavement exclusion in the diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder, preventing diagnosis in the two months following bereavement; however, this exclusion was removed in DSM-5. This removal generated significant controversy, with some arguing that it would medicalise normal grieving processes; however, it could also be argued that the removal ensures that varied responses to bereavement are acknowledged and that major depression following bereavement does not go untreated (Pies, 2014). This debate highlights the difficulties with trying to formalise diagnostic criteria and time frames for different types of and responses to bereavement, given the wide variety of experiences and reactions.

Holland describes bereavement as a state of losing something, typically used in loss by death (Holland, 2001). He discusses a range of potential losses, including relatively small losses, such as moving house or school, and larger losses, such as prolonged separations from parents / carers due to illness, stating that such losses can help children to develop coping strategies to later address losses through death. Holland goes on to hypothesise that attachment and social cohesion have supported human development and that human responses to bereavement may therefore be adaptive in promoting social bonds.

Ribbens McCarthy (2006) stresses the importance of understanding the interaction between the wider context and the individual meaning that bereaved people assign to their situation in order to ascertain how significant a bereavement may be. Therefore, certain types of relationships or circumstances of death do not automatically lead to a bereavement being more or less complex or traumatic. This conceptualisation considers the potential impact of class, gender, ethnicity, culture and prior psychological and physical functioning, and also acknowledges possible effects of a broad range of bereavements, for example, with regard to

the deaths of acquaintances and pets. Ribbens McCarthy (2006) also discusses the relationships between bereavement and the broader concept of loss. Whilst bereavement is typically considered as a type of loss through death and its impacts may have much in common with other losses, in keeping with Holland's (2001) analysis, loss always implies a deficit with inherent negative connotations. Dependent on the nature of the attachment between the deceased and the bereaved, this may not always be the case, which further reinforces the difficulties with conceptualising bereavement and need to acknowledge both the wider context and the subjective experience of bereavement.

In this research, I chose to define 'bereavement' as a loss related to death, whilst also considering the relationships between bereavement and broader experiences of loss. This was due to the difficulties of formalising a fixed and limited conceptualisation, as demonstrated by the inherent problems involved in defining complex bereavement within the DSM-5, and also the need to consider the complicated interactions between bereavement, broader losses and wider contexts, both social and psychological. I was also keen to allow broader discussion of 'loss' because potential participants discussed wider losses during preliminary discussions about the research, particularly the relatively common experience of parental separation, and they wished to discuss parallels between loss following death and other losses, in keeping with much of the literature reviewed (Holland, 2016). 15% of CYP experience the loss of the presence of a parent through divorce (Parsons, 2011). Potential participants also used 'loss' both as a euphemism for death and when describing the lived experiences of CYP following bereavement. Rawlings *et al.* (2017) describe how euphemisms are common when discussing death, as they provide socially acceptable means of mentioning unmentionables. 'Loss' is also commonly used in research literature, often for both these reasons, for example, key researchers in this field, Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje

(2020) repeatedly refer to children experiencing the ‘loss’ rather than the ‘death’ of a parent in their recent paper on school support following bereavement. Holland and McLennan (2015) concluded from their research in 71 schools in North Yorkshire that a broad definition of loss was most helpful for ensuring that pupils’ needs were met and were not ‘hidden’.

‘Grief’ has also been described in various ways. Stroebe, Schut and Stroebe (2007) define it as a predominantly emotional reaction to bereavement, comprising diverse psychological and physical reactions, often incorporating oscillation between grieving and restorative work. They note that whilst grief is not a disease and most people do not require specialist psychological intervention, it does increase risks for physical and mental ill health. Whilst theories that suggest grief is a staged process, such as that developed by Kubler-Ross (1980), are now often viewed as being too deterministic and were not based on research with CYP, research with children suggests that their grief typically constitutes a number of more flexible tasks: understanding, grieving, commemorating and going on (Holland, 2016).

Longitudinal studies report a relatively high prevalence of bereavement amongst CYP, suggesting that approximately 5% experience the death of a parent by the age of 16 (Parsons, 2011). Questionnaire responses from 1746 adolescents aged between 11 and 16 years indicated that 78% had experienced the death of a first-degree (parents and siblings) or second-degree relative (grandparents, aunts/uncles and half-siblings), or close friend (Harrison and Harrington, 2001). Children are also exposed to death indirectly through media exposure. Research conducted with American parents of children aged 3 to 6 years found that 67% had been asked questions by their children about death, following exposure through books and films (Gutierrez et al., 2014). However, it may be that children’s social learning about death in contemporary, Western societies is less extensive than it was in the

relatively recent past, due to increased life expectancy and less overt mourning rituals in societies that are becoming more secular (McGovern and Barry, 2000; Leader, 2009; Holland, 2016).

Dyregrov (2002) discusses the importance of considering the different effects that may follow traumatic death and other bereavements, with sudden death often resulting in additional trauma. Oosterhoff, Kaplow and Layne's (2018) research suggests that nearly 40% of CYP in the USA experienced sudden loss by age 18, with 15-16 years being the most common age for this experience. Schools may have students who experience sudden bereavement within the context of a critical incident. A critical incident can be defined as a sudden and unexpected traumatic incident that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of a school (Department of Education, 2018). Whilst critical incidents may involve sudden death, this research did not explicitly seek to study such incidents. Balk, Zaengle and Corr (2011) distinguish between 'normal bereavement' and 'complicated bereavement', in which the CYP may feel extremely lonely and lack a sense of meaning and self-efficacy, with the latter being more likely after sudden, traumatic or complex bereavement.

2.1.2 Impact

Whilst bereavement is an inevitable part of life and grief should not be pathologized, with most CYP demonstrating resilience, if given appropriate support (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019; Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020), it presents a risk factor for the development of academic, social, emotional, physical and mental health difficulties (Penny and Stubbs, 2015), and for negative economic and familial effects (Holland, 2016). A literature review undertaken by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre found that CYP

who have experienced parental bereavement are prone to experiencing significant psychological ‘nonspecific disturbances’, including anxiety, depressive symptoms, developmental regression, low self-esteem, and somatisation, with most experiencing at least some short term negative psychological impact (Akerman and Statham, 2014). The study found that depressive symptoms are particularly common amongst CYP who have experienced the death of a close relative or friend, with rates varying according to the prevalence of other social, emotional and economic vulnerabilities. Bereavement can also affect physical health. Stroebe, Schut and Stroebe (2007) undertook a systematic review of health outcomes and found a relationship between bereavement and physical ill-health and mortality, particularly after traumatic death, also noting an excessive risk of mortality, including suicide, for suicide-bereaved children.

It must be remembered that adverse events will not necessarily lead to the same outcomes in all children, depending on the various factors affecting the child, a concept known as multifinality (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 1996). Ribbens McCarthy (2006) discusses the difficulties with causal models that suggest likely outcomes in bereaved children, describing instead a cascade model in which events in a child’s life, including bereavement, act as ‘pinball buffers’ over time, with unpredictable outcomes. Not all experiences arising from bereavement are negative, as there is also potential for ‘post-traumatic growth’ (PTG) during the struggle to adjust to a new reality (Akerman and Statham, 2014; McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019). Therefore, Ribbens McCarthy and Jessop (2005) propose the consideration of bereavement in terms of ‘change’, rather than ‘loss’ in some contexts. Whilst research regarding PTG in children is limited, the available evidence suggests that most children do experience PTG during bereavement, particularly regarding greater life appreciation, strengthened emotional bonds with loved ones, increased emotional resilience and personal

strength, and openness to new possibilities, often associated with the presence of supportive parents and teachers, and safe environments (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019).

CYP’s understanding of death varies according to their age. Brown, Jimerson and Comerchero (2015) apply Piaget’s theory of cognitive development to children’s cognitions and behaviours following bereavement in the following ways:

Age range	Piagetian stage	Cognitions and ensuing behaviours
2-7 years	Preoperational	-Egocentric thinking may lead child to believe that their negative emotions have caused the death -Fixed, concrete beliefs, for example, the dead always have closed eyes
7-11 years	Concrete operations	-Beginning to understand the universality and finality of death -May understand and believe that the deceased is simultaneously in heaven and in the cemetery -May engage in ‘magical thinking’, believing that they could have prevented the death
11 years to adulthood	Formal operations	-Likely to understand the finality of death -May have a self-centred perspective and be self-conscious about others’ perception of their grief

Table 1: Application of Piaget’s theory of cognitive development to children’s understanding of death, adapted from Brown, Jimerson and Comerchero (2015).

Dyregrov (2002) outlines potential impacts at different ages. Preschool children may exhibit anxious attachment behaviour, including anxiety around strangers and ‘clinginess’ to caregivers, and withdrawal from their surroundings. Regressive behaviours, such as wetting and sleep difficulties, are also common. However, they may also be protected by their lack of understanding of the permanence of death. School-age children may try to engage in behaviours to undo the bereavement, such as role-playing alternative scenarios or taking

revenge on those they hold responsible. Given the greater responsibilities that they face as they mature, problems with concentration, aggression, anxiety and low mood are common. Difficulties with sharing feelings with peers and adults, and ensuing social isolation are also typical.

Balk, Zaengle and Corr (2011) studied adolescent bereavement and found that bereaved teenagers' self-concept tends to remain healthy and their moral views often develop quickly in maturity. However, they often experienced more anxiety, sadness and loneliness over time than their non-bereaved counterparts. They also comment that adolescents are more likely to experience 'disenfranchised grief', in which societal assumptions consider the grief to be unworthy, for example, when a teenage friend dies during risk-taking behaviours, or when a boyfriend or girlfriend dies after a short relationship. This can result in a damaging lack of support. Risk-taking behaviours are also a common aspect of adolescent bereavement (Dyregrov, 2002). Adolescents are also more likely to experience and express grief across wide social circles through social media memorials, including following the deaths of people they have never met (Frost, 2014).

The economic consequences of bereavement can be significant, particularly if the main earner has died, both in their direct effects and the indirect effects, for example, if the CYP has to move area (Holland, 2016). Lower socio-economic status is associated with greater likelihood of experiencing multiple and complex bereavements (Ribbens McCarthy and Jessop, 2005) and with worse outcomes for bereaved CYP (Akerman and Statham, 2014). Bereavement often has an impact on CYP's daily routines and functioning. Research in Botswana (Thamuku and Daniel, 2013) and the USA (Ray, 2013) found that bereaved

children often had to undertake additional domestic chores, with some describing the experience as marking the end of their childhoods (Lytje, 2018).

Parsons (2011) considered the long term impact of childhood bereavement, through a longitudinal analysis of the 1970 British Cohort Study. Results showed that childhood bereavement was associated with lower levels of employment aged 30 for men; whereas for women, a very small effect was found linking bereavement to poorer qualifications and employment, depression and smoking. These associations were far greater for families with pre-existing risk factors. Psychological difficulties can occur in later life for some young people, particularly if the death was sudden and the child did not receive adequate support (Dyregrov, 2002).

2.1.3 Impact in educational contexts

Research presents a complex and contradictory picture regarding academic outcomes for bereaved CYP, possibly due to the lack of robust evidence, using inconsistent methodologies; exacerbation of existing demographic risk and protective factors; and polarising factors, such as some CYP pursuing academic attainment as a coping mechanism (Akerman and Statham, 2014). A literature review undertaken for the Childhood Bereavement Network found that bereaved CYP's concentration in school was significantly lower than their peers, absence rates were higher, adolescents who had experienced the death of a parent had GCSE exam scores on average half a grade lower than their peers, and girls whose sibling had died had scores almost a full grade below; however, this evidence is mixed as some longitudinal research failed to find any association between bereavement and lower attainment (Penny and Stubbs, 2015). McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday (2019) identified that bereavement is not

necessarily a direct, causal factor in educational underperformance, but rather acts as a mediating factor, in conjunction with other factors, such as social, educational and familial support and socioeconomic status.

Bereaved children can face increased risk of exclusion from school (Childhood Bereavement Network, 2011; Akerman and Statham, 2014). UK Home Office research states that bereaved children comprise the largest demographic group of those excluded from school below the age of nine years (Berridge et al., 2001), with school staff often struggling to know how to address their emotional needs and ensuing dysregulated behaviour (Keaney, 2016).

Educational professionals need to have an awareness of the complex, bidirectional interactions between various risk factors, psychopathology and school exclusion when considering the needs of bereaved CYP (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019).

Oosterhoff Kaplow and Layner (2018) examined the impact of sudden and/or traumatic bereavement and found associations with decreased ability to concentrate, enjoy school and feel a sense of belonging, lower feeling that staff treated pupils fairly, and lower academic attainment, after accounting for demographic variation. This suggests a need for schools to be particularly vigilant for such losses.

CYP with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may suffer additional complications in response to bereavement, compounded by the fact that their grief may be unacknowledged due to different presentations or a belief that the effects will be limited due to their lack of understanding (Blackman, 2003; Everatt and Gale, 2004). CYP with autism may find the changes arising from bereavement particularly anxiety-provoking, and may also

struggle with understanding the euphemisms and social conventions connected with death and grief (Forrester-Jones and Broadhurst, 2007), requiring specific psychoeducation (Sormanti and Ballan, 2011). Loneliness may be particularly acute for CYP with learning difficulties, as they can often have more limited social connections and school staff may feel underqualified to respond to their needs (Blackman, 2003). These difficulties may result in externalising behaviours, rather than verbal expressions of grief (Sormanti and Ballan, 2011); however, CYP with SEND will have diverse needs and experiences, as with neurotypical CYP, and professionals should guard against generalised responses. Winston's Wish (2019) published accounts of strategies to facilitate communication with CYP with SEND using alternative and augmentative communication strategies.

2.2 Death and bereavement support in schools

2.2.1 Search strategy

This research was informed by a literature review on schools' approaches to addressing death and bereavement, from literature that was found through references identified in this review, and from professional work. The search methods are detailed in Appendix 2, including the rationale for search terms, for including grey literature, and for inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.2.2 Reactive and proactive approaches to bereavement in schools

Schools are well placed to support CYP due to the amount of time they spend in school, staff knowledge of pupils' individual needs and their communities, and peer and staff social support (Holland, 2016; Howard Sharp *et al.*, 2018; Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020). Despite this, literature suggests that the majority of UK schools tend to act in reactive, ad hoc

ways, rather than proactively when addressing loss and bereavement, with only a minority of schools having bereavement policies and relatively few having planned, holistic responses, despite the availability of supporting resources from specialist organisations (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015; McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019). This can leave school staff feeling de-skilled, isolated and anxious regarding how to address the issue appropriately, despite considering bereavement support to be a high priority (Bloom 2019; McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019). Such research echoes my own prior professional experience as a Link Learning Mentor in a UK local authority, in which most of the area's sixteen schools did not have bereavement policies or whole school training, leading to reactive and inconsistent practices, largely dependent on the judgment and experiences of individual professionals.

Receiving appropriate, effective support is an important factor in addressing risk factors and promoting long-term positive outcomes for bereaved CYP (Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020). This should acknowledge that children do not live in silos, but are part of wider communities and social contexts that can be better understood through Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development (BTHD) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), in order to place the child at the centre of concentric circles of support, including consideration of family and school responses, and the impact of time (the chronosystem) (Holland and McLennan, 2015). Evidence suggests that the following planned approaches are effective in both preparing CYP to cope with bereavement, at an individual or universal level, and in supporting them after it occurs:

- Ensuring that staff receive bereavement training (McGovern and Tracey, 2010; Holland and McLennan, 2015; McManus and Paul, 2019), including training

regarding the impact of traumatic grief (Cohen and Mannarino, 2011), and that this is updated in accordance with current literature (Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020).

- Developing and implementing school bereavement policies and plans (Adams, 2014; Holland, 2016; Lytje, 2017; Bloom, 2019).
- Implementing whole-school policies promoting emotional wellbeing, resilience and compassionate school communities through the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Kennedy *et al.*, 2017; Akerman and Statham, 2014) and providing a sense of belonging in the classroom for bereaved children through the use of strategies to support social and emotional wellbeing (Penny and Stubbs, 2015; Howard Sharp *et al.*, 2018).
- Establishing ongoing, frequent and empathetic communication with children and families when a bereavement is anticipated. Ensuring that procedures are in place to create short-term plans for children’s return to school following a bereavement, which take account of their individual responses and preferences, including methods of communication and support, and of key moments following bereavement. Ensuring that long-term plans are also in place that acknowledge that the child’s feelings and needs may change over time, particularly during sensitive periods, such as anniversaries and times of transition (Bennett and Dyehouse, 2005; Holland, 2016; Costelloe, Mintz and Lee, 2020; Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020).
- Whilst it is often helpful for one person to coordinate bereavement responses, more than one member of staff should be involved in bereavement work in order to acknowledge the psychological strain of this work, to provide mutual support, to identify self-care strategies, and to allow staff to adopt roles to which they feel suited (Brown, Jimerson and Comerchero, 2014; Lane, Rowland and Beinart, 2014; Holland, 2016; Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020).

- Having awareness of appropriate specialist services and making referrals to them for both systemic and individual support, when appropriate (Aynsley-Green, Penny and Richardson, 2012; Adams, 2014; Akerman and Statham, 2014; Holland and McLennan, 2015), including educational psychology services (McGovern and Tracey, 2010; Costelloe, Mintz and Lee, 2020).
- Making sure that death and loss are addressed in the curriculum and that suitable lesson plans, texts and resources are available for staff (McGovern and Barry, 2000; Bowie, 2000; Wiseman, 2013; Adams, 2014).

Given that there is relatively little research on bereavement support in school (Costelloe, Mintz and Lee, 2020), it should be noted that some of the evidence for these approaches is based on small scale studies, sometimes including only one school as a case study, for example, Bennett and Dychouse's research (2005); some is focused on provision outside the UK, for example, Lytje's (2017) work on Danish bereavement plans; and not all is peer reviewed, for example, Bloom's (2019) work on practice following a pupil's or teacher's death. Although some of the evidence cited above is from literature reviews and there is also longitudinal evidence from adults who were bereaved as children, suggesting that feeling ignored and isolated was a common experience, and that kind and empathetic acknowledgments of loss were often most effective, there is a lack of empirical research evaluating interventions in UK schools (Akerman and Statham, 2014). Therefore, caution should be exercised in applying some of these findings and further research is required in these areas, as is acknowledged in much of the research.

Bereavement work in UK schools has been considered by Holland, a key researcher in the field, as falling into two categories – reactive and proactive work, with proactive approaches including staff training and the implementation of bereavement policies, and reactive work including support provided after a bereavement, such as counselling support (Holland, 2008). Holland (2016) breaks down the roles that staff may adopt into proactive ‘champions’, who raise awareness and help develop training and procedures, and ‘strategists’, who are typically in leadership roles and develop policies; and reactive ‘interventionists’, who carry out interventions for individual pupils following a bereavement, and ‘interactionists’, who may encounter bereaved pupils in wider settings and can notice and respond to the far-reaching effects of loss. Holland and Wilkinson (2015) state that having a school policy, “is a marker of a proactive response” (p.54); however, their language reveals the complexity of this distinction, as a ‘response’ typically occurs after a death, but this could be either be planned and proactive, or ad hoc and reactive in nature, thus revealing that this distinction cannot be simply defined by describing what schools do before a death as being proactive and what they do after as reactive. Neither is the use of external agencies always a reactive measure, for example, pupil counselling could be provided prior to a bereavement and school counsellors may also be involved in planned, systemic school work. Therefore, a more nuanced, critical approach was taken in this research to considering the nature of proactive bereavement work.

Whilst both reactive and proactive practice is important (Holland, 2008; Aynsley-Green, Penny and Richardson, 2012), proactive approaches have been identified as being particularly helpful to prepare children and staff to cope with death, and to ensure that appropriate support is not overlooked following a bereavement (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015; Lytje 2017), in accordance with the literature cited above. However, such work is not widespread in UK

schools (Akerman and Statham, 2014; McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019). Various researchers have speculated on the possible reasons for this, including taboos concerning death (Kennedy, Gardner and Farrelly, 2020); fear of saying or doing the wrong thing (Potts, 2013); and lack of staff training (McManus and Paul, 2019). Consequently, this area was chosen as the focus of the study.

The following types of proactive practice were selected as the focus for this research based on their prevalence in the literature and also the evidence found for the importance of developing effective practice in these areas:

- staff training;
- bereavement policies;
- Death Education in the curriculum;
- collaborative work with external agencies.

Literature related to these areas is discussed below, including UK and international research, given the limited research available in some of these areas. The primary focus is on UK literature where possible, given its relevance to this study.

2.2.3 Staff training

Research conducted by the Childhood Bereavement Network states that all adults who work with bereaved children should receive bereavement training and support (Penny and Stubbs, 2015). However, a Child Bereavement UK study in 2018 reported that only 10% of teachers had accessed bereavement training during initial teacher training, or subsequent professional development, based on survey data from 1022 school staff participants across UK early

years, primary and secondary schools (Child Bereavement UK, 2018). This was despite 86% stating that there had been at least one death in the school community. This was echoed in research by Costelloe, Mintz and Lee (2020), which found during interviews that all participants noted the need for training and also worry, guilt and sadness that often arose, due to their concerns about not knowing the right things to say or do, and the stress triggered by their own emotional responses to bereavement work. Holland and Wilkinson (2015) confirmed the ‘training gap’ from the results of their bereavement and loss survey sent to all schools in Hull and North Suffolk (34% of Hull schools and 36% of North Suffolk schools responded). However, higher rates of training were reported than in the Child Bereavement UK research, with 68% of Suffolk schools and 43% of Hull schools stating the need for more training, probably due to the delivery of the ‘Lost for Words’ training programme delivered by Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) in these areas. Schools that had received training generally found it to have had a positive impact on confidence and policy development, with awareness of the importance of this work enhanced. McManus and Paul (2019) reported similar findings in their evaluation of bereavement training delivered to eight schools in Scotland – 17% of participants felt ‘highly confident’ in recognising bereavement needs pre-training, compared with 70% post-training, and 24% rated themselves as ‘highly confident’ in acknowledging that someone had died, compared with 79% post-workshop. A weakness of this study was the lack of long term follow-up, which has been identified in other research as being important (Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020). Very little literature was found that critically evaluated the impact of bereavement training in schools, beyond participants’ confidence levels, with Holland’s (2004) evaluations of the ‘Lost for Words’ programme being an exception, as whilst it mostly evaluated staff confidence, it also assessed the development of bereavement policies following training. Kirkpatrick (1996) noted participants’ positive reactions to training do not guarantee that learning has taken place, nor

that behaviour will change, nor that positive results will occur. There is therefore a need for more research in this area, using a model such as Kirkpatrick's Four Level Model of Training Evaluation, that evaluates participants' reactions, learning, behaviours and results (Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Potts (2013) argues that bereavement training should be included in initial teacher training programmes, in response to needs identified by primary school teachers in her mixed-methods research. A need has been identified for additional training for SEND Coordinators (SENDCos), particularly regarding supporting children with life-limiting conditions, and their families, given that the numbers of children with such conditions in the UK is double what it was in 2000 (Robinson *et al.*, 2018), and also regarding the potentially differing needs of children with SEND (Blackman, 2003).

Beyond the UK, these results are echoed in research in the USA (Schonfeld and Demaria, 2015) and Ireland (Lynam, McConnell and McGuckin, 2020). However, research from Denmark provided a different picture, with 56% of teachers stating that they did not need further training, which may relate to the national system of Bereavement Plans, which are present in 96% of Danish schools (Lytje, 2017). Most of the UK and international research focuses on teachers, with some reference to non-teaching, pastoral staff; therefore, further research is required regarding the need for and impact of training for whole staff communities.

2.2.4 Bereavement policies

As most UK schools do not have bereavement policies (Holland and McLennan, 2015; Holland and Wilkinson, 2015), literature regarding their implementation and effectiveness

either comes from grey literature, particularly from UK bereavement charities, or from international studies. At a macro level, whilst national policies exist to promote mental health in schools, specific consideration of bereavement within such policies is only made in Scotland and Wales, and not in England (Child Bereavement UK, 2018). Akerman and Statham (2014) note that local authorities (LAs) have Critical Incident policies; however, LAs and schools often do not have more general bereavement policies, relying on generic mental health policies and practices, such as Targeted Mental Health in Schools and social and emotional learning initiatives. The lack of clarity regarding national and local policies and expectations for schools to deliver mental health and bereavement provision could lead to confusion and an absence of an explicit focus on bereavement support (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019).

Organisations like Winston's Wish and Child Bereavement UK provide online advice and templates for schools to develop bereavement policies, whilst noting the importance of the policy being appropriate for the structure and culture of the school. Child Bereavement UK states that a bereavement policy should:

Consider the impact of a death within the school;

Use expertise and share responsibilities;

Make appropriate plans, produce guidelines and draft letters;

Collect resources for support;

Prepare staff and organise any training;

Create a bereavement-aware culture within the community

Child Bereavement UK (2020), p59.

Frost (2014) considers the ways in which grief is expressed online – thanatechnology – and notes that social media is an increasingly important means for adolescents to mourn. He comments that schools therefore should include an awareness of this in both their bereavement and social media policies.

Bereavement policies have been recommended as important components of proactive school approaches, as they can help schools to respond effectively to meet bereaved pupils’ needs; to communicate appropriately and sensitively with CYP and families; to be aware of the potential impact of community, cultural and religious contexts; and to ensure that staff feel prepared to address bereavement (Holland, 2008; Lytje, 2018; Winston’s Wish, 2020).

Lytje’s work in Denmark on the development and evaluation of Danish bereavement policies (‘B-plans’), provides useful insight. 98% of Danish state schools now have B-plans, individually developed by schools to reflect local needs and to give staff a sense of ownership and responsibility, but within a context of national guidance (Lytje, 2018). Lytje’s research into their effectiveness concluded that B-plans are widely implemented, due to teacher ownership; they provide a framework for staff to provide effective support without being experts; their development and implementation is not excessively time-consuming; however, they do not utilise student voices adequately in their development or review, consider individual differences in CYP’s responses, nor adequately offer guidance regarding addressing terminal illness (Lytje, 2018). On balance, Lytje finds evidence for their helpfulness and for favourable comparisons with more ad hoc approaches in UK schools.

2.2.5 Death Education

Death Education occurs regularly for students. They see it in their lives and those of their friends. What is needed is not such informal 'education', but information delivered in a systematic, measurable way...in the formal curriculum.

(Stevenson, 2017, p.17)

Pedagogy can be considered to encompass the 'formal curriculum as specified', influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors; 'the curriculum as enacted', informed by assumptions concerning learners' mind; and the 'curriculum as experienced', including the 'hidden curriculum', namely the implicit teaching of norms and values (McCormick and Murphy, 2008). Whilst the implicit teaching of values regarding death may occur through the various types of bereavement support described within this chapter, strong arguments have been made for the inclusion of Death Education in the formal curriculum:

- CYP who are educated about death and loss are better prepared when they experience it, with clearer self-awareness, values and coping strategies (Clark; 1998; Holland, 2008)
- Schools who teach Death Education are better prepared to address death when it arises in the school community (Bennett and Dyehouse, 2005; Kennedy *et al.*, 2017)
- Death Education can increase empathetic responses from CYP when their peers are bereaved (Childhood Bereavement Network, 2017)
- Death Education can help to dispel myths, taboos and distorted portrayals of death in the media (Wass 2004; Penny, 2018)

However, the evidence base for the effectiveness of UK Death Education is very limited, given the paucity of literature and its small-scale nature. The limited research gathering

pupils' views is ambiguous - whilst Bowie (2000) and Jackson and Colwell (2001) concluded that their participants were supportive of Death Education, only 36% of pupils in Bowie's survey and 65% in Jackson and Cowell's felt that death should be taught in primary schools, yet the authors concluded this to be a favourable response. Therefore, further research is required.

Death Education can be considered to have its modern origins with Feifel's symposiums in the 1950s, which stressed the importance of multidisciplinary Death Education, rooted in humanistic principles, to promote both acquisition of knowledge and self-understanding (Wass, 2004). The 1988 BBC programme *The Facts of Death* brought American Death Education school curricula to a UK audience (Stevenson, 2004). Subsequent UK research is limited; however, it includes papers by Clark (1998) considering how the principles described above might be applied to UK schools' Death Education; Bowie (2000) reporting primary school children's views on death and its place in the curriculum; Holland (2008) and Jackson and Cowell (2001) describing opportunities to address Death Education through topics in RE, PSHE and science; and Tsiris *et al.* (2011) reviewing the St Christopher's Schools Project, which introduces the work of hospices to school pupils through collaborative arts projects. International papers focusing on Death Education include studies from Ireland (McGovern and Barry, 2000); Hong Kong (Mak, 2013); Nigeria (Imogie, 2000); Canada (Engarhos *et al.*, 2013); Australia (Kennedy *et al.*, 2017); Italy (Beccaro *et al.*, 2014) and Japan (Katayama, 2002). The foci of these papers varies considerably according to the societal context, for example, Imogie (2000) considered the importance of designing a curriculum to take account of the varying cultural values within Nigeria, and Shackford (2003) explored evidence for using Death Education as a prevention programme to address school shootings in the USA.

There is no requirement for schools to teach pupils about bereavement in the UK National Curriculum. The recent Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) (Department for Education, 2020) curriculum only states that secondary schools should teach pupils about ‘problems and challenges’, and that teachers should be aware of the potential impact of ‘adverse childhood experiences’ on pupils, including bereavement. Death Education lesson plans have been produced by The PSHE Association, Winston’s Wish and Child Bereavement UK (known as ‘The Elephant’s Tea Party’). These cover topics such as life cycles, emotional literacy, and remembering. No peer reviewed research on the outcomes following Death Education was found; however, unpublished research undertaken by West Dunbartonshire EPS (Education Scotland, 2017) evaluating the implementation of The Elephant’s Tea Party classes in a secondary school found that pupils developed a more nuanced understanding of how they might cope with bereavement and teachers considered it an effective and accessible curriculum.

Issues raised in the literature included the need for appropriate training for staff, particularly regarding cultural differences (McGovern and Barry, 2000; Stevenson, 2017); staff to be aware of bereaved pupils in the class and provide the ‘right to pass’ (Winston’s Wish, 2016); a spiral curriculum that is differentiated according to age, stage and SEND (Penny, 2018); and the need to collaboratively involve pupils, families and the wider staff (Kennedy *et al*, 2017; Penny, 2018).

2.2.6 External agency work in schools

Whilst external professionals are often involved following a bereavement and therefore their involvement could be considered part of reactive practice (Holland, 2008), schools should have advance knowledge of what support is available and an awareness of appropriate

referral processes, as referrals to counsellors or school nurses can be inappropriate and/or pathologise grief (Potts, 2013). Whilst counselling can be very helpful for some CYP, particularly those dealing with complex or traumatic grief, it should not be seen as an automatic response for all pupils, as a 'one size fits all' approach can be harmful to individuals with instrumental or avoidant coping styles, and for those who may benefit, the timing of the intervention is important (Jordan and Neimeyer, 2003). A school-based, personalised response is likely to be most effective for most CYP; however, schools need to be aware of the signs that external support may be needed (Holland, 2016; Dyregrove, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020). External professionals can also include staff training and supervision (Costelloe, Mintz and Lee, 2020). Therefore, this research considers the informed and considered use of external agencies to be part of a proactive approach.

According to questionnaire responses from 1746 11-16 year olds in Northern England, of those who had experienced bereavement and had talked to someone about it, most had not talked to a health professional, with the most common choices of people to talk to being parents, other family and friends (Harrison and Harrington, 2001). The minority who had received support from specialist professionals had received it from school counsellors, primary health care professionals, bereavement counsellors and child mental health professionals. Most of these CYP had relatively high levels of depressive symptoms and had found the support helpful. Professionals identified in other research include play therapists (Webb, 2011), SEND advisory teams, educational psychologists (EPs), Macmillan nurses, social care teams, bereavement organisations, funeral directors (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015), community leaders and religious leaders (Leek-Openshaw, 2011). Counsellors, primary health professionals (including school nurses) and SEND support services (including educational psychologists [EPs]) were the most common sources of support in these studies.

Holland and Wilkinson (2015) noted that 58% of responses from schools surveyed in Hull would not seek external support and an unspecified number of schools were unaware that external support was available. Given that this research also stated that many schools reported the need for further training (68% in Suffolk and 43% in Hull), this suggests a lack of awareness of sources of external support, rather than a confidence in ‘in house’ support. Akerman and Statham’s (2014) literature review found that effective external interventions were differentiated to CYP’s needs; enabled CYP to better communicate their experiences and needs; alleviated feelings of loneliness; and helped CYP and their families to develop coping skills.

2.2.6.1 EPs and bereavement work

Costelloe, Mintz and Lee’s (2020) research into bereavement support in UK primary schools identified how EPs are well placed to offer both whole school support and individual support to pupils. Their research considered how EPs could draw on systemic and psychodynamic theories to provide training, supervision, and to help schools develop policies and practices. They particularly noted the emotional stress of bereavement work and identified Bion’s psychodynamic model of containment (Bion, 1983) and Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory of human development (BTHD) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) as useful psychological frameworks that could be used in parallel to guide work to support pupils and staff. BTHD considers the influences of proximal processes (namely bidirectional interactions between the child/family/school), personal characteristics of the child, wider context, and time. It has also been identified as a helpful framework for EP bereavement work by Holland and Wilkinson (2015) and Holland and McLennan (2015). Containment theory analyses emotional interactions between individuals, in which one will contain and process the other’s emotional responses and reflect back to them in a supportive and more understandable form. Costelloe

Mintz and Lee (2020) argue that containment theory can be helpfully employed to analyse the various interactions between CYP, school staff and other professionals, and create supervision models to address the emotional distress that may consequently arise. They add that these frameworks could also inform the development of ‘bereavement passport’ procedures, that consider the role of the ecological systems around the child, including the chronosystem. Bennett and Dyehouse’s (2005) article provides a useful case study regarding how an EP provided support at an individual, group and systemic level for a primary school following the death of a pupil, utilising similar approaches.

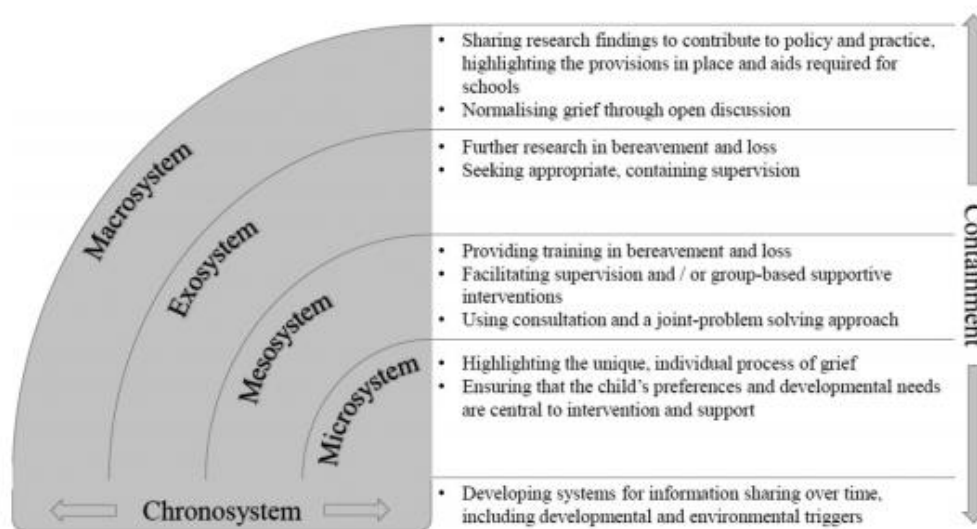


Figure 1: Implications for EP practice, Costelloe, Mintz and Lee (2020), p291

Training has also been identified as a key area for EP work, as EPs are well placed to use their knowledge of psychological theories of attachment, loss and its effects to inform training for school staff, for example the ‘Lost for Words’ course and associated audit materials developed by Hull EPS and Dove House Hospice (Holland, Dance, MacManus and

Stitt, 2005). EPs can also signpost schools to current research findings, books and resources (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015).

EPs were not mentioned in the literature reviews of school bereavement provision conducted by Akerman and Statham (2014) nor by McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday (2019), and only 10% of schools in North Suffolk and none in Hull completing the ‘Loss in Schools’ questionnaire (Holland, 1993) would refer to EPs for support (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015). In contrast, when the same questionnaire was used in schools in Galway and Derry, EPs were identified as the primary sources of support (McGovern and Tracey, 2010). Research by Keaney (2016) into the experiences of CYP who had been bereaved and subsequently excluded from school found that the participants had been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), rather than EPs, leading Keaney to hypothesise that schools may not consider such work to be within EPs’ remit. Consequently, questions arise regarding how UK EPs can raise their profiles in this area and apply psychology more widely. Keaney (2016) also notes that as bereavement is generally not covered in initial EP training, it should not be assumed that all EPs feel competent in addressing this area.

2.3 Cultural variation in responses to death and bereavement and how this is addressed in schools

Understanding of and responses to death are situated in and influenced by our time and culture (Wass, 2004). Whilst grief is universal, “the expression and experience of grief and mourning are mediated by one’s culture, ethnicity, race, religion, geographical location, socio-economic status, age, gender, and so on” (Granek and Peleg-Sagy, 2017, p385).

Granek and Peleg-Sagy (2017) go on to review literature that identifies both the similarities across cultures in the manifestation of grief, such as crying and fear, but also the extensive

differences, and note that much psychological and psychiatric research fails to note these differences, with clinical constructs of pathological grief being ethnocentrically based on research with predominantly white populations. This has significant implications for anti-oppressive practice, particularly when considered in conjunction with data regarding the disproportionate effects of death on ethnic minority populations (Ribbens McCarthy and Jessop, 2005; Simpson *et al.*, 2021). Great variety exists in the manner, time-scales and public nature of mourning across cultures and religions (Parkes, Laungani and Young, 2015), for example, the cultural norm of excluding children from funerals in Botswana (Thamuku and Daniel, 2013), in contrast to the norms in Ireland of children's attendance at wakes (Toolis, 2017) and Mexico, in which children are socialised about death from a young age through events such as the 'Dia de los Muertos' festival (Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2020). There is also wide variation within cultures, as traditions evolve, therefore professionals should be aware of their cultural assumptions and be sensitively curious when supporting individuals (Cohn and Mannarino, 2011; Oyebode and Owens, 2013). Ungar (2011) critiques approaches to addressing loss that focus on individualised support, instead arguing that fostering culturally sensitive, community-based resilience is of key importance.

Penny (2020) noted a lack of literature regarding how childhood bereavement is construed and addressed from different cultural standpoints. Whilst examples are cited earlier in this chapter of literature that encourages schools to be aware of cultural and religious diversity in their approaches to bereavement, McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday (2019) note that although such guidance exists, they found no research articles in their literature review on how this might be being implemented in schools. Lowton and Higginson's (2003) research concluded that the prevailing contemporary culture in UK society may encourage a culture of silence about death in schools, which might make it harder for teachers to proactively address

bereavement, as well as reducing awareness of practices and values within minority ethnic cultures. Resources are available that schools may draw on regarding the specific nature of different cultural and religious approaches to death and bereavement, including literature provided by Public Health England (2016) and Oyebode and Owens (2013). However, this is not specifically designed for schools, and neither the peer-reviewed papers nor the grey literature reviewed in this literature search attempted to draw schools' attention to such information. In light of this, and of the challenges for staff in familiarising themselves with a range of cultural and religious practices and families' relationships with these practices, Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje (2020) stress the importance of staff not making assumptions and always asking families about their beliefs and practices when a child is bereaved.

2.4 Research questions

The literature review raised a number of key points, as summarised below:

- There is a relatively high prevalence of childhood bereavement.
- Childhood bereavement presents a risk factor for the development of academic, social, emotional, economic, familial, physical and mental health difficulties. There is also potential for some positive outcomes, attributable to post-traumatic growth.
- CYP's understanding of and experiences of bereavement vary significantly and are affected by their age, developmental stage and prior life experiences.
- There is complex and sometimes seemingly contradictory literature regarding educational outcomes for bereaved CYP, possibly due to the limited research in this area. Previously vulnerable CYP are potentially more at risk of adverse educational outcomes following bereavement.
- Schools are well-placed to provide support for bereaved CYPs, with research suggesting that a range of approaches and interventions can be effective in supporting

CYP's needs and reducing the risk of adverse outcomes. However, such approaches are underdeveloped in many schools, leaving schools to act in predominantly reactive ways that can leave staff and CYP feeling ill-equipped to cope with bereavements.

- The main areas of effective, proactive school practice were as follows: staff training; bereavement policies; Death Education in the curriculum; and collaborative work with external agencies. However, research in all these areas of UK school practice is relatively limited, both regarding types and prevalence of practice; factors that affect the development of this practice; and regarding its impact.
- Whilst bereavement is a universal human experience with some commonalities across experiences, there is also significant variation in how bereavement and grief is constructed and experienced within different cultures and religions.

The gaps in the literature were highlighted both directly, as explicitly mentioned by other authors, and indirectly, by the absence of relevant literature. There was relatively little research regarding both the types of proactive bereavement work being undertaken in UK schools and the effectiveness of this work. Most of the existing research either comprised single case studies or survey research, which did not provide in-depth analysis of the factors affecting the development and outcomes of such work. No research was found pertaining to bereavement work in special schools, despite the potential vulnerabilities of pupils with SEND. Another gap in the literature was found regarding the impact of cultural variation on CYP's experiences and also regarding UK schools' consideration of and responses to cultural variation when addressing bereavement.

The study therefore aimed to address the following four research questions (RQs), arising from the research aims and the evidence analysed in the literature review:

- RQ1. What kind of proactive and systemic approaches to death, bereavement and loss exist in schools, including special schools?
- RQ2. How effective do school staff believe these approaches to be in supporting pupils' needs?
- RQ3. What factors promote and what factors inhibit proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death, bereavement and loss in schools?
- RQ4. What is the perceived impact of pupil, staff and wider community cultures on death, bereavement and loss practices in schools?

Questions One and Two were intended to be exploratory in nature regarding the types of proactive bereavement work that was being undertaken in the cases of the participating schools, and staff ideas about its implementation and effectiveness, given the limited amount of research about pre-bereavement support for CYP (Penny, 2020) and about planned, holistic approaches in UK schools and reported staff concerns about their abilities to undertake such work (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019). No studies were found that involved UK special schools, and the lack of special school responses from a bereavement survey sent to all schools in North Yorkshire was noted as a weakness (Holland and McLennan, 2015), hence their inclusion in the focus of RQ1. RQ3 was to consider why such proactive approaches may or may not be being implemented, in order to support theory development about how such approaches, which evidence from the literature suggests are helpful, may be better delivered, given evidence that staff want to prioritise this work, but often feel unprepared (Bloom, 2019). It also provided an opportunity to consider the

potential role of EPs within in this work. RQ4 addresses the absence of research regarding how bereavement is construed and addressed from different cultural standpoints in schools (McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019) and provided opportunity for exploratory research in this area. It enabled cultural diversity to be used as an interrogative theme across the research (Hollway, 2007), to interrogate participants' knowledge and values regarding the impact of culture on experiences of bereavement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

When undertaking research, it is important to consider the philosophical and methodological frameworks within which the research is situated and to critically reflect on the rationale for these decisions, ensuring that the frameworks are consistent and are suited to effectively addressing the research questions (Thomas, 2013). This is because different ontological perspectives, regarding the nature of reality, and epistemological perspectives, regarding the nature of knowledge, result in differing conceptions of reality, approaches to studying it and interpretations of the ensuing data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). All knowledge is situated in time, place and social relations, and is imbued with values accordingly, which should be explicitly considered (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Therefore, this chapter outlines the rationale for this research's ontological, epistemological and methodological positions. It describes the design of the study, including the design frame and methods employed for selecting participants, data collection and data analysis. It concludes with a consideration of procedures undertaken to ensure that the research was undertaken ethically, and in a trustworthy manner.

3.2 Philosophical positions

3.2.1 Ontological and epistemological positions and rationale

Robson (2011) describes the 'paradigm wars' that occurred in the social sciences in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century between proponents of different ontological and epistemological paradigms. The idea of a scientific paradigm, namely a conceptual framework for understanding and studying the world, was proposed by Kuhn (1962). A

scientific paradigm is tested by scientific and social processes until anomalies develop and the strain leads to a new paradigm replacing it in a scientific revolution. Robson (2011) states that the paradigm wars pitch positivist, constructionist and realist positions against each other; however, other theorists describe these competing philosophies in different ways – Gorski (2013) discusses positivism, interpretivism, constructivism and critical realism; Thomas (2013) describes positivism and interpretivism; Willig (2001) reviews positivism, empiricism, hypothetico-deductivism, feminism, and social constructionism; and Braun and Clarke (2019) consider essentialism and constructionism.

3.2.1.1. Critical Realism (CR)

Maxwell (2012) describes realism as a philosophy that states that entities exist independently of our perceiving of them or theorising about them, with ‘reality’ referring to aspects of the universe that cause the phenomena we perceive. CR considers ontological and epistemological positions to be separate and draws attention to the ‘epistemic fallacy’, in which questions about existence are mistakenly reduced to questions about our knowledge of what exists, as epistemological theories are situated in time and place, partial and fallible (Maxwell, 2012). Consequently, critical realists may subscribe to an ontological realism and an epistemological relativism, assuming that this constitutes ‘weak constructivism’, namely the belief that all theoretical understanding involves an interpreted and constructed element, rather than ‘strong constructivism’, which states that all phenomena are merely theoretical constructions (Bhaskar and Danermark, 2006). This acknowledgement of the situated nature of knowledge has resulted in CR being aligned to emancipatory research, as it is able to incorporate multiple perspectives, particularly those of participants, whilst also acknowledging structural inequalities (Robson, 2011).

Bhaskar (2008) considers there to be strata of reality in the natural and social worlds, at micro and macro levels, with strata emerging from combinations of specific agents, powers and tendencies (Gorski, 2013). Change occurs due to dialectical interactions between social and natural, micro and macro structures. Bhaskar (2008) describes three ‘ontological domains’:

Domain level	Entity level
The empirical	Phenomena: events that are observed and experienced
The actual	Events that are generated by the structures and mechanisms
The real	Structures and mechanisms with enduring properties

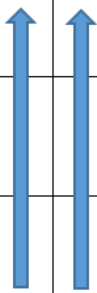


Table 2: Bhaskar’s stratified ontology of CR (adapted from Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013)

The aim of research is to bring these domains into phase, “and so to activate, isolate, and observe the powers and tendencies of a particular entity or strata” (Gorski, 2013, p.665).

A social constructionist stance was considered in this research, in light of the desire to consider practice in a range of cultural and religious contexts and also the impacts of language regarding death, given the diverse ways in which death is discussed, often euphemistically to provide linguistic safeguards when discussing ‘unmentionable’ issues (Rawlings *et al.*, 2017). However, I also assumed an underlying structural reality in the data, beyond the language, given the objective reality of death and its effects. Therefore, whilst I

have a belief in the transformative powers of discourse, I cannot adopt an entirely constructionist ontological position, nor a positivist stance. Robson (2011) argues that CR overcomes the dichotomies of the ‘paradigm wars’ through its commonalities with philosophical pragmatism, such as acknowledging the constructed and stratified nature of reality and the value-based nature of research. I therefore adopted a critical realist ontological framework in which to conduct this study, as it enabled me to study an assumed reality in the data, whilst also critically examining the various ways in which participants make sense of this objective reality, within a wider socio-cultural context (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011), thus drawing on a weak constructionist epistemological perspective.

3.2.2 Methodological position

Whilst methodological approaches must be compatible with the adopted ontological and epistemological positions, a range of methodologies were considered as being potentially appropriate for this research. Manstead and Wetherell (2005) warn of the risks of bifurcation between positivist and interpretivist paradigms, and associated qualitative and quantitative approaches, which can limit researchers’ awareness of and skills in employing the methodologies best suited to address their research questions. I found Peim’s (2016) discussion of Derrida’s concept of the bricoleur – the maker who relies on whatever is to hand and best suited for construction – to be particularly useful when conducting research during a pandemic, as it led me to consider the contingent nature of the knowledge that is constructed as a result of the pragmatic selection of methodologies and research tools. This encouraged me to be critical and open minded when considering the most appropriate methodology, despite my previous lack of experience in quantitative research. Accordingly, my decision making processes are described below.

Olsen (2007) describes the four methodological approaches to reasoning in social science research:

Methodological approach	
Induction	Attempts to reason from data to generality
Deduction	Attempts to reason from generality to data via hypothesis testing
Abduction	Attempts to reason from immersion in the data to the most likely explanation
Retroduction	Attempts to reason tentatively about why the data appears as it does to suggest the existence of phenomena

Table 3: Four methodological approaches to reasoning (Olsen, 2007)

Retroduction is compatible with CR philosophy and is often used in CR research (Vincent and Mahoney, 2018). As my research was exploratory, rather than hypothesis testing, and I did not intend to create generalised theories from such a small-scale study, a retroductive approach seemed most appropriate.

I considered the use of Reflective Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019) as an analytic method and noted that whilst Braun and Clarke (2012) state that RTA can be used within inductive or deductive approaches, but do not mention retroductive approaches, they do state that RTA is flexible enough to straddle both, often using combinations of the two in one piece of research, as researchers normally bring theoretical assumptions to their work, and rarely completely ignore its semantic content. Braun and Clarke (2012) also note the importance of being explicit about these methodological choices and of adopting a critically reflective approach, which supported my intentions to use RTA to analyse predominantly qualitative data in a retroductive manner, within a critical realist perspective.

3.3 Study design

Thomas (2013) describes a research design frame as providing the scaffolding to plan and structure the research process, drawing on the collective wisdom from previous, similar types of research. He notes that whereas in ‘pure’ social sciences, research design is sometimes considered synonymous with the details of experimental design, in applied social sciences it has a broader meaning, encompassing the choices, frameworks and processes involved in the research’s design.



Figure 2: Framework for research design (adapted from Robson, 2011)

Thomas (2013) lists the main frames as being: action research, case study, comparative research, ethnography, evaluation, experiment, longitudinal, cross-sectional study, survey, and no design frame, with the possibility of frames existing in combination and changing as research progresses (Blaikie, 2010; Thomas, 2013). Robson (2011) distinguishes between ‘fixed’ and ‘flexible’ designs, preferring these terms over ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’, as ‘qualitative’ designs may include quantitative data and frequently do so; however, they differ with regard to the tight, pre-specification required by fixed designs that predominantly employ quantitative data. Research questions should determine the most appropriate design frame, not a pre-existing belief in the primacy of one approach, which can introduce bias to the results (Godard, 2003; Thomas, 2013). Therefore, I considered the use of a range of design frames.

3.3.1 Design frame

This research sought to gain a rich understanding of school staff's experiences of and thoughts about proactive and systemic approaches to death and bereavement, in accordance with the research questions described above. Literature searches had led me to anticipate that participating schools may have minimal and diverse experiences in this area, and that some schools may find it a difficult area to consider, given the possibility of profound, underlying experiences related to such work. Consequently, flexible design frames that could include thick, qualitative data were considered, primarily case studies, for reasons described below.

3.3.1.1 Case study design

Case studies can be described as,

...analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object.

(Thomas, 2011, p.513).

Robson (2011) states that case studies normally use multiple methods of data collection, in order to provide rich, deep accounts, often resulting in thicker data and more complex explanations than from some other design frames (De Vaus, 2001). Case studies typically incorporate a range of data, including interviews, document analysis and observations, in a variety of manners (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Consequently, case studies have been criticised for their vague notions of what constitutes 'a case'; lack of rigour; and selectivity, resulting in bias (Robson, 2011; Ragin and Becker, 1992). However, adopting a

reflexive approach, with an awareness of the situated nature of knowledge; an acceptance of the subjective nature of research; and an understanding that participants and researchers both position themselves and are positioned within their contexts (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) helps to minimise these risks. The use of a case study typology also provides a framework to address these concerns, to ensure that the case study is rigorously defined, planned, and analytical. Therefore, I considered the use of Thomas's case study typology and terminology (Thomas, 2011) to structure my design, which describes a case study as a specific, bounded example (subject) that provides illumination of a particular analytical frame (object), with an ensuing decision making process regarding the formulation of the subject, object and process.

I also considered utilising a combination of frames and mixed methods, particularly survey data, to analyse a wider range of school practice. However, this risked resulting in a thin spread of data, rather than the depth I sought; a lack of ethical care for participants, given the sensitive nature of the topic; and challenges for coherently analysing and presenting the data, resulting in a risk of an "indigestible mass of detailed evidence in the report" (Hakim, 2000, p.73). During literature searches, no studies were found that focused specifically on the range of proactive approaches to bereavement in UK schools and detailed staff reflections on the drivers and barriers to such approaches. The research in this area that does exist utilised questionnaire responses to gain a broad overview of practice in particular geographical areas (Holland and McLennan; 2015; Holland and Wilkinson, 2015), but was unable to undertake the intended follow up interviews, therefore using interviews to gain rich data addressed a gap in the literature. I was also interested in using action research to work with schools to develop proactive approaches; however, it seemed appropriate to undertake exploratory case study research initially, to inform any such future work. These issues and the scale of the

research were reflected upon during university research panel meetings and informed my decision making processes.

Case study designs have a number of strengths that made them suitable for this research.

This research meets Yin's (2018) definition of a case study:

A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

(Yin, 2018, p.45)

Yin (2018) also stresses that case study investigation involves empirical research in its real life context and can therefore follow a realist perspective. This is therefore an appropriate approach for ecologically valid research situated within a critical realist paradigm, concerned with analysing the 'how and why' of the phenomenon in question (Hammond and Wellington, 2012). It has potential to elicit deep and rich data, which can holistically illuminate complex and nuanced issues, such as those involved in my research. It is suited to small-scale research projects (Hammond and Wellington, 2012). The flexible manner in which it can incorporate eclectic methods and can be modified in response to the evolution of the research was initially helpful and later necessary, due to Covid 19 pandemic restrictions, which resulted in visits to schools being cancelled and data collection being scaled back.

However, this study still met criteria for case study research:

- Thomas (2011) states that case studies employ one or more methods of data collection and whilst Robson (2011) states that case studies *typically* employ multiple methods, he also cites examples of studies that are solely based on written correspondence or press articles.

- Interviews were ‘in depth’, in accordance with Yin’s (2018) recommendation for case studies, and were undertaken with key individuals who were able to discuss a range of school practice.
- Additional data was requested and limited information was provided, including one bereavement policy, training information, demographic data and Ofsted data. The *absence* of available school documentation provided evidence in itself about practice.
- Site visits had been undertaken prior to pandemic restrictions in four of the six schools to observe wider pastoral practice.

In accordance with Thomas’s design frame and case study typologies (Thomas 2011; 2013), this research employed an exploratory, case study design, given the lack of previous research in the area. The approach was initially intended to be illustrative / descriptive, with an openness to theory-building, dependent on the nature of the data and analysis. It investigated practice within six schools in the shire county in which I am currently on placement. The research comprised a snapshot study of current practices at the time of data collection. The object of the study was schools’ proactive and systemic approaches to bereavement and loss; and the multiple subjects were the participating schools and their staff. The boundaries of cases should be stipulated, and in this research, the boundaries were drawn around the school staff, teaching and non-teaching, in order to involve pastoral staff. This was because I assumed that some schools would have little or no experience in this field and I was keen to investigate why this may so. Consequently, school staff could offer thoughts about this; however, pupils and parents would be unlikely to be able to provide valid speculation about the reasons for the absences of practice. Participating schools constituted local knowledge cases and were studied in parallel. Thomas (2011) argues against describing the selection of

multiple case study subjects as a ‘sample’, as they are not representative of a wider population and case study research should not aspire to typicality or generalisability, instead gaining its meaning and worth from the analytical illumination that the subject can shine on the object. However, this is a contested position, for example, Hammersley (1992) argues for analytical generalisation from multiple cases and De Vaus (2001) states that theoretical generalisability is important to give research wider purpose. Given the small-scale nature of this project, I do not claim that the results could be generalised to all schools, instead accepting Hammersley’s (1992) ‘trade off’ of a loss of empirical generalisability, in favour of accuracy and rich detail regarding what the subject suggests about the object of the research.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted by Birmingham University’s Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee in October 2019. The Application for Ethical Review is contained within Appendix One and contains a detailed account of the ethical decisions and processes. The research was conducted in accordance with The British Psychological Society’s (BPS) ‘BPS Code of Human Research Ethics’ (BPS, 2021), The British Educational Research Association’s (BERA) ‘Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research’ (BERA, 2018), and with university ethics protocols. Information provided to participants prior to the interview and the consent form are provided in Appendices 3-5.

Respect for participants and minimisation of harm are key aspects of both the BPS and BERA ethical guidelines. Whilst the sensitivity of the topic and potential for mental distress were discussed in the Application for Ethical Review, additional checks were made with participants during recruitment and immediately prior to the interviews, in light of the potential for additional stress to participants due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

3.5 Data collection methods

3.5.1 Instrument design

A group interview was initially chosen as the primary method of data collection, as their interactive and dynamic nature can enable a deeper and wider-ranging discussion than an equivalent time spent undertaking individual interviews (Robson, 2011) and they provide a naturalistic approach to studying collective activity in organisations (Mitchell, 2009). I hoped that group interviews would allow professionals with different roles within the participating schools to share reflections and collectively formulate ideas regarding the drivers and barriers to systemic work addressing death and bereavement within their school. However, the pandemic resulted in some participants withdrawing, due to time pressures, technology difficulties and heightened emotions regarding the topic; conversely, some individuals felt that participation was a greater priority than prior to the pandemic. Therefore, following discussion with my supervisor, individual interviews were offered as an alternative, as this was the only manner in which some schools could participate.

A semi-structured interview schedule was devised (see Appendix 7), to ensure that key topics were discussed, but also to allow the use of supplementary questions according to participants' responses, providing scope for them to guide the exploratory process (Powney and Watts, 1987). It was also consistent with the exploratory nature of the research and with Yin's (2018) guidance that case study interviews should be fluid. The schedule was informed by the literature searches, the research questions, and preliminary discussions with the participants, for example, the addition of questions regarding staff support and supervision.

Interview question	Related literature	Related research question
1 -2	Cultural variation literature in Section 2.3	RQ4

3	Types of bereavement support in schools in Section 2.2	RQ1
4	Reactive / proactive approaches literature in Section 2.2.2	RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3
5-6	Bereavement policy literature in Section 2.2.4 and reactive / proactive approaches literature in Section 2.2.2	RQ1 and RQ3
7	Bereavement policy literature in Section 2.2.4 and cultural variation literature in Section 2.3	RQ2 and RQ4
8	Bereavement policy literature in Section 2.2.4 and reactive / proactive approaches literature in Section 2.2.2	RQ2 and RQ3
9-10	Training literature in Section 2.2.3 and external agency literature in Section 2.2.6	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4
11-12	Death Education literature in Section 2.2.5, proactive approaches literature in Section 2.2.2 and cultural variation literature in Section 2.3	RQ1, RQ3 and RQ4
13-15	External agency literature in Section 2.2.6	RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3
16-17	Proactive approaches literature in Section 2.2.2 and cultural variation literature in Section 2.3	RQ1, RQ3 and RQ4

Table 4: Interview questions and their relationship to the literature review (full interview schedule in Appendix 7)

3.5.2 Participants

The approach to recruiting participants could be described as ‘opportunity sampling’.

Although a more purposive approach was considered to provide a range of different types of schools (primary, secondary and special) and a range of levels of experience, the pandemic made recruitment more challenging and therefore this was not possible. I was keen to include a special school, as a gap in the literature has been identified regarding supporting bereaved children with learning difficulties (Penny, 2020). Thomas (2013) argues that caution should be exercised when referring to ‘sampling’ in case study research, as it would not be valid to describe the participants as being representative of a wider whole; therefore, he suggests

using the phrase ‘non-probabilistic sampling’ for such research, or avoiding the term ‘sampling’ altogether. The term ‘sampling’ is used with this caveat.

All schools in the targeted, shire local authority were invited to take part via an article in the headteachers’ bulletin, with an attached information sheet, explaining the purpose, process and ethics of the research (Appendices 3 and 4). A range of experiences of systemic bereavement work was actively welcomed, from no experience to significant experience, with reassurance given that most schools do not have bereavement policies and proactive approaches in place (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015). This was to try to gain accounts of a variety of practices and also to attempt to avoid eliciting demand characteristics if school staff felt that their practice was not well-developed, which may have resulted in them declining the invitation to participate or exaggerating their experiences. Six schools agreed to take part (Table 5).

I had initially wanted to use group interviews to facilitate dynamic discussions between staff with different professional roles within participating schools, including both teaching staff and support staff. This was to ensure that the views of support staff were also included, and to encourage debate within a group and the subsequent generation of new ideas on issues that the staff may not have previously considered. However, as a result of delays arising from my need to take leave of absence from my doctoral studies due to personal issues, data collection arrangements were made on the eve of the Covid 19 pandemic and some schools that had previously volunteered to participate in group interviews withdrew. This was due to the pressures that schools faced during the first Covid 19 lockdown and the sensitivity of the topic at a time when many people were experiencing heightened anxieties about illness and death. Other schools stated that they were no longer able to provide a group of staff to take

part, given the different, individual circumstances that staff members faced, with many working at home, and their lack of familiarity with taking part in video meetings early in the pandemic. They requested individual interviews instead. New schools were recruited, but could only meet individually, for the reasons stated above. Only one school was able to commit to a group interview, with the group composition being described in Table Five. I discussed this issue with my supervisor and concluded that it was appropriate to proceed with individual interviews and group interviews, using the same semi-structured interview schedule for both, as pandemic conditions meant that this was the only possible option in the circumstances.

3.5.3 Procedure

Preliminary discussions took place with all participants to explain the research, answer questions and gain informed consent, either in person or on the phone.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions, the interviews had to be undertaken remotely using Microsoft Teams. A pilot with an EPS colleague was undertaken to trial the remote interview approach. This helped to address some technical issues, for example, resolving recording complications when microphones were muted, and enabled me to subsequently facilitate the remote interview process more confidently and smoothly.

Participant no.	School	School demographics (comparisons with national averages)	Member(s) of staff participating in the interview
1	Mainstream primary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 – 11 years • Mixed gender • Approx. 400 pupils • No religious character • Ethnicity – 46% WBRI; 54% other (approx. 27% Indian heritage; 27% other minority ethnic backgrounds) • The proportion of pupils known to be currently or recently eligible for free school meals is slightly below average • The proportion of pupils with SEND is substantially above average 	Special Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo)
2	Special school for pupils with complex Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a range of other difficulties and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-19 years • Mixed gender • Approx. 200 pupils • No religious character • Ethnicity – 88% WBRI; 12% other • The proportion of pupils known to be currently or recently eligible for free school meals is substantially above average • All pupils have SEND and have Education Health and Care Plans 	PMLD class teacher; class teacher / key stage leader; class teacher; teaching assistant (TA); teaching assistant; higher level TA.
3	Mainstream primary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 – 11 years • Mixed gender • Approx. 400 pupils • No religious character • Ethnicity- 67% WBRI; 33% other (the largest group being from Indian backgrounds) • The proportion of pupils known to be currently or recently eligible for free school meals is below average 	SENDCo

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average 	
4	Mainstream primary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 – 11 years • Mixed gender • Approx. 200 pupils • Roman Catholic school • Ethnicity – 76% WBRI; 24% other • The proportion of pupils known to be currently or recently eligible for free school meals is below average • The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average 	SENDCo
5	Mainstream primary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 – 11 years • Mixed gender • Approx. 300 pupils • Church of England school • Ethnicity – 85% WBRI; 15% other • The proportion of pupils known to be currently or recently eligible for free school meals is slightly below average • The proportion of pupils with SEND is slightly below average 	Assistant Inclusion Manager
6	Mainstream primary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 – 11 years • Mixed gender • Approx. 250 pupils • No religious character • Ethnicity – 89% WBRI; 11% other • The proportion of pupils known to be currently or recently eligible for free school meals is below average • The proportion of pupils with SEND is slightly below average 	Headteacher / SENDCo

Table Five: Demographics of participating schools and title of the member(s) of staff participating in the interview

It was also useful to pilot my planned use of space and equipment, given that I was working at home. I benefited from having used RTA before in small scale subsidiary doctoral research projects.

To ensure that the process is rigorous and ethical, piloting case study interview schedules is recommended (Stake, 1995). Although I was not able to formally pilot the question schedule, I had been able to discuss the interview schedule with colleagues over time, given the delays in data collection, resulting in a longer-term consideration of the interview schedule. I also made additional, preliminary phone calls to those who were considering participation to address their thoughts and feelings regarding participation in the midst of the pandemic, which included providing an overview of interview topics. This provided opportunities for them to give feedback on the processes and content, resulting in amendments, for example, adding a question about supervision support for staff.

At the start of the interviews, key information, including ethical procedures and sources of personal support, was reiterated and a further opportunity was provided for participants to ask questions or to withdraw. Brief videos relating to a range of proactive approaches to addressing bereavement with young people in different cultures were then shown, prior to the implementation of the interview schedule, to stimulate discussion about the similarities with and differences from participants' experiences, and about ideas for developing practice.

Six interviews were undertaken, lasting between 50 minutes and 125 minutes. 459 minutes of interviews were undertaken in total. Brief field notes were taken during the interviews and

reflective notes were made straight afterwards. The interviews were recorded, using Microsoft Teams, then transcribed verbatim.

Pertinent documentation, including bereavement policies and curriculum resources, was requested from participants prior to and during the interviews, for subsequent thematic analysis and triangulation. This was intended to allow comparisons between the interview data and school documentation; the hidden curriculum and the formal curriculum; espoused theory and theory-in-action (Argyris and Schön, 1978). However, the only documentation that participating schools were able to provide were one bereavement policy and two links to training packages. Ofsted reports were consulted to provide contextual information about the schools in conjunction with site visits to four of the schools, which were undertaken prior to pandemic restrictions.

Participants were offered a summary of the key findings from the research, both for ethical reasons and to allow for participant checking to enhance the trustworthiness of the results.

3.6 Data analysis methods

3.6.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Interrogative Themes

The interview data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019). Themes are described as ‘patterns of shared meaning’ underpinned by a ‘central organizing concept’, which provide creative stories about the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p.593). RTA was a suitable analytic method as it can offer ‘thick description’ of data; it allows for social as well as psychological analysis, including cultural variation; provides a flexible approach; and is not a naïve realist approach, given its acknowledgment that themes are constructed by the researcher and do not merely ‘emerge’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, it was in keeping with the research’s critical realist perspective and provided an

appropriate, rigorous methodical approach that retains theoretical flexibility, for example, by accommodating inductive, deductive or retroductive approaches. A retroductive stance to coding was taken, as described above, along with a predominantly semantic approach, to reflect the explicit content of the data, rather than implicit, underlying themes, as it would not have been possible to theorise about the broader assumptions underpinning the data from single interviews alone, as is required when adopting a latent approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The six phases of analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were adhered to (Table 6) and Braun and Clarke’s (2019) guidelines ‘Evaluating and reviewing TA research: A checklist for editors and reviewers’ were used to guide the analytic processes. Given the small-scale nature of this research, purpose-designed, qualitative data analysis computer software was not used, with standard word-processing software being used instead. The entire dataset was coded, then themes were identified according to the emphasis placed upon them by participants and their pertinence to the research questions, following a reflective and recursive process of analysis. 110 codes were initially identified, grouped into 25 potential themes. Following additional cycles of analysis, codes and themes were refined, resulting in 7 themes. Additional information is provided in the appendices, including an annotated transcript, and tables and thematic maps of codes and themes (Appendices 7 to 11).

	Phase	Description of the process
1	Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing data; repeated reading of the data; noting initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes	Systematic coding of the entire data set; collation of data according to codes.

3	Searching for themes	Organising codes into potential themes; collation of data according to themes.
4	Reviewing themes	Reviewing potential themes to establish if they fit within the coded extracts and the entire data set; production of thematic maps for each theme.
5	Defining and naming themes	Refining themes; reviewing the overarching 'stories'; producing definitions and names for themes.
6	Producing the report	Selection of key data extracts to illustrate themes; analysis of extracts in relation to research questions; production of report.

Table Six: Phases of Thematic Analysis (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

I was aware that the process of undertaking the one group interview was slightly different to the process of undertaking the individual interviews and that the data gathered may have been inconsistent with that gathered from the other interviews, leading to issues regarding the validity of the results. However, I reflected upon this issue and decided that it was appropriate to include this group interview data in my results for the following reasons. I was able to stick to the semi-structured interview schedule during the group interview to the same extent as was the case in the individual interviews, therefore there was no difference in the approach to questioning. Having considered the results of the data analysis, the themes in the group interview were largely consistent with the themes in the individual interviews and whilst some themes were amplified, for example, the need to avoid using euphemistic language, there were no significant differences. The stress on the importance of using non-euphemistic language was likely due to the fact that all of the pupils at the special school had special educational needs, often affecting their social communication, so it seemed probable that it was the nature of the school, rather than the nature of the interview, that led to the increased focus on this issue. Hence I decided that it was valid to include the group interview data with the rest of the dataset.

Interrogative themes were identified both before data collection and during data analysis, namely, overarching themes which allowed the data to be questioned and organised (Hollway, 2007). The literature review suggested that the potential impact of culture would need to be considered across the different research question areas, therefore adopting the concept of an overarching, interrogative theme to consider the impact of culture seemed helpful. Whilst using ‘culture’ as an interrogative theme was considered prior to data collection, the use of ‘time’ as an interrogative arose during data analysis, through the process of undertaking RTA. Both of these themes were used to interrogate the data and to ensure that their impacts were considered across all the issues covered by the research questions, as described in the Results and Discussion sections, and as shown in the thematic maps. During the process of analysis, I heeded Braun and Clarke’s (2012) caveat regarding the potential for researchers to simply use the research questions or interview questions as themes, thus resulting in a cyclical and tautological process, and I was careful to adopt a critical approach to ensure that I did not use the interrogative theme of culture superficially.

3.6.2 Force Field Analysis

As proactive approaches to death and bereavement currently seem to be limited in UK schools (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015), attempts to develop these approaches would require changes of practice by many schools. Therefore, in order to answer RQ3 concerning the factors influencing their use, a force field analysis approach was adopted. This approach was devised by Lewin (1951) to analyse factors supporting and impeding progress towards a target situation, labelled as ‘enabling’ and ‘constraining’ forces. This is a complex, dynamic and intersected process, as forces can be varied in nature, for example, structural or attitudinal, with some factors being both enabling and constraining forces, dependent on the

context and on whether constraints are seen as barriers or motivators for change (‘the inverse principle’) (Swanson and Creed, 2014). Following analysis, consideration can be given to how to address these factors to facilitate organisational change, with the weakening of constraining forces typically being the most effective approach (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004).

3.7 Criteria for trustworthiness of data and interpretation

The concepts of reliability and validity are typically operationalised in ways that cease to be relevant to much interpretative research (Thomas, 2013). Alternative criteria for rigour in qualitative research have been suggested, with the accounts provided by Guba and Lincoln (1981; 1989) that focus on the overarching concept of ‘trustworthiness’ being particularly influential (Table 7).

Aspect	Scientific term	Naturalistic term
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity / generalisability	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

Table 7: Scientific and naturalistic terms appropriate to four aspects of trustworthiness (taken from Guba, 1981, p80)

Other qualitative frameworks have been suggested, including: trustworthiness, rigour and quality (Golafshani, 2003); coherence, participant orientation and fruitfulness (Potter and Wetherell, 1987); and transparency, accuracy, purposivity, utility, propriety, accessibility, and specificity (Pawson *et al.*, 2003). However, Morse (2015) argues that Guba and Lincoln’s approach, and other similar approaches, have not been properly critically assessed and that whilst some of the included strategies are helpful, the overarching terminology of

validity and reliability should therefore be retained. Porter (2007) also criticises Guba and Lincoln for adopting a relativist approach to research, whilst simultaneously adopting an absolute, foundationalist, approach to assessing the rigour of this research. Porter (2007) instead proposes a critical realist approach that acknowledges that different stakeholders will view the validity of research in different manners, and argues that these various perspectives should be considered, with no single approach being employed for all qualitative methodologies. Therefore, the following section considers the rigour of this research in accordance with key criteria that were, on reflection, considered most pertinent to it.

3.7.1 Researcher positionality

Acknowledging the positionality of researchers is important in qualitative research, as they are not, “Neutral vehicles for representing knowledge” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.3) and providing an account of the researcher’s background and position provides transparency regarding the decisions that were taken and any potential conflicts of interest (Thomas, 2013). Research is never value-free, therefore researchers should be as transparent as possible about their situation and values, whilst aiming for neutrality (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014). Researchers bring their values and expectations to the research, which may result in tendencies for them to see what they expect to see in the data (Morse, 2015). Consequently, I was transparent about my position within the EPS and the potential overlap between my academic and professional roles in their schools, along with providing an account of my personal and professional interest in the topic during my preliminary discussions with participants.

I was aware of the assumptions that I may have brought to my analysis due to my prior experience as a school learning mentor, working to develop bereavement policy and practice,

and due to my personal experiences of terminal illness and bereavement. I had experienced very little proactive bereavement practice in the schools in which I had previously worked and had been party to discussions with pastoral staff in other schools during professional networking events that led me to believe that this was also the case in other local schools. These experiences coloured my thinking about such practice and may have led to me initially seeking literature that reflected these experiences. I had originally made an assumption that the concept of 'culture' would be most relevant when considering the experiences of children and families from ethnic minority cultures, which may have arisen through my interest in anti-oppressive practice. However, this assumption was challenged by the participants being keen both to discuss the potential impact of bereavement and grief beliefs and practices of minority cultures in their schools, and also those of 'mainstream' British ideas and practices. The idea of British culture considering death as a 'taboo' not to be discussed was a common topic, which was critically discussed by several participants. I therefore broadened my thinking in this area through the process of data collection and analysis. The issue of supervision in schools has been a topic that has interested me greatly throughout my career, having become aware that supervision is rarely provided for school staff who are working very closely with children with complex needs, in contrast to professionals from social care or psychology services, who are also working with such children. This may have made me more likely to pursue the topic of supervision during interview discussions regarding support for staff. Finally, my personal experiences of terminal illness and death amongst my own family and friends has led to my interest in the area of bereavement support and has affected my ideas about both existing practice and areas for development in this field. Having had to take leave of absence during my doctoral studies to care for my mother through treatment for incurable illness, I was aware that this profound experience may influence my thoughts and feelings about the topics addressed in the research.

Discussing my experiences and their effects during supervision increased my capacity subsequently to reflect in action during the interview process on this potential impact, and to reflect on action during the analysis, in an attempt to make tacit knowledge explicit (Schön, 1983). I was aware of the potential for bias within the research, given that researchers can seek and interpret data in ways that confirms their existing theories, for example, through the manner in which they formulate and ask interview questions (Hammersley and Gomm, 1997). The focus within qualitative research on personal and theoretical reflexivity (Billington and Williams, 2017) helps to address such risks and guard against over-interpretation. Receiving supervision both from my university and placement supervisors provided valuable opportunities to address the assumptions and issues discussed above, particularly to ensure that I took an appropriate period of absence to care for my mother and to critically reflect on my capacity to conduct this research following my leave of absence. I also used Bolton's (2010) approach to reflective writing within my research diary to ensure that I monitored my own thoughts and feelings about the research and to address my prior assumptions, which helped me to become aware of the presumptions described above and to address them. The importance of reflective and reiterative practice as a critical component of RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2019) was a factor in choosing this analytic approach, as I considered that this would be useful in addressing the suppositions arising from my prior experiences, thoughts and feelings, given the profound emotions that this topic may elicit.

3.7.2 Triangulation

Triangulation has been described as an attempt to better explain the richness and nuance of human behaviour by researching it from multiple standpoints to verify authenticity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Triangulation in qualitative research includes gaining feedback

from participants regarding the initial data analysis; developing inter-rater reliability; and undertaking extralinguistic triangulation, in which discourse is analysed against the broader social and socio-political context (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1989) state that cooperation and negotiation between researchers and participants, in the form of ‘member checks’ of the data analysis, are essential to ensure that the processes of case study research are both valid and ethical, given the importance of participants feeling a sense of ownership of the data and of the potential for power imbalances if researchers entirely control the research agenda. Braun and Clarke (2019) highlight the importance of inter-rater reliability in RTA:

If more than one researcher is involved in the analytic process, the coding approach is collaborative and reflexive, designed to develop a richer more nuanced reading of the data, rather than seeking a consensus on meaning.

(Braun and Clarke, 2019, p594).

Inter-rater assessment was not possible, given the nature of the doctoral research project; however participant feedback was sought. This was both through summarising and reflecting back to participants during the interview and also provide feedback after analysis; however, demand characteristics may have affected participants’ responses when responding to feedback requests. Analysis in relation to the wider social context was sought through requests for pertinent school documentation from participants, however responses were limited to providing external training documents and Ofsted reports, and reference to the results of the literature search.

3.7.3 Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) breaks down trustworthiness into the qualities of credibility, transformability, dependability and confirmability. Table 8 details the component strategies of these qualities and the attempts to address them in this research.

Processes to establish trustworthiness (Guba, 1981)			
During:	After:	In the hope these actions will lead to:	Whether and how this was addressed in this research:
<i>Use prolonged engagement</i>	<i>Establish structural corroboration or coherence</i>	Credibility	<p><i>Addressed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -I had prolonged engagement through the academic year with four of the six schools, developing rapport and knowledge of the school communities and systems, whilst reflecting on the risks of becoming over involved. -Supervision provided opportunities for debriefing. -Triangulation was undertaken, through considering the data with regard to different theories and structures, and through providing and seeking feedback from those involved throughout the process. -School reference materials were requested; training materials and Ofsted reports were provided. -RTA was used to test themes for coherence, including deviant case analysis. -Member checks with participants were undertaken during and after the interviews. <p><i>Partly addressed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -School observations of specific practice were not possible due to the Covid 19 pandemic, although visits were made to four schools prior to the interviews taking place.
<i>Use persistent observation</i>			
<i>Use peer debriefing</i>			
<i>Do triangulation</i>			
<i>Collect referential adequacy materials</i>	<i>Establish referential adequacy</i>		
<i>Do member checks</i>	<i>Do member checks</i>		
<i>Do theoretical / purposive sampling to</i>		Transferability	<i>Addressed:</i>

<i>maximise the range of data</i>			<p>-Attempts were made to gain participants from a wide range of schools; participants were from a range of types of schools (see Table 5), but some schools were unable to participate, mainly due to pandemic pressures. No secondary schools participated. Information regarding school contexts was included in the report.</p> <p>-Interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 125 minutes, allowing time for in depth discussion and for participants to direct topics within the semi-structured interviews. Additional conversations were undertaken prior to interviews to establish rapport, and to address participants' questions and issues in advance of interviews.</p> <p>-RTA was used as a frame to develop thick 'stories' and to test themes for structural coherence and trustworthiness, in accordance with Braun and Clarke's 15-point checklist of criteria for good RTA (2006).</p>
<i>Collect thick descriptive data</i>	<i>Develop thick description</i>		
<i>Use overlap methods</i>	<i>Do dependability audit (process)</i>	Dependability	<p><i>Addressed:</i></p> <p>-RTA was employed to develop patterns of shared meaning and to provide evidence of research processes.</p> <p>-An audit trail was created through doctoral research documentation.</p> <p><i>Not addressed:</i></p> <p>-An overlap of frames and methods was not employed.</p> <p>-Stepwise replication, involving two teams of researchers was not possible, due to the nature of the academic requirements of the project and staffing issues.</p>
<i>Use stepwise replication</i>			
<i>Leave audit trail</i>			
<i>Do triangulation</i>	<i>Do confirmability audit (product)</i>	Confirmability	<p><i>Addressed:</i></p> <p>-Triangulation was undertaken, through providing and seeking feedback from participants, and through considering the interview data in relation to other data items within the data set, and in relation to different theories and structures.</p>
<i>Practice reflexivity</i>			

			<p>-Reflective practice, in accordance with Schön (1983), Bolton (2010) and Braun and Clarke (2019), was undertaken, including reflecting during supervision and writing reflective notes through the process.</p> <p><i>Not or partly addressed:</i></p> <p>-An external confirmability audit was not commissioned; however, the research was interrogated through doctoral assessment</p>
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Table 8: Processes to establish trustworthiness, in accordance with Guba's criteria (Guba, 1981)

The need to undertake interviews remotely created some potential threats to trustworthiness, predominantly due to the difficulties experienced during interview 4, when problems with the internet connection led to intermittent breaks in the communication. This resulted in occasional disturbances to the flow of conversation and the need to regularly recap what had just been said. This could have resulted in both researcher and participant paraphrasing their initially unheard contributions on occasion, resulting in condensed expression and also the potential for the participant to agree with my paraphrasing, due to response bias. However, it may also have resulted in a more collaborative, checked approach in which ideas and themes were co-constructed through the interview, which is beneficial in this type of research to aid authenticity (Robson, 2011). Consequently, the interview was included in the research.

3.7.4 Generalisability / Transferability

As this research only involved six participating schools and the participants self-selected due to their interest in the topic, the participants cannot be seen as being a representative sample of a wider cohort and therefore it is not possible to generalise from the data the cohort provided (Thomas, 2010). Generalisability is neither possible, nor desirable in such research, as attempts to generalise inevitably deny specific contexts (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The

validity of the research instead arises from the richness of the accounts, which can be used to interrogate existing literature and to provide school staff and EPs with a range of ideas with which to explore and develop their knowledge and practice in this area. Guba (1981) therefore proposed the alternative concept of 'transferability', in which a critical approach is taken to assessing if findings from one specific context may be transferred to another, rather than to a whole population. Guba proposes that collation of thick, descriptive data, along with similarly thick description of the context (shown in Table 5) , should be provided, to allow readers of the research to assess 'goodness of fit' to other contexts. This has been attempted in this research.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this research and a discussion of how these results answer the research questions. The conclusions were drawn after cycles of analysis and reflection on the data from interviews, school visits and additional data relating to the bereavement work and demographics of six schools, followed by member checks with participants. All participants were contacted with information regarding the key findings of the research. This included sending them copies of all the thematic maps and a description of the key findings. Four of the participants replied and none requested any changes, with one participant commenting that the results comprehensively covered all the information that they had provided and all the arising issues. Careful analysis of extensive interview data, triangulated with other information, increased the internal validity of the research (Yin, 2009).

The superordinate, subordinate and interrogative themes are described in turn in an analytic narrative, supported with data extracts that were selected due to their saliency in developing knowledge of the theme (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Quotations are attributed to participants using the convention ‘P1’ for ‘Participant 1’ and so forth, with ‘P2’ referring ‘Participating school 2’ and the group interview. Detailed information regarding the development of themes is provided in Appendices 8-10 and the application of criteria for trustworthiness are described in Section 3.7. The themes are then discussed in relation to the research questions and research literature explored in Chapter 2. Potential mechanisms and conditions underlying the findings are explored, along with discussion of exceptions and contradictions within the dataset, given the importance of careful consideration of deviant cases to ensure

that alternative hypotheses have been considered and conclusions are robust (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

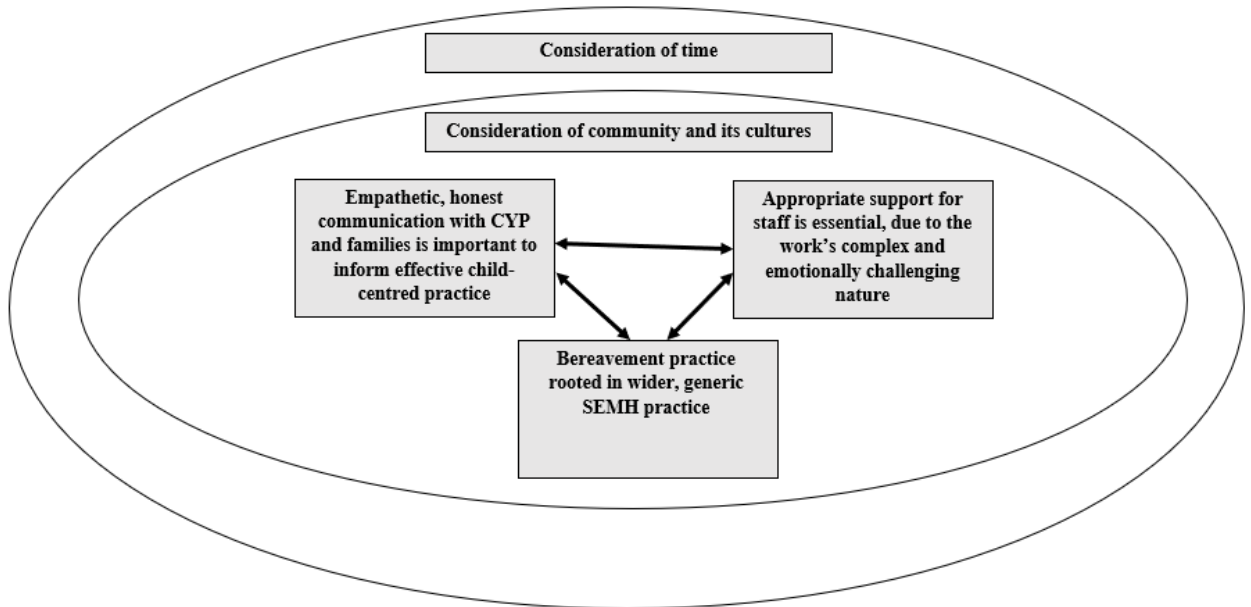
Braun and Clarke (2019) describe processes of interpreting data and *creating* themes, rather than *discovering* emergent themes, as themes are generated by researchers through analytic processes that create stories of shared meaning, united by a central concept. The themes detailed below were drawn, to a greater or lesser extent, from the interviews with all participants; however, there were differences in their prevalence and the main foci. Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012) state that themes should not just be delineated according to prevalence, but also due to their ability to address the RQs; their singular focus; and their ability to relate to the other themes without overlapping: therefore, these principles drove the development of the following themes. Themes should also relate to each other to help to tell the stories within the data: for example, in this research, connections were apparent between participants' desire to better consider cultural variation in mourning practices and the importance of sustaining ongoing, empathetic communication with CYP and families to support their needs. Reflective practice, in accordance with Schön (1983), Bolton (2010) and Braun and Clarke (2019), was undertaken, including writing reflective notes throughout the process and reflecting during supervision, in order to support the analytic processes and ensure fidelity to the principles of RTA.

The themes were collated around two areas relating to the research questions, presented in the thematic maps in Figure 3: firstly, staff perceptions of effective, proactive bereavement practice; and secondly, development of proactive practice. Two interrogative themes were also developed that applied across the dataset and across the themes: the importance of the

consideration of time and the importance of the consideration of communities and their cultures.

Final themes across dataset:

Staff perceptions of effective, proactive bereavement provision



Final themes across dataset:

Developing proactive practice

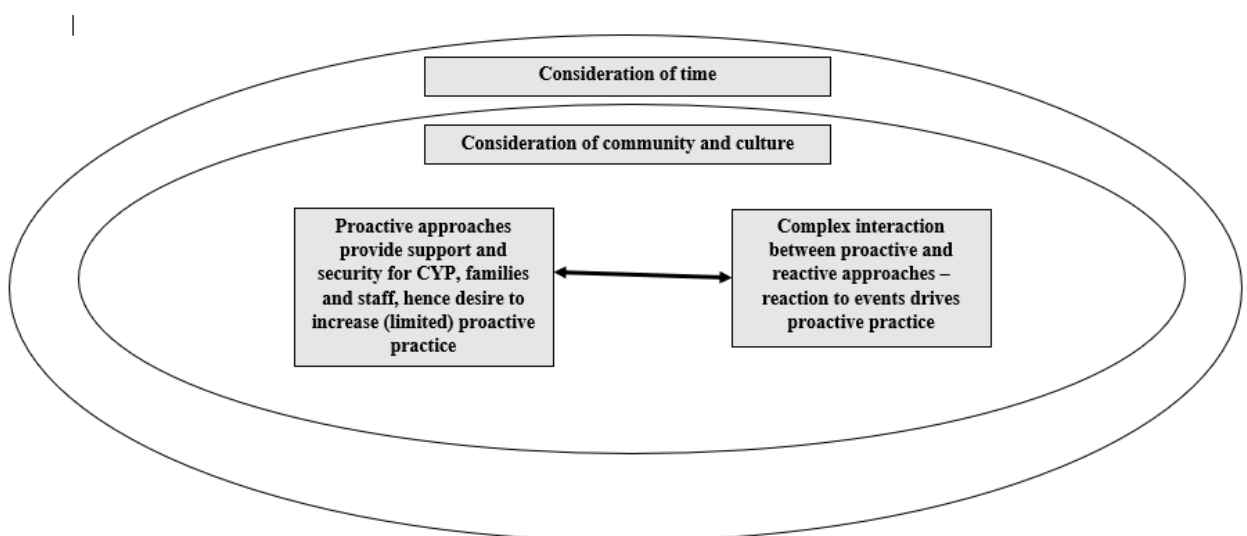


Figure 3: Final thematic maps of superordinate themes on staff perceptions of effective, proactive bereavement practice and on developing proactive practice

Although the interviews comprised the majority of the data, the themes also link to evidence from other data, including site visits to four of the six schools and review of documentation including a bereavement policy, training packages, Ofsted reports, and demographic data about the schools. Only one school had a bereavement policy in place and the LA in which the research took place did not have any explicit policy or bereavement guidance for schools. The only resources found were a council webpage listing organisations that provide bereavement support and similar local NHS Trust webpages providing guidance for individuals on grief, bereavement during the Covid 19 pandemic, and signposting to bereavement organisations. Data from Ofsted reports on the schools' pastoral processes was triangulated with information provided in interviews about bereavement practice being rooted in generic pastoral work. Demographic data is included in Table Five to provide context, particularly about the ethnic and religious characteristics of the school and to allow consideration of transferability (Guba, 1981). Whilst the almost complete absence of written policies and procedures in the participating schools and LA meant that an extensive analysis of such data was not possible, this absence did provide support for the themes and subthemes regarding an acknowledgement of practice being predominantly reactive and a desire for more proactive practice.

4.2 Interrogative theme: Importance of the consideration of community and culture

When gathering data on different aspects of proactive practice, questions were also asked regarding the impact of cultural diversity on these practices, in accordance with Hollway's (2007) account of the use of 'interrogative themes' to allow researchers to enquire about

overarching domains when considering a range of topics. This theme was then developed in through the process of data analysis.

Interrogative theme	Related themes and subthemes
Importance of considering wider culture / community and their potential impact on bereavement work	Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families is important to inform child-centred practice
	Varied responses to bereavement across cultural contexts and across time
	All emotional responses to bereavement are valid
	Cultural diversity rarely considered in bereavement practice due to lack of awareness, not willingness
	‘Mainstream’ UK cultural norms inhibit open discussion of death
	Covid 19 pandemic has exacerbated bereavement needs
	Interaction of personal and professional experiences
	School is often the primary point of contact for community support – schools have moved beyond just being educators
	Awareness / unawareness of external sources of information and support
	Usefulness of accessing support from specialist agencies

Table 9: Subthemes relating to the theme ‘Importance of the consideration of community and culture’

‘Culture’ was discussed extensively by participants in a very broad sense, to include national cultural mores and events (including the Covid 19 pandemic); local community culture (particularly families’ cultures); school culture; ethnic culture; and gender culture (with P5 noting that girls are encouraged to “have a good cry”, but boys are not). Consideration of the culture of the local community and wider society was deemed an important factor by all participants, even though current practice often did not do so, particularly regarding ethnic and religious diversity. Most participants had previously considered the impact of their local

community cultures on bereavement work (mostly White British in composition), particularly parents/carers' attitudes, which they linked to British cultural norms that may work to inhibit discussion of death:

I think as a culture, we are quite uneasy talking about bereavement and talking about death with each other and I think that's why we find it quite difficult when death and bereavement happen to other people, we find it quite difficult to say the right thing and if it was in the curriculum more, perhaps we wouldn't....talking about death more, what happens at a funeral service, like we would talk quite easily about what happens at a christening or a wedding. (P2)

If we sent out a letter to parents saying that we were going to start doing a project on death and funerals, I'm not quite sure how that would go down. (P4)

In light of the expressed beliefs about death being considered taboo, the importance of good communication with families was stressed by all, including an acknowledgement that assumptions shouldn't be made about families' attitudes based on aspects of their identities:

Just because somebody is, say, a traveller, there's still a huge amount of variation. So, the best thing to do is just talk to the family. (P5)

The pronouns "We" and "Our" were commonly used without making explicit what the parameters of "Our culture" were; however, "Our culture" was often linked with the perceived "Stiff upper lip" (P2) attitudes of mainstream British culture. Although pupils at most of the participating schools were predominantly White British and 33% of the schools were explicitly Christian schools, all the schools had some pupils and staff from minority

ethnic backgrounds. Most participants perceived children to be somewhat immune to this “British” attitude of silence about death, with P2 noting that “I think children are more open to discussion about things like that than adults” and P3 stating that children were open to discussions about the Day of the Dead with a Mexican pupil and “just accepted it”.

P4 noted that a “cultural shift” would therefore be required, ideally at societal and individual school level, to support the required development of proactive bereavement work in schools, in light of current social mores and minimal school practice. P6 also acknowledged this and that it therefore required careful consideration and “getting the balance right” to ensure that all parts of the school community were happy with expanding such work.

In keeping with previous research (Granek and Peleg-Sagy, 2017), all participants acknowledged that different cultures have different ideas about death and bereavement, which may influence conceptualisations of death and mediate approaches to grief. Linked to this was a widely expressed belief that responses to death are not predictable according to staged models of grief or cultural mores, that all responses are valid, and that diversity should be valued, with P3 stating that these ideas should be explicitly raised with children to promote the idea that “We all believe different things and that’s ok”. The celebratory aspect of mourning in some cultures was considered valuable by most participants and was contrasted with more sombre approaches in British cultures, as P5 noted:

I actually really liked the notion of the Mexican Day of the Dead. I did think it was a very much focused on a celebration of somebody’s life rather than mourning their passing. And I thought that it gave children and families the opportunity to reflect.. I

liked that it was colourful, it was vibrant, that it had traditions attached to it I thought that was a very good way of learning about your family's background and it was very uplifting, I've got two friends from Ireland and the notion of a good old wake is also a real cause for celebration.

Half the participants commented that addressing death through consideration of different cultural approaches would not only be respectful and useful when supporting CYP of minority ethnic backgrounds, and promote equality and diversity in school, but would also make Death Education more acceptable to CYP and families:

Doing it through something like the Mexican Day of the Dead, maybe that's a way of depersonalising it – approaching it through a celebration. (P6)

Despite this acknowledgement of its importance, all of the participants stated that currently cultural diversity was generally not explicitly considered in bereavement work, either in school procedures or when accessing external training and resources, which is not surprising given that Penny (2020) identified a gap in the literature exploring childhood bereavement and cultural diversity. The only exception to this was that it had been addressed in the bereavement training that one school had accessed; however, this was “Only touched on briefly” (P2). Some participants expressed guilt at not addressing cultural variation and all except one stated that they felt this was an issue that they needed to give greater consideration to: “Different religions and different countries deal with [death] differently. And I hadn't particularly picked up on that. But, you know, it is very important to know what it is.” (P2). Participants in the special school group interview acknowledged that they lacked knowledge in this area and that this could be problematic both for CYP, families and staff, and that they therefore required more knowledge and support, possibly from external organisations:

P1: The pupil that died about a year ago, that was a very different, they were Hindu.... the funeral was totally different to what I had envisaged, nothing like I'd ever been to before. But it was important that we knew all that. I hadn't got a clue what was going to happen when I went there. And one or two things surprised me a little bit...

P3: It was a bit of a culture shock for us I think, wasn't it?

P1: Absolutely, yeah. It wasn't seeing the young man in the coffin, that didn't bother me. But I didn't know I was going to see him, so –

P3: No, I didn't - that was quite a shock.

One school was an exception to this pattern (P1) and stated that “All families handle [bereavement] in a different way. I haven't noticed any differences” between different ethnic groups, with “No patterns emerging”. Interestingly, this was the most diverse school with only 46% of pupils being from White British backgrounds, with the next largest ethnic group being pupils from Indian backgrounds. Instead, the participant placed emphasis on individual differences between families and the need for bespoke approaches, with ethnicity being only one aspect of CYP's identities that may affect their attitudes to death.

Most participants discussed the importance of their school's culture and ethos, particularly in relation to the impact of being Christian faith schools: “The whole Catholic identity of the school would be quite an important part of a [bereavement] policy” (P4). The unique nature of each school and the need to develop bespoke practice pertaining to the needs of the school community was mentioned: “I just think that we've got to develop our own culture within this school” (P2). The concept of schools being at the heart of the local community and the

importance of this role when a member of the wider school community has died was noted by several participants, with great stress being placed on supporting families and having a member of staff attend funerals. “Communication with the wider community” (P6) was noted as a very important component to include in school bereavement policies.

4.3 Interrogative theme: Importance of the consideration of time

Interrogative theme	Related themes and subthemes
Importance of the consideration of time	Complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches –reaction to events drives proactive practice
	Importance of collective remembrance, marked across time
	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue that will affect all CYP often profoundly (long term) vs. bereavement as a minority issue that affects very few CYP (short term)
	Varied responses to bereavement across time and context – not fixed nor linear
	Key role of counsellors and the importance of ensuring that support is offered at appropriate times
	Age / stage appropriate spiral approach to Death Education and support
	Staff time for bereavement work is limited – many competing school demands

Table 10: Subthemes relating to the theme ‘Importance of the consideration of time’

The second interrogative theme was not an initial line of enquiry, but was developed through the course of data collection and analysis. All participants mentioned the importance of the consideration of time as a factor that related to many areas of practice. This was in keeping with Holland and McLennan’s (2015) references to the importance of drawing on Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) BTHD model to consider the impact of the chronosystem in bereavement work.

The most common area for discussion was the idea that CYP will have varied responses to bereavement that are not fixed or linear, with several participants dismissing staged models of grief, such as that of Kubler-Ross (1980), and instead reflecting on CYP's diverse responses that are often unpredictable and ebb and flow across time:

It's like standing on the beach and you're looking out at the waves and some days you'll get a little ripple coming towards you and other days you get a big, huge tidal wave, the next day a little wave and so on. (P6)

Whilst individual differences were acknowledged, all participants discussed the importance of planning prior to a bereavement in the case of illness and anticipated death; immediate support for a bereaved child; and longer term support, with the ongoing, often lifelong effects of bereavement frequently acknowledged, exemplified in this quote:

He's 13 and I think his mum died about 10 years ago and he's been in care ever since. But that has a huge impact on him, even now. And the way that she died, it was very violent.... I still think the feelings are still quite raw.... And he's understanding more now. So, personally, I would probably deal with it as a bereavement if it had happened yesterday or 10 years ago. (P2)

Child-centred support was a common subtheme, with an awareness that interventions such as counselling should be timely and should not be advocated for all CYP immediately after a bereavement, when it might be "too early" (P1). Two schools reported valuing advice from school counsellors about this issue. Similarly, most participants noted that some CYP may want to talk soon after the death, whilst others may take years to feel able to talk.

Bereavement anniversaries and significant events, particularly times of transition, were discussed by most participants. Whilst it could be considered that acknowledgment of anniversaries is a reaction to an event, three participants argued that the effects of the anniversaries of significant deaths could be so significant that schools should be proactive in their procedures and ensure that systems are in place to address this issue. This is an example of the complex interaction between reactive and proactive processes over time that will be discussed in section 4.5.2.

I think as a school, in the same way you would have a vulnerable overview sheet, so you have an overview, I know that so and so is allergic to peanuts, I know that so and so is awaiting assessment at CAMHS, whatever, I should have it on there, this day this child's mother, this child's mother died please pay attention, and that doesn't happen. (P5)

It's also being mindful of significant days like Mother's Day and Sports Day when Mum can't come and just things like that. (P2)

The importance of ongoing remembrance was a significant subtheme, with most participants noting the lack of public opportunities for remembrance, contrasting this with their enthusiasm for the collective remembrance by communities during the Mexican Day of the Dead festival and noting their personal experiences of the need for remembrance.

Remembrance Day was acknowledged in all the schools; however, this was universally considered to be related to military deaths and no other forms of remembrance were practised. Even in the special school (P2) that had suffered the deaths of several pupils, remembrance was not considered an active issue:

The other thing lots of us have talked about is we have a, I don't even know what the correct name is, the memorial tree or a remembrance tree - making use of that a little bit more because it's there but do the students know it's there, do they know why we have it, do the new staff even know it's there? I'm not sure that they do.

Half the participants commented on the need for death and bereavement initiatives to be age and stage appropriate, advocating for a spiral curriculum of Death Education that addresses death in age-appropriate manners throughout school, with the communication needs of pupils with SEND also considered. P3 described starting with stories about transitions, losses and emotions in Reception, then developing the complexity as children grew older.

A tension was evident in several of the interviews between the acknowledgement that bereavement would affect all CYP at some point in their lives and should therefore be a priority issue, versus a feeling that very few pupils were affected by a significant death, which resulted in death and bereavement not being high on the school's agenda:

I can't think of a family we have in school who have lost a parent, but I have worked in schools where that has happened, so yes, I think that [a policy] is absolutely relevant. (P6)

This picture was complex and sometimes contradictory, with some participants commenting on the infrequency of children facing significant bereavements, but also noting that the deaths of distant relations and animals can be "Huge events" (P6):

I guess it doesn't come up frequently enough for staff to feel that it merits its own separate policy, but actually it isn't as infrequent as you might think and also if you're considering the death of pets and other family members.

(P4)

Connected to this issue was the common subtheme regarding the pressures on staff time, resulting in death and bereavement training and policy-making being only one of many competing demands and staff feeling stretched. Bereavement work was often relegated to the bottom of the 'to do' list, with curriculum development being prioritised and "Everything else taking a backseat" (P4):

Schools often are the first point for everything ... You're supposed to be cook, cleaner, social worker. You're supposed to be multi-skilled at absolutely flipping everything. (P5)

4.4 Staff perceptions of effective, proactive bereavement practices

The next section considers the themes that were generated from the range of topics that participants considered important for effective, proactive bereavement practices. Given that all participants identified areas in which this work was underdeveloped, some of these opinions were based on practices that they had previously found to be effective and others were based on their ideas about procedures that they felt ought to be administered to enhance practice. Consequently, the account below does not claim to provide an account of evidence-based best practice, but is rather a description of participants' opinions and ideas based on their professional experiences and reflections. Although these themes are presented distinctly, they are related to each other and also to the themes within section 4.5 on developing proactive practice, with coded sections of text often applying to more than one

theme. Consideration of the context of the local community, wider societal issues and the evolving nature of this work over time, both at individual and systemic levels, was deemed by most participants to be an important aid to effective practice, as described above.

4.4.1 Superordinate theme 1: Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families is important to inform effective child-centred practice

This theme focuses on the belief that was repeatedly stated by all participants that attuned, empathetic communication with CYP and families is key to developing helpful, child-centred practice.

Superordinate theme	Related themes and subthemes
Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families is important to inform effective child-centred practice	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic pastoral / Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) practice
	Complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches –reaction to events drives proactive practice
	Importance of considering wider culture / community and their potential impact on bereavement work
	School is often primary point of contact for community support – schools moved beyond being educators
	Importance of attuned relationships with CYP, families and wider agencies
	Varied responses to bereavement across time and context – not fixed nor linear
	Emotion coaching approach – all emotions are valid
	‘Mainstream’ UK cultural norms inhibit open discussion of death
	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them – CYP generally open to this
	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death

	Traumatic death and complex grief are very challenging and require support and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
	Supervision is / would be a useful forum for reflection and emotional containment, and to allow staff to continue to be emotionally available and supportive to CYP

Table 11: Subthemes relating to the theme ‘Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families is important to inform effective child-centred practice’

Empathetic communication was considered a driver of proactive approaches, as participants learnt from the experiences of CYP, families and the wider community, and consequently felt compelled to develop school procedures to better meet their needs, with several participants viewing schools as a central hub for community support and the “first port of call” for families. Most participants discussed drawing on wider pastoral practice and skills to provide empathetic support. This was considered very important, given the varied and unpredictable way that CYP responded to death, so listening carefully to CYP and families about their individual needs was key.

Every child and family is different.... I mean, we would always make contact with the family if they hadn't made contact with us within a few days. We would offer our sympathies and support and, you know, “Do come back to us if you need any help or advice”. And then we would talk to the child, depending on their age and level of maturity, and just ask how we could help, and take it from here. And some families don't want to have help and others do, and that's okay. (P1)

Half of the participants discussed experiences of learning from families about their cultural and religious practices, which they deemed important as they would have otherwise been

ignorant of them. This theme also linked to the theme concerning the importance of considering culture and community in other ways, such as the need to challenge the perceived assumption that British mores inhibit open discussion of death. Most participants mentioned concerns about social conventions discouraging such conversations and the ensuing tendency to either avoid the topic or to talk around it euphemistically, arguing that death should be discussed and taught in a form of Death Education to “normalise” it and to prepare CYP for their inevitable exposure to it:

We're trying to embed, like, a resilience based approach. We want to obviously equip children for life in that way so that if there was to be a loss, children have had previous support to underpin it and to understand and to be able to rationalise what's happened. (P3)

Euphemisms were considered particularly problematic for young children or those with SEND. However, all participants spoke in manners that were contrary to this perceived “taboo”, typically stressing the importance of openly discussing death, albeit with most using a mix of direct and euphemistic terminology such as “passed” and “lost”, and no participants gave concrete examples of communication being closed down due to social mores of silence regarding death. P5 expressed anxiety about whether they were using the “right terminology” and thus reverting to commonly-used euphemisms, drawing parallels with questions and anxieties regarding the language used in Sex Education.

We lost a young man, 'lost', you see that's the other problem, isn't it? We use all these euphemisms as well which can be tricky because you have to be on the same vocabulary wavelength to understand exactly what it all is.... I do think language is important and we ought to have a bank of words that we are going to use and perhaps

ones that we shouldn't use and try and avoid euphemism, because that's especially difficult with our children, with lower understanding ... If you lose something, you've lost your pencil but you find it again, eventually. (P2)

4.4.2 Superordinate theme 2: Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic pastoral and SEMH practices

Most participants described practices that were used to support bereaved CYP that were part of existing pastoral and SEMH procedures, for example, Emotion Coaching, Nurture Groups and school counselling. Some of these approaches were also discussed and/or observed during the school visits that took place prior to the pandemic. A “nurturing” ethos was also described as being central to bereavement support by two participants. Participants did not describe any ‘in house’ bereavement-specific interventions provided by school staff, aside from one mention of making memory boxes and one mention of sharing books on loss and bereavement. Hence this theme was developed to reflect how participants generally conceptualised bereavement provision within generic pastoral frameworks. There was a tension between such generic provision often being described in positive terms as “helpful” and “capacity-building”, and the widely expressed views that more specialised interventions should be provided, as bereavement provisions were considered less developed than other pastoral practices, possibly due to infrequency of need; unease regarding the issue of death (“We’re all probably a bit frightened of addressing it” P2); and time pressures, as described above.

Superordinate theme	Related themes and subthemes
Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic	Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families is important to inform child-centred practice

pastoral and SEMH practices	Complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches –reaction to events drives proactive practice
	Importance of nurturing and coherent whole-school approach
	Bereavement work is less developed than other areas of pastoral work
	Staff time is limited – many competing demands
	Parallels between bereavement and other losses
	Bereavement as a mental health risk factor
	SENDCo and / or pastoral leadership team leading bereavement practice
	Emotion coaching approach – all emotions are valid
	Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and resilience
	Key role of (school) counsellors
	Knowing when and when not to use external agencies – need to build capacity in school as primary contact
	Age / stage appropriate, spiral approach to Death Education and support

Table 12: Subthemes relating to the theme ‘Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic pastoral and SEMH practices’

Wider experiences of loss were addressed more widely than bereavement in most schools, with descriptions of the increased frequency of pupils experiencing loss, for example, through divorce, transitions, and being looked after by the LA; the greater acknowledgment of such losses in the curriculum; the wider availability in school of resources addressing loss; and staff feeling more at ease addressing loss not associated with death, as they were, “more familiar with it” (P4). Consequently, some participants felt that it was useful to address loss and bereavement together to promote and expand bereavement work, given the parallels in grief presentations between these losses and bereavement. However, participants also

acknowledged that bereavement presents distinct challenges, such as its inevitable permanence and its abstract nature. P3 noted that whilst trauma-informed theory and practice was applicable both to bereavement and wider losses, specific bereavement policies are also needed covering information regarding death and grief to, “upskill staff and make sure that we have letters and proformas in place if there has been a loss.”

This theme linked to the views that most participants expressed describing how the SENDCo and/or Pastoral Leaders led the development of bereavement practice, but that all staff, including support staff, needed to be versed in the theory and practice of this work, given their regular contact with CYP and families and the potentially severe impact on some bereaved CYP’s wellbeing and development: “The whole staff should be part of the same training because as a school community we would all be part of the bereavement process” (P2).

4.4.3 Superordinate theme 3: Appropriate support for staff is essential, due to the work’s complex and emotionally challenging nature

This theme outlines the ways in which nearly all the participants found work concerning death to have the potential to be complex, emotionally draining and anxiety-provoking, due to the profound emotions it elicits in the bereaved and those supporting them; the resonance with their own personal experiences of bereavement; the relative lack of training and resources; and the frequency of connection with CYP and families, given how much time CYP spend in school. Two participants described experiencing, “secondary trauma” when working intensively and empathetically with CYP and families who had suffered traumatic bereavement. Whilst parallels were drawn by some participants with other pastoral and

SEMH work that was deemed less emotionally demanding and better resourced, such as addressing anxiety in pupils with autism, no participants described parallels with other forms of pastoral work that were considered as demanding, suggesting that they perceived this work to be exceptionally complex and challenging.

Superordinate theme	Related themes and subthemes
Appropriate support for staff is essential, due to the work's complex and emotionally challenging nature	Proactive approaches provide support and security for CYP, families and staff
	School is often primary point of contact for community support – schools moved beyond being educators
	Importance of attuned relationships with CYP, families, wider agencies
	Traumatic death and complex grief are very challenging and require support and CPD
	Interaction of personal and professional experiences
	Awareness / unawareness of external sources of support
	Usefulness of accessing support from specialist agencies for CYP, families & staff
	Supervision is / would be a useful source of support
	Appropriate staff support is / is not routinely provided

Table 13: Subthemes relating to the theme 'Appropriate support for staff is essential, due to the work's complex and emotionally challenging nature'

Several participants described how they had found the guidance and support of external professionals to be very valuable, both as a form of continuing professional development (CPD) to help them to deliver appropriate support, and also to allow them to “offload” and process the emotional impact. Supervision was identified by several participants as having been helpful or as being desirable in the future. Sometimes, this was explicitly described as

‘supervision’ and sometimes professional relationships were described that fulfilled this role but were not defined as such. School or hospice counsellors were identified by half of the participants as fulfilling this role for school staff, sometimes on a planned and sometimes on an ad hoc basis.

CK: Does the school counsellor ever do any professional development work with staff, any training with staff, or have any other input with staff?

P1: Unofficially, yes! She’s brilliant, our counsellor. But not officially, no. So, I will give you an example and I’ll link it to a child that was bereaved, who’d lost her mother as a young child and had lots of ongoing difficulties.... and I would quite often say to the counsellor, “I feel so guilty, you know, when I look at this child’s life, and when I look at my own children’s lives”. And she would give me a whole load of counselling on the side and then that, obviously, helps me to support this little one better.

I think you need the space to offload emotionally to somebody within a safe arena. It was a tough one to contain three hours of quite difficult information and then go back to teaching.... then come home and have to start parenting and being available for your own children emotionally. So, I’ve had you know, I’ve had telephone supervisions and I’ve also had group supervisions and I’ve also had one to one supervisions..... So I said to my new school, “Where’s the supervision?” I said that at my previous school within the cluster we funded supervision for a group, and it was like a joint financial burden across five or six schools.” (P3)

There was a diverse range of experiences regarding awareness of sources of external support and access to it, with some participants reporting frequent and regular access to the school counsellor or other external professionals and organisations, and others describing a lack of supervision and support contributing to feelings of anxiety about whether they were doing or saying the “wrong thing” and being “overwhelmed” by the work.

4.5 Developing proactive bereavement practice

This section considers the themes that relate to the development of proactive bereavement practice. In keeping with the literature (Holland and Wilkinson, 2015; Bloom, 2019; McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday, 2019) all participants commented on significant areas in which proactive practice was underdeveloped and expressed desires to further develop proactive approaches, in order to feel more prepared and to provide better services to CYP and families. However, this picture was complex, as several participants stated that flexible, reactive approaches were also necessary to facilitate bespoke work that accounts for the variation in CYP’s experiences and responses to death and bereavement. It was also apparent from the data that there is not always a simple demarcation between ‘reactive’ and ‘proactive’ approaches, given this need for bespoke reactions to bereavement and given that reactions to events can act as drivers towards developing proactive practice, hence the interrogative themes regarding contextual situation were also applicable to this area.

4.5.1 Superordinate theme 1: Proactive approaches provide support and security for CYP, families and staff, hence desire to increase (limited) proactive practice

This theme outlines the ways in which most participants equated proactive approaches with knowledge, preparedness, and schools’ abilities to meet the needs of CYP and families. This

included both working with those CYP who had experienced bereavement, but also those who hadn't, given that most participants acknowledged that bereavement is an inevitable part of life and that schools should therefore educate and prepare all CYP to address it. As well as helping CYP and families, proactive approaches were also considered to provide support and security to staff, given the complexity and emotional toll that can arise from this work, which echoes the research of Bloom (2019) and McLaughlin, Lytje and Holliday (2019) that suggests that a lack of proactive approaches can leave staff feeling de-skilled, isolated and anxious. Given that proactive approaches were typically limited or non-existent, most participants expressed a desire to further develop such work to be "better prepared":

It's about equipping the teachers to deal with that and understanding it, [not] naively thinking everything's going to be absolutely fine until the worst happens. (P6)

Superordinate theme	Related themes and subthemes
Proactive approaches provide support and security for CYP, families and staff'	Appropriate support for staff is essential, due to the work's complex and emotionally challenging nature
	Complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches –reaction to events drives proactive practice
	Traumatic death and complex grief are very challenging and require support and CPD
	Usefulness of accessing support from specialist agencies for CYP, families & staff
	Knowing when and when not to use external agencies – need to build capacity in school as primary contact
	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue that will affect all CYP often profoundly vs. bereavement as a minority issue that affects very few CYP
	Proactive practice is not always formalised, which can promote bespoke CYP-led practice
	Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement needs

	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them – CYP generally open to this
	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death
	Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice

Table 14: Subthemes relating to the theme ‘Proactive approaches provide support and security for CYP, families and staff’

All participants discussed the potential complexity and emotional toll of addressing death and bereavement on CYP, families and staff, particularly so with traumatic and complex bereavement, and it was in the context of addressing traumatic death that the importance of being prepared with knowledge, skills and procedures often arose in interviews. It was also referenced in the one bereavement policy that was submitted for review, which stated that the school wanted a bereavement policy in place to allow them to be “proactive when responding to these difficult times”, referring to the potential for isolation and trauma during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also recognised by most participants that traumatic bereavement in their school communities was thankfully rare and not easy to contemplate, which were identified as factors to explain why they felt that their schools were not better prepared. Whilst some bereavements were anticipated and therefore gave staff opportunity to prepare and develop links with external agencies, particularly hospices, it was also noted by half the participants that this is not always the case and that:

Death doesn’t knock on the classroom door. It just enters silently and swiftly with no cause for what lesson you're doing... I think that we started off being more reactive, but then quickly we realised that in order to provide an environment for all children actually who may have experienced loss or trauma to feel well, for all children actually to feel more secure, that those systems were in place as a protective

mechanism as opposed to, “Right, what can we do to firefight this particular trauma now?” We needed those systems to become more embedded, so that should something come knocking on the classroom door, the safety net was already there for children, parents and for the community. (P3)

Advance awareness of the support that external professionals could provide was considered very useful, including hospices, counsellors, psychologists and bereavement organisations, such as Winston’s Wish. These professionals could foster school staff’s emotional wellbeing and professional development, and therefore enhance their abilities to support CYP and build capacity in schools, but some participants felt ignorant about where to go for support, forgetting the names of organisations and commenting on the lack of available information for schools from the LA.

Two participants questioned whether formalised policies were always beneficial. P1 provided a different concept of proactive practice to that in the literature, which stresses the need for proactive practice to include formal school policies (Holland, 2016; Lytje, 2017), arguing instead that written policies might be too restrictive and, “take away the flexibility” for bespoke interventions that acknowledge the wide variations in how CYP grieve. This exception provided potential for a broadening of the concept of ‘proactive bereavement practice’ to include unwritten, but planned procedures, and highlighted the need for policies to allow for flexible approaches; however, the participant also noted that she hadn’t previously considered writing a formalised bereavement policy and therefore, “might be making excuses!”. One of the participants in the P2 group interview also expressed wariness of potentially restrictive proactive policies:

Gp2-P5: If you know that someone has died who's close to that child, I think you need to talk to each other as staff to think how, if the subject comes up, how should you broach it. I think we have to be reactive because some children won't want to talk about it - you've got a whole different range of emotional responses and I think we have to be reactive to those emotions and to what is said to us.

Gp2-P3: And that's where it's important that the families liaise with school, because at least, if we know, we're ready for it.

Therefore, a mix of proactive and reactive approaches was advocated by some participants, which all include high degrees of flexibility and extensive communication between CYP, families and staff to provide bespoke interventions.

Proactive practice was also considered to be in the interests of all pupils in order to counter the perceived British taboo of discussing death and to provide forms of Death Education to prepare them for inevitable bereavements. Many participants noted the disparity between schools being expected to educate CYP about relationships, sex, birth and life cycles in wider nature, but not death and loss, stating that this should be part of schools' responsibilities to teach PSHE and to foster emotional literacy and resilience.

4.5.2 Superordinate theme 2: Complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches – reaction to events drives proactive practice

This theme was developed as it became apparent that the clear demarcations between reactive and proactive practices described in some of the literature (Holland, 2008; Holland and Wilkinson, 2015) were not so clear in participants' experiences. Participants both explicitly

and implicitly defined ‘reactive’ and ‘proactive’ in different ways, some of which were consistent with Holland’s demarcation and some of which weren’t. For example, the only bereavement policy submitted for review was written as a reaction to the pandemic, explicitly stating that, “This policy has been issued in light of COVID-19” and was addressed to families when their children were learning at home; however, Holland and Wilkinson (2015) suggest that having a policy is solely the mark of a proactive approach. It could be argued that this policy was therefore both an example of reactive and proactive practice. Similarly, P6 described changing the curriculum to address peace and reconciliation in light of children’s fears about dying in terrorist incidents, following a wave of attacks. Curriculum work would be considered proactive practice in the literature previously cited; however, P6 stated:

I know it's reactive, but it's still recognising that we don't live in a bubble in this school, that there's a world outside and we need to recognise it and talk about it.

Therefore, this theme is closely linked to the interrogative themes concerning the importance of consideration of community, culture and time, with policies and processes needing to be understood within these contexts, arising as result of interactions between responses to existing contexts and motivations to create new approaches.

Superordinate theme	Related themes and subthemes
Complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches –reaction to events drives proactive practice	Time is a key factor to consider
	Bereavement practice is rooted in wider, generic pastoral and SEMH practices
	Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families is important to inform child-centred practice
	Proactive approaches provide support and security for CYP, families and staff



	Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice
	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue that will affect all CYP often profoundly vs. bereavement as a minority issue that affects very few CYP
	Varied responses to bereavement across time and context – not fixed nor linear
	Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement needs
	Appropriate staff support is / is not routinely provided
	Knowing when and when not to use external agencies – need to build capacity in school as primary contact

Table 15: Subthemes relating to the theme ‘Complex interaction between proactive and reactive approaches –reaction to events drives proactive practice’

Nuance is required to establish how proactive particular practice is. For example, Holland (2008) describes support provided after a bereavement, such as counselling, as reactive practice. However, some participants defined such work as proactive, given that they had well-established links with specialist services and procedures for CYP and staff support; but others described it in reactive terms, stating that such links were ad-hoc and that staff were not fully aware of the potential assistance available. Such links were often driven by incidents of bereavement, therefore the frequency of known bereavements in school and the CYPs’ patterns of grief determined the prevalence of proactive approaches, as staff reacted to these incidents to develop proactive practice.

4.6 Force Field Analysis results

A Force Field Analysis was undertaken (Lewin, 1951) to establish the potential enabling and restraining forces that may promote or inhibit the development of proactive, systemic bereavement work. The enabling and restraining forces were not assigned scores, because scoring was not discussed with participants and there was some variation of experiences across the dataset, so scoring could not have been used validly to create an action plan. Instead, the analysis was undertaken by repeated consideration of the codes and themes and their abilities to address the issues of drive and restraint towards proactive practice. The combined use of RTA and force field analysis was therefore able to be used effectively and helpfully, by drawing on the codes generated through the processes of RTA to consider the potential enabling and restraining forces regarding the development of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death in schools.

Enabling forces for greater proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death 	Restraining forces for greater proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death 
Staff awareness of the inevitability of death and bereavement, and also the potential for it to have a profound impact on CYP	Staff perception that bereavement only affects a small minority of CYP and is therefore not a priority issue
Need to develop and hone more specific bereavement procedures and interventions	Reliance on existing SEMH and pastoral processes
Desire to overcome a perceived cultural taboo regarding talking about and addressing death and bereavement	Perception that families may be unwilling to support explicit acknowledgment of death and bereavement in work with CYP
Proactive approaches provide security and support for CYP, families and staff	Desire to ensure that formalised procedures do not restrict bespoke, child-centred approaches that take account of individual differences
Desire to develop greater awareness of external sources of support in order to benefit from their expertise and support	Lack of awareness of external sources of information and support
Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families supports development of proactive, child-centred practice	'Mainstream' UK norms inhibit open discussion of death
Need for planned support for staff e.g. supervision	Lack of staff time, with many other competing priorities

Desire for greater awareness of diverse community and cultural bereavement practices and needs	
Ability to provide support and remembrance opportunities across time, not just as an immediate reaction to bereavement	
Desire to ensure a coherent, whole school approach, with all staff having some knowledge of how the school addresses death and bereavement	
School as the hub of the community and ensuing need for preparedness	
Societal and cultural issues in the local and wider community e.g. the impact of a death in the local community; the Covid 19 pandemic	

Table 16: Force field analysis regarding the factors that influence the development of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death and loss in schools

Key enabling forces included staff awareness of bereavement as a significant risk factor to children's personal, social and academic development; a desire to ensure that empathetic communication with children and families is developed, despite the possibility of bereavement being considered taboo; a need for the implementation of proactive school practices to ensure that staff feel that they have the training and skills to support CYP effectively; and the need for schools to address the wider cultural and societal needs within the communities in which they are situated. Restraining forces centred around a belief that childhood bereavement is a relatively rare event and was therefore not a priority for the investment of time and resources required to develop specific bereavement practices; an awareness that some families may consider bereavement is a private matter; lack of awareness of sources of support from specialist agencies; and the need for bespoke, rather than generic, practices, given that individual responses to bereavement vary considerably.

Tensions arose between an awareness that death is an inevitable part of human experience that all children will encounter at some point in their lives, and yet is also a seemingly rare and profound experience for children. Similarly, there were tensions between considerations of death as a private issue that affects individuals in personal and varied ways, and as an issue that is both shaped by and actively shapes wider communities and cultures.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results of this study in relation to the RQs:

- RQ1. What kind of proactive and systemic approaches to death, bereavement and loss exist in schools, including special schools?
- RQ2. How effective do school staff believe these approaches to be in supporting pupils' needs?
- RQ3. What factors promote and what factors inhibit proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death, bereavement and loss in schools?
- RQ4. What is the perceived impact of pupil, staff and wider community cultures on death, bereavement and loss practices in schools?

Whilst the themes were developed due to their ability to tell the story of the data in relation to the RQs, rather than strictly by prevalence, most of the participants provided data that supported the themes, as did the additional school data. However, there was some inconsistency across the dataset and so deviant examples will be discussed, along with possible alternative interpretations of the data to increase the robustness of the study's conclusions (Yin, 2009). As this research was undertaken in accordance with the principles of CR, which is concerned with learning from real world observable events and hypothesising about potential causal mechanisms (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013), evidence for such mechanisms will be considered in this section. Stroebe and Schut (2003) discuss methodological issues in bereavement research and comment that qualitative research can reveal the unique perspectives and meanings that underlie participants' reactions, but is less able to establish causal relationships or the effectiveness of bereavement interventions. This

study did not attempt to measure interventions' effectiveness, but rather to explore participants' attitudes to and beliefs about them, so the discussions below do not claim to provide incontestable facts regarding such work, but rather offers tentative interpretations regarding participants' accounts and hypotheses regarding potential causal mechanisms involved in the issues related to the RQs. This approach is consistent with retroductive reasoning (Olsen, 2007). The methods described in Table 8 in Section 3 detail the processes employed to establish trustworthiness, which drew on Guba's criteria (Guba, 1981) and gave credibility to the processes of analysing the data and drawing tentative conclusions from it.

5.2 Discussion of RQ1: What kind of proactive and systemic approaches to death, bereavement and loss exist in schools, including special schools?

The answers to this RQ fell into two areas. Firstly, the research highlighted the complexities of categorising bereavement practices as 'reactive' and 'proactive' and therefore the varying conceptualisations of activities that could be considered as proactive practice. Secondly, descriptions of work that could be considered proactive were provided.

Holland (2008) first categorised school bereavement work in this manner and stated that reactive provision comprised responses to bereavements that had already happened, such as provision of counselling for bereaved CYP; whereas proactive provision could include preparatory activities such as staff training. Holland and Wilkinson (2015) acknowledged that both types of work were necessary, but suggested that proactive practice was underdeveloped in schools and stressed the importance of developing this. Interestingly, Holland also described the "growing level of awareness of the importance of knowing how to respond in both a reactive and proactive manner to children and young people who are

bereaved” (Holland, 2008, p.412), which suggests that proactive responses to events are also possible. This position was echoed by several participants, who provided complex and sometimes seemingly contradictory accounts of practice that could be described as both reactive and proactive, with value placed on both, but a desire to increase work that was self-defined as ‘proactive’. The Cambridge Dictionary (Walter, 2008) defines ‘proactive’ as, “Taking action by causing change and not only reacting to change when it happens”. Whilst all action takes place in a context and is therefore at some level a reaction to previous events, this definition helpfully suggests that proactive practice does not just relate to the ‘before’ rather than the ‘after’, but involves the demonstration of agency and initiation of new procedures. In light of these issues, perhaps the use of the term ‘systemic’ is a more helpful term than ‘proactive’ to describe approaches that relate to the whole organisation, as the need for awareness and preparation across the whole staff was frequently mentioned by participants. Linked to this expressed need for a coherent, whole-school approach was a call for systems for mutual staff support, involving either/or internal and external professionals.

Examples of work that participants described as ‘proactive’ included both activities that had already been undertaken and activities that participants were intending to develop. Examples of all four of the areas identified in the literature as potentially including ‘proactive’ work were mentioned by participants as either having occurred or being planned, but a common theme was that this practice was minimal and partial. Staff training was the most common, with all participants having had some experience of this in their schools, and death education was the least, with none of the participants stating that this was covered in an adequate manner in the curriculum. An additional topic in the interview schedule was an enquiry about whole school events that include a focus on death and bereavement. No schools were able to describe any events other than Remembrance Day and this was generally considered

to be more concerned with history than grief. Most participants were interested in the idea of developing such events, with the manner in which the Mexican Day of the Dead is acknowledged in American schools generating interested and enthusiastic discussions for its acknowledgment of the importance of community, remembrance and celebration of lives; however, most participants expressed anxiety about the potential for negative reactions from families.

- **Training:** Although all schools had accessed some training, this was generally only undertaken by a minority of school staff. Many participants echoed McManus and Paul's (2019) stress on the importance of training being essential for increasing self-efficacy and confidence. All except one school had undertaken this in the previous 12 months, mostly as a reaction to the pandemic, providing another example of proactive practice being reactive to wider events. Most of the participants cited concerns about this training not being consolidated and implemented, or disseminated to the wider staff, which is in keeping with Kirkpatrick (1996) and the notion that a favourable reaction to training does not guarantee behaviour change. Training should therefore not be seen as a tick box to confirm systemic development, but rather as a first step towards change.
- **Bereavement policies:** Only one school had a policy, with another school in the process of creating one. A third suggested that they had informal policies in place, but these had not been formalised in a written policy. The purposes of policies were unclear, with diverse accounts being provided of policies being to provide guidance to staff; guidance to parents; action plans; information on theories of grief; glossaries of language; and signposting to other agencies. Two participants stated that their schools had a plethora of policies, but bereavement was a significant omission.

- Death education: Only one school addressed human death in the curriculum within PSHE. Other participants felt it was tangentially and implicitly covered, for example, in life cycle lessons, but that this was not adequate. This was an area that most participants felt needed to be addressed to equip CYP to understand the inevitabilities of death and grief, but considerable anxiety was expressed about “getting it wrong” and about families’ potentially negative reactions, drawing parallels with implementation of Sex and Relationship Education. None of the participants were able to cite any specialist curriculum resources, nor an awareness of the Government guidelines (Department of Health, 2004) advocating for the inclusion of death within the PSHE curriculum.
- Multi-agency work: This was an area in which participants diverged from Holland’s (2008) descriptions, with most giving examples of their collaborative work with external agencies after a CYP had been bereaved providing considerable professional development, as well as valuable supervisory support. Indeed, more examples of learning and development were provided from such work than from formal training.

In addition, participants described aspects of generic pastoral work in proactive terms, such as emotional literacy and mental health work. Similar patterns were found at LA level by Akerman and Statham (2014), who noted that few LAs had specific childhood bereavement services in place, instead relying on services such as CAMHS. Ribbens McCarthy (2016) suggests caution with relying on generic, emotional literacy approaches, which may be too prescriptive about ‘appropriate’ emotional responses and regulation; can promote the value of talk when CYP do not want to do so; and may not respect culturally diverse grief responses.

The special school practices and concerns were generally very similar to the mainstream schools. The main difference was that whilst most schools mentioned the importance of using unambiguous language, special school staff felt that this was exceptionally important, to the extent that guidance should be prioritised in a policy.

5.3 Discussion of RQ2: How effective do school staff believe proactive approaches to be in supporting pupils' needs?

Given the relative lack of proactive approaches in most schools, participants did not have a lot to say regarding their effectiveness. They provided the following accounts of their beliefs about the effectiveness of aspects of proactive practice. Being willing to talk to CYP about death in an open, honest manner was deemed effective, as several participants reported it being easier than expected and described CYP's curious and positive responses during informal opportunities for Death Education, for example when prompted by a pupil's Mexican Day of the Dead costume. Drawing on external professionals such as the school counsellor to provide supervisory support was considered very effective, both to reduce school staff's stress and anxiety and to develop practice through professional reflection.

Three participants stated that when there were established policies and/or procedures that allowed scope for flexibility to account for CYP's varied responses to death they felt that practice was effective. This was to address the commonly held belief that, "There is no one way for children to mourn, and there are no fixed phases for them to follow through their grief" (Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Lytje, 2020, p95). Responses to bereavement are hard to predict, with many longer-term events influencing CYP's reactions and outcomes, therefore a sensitive and attuned approach that remained aware of a CYP's bereavement throughout the

course of their time in school, noting key dates and transitions, was considered good practice. Whilst most participants discussed this as a desirable hypothetical, one participant gave examples of this occurring, albeit through informal information sharing processes. An acknowledgement of the importance to effective practice of timely interventions was noted by all participants and echoed discussions in the literature regarding the need to monitor CYP's needs over time, for example, during times of transitions, such as changing school (Holland, 2016); when facing additional losses (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006); and appreciating that interventions such as counselling may be more effective if delivered later in the grieving process (Jordan and Neimeyer, 2003). This all relates to Bronfenbrenner's BTHD (2005) and the potential impact of factors within the chronosystem. Awareness of these issues was considered important by most of the participants, and whilst this work follows a bereavement, it requires forethought and planning and can therefore be argued to be proactive.

Although some components of practice were highlighted as being considered effective, most participants stated that when taken as a whole, systemic practice was not as effective as it might have been. Most of the examples of positive outcomes related to reactive practices, for example, when staff had responded empathetically to CYP and families, and had received positive feedback. Proactive approaches were generally considered less effective than reactive due to their underdeveloped nature, for example, absences of policies and a lack of dissemination and implementation after bereavement training.



No participants provided any evidence of monitoring and evaluation procedures, which both made it harder for participants to assess the effectiveness of their work and was evidence in itself of a lack of proactive, change-making practice. Holland (2008) stresses the importance

of this, stating that there is a risk of good intentions failing to deliver effective provision without it.

Whilst Potter and Wetherell (1987) are writing within the tradition of discourse analysis, their caveats about evaluative expressions are worth noting. Researchers should be cautious about assuming that expressed attitudes are fixed in time or predict behaviour, as they are related to the context of the expression and to participants’ judgments about normative desirability. Therefore, the function and context of the language should be considered. In this case, participants’ descriptions of effective proactive practice may have been skewed by wanting to sound supportive of my interest in this area.

5.4 Discussion of RQ3: What factors promote and what factors inhibit proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death, bereavement and loss in schools?

A force field analysis was undertaken (Lewin, 1951) to establish the potential enabling and restraining forces that may promote or inhibit the development of proactive, systemic bereavement work. Consideration can be given to how to address these factors to facilitate organisational change, with the weakening of constraining forces typically being the most effective approach (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004).

Enabling forces for greater proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death 	Restraining forces for greater proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death 
Staff awareness of the inevitability of death and bereavement, and also the potential for it to have a profound impact on CYP	Staff perception that bereavement only affects a small minority of CYP and is therefore not a priority issue
Need to develop and hone more specific bereavement procedures and interventions	Reliance on existing SEMH and pastoral processes

Desire to overcome a perceived cultural taboo regarding talking about and addressing death and bereavement	Perception that families may be unwilling to support explicit acknowledgment of death and bereavement in work with CYP
Proactive approaches provide security and support for CYP, families and staff	Desire to ensure that formalised procedures do not restrict bespoke, child-centred approaches that take account of individual differences
Desire to develop greater awareness of external sources of support in order to benefit from their expertise and support	Lack of awareness of external sources of information and support
Empathetic, honest communication with CYP and families supports development of proactive, child-centred practice	'Mainstream' UK norms inhibit open discussion of death
Need for planned support for staff e.g. supervision	Lack of staff time, with many other competing priorities
Desire for greater awareness of diverse community and cultural bereavement practices and needs	
Ability to provide support and remembrance opportunities across time, not just as an immediate reaction to bereavement	
Desire to ensure a coherent, whole school approach, with all staff having some knowledge of how the school addresses death and bereavement	
School as the hub of the community and ensuing need for preparedness	
Societal and cultural issues in the local and wider community e.g. the impact of a death in the local community; the Covid 19 pandemic	

Table 16: Force field analysis regarding the factors that influence the development of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing death and loss in schools

Some factors could be seen as both enabling and constraining forces. This is in part due to the mix of variables in a particular context, such as the interaction of specific individuals and organisations, but may also be due to the 'inverse principle' (Swanson and Creed, 2013), namely that constraints may be perceived as barriers, but also as motivators for change. This principle is highly relevant to the discussion above regarding dialectical interactions between proactive and reactive practices and is consistent with a CR framework, which considers there to be strata of reality (Bhaskar, 2008), with change occurring due to interactions

between social and natural, micro and macro structures (Gorski, 2013). Describing societal and cultural issues in the local and wider community as motivators for change and development of proactive practice occurred in all interviews in various ways, for example, the impact of a death in the local community and the Covid 19 pandemic, which is consistent with CR theory and also promotes the importance of the ethos of community schools.

The tension between expressed views that proactive approaches, such as written policies, provide security and support for CYP, families and staff; and the desire to ensure that procedures remain informal in order not to restrict bespoke, child-centred approaches that take account of individual differences was also explored in some of the literature. Tracey and Holland's (2008) research found that many schools expressed the latter view, resulting in schools responding in ad hoc manners. Holland (2016) addresses this tension in a helpful manner that acknowledges the dialectical approach to change described above:

There are patterns that are common in all deaths, including how to respond to the pupil, the family and the school community. If there is no plan, then each bereavement or loss has to be planned from scratch without the benefit of the experience of previous ones. A plan does not have to be set in stone, but forms a basis of core ideas for the initial response and can be flexible to adapt to circumstances, with changes used to feed back into revisions for the next time.

(Holland, 2016, p.20)

The importance of reconciling these issues by retaining a degree of flexibility within formalised policies was explored in Lytje's (2017) research, in which students' views were gathered about the near universal system of 'B-Plans' (school bereavement policies) in

Denmark. He found that bereaved students felt that plans and policies should be more individualised to meet specific needs, rather than relying on standardised approaches.

Enabling and restraining forces were also identified around themes of language, with ideas expressed that the British taboos concerning the discussion of death restrains proactive practice; whereas empathetic, attuned and unambiguous communication promotes child-centred proactive practice and resilience. Lowton and Higginson (2003) found that teachers attributed CYP's difficulties with talking about bereavement to British society's 'silence' regarding the issues. Sormanti and Ballan (2011) produced a framework for addressing the bereavement experiences of children with developmental disabilities that stressed the importance of resisting wider socio-cultural pressures to avoid direct discussion and to use euphemisms, which can be abstract and confusing. Van der Kolk, B. (2014) hypothesises that the collective silences created by taboos can act as defensive mechanisms, allowing the brain to deny experiences of trauma. Whilst not all school communities will have experienced traumatic bereavement, this may provide a plausible explanation for why death is considered taboo in some parts of British society and how awareness of this taboo acts as a restraining force on people who would otherwise be more open to discussing it.

However, other literature has questioned the notion of the death taboo, therefore in keeping with Yin (2018), alternative interpretations were sought. 'Death denial' theories have been criticised for lacking empirical evidence and making demographic generalisations (Tradii and Robert, 2019). Research considering whether death is taboo tend to ignore children's voices and focus group research with children suggests ambivalent attitudes (Paul 2019). Whilst most research considers death a sensitive topic, it is not universally considered taboo (Walter,

2017), particularly amongst children. Several participants discussed children's willingness to talk about death and no evidence of families' reluctance to support proactive approaches to death was provided, despite the notion of death taboos being widely discussed. Therefore, this seeming contradiction may suggest an overreliance on stereotypical views of British mores as an explanation for lack of systemic practice, to the exclusion of consideration of some of the other restraining factors cited above.

Consideration of the factors in the table above led to the development of ideas about the potential causal mechanisms promoting proactive practice. Given the context of this study occurring in the midst of a pandemic and the fact that most schools had only recently undertaken training and begun to consider bereavement policies, it seemed credible to suppose that societal and cultural issues in the local and wider community act as enabling forces to developing proactive practice. However, an alternative and potentially compatible hypothesis is that such issues can also restrain practice, depending on interactions of factors at personal, organisational and societal levels, as demonstrated by several schools withdrawing from this research due to concerns about the potential pressures on staff, many of whom experienced loss and distress through the pandemic. Therefore, whilst societal and cultural factors can be enabling, this is dependent on the complex interactions between social and natural, micro and macro structures (Gorski, 2013).

5.5 Discussion of RQ4: What is the perceived impact of pupil, staff and wider community cultures on death, bereavement and loss practices in schools?

The impact of culture was more widely discussed than I had anticipated and was closely connected with many of the codes and themes. This occurred beyond my direct questions

about whether cultural variation had been considered in relation to various aspects of proactive practice. This supported my initial intention to employ it as an interrogative theme. The issues that participants raised contributed to consideration of different levels of cultural context – families, school communities, local neighbourhoods, wider society and the customs and beliefs associated with these levels. Bronfenbrenner’s BTHD model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) provides a useful framework for considering how well-placed schools are to act at the microsystemic level of family, school and neighbourhood; the mesosystemic level of exploring the interactions between systems; whilst always remembering the impact of the wider culture, society and the passing of time. This theme also corresponded with the principles of CR, namely that there is a dynamic relationship between human activity and society, and that our understanding of the world is always culturally situated.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants had much more to say about the impact of mainstream British culture on bereavement practice than minority cultures, as described in Section 5.4; however, the use of the term “our culture” was not defined or critiqued by any of the participants. It is possible that this is this a reflection of wider assumptions concerning an undefined ‘us’ as contrasted with ‘them’ that pertain to school staff’s perceptions of other aspects of school practice and merit a further review of literature.

The idea of culture as an expression of the connecting beliefs and structures of a social group was linked to the importance of schools at the heart of local communities, as their responsibilities to the members of that community, beyond its pupils, particularly families and ex-pupils, was often mentioned. Ungar (2011) describes community resilience as,

Its social capital, physical infrastructure, and culturally embedded patterns of interdependence that give it the potential to recover from dramatic change, sustain its adaptability, and support new growth that integrates the lessons learned during a time of crisis.

(Ungar, 2011, p.1742).

Ungar adds that this resilience is dependent upon the resources and strengths that have been developed prior to crises, which confirms the importance of the development of proactive practice in schools.

Different cultures and religions have very different approaches to death and mourning, which was acknowledged by most participants, typically as a result of their personal rather than professional experiences. The need to consider the role of cultural variation in bereavement had received very little prior consideration by most participants. Oyebode and Owen (2013) and Cohen and Mannarino (2011) stress the importance of addressing cultural variation in bereavement work and offer examples of varying customs and issues that may arise in multicultural societies. Both papers guard against assuming cultural homogeneity, given the variable influences of individual and cultural factors, and recommend that professionals should ensure they communicate with families with openness and humility in order to increase their awareness and understanding in this area.

Nearly all participants expressed interest in and enthusiasm for the Mexican Day of the Dead festival, having watched short videos about how it is acknowledged in schools across Mexico and the Americas. Several participants argued that introducing cross-cultural ideas such as

this would help CYP to develop their understanding of diversity and inclusion, as well as delivering an approach to grief that explicitly acknowledges community and celebration of life, in a depersonalised and safe manner, given the cultural distance between these practices and mainstream British practices. It was also noted that such practices are deeply rooted in culture and heritage, and that this would need to be acknowledged in any attempts to utilise such events in UK schools. Cultural appropriation (Coutts-Smith, 1991) was also mentioned in relation to this idea.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the implications for practice; strengths and limitations of this study and potential ways of addressing these limitations in future research; and reflections on the conduct of the research and my learning.

6.2 Implications for practice

Given that it is not possible to generalise from qualitative research, as described in section 3.7.4, this section does not claim to provide evidence-based recommendations, but rather provides school staff and EPs with a range of ideas with which to consider and develop their practice in this area, in keeping with the principles of transferability (Guba, 1981).

6.2.1 Implications for school practice

- Schools should create bereavement policies that include frameworks for practice that also allow the potential for flexible, child-centred procedures, drawing on exemplars provided by specialist bereavement organisations. Schools should be clear about who the policy is aimed at and about its objectives.
- School staff should critically consider whether their school is over-reliant on generic pastoral tools that may or may not be appropriate for various aspects of bereavement work, and should consider the development of more specific interventions following this audit.

- Whilst having a key person/people to take responsibility for this issue is helpful, a whole-school, coherent approach is required, which includes support staff as well as teachers in events such as training.
- An awareness of culturally diverse practices is important and requires staff to be curious about CYP's cultural, ethnic and religious identities and to educate themselves accordingly, either through accessing resources and/or through listening to CYP and families. Consideration should also be given to teaching CYP about different cultural approaches to death in the curriculum and/or pastoral events.
- Senior leaders should ensure they work with staff to provide appropriate support to staff who are heavily involved in working with bereaved CYP, with agreed support systems identified and implemented.
- School staff should be aware of the potential for external professionals to fulfil roles beyond individual work with CYP and to utilise them in systemic work accordingly, for example, in the development of policies or the provision of supervision.
- Systems should be in place that ensure that key information about bereavement, including significant dates, is shared on pupils' records/plans.
- Death and bereavement should be included in initial teacher training with refresher courses available to the wider staff, dependent on the needs of the school. School leaders should ensure that training in school is disseminated and followed through.
- School bereavement practices should be monitored, evaluated and developed accordingly.

6.2.2 Implications for EP practice

EPs role in bereavement work was mentioned by most participants (I was aware that demand characteristics may have been at play, given my role both as interviewer and trainee EP).

However, they were mentioned less frequently than school counsellors and hospice counsellors, possibly in part due to the school counsellors typically being in school more frequently and regularly than EPs, and to hospice counsellors being called upon when death as expected, therefore they are already engaged with families. Cited EP work included providing training in generic SEMH approaches, such as Emotion Coaching; supporting school communities in cases of traumatic death through Critical Incident support; signposting schools to specialist bereavement resources and organisation; and being referenced in a Bereavement Policy as a source of support.

- EPs are well placed to deliver systemic work in schools, drawing on their knowledge of frameworks for practice and organisational change, such as the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model (Timmins, Shepherd, & Kelly, 2003) and the Systemic Solution-Oriented Model (Rees, 2008). Systemic work could include providing training on topics such as bereavement and trauma; supporting schools with community work, utilising the principles of community psychology; and supporting schools with the development of bereavement policies. In order to do this, EPs should ensure schools are aware of these possibilities through their EP Service publicity and during planning meetings.
- EPs can also provide therapeutic support to CYP who are struggling with the effects of bereavement, as part of the school's planned use of EP time.
- EPs both receive and provide supervision regularly as a standard part of their professional practice. They are well placed to provide supervision to school staff to facilitate emotional containment and thereby help school staff to continue to be

emotionally available to support CYP and families, as discussed in Costelloe, Mintz and Lee (2020).

- Death and bereavement should be included in EP initial training courses to ensure that trainee EPs have an awareness of key issues in this area and have the topic ‘on their radar’ when working with schools.
- EPs can fulfil the roles of ‘champion’ and ‘strategist’ with regard to death and bereavement (Holland, 2016), by ensuring that the topic is discussed during their planning meetings with schools and that individual and systemic, reactive and proactive approaches to death and bereavement work is planned and delivered in accordance with the needs of the school community.

6.3 Strengths and limitations of the study, and implications for future research

The main strength of this research was the extensive and rich data that was collected during the interview process, with all participants providing data on all the questions on the interview schedule. The participants all seemed keen to talk, with one interview lasting 125 minutes, and the semi-structured interview schedule seemed to work well to structure the discussions, whilst also allowing the participants scope to develop discussion of their areas of interest (Powney and Watts, 1987). The Covid 19 pandemic may have facilitated this, as over half the participants discussed how the pandemic had provided an impetus for considering and developing this work. Another strength was the positive reports from over half the participants regarding the usefulness of the interviews to develop their thinking on bereavement work and promote change. The results addressed the research questions and related well to the literature, both regarding the findings and the methodological frameworks.

The pandemic also created significant challenges, delays and limitations. It negatively affected the scale of the project, with individual interviews rather than group interviews taking place in all but one case, due to social distancing and staff time restrictions. It also limited the range of data available from each school case, due to school closures and time pressures on staff.

Limitation of this research	How this might be addressed in future research
Participating schools were self-selecting, which is likely to have skewed the research towards gathering the views of members of staff who had a particular interest in proactive bereavement practice. It is possible that schools with less developed practice were more reluctant to reveal this, despite reassurance being provided in the recruitment information that such contributions would be very valuable.	Undertaking similar research but with a more random and extensive sampling approach, in conjunction with providing reassurance to the schools approached.
All of the individual interview participants were either SENDCos or Assistant SENDCos, therefore the perspectives of other staff members were not gathered. This may have limited the study's ability to assess how systemic some of the described practices were and whether the wider staff were aware of them and found them effective.	Repeat the research with either group interviews comprising a mix of teaching and support staff and / or individuals who have a broader range of roles.
Given the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic, only one group interview took place, with all other interviews being individual interviews. Whilst the occurrence of themes across the individual and group interviews was similar, the disparity in interview conditions may have distorted the results.	“ “ “ “ “
No secondary schools were included in the research.	Future research could be undertaken into secondary school staff's experiences of and reflections on proactive bereavement practices.
None of the participants were from minority ethnic backgrounds. This may have	Research could be undertaken that targeted school staff from minority ethnic

affected the narratives given regarding “our” culture being synonymous with mainstream British culture and meant that voices from a range of ethnic backgrounds were not heard.	backgrounds in order to gain their perspectives, which would be particularly important on topics related to culture and community.
Lack of data provided by schools, e.g. bereavement policies and curriculum resources, even though this was in itself revealing.	Gathering samples of bereavement policies written by school staff for analysis of their themes and / or discourse
Assumptions were made by some participants about families’ attitudes to teaching children about death and bereavement, with beliefs expressed that some families would be unsupportive; however little evidence was provided.	Research could be undertaken that consults parents/carers and their views about Death Education and other proactive approaches to death and bereavement.
Participants interchanged between describing examples of existing proactive work and of intended proactive work, commenting on their desirability and usefulness, which may have distorted the findings, given that hypothetical judgments were made about the intended work.	An action research study could be undertaken in order to analyse the process of the development of new death and bereavement work and gather evidence about its implementation and effectiveness, for example, one school was interested in considering developing a school project based on the Mexican Day of the Dead.

Table 17: Table documenting significant limitations of this research and possible ways to address these limitations in future research

6.4 Reflections on the conduct of the research, learning and practice

Braun and Clarke (2019) describe the importance of researchers reflecting on their assumptions and positionings throughout the research process to consider if initial assumptions were borne out and if they affected the process and findings. I realised that I had initially made assumptions that distinctions between reactive and proactive practice would be clear; that policies always need to be written; that cultural impact would primarily be discussed with regard to variation and minority cultures; and that the situated nature of practice would not be addressed by participants so explicitly and extensively. I had taken too narrow a view of the potential impact of ‘culture’ and not given sufficient thought to the

importance of schools' place at the heart of communities, in which the ripple effects of death can be widely felt. It was therefore essential to continually and critically question my assumptions when analysing data and drawing conclusions, which RTA was well suited to.

RTA also helped me to consider predominantly semantic, but also latent themes, in keeping with Braun and Clarke's (2012) acknowledgement that both approaches can be used concurrently. This was useful when considering the tensions between different conceptualisations of 'proactive' and 'reactive', and participants' opinions regarding the impact of social mores and language on practice. The CR framework ensured that I was able to acknowledge the role of interpretation and social construction, without reducing all phenomena to the status of theoretical constructions (Bhaskar and Danermark, 2006).

Whilst the process of undertaking the research was demanding and often stressful, particularly given the additional challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic and personal circumstances that resulted in direct and emotional experiences of contemplations of mortality, I found the process to be engaging and worthwhile. I was conscious of the synthesis of knowledge and experience that I had accumulated through the course of my doctoral studies, along with the limitations of my capabilities in areas in which my knowledge was weak or in need of refreshment. Several participants described the process as helping them to review and plan death and bereavement work and as therefore being "very beneficial". This encouraged me to pursue the dissemination of this research within schools and EPSs through professional seminars and training, and to try to fulfil the roles of 'champion' and 'strategist' with regard to death and bereavement (Holland, 2016). This was expressed in my reflective notes made after Interview 2:

I closed the interview feeling inspired, enthused and contemplative following such a thoughtful and passionate discussion with members of staff who were very keen to further develop proactive approaches to death and bereavement in their school.

In conclusion, this research highlights a number of key issues for bereavement practice in schools. The significant impact of bereavement on children and young people and its potential to affect their development and engagement with education was noted by all participants, as was schools' unique role in being able to act as sources of day to day, empathetic, child-centred support for children and families. Making distinctions between proactive and reactive sources of support is a complex issue, given the interactions between the two and the potential for some practices and roles to fulfil both functions. However, the need for further development of proactive practices that provide both preparation and support for children's, and also staff's needs is of great importance. Given the demanding nature of bereavement work, there is a need for additional support for staff in this area, through mechanisms such as training and supervision. There is a role for EPs in this work, alongside other specialist professionals, in order to build capacity within schools and to ensure that staff feel able to meet children's needs effectively. Finally, schools must be aware of the impact of the wider, cultural context on bereavement beliefs and practices, given the range of cultural variation in this area and that schools act as important hubs within their communities. This requires the development of greater awareness of the bereavement practices of the ethnic minority cultures within the communities in which schools are situated, and also critical reflection on the effects of supposed 'mainstream' cultural norms regarding bereavement on CYP and school communities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Application for Ethical Review

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW
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Who should use this form:

This form is to be completed by PIs or supervisors (for PGR student research) who have completed the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review of Research Self Assessment Form (SAF) and have decided that further ethical review and approval is required before the commencement of a given Research Project.

Please be aware that all new research projects undertaken by postgraduate research (PGR) students first registered as from 1st September 2008 will be subject to the University's Ethical Review Process. PGR students first registered before 1st September 2008 should refer to their Department/School/College for further advice.

Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:

1. The project is to be conducted by:
 - staff of the University of Birmingham; or
 - postgraduate research (PGR) students enrolled at the University of Birmingham (to be completed by the student's supervisor);
2. The project is to be conducted at the University of Birmingham by visiting researchers.

Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduate (PGT) students should refer to their Department/School for advice.

NOTES:

- An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. Please **do not** submit paper copies.
- If, in any section, you find that you have insufficient space, or you wish to supply additional material not specifically requested by the form, please it in a separate file, clearly marked and attached to the submission email.
- If you have any queries about the form, please address them to the [Research Ethics Team](#).

<p>✓ <input type="checkbox"/> Before submitting, please tick this box to confirm that you have consulted and understood the following information and guidance and that you have taken it into account when completing your application:</p>

- The information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages
(<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-of-Research.aspx>)
- The University's Code of Practice for Research
(http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf)

**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW**

OFFICE USE ONLY:
Application No:
Date Received:

1. TITLE OF PROJECT

A study of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing loss and bereavement in schools.

2. THIS PROJECT IS:

- University of Birmingham Staff Research project
 University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project
 Other (Please specify):

3. INVESTIGATORS

a) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	Dr Julia Howe
Highest qualification & position held:	EdPsychD / Academic and professional tutor
School/Department	School of Education (Disability, Inclusion and Special Needs Department)
Telephone:	
Email address:	

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

b) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

c) In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student

Name of student:	Alison Claire Kime (known as Claire)	Student No:	
Course of study:	Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate	Email address:	
Principal supervisor:	Dr Julia Howe		

4. ESTIMATED START OF

Date:

PROJECT

ESTIMATED END OF

Date:

July 2019

PROJECT

5. FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

<i>Funding Body</i>	<i>Approved/Pending /To be submitted</i>
N/A	

If you are requesting a quick turnaround on your application, please explain the reasons below (including funding-related deadlines). You should be aware that whilst effort will be made in cases of genuine urgency, it will not always be possible for the Ethics Committees to meet such requests.

N/A

6. SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore schools' staff's attitudes to and implementation of proactive and systemic approaches to supporting pupils affected by loss and bereavement. It will consider the views of teachers and support staff, such as learning mentors and teaching assistants. It will focus on school staff perspectives, factors that promote and inhibit systemic approaches, and the effects of cultural variation on practices.

Background and rationale

Longitudinal studies report a relatively high prevalence of bereavement and loss amongst children and teenagers, with 5% experiencing the death of a parent by the age of 16 and 15% experiencing the loss of the presence of a parent through divorce (Parsons, 2011; Harrison and Harrington, 2001). Whilst bereavement is an inevitable part of life and should not be pathologized, it presents a risk factor for the development of academic, social, emotional and mental health difficulties if pupils' needs are not met (Penny and Stubbs, 2015). Despite this, literature suggests that schools tend to act in reactive, ad hoc ways, rather than proactive ways when addressing loss and bereavement, with few schools having policies and procedures in place. There is limited research regarding systemic, proactive school approaches to supporting children affected by loss and bereavement and also regarding how bereavement is dealt with from different cultural standpoints. Therefore, I intend to undertake exploratory, case study research in three or four schools in the shire county in which I am currently on placement to investigate the types of systemic approaches to bereavement support that may exist in schools and what factors promote and inhibit such approaches, including cultural factors. I will particularly focus on staff training, bereavement policies, death education, whole school events, and multi-agency working, including the role of educational psychologists.

Research questions

1. What kind of proactive and systemic approaches to supporting pupils affected by bereavement and loss exist in schools?
2. How effective do school staff believe these approaches to be in supporting pupils' needs?
3. What factors promote and what factors inhibit proactive and systemic approaches to supporting pupils affected by bereavement and loss?
4. What is the impact of staff culture and pupil culture on bereavement and loss practices in schools?

Expected outcomes

It is anticipated that there will be variation in schools' approaches, with some schools having minimal or no proactive systems in place and others having more developed systems. I also anticipate that the personal experiences of staff and the cultural demographics of the geographical areas in which the schools are situated may influence attitudes and practice.

The research will provide illumination regarding the types of systemic approaches that some schools currently employ; staff perceptions of their effectiveness; the factors that promote and inhibit such approaches; and the impact of local culture on practices. In doing so, the research will provide opportunities for improved professional practice, both by school staff and by the external agencies that support them, which will in turn help staff to better support pupils affected by bereavement and loss and minimise the risk factors for the development of academic, social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

7. CONDUCT OF PROJECT

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used

Methods:

This research will employ an exploratory, case study design, investigating practice in three or four schools in the shire county in which I am currently on placement.

I intend to undertake document interrogation by gathering data from the schools, such as bereavement policies and documentation regarding staff training on loss and bereavement.

I will then undertake group interviews, using a semi-structured interview schedule (attached), which will first be piloted.

I will undertake a group interview in each school, which will include between three and six participants in each group. They are expected to last for between one and two hours, to allow participants to discuss their experiences in an unhurried manner and to follow topical trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the interview schedule (attached), when appropriate.

I intend to share short videos about different approaches in different cultures beforehand to stimulate discussion about the similarities with and differences from participants' experiences, and about ideas for developing good practice.

I will take brief field notes during the group interviews and will record reflective notes directly after the group interviews finish.

Analysis:

The group interviews will be recorded and transcribed. They will then be analysed using thematic analysis. Data from different schools will be compared for similarities and differences. Analysis of documents will be undertaken using thematic analysis.

8. DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?

Yes No

Note: 'Participation' includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

If you have answered NO please go to Section 18. If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.

9. PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

All primary, secondary and special schools in the target local authority will be invited to participate in the research. These will be recruited by approaching the headteachers of all schools in the targeted local authority with an email and an attached information sheet, explaining the nature of my research and inviting them to participate (attached). All schools in the targeted local authority will eligible to be included in the study.

It is proposed that 3-6 participants will be interviewed in each group interview, comprising a mix of teachers, support staff and senior leaders. No school staff members will be excluded from the study – if more than 6 members of staff in any of the participating schools would like to take part in the group interviews, I will discuss the group composition with the school's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo) to identify which participants might be best placed to provide a representative overview of the school's experiences. I intend to undertake a pilot group interview group, followed by a group interview in each of the 3 or 4 selected schools.

10. RECRUITMENT

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student).

Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

All schools in the targeted local authority will eligible to be included in the study and will be invited to take part via an emailed letter, with an attached information sheet. In this information sheet (attached) the purpose of the research will be explained. It will also state that taking part in the research is not compulsory and that participating schools and individuals within those schools have the right to withdraw at any time during the study (British Psychological Society ethical guidelines, 2009; BERA ethical guidelines 2011).

If more than four schools volunteer to take part, I will contact the schools' headteachers or SENDCos by telephone to gain an overview of the nature of the school's approaches to bereavement support. I will then select four schools to gain a mix of schools with greater and lesser developed bereavement systems and with different demographics.

If fewer than four schools volunteer to take part, I will use opportunity sampling to contact schools by telephone that are known to have received bereavement training from the educational psychology service in which I am on placement.

I will ask to attend a staff meeting at participating schools in order to explain the nature of the research in more detail and to appeal for participants to take part in the group interviews. I will explain the purpose of the research and the type of data that I will be collecting. I will also cover issues of confidentiality and its limits, anonymity, data protection and the right to withdraw. This will also provide an opportunity to answer questions and to distribute consent forms (attached).

11. CONSENT

a) Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why. If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

School consent forms will be sent to schools that volunteer to take part in the study, in order to gain written, informed consent from the headteachers of the schools that agree to take part, and to ensure that they understand what is expected of the school (attached). Prior to asking headteachers to sign the consent form, I will visit or telephone the headteachers to reiterate and discuss the information in the Information Sheet and to provide an opportunity to them to raise questions.

Participant consent forms will then be distributed to individual participants who will be taking part in the group interviews, to gain written, informed consent (attached), after they have read the information sheet about the research project (attached) and have been given the opportunity to discuss concerns or questions about the research. The information sheet will outline a description of the research and its purposes; expectations of participation; voluntary informed consent; the right to withdraw; confidentiality and anonymity procedures; audio recording and data storage procedures; the use of results and feedback to participants; and contact details. The consent form will ask participants if they have understood the research information and whether they give their consent to participate.

My contact details and those of my supervisor will be provided to participants, in keeping with British Psychological Society ethical guidelines (2009).

A copy of the signed and dated consent form and the participant information leaflet will be given to the participant and retained by the researcher to be kept securely.

The consent form and the information sheet will also be used in the pilot to check that they are likely to be clearly understood by participants and that all the information required by participants is included.

Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? Yes No

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

N/A

12. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

Participants who take part in the research will receive a brief summary of the key findings from the research.

13. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

a) Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

Written information will be given to participants prior to them consenting to take part, informing them of their right to withdraw. This will be explicitly stated in the information sheet and on the consent form. Participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw at the beginning of the group interviews. Participants will be free to withdraw at any time prior to, during, or after the data collection. Withdrawal time after the data collection takes place will be limited to a maximum of two weeks after participation as after this time data analysis will have commenced and it will be logistically difficult to remove participants' data from the analysis process. Participants will be informed of this time limit in the information sheet and consent forms.

b) Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

There will be no consequences for participants (in either the pilot or full research study) if they wish to withdraw from the research study.

If participants wish to withdraw during or up to one week after the data collection, their data will be identified, the transcript will be destroyed and audio-recording erased from storage devices. This data will not be included in the data analysis.

14. COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial

Yes No

ii) Non-financial

Yes No

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

N/A

If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

N/A

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

- a) Will all participants be anonymous? Yes No
- b) Will all data be treated as confidential? Yes No

Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

Schools involved in the research will not be named and will be referred to as 'schools in a shire county local authority' to ensure confidentiality. All schools and participants in the group interviews will be allocated a pseudonym during transcription to ensure that the data is anonymous, once the data is analysed and reported. Participants will be reminded not to mention names of services/schools/children/families/colleagues; however, if any names are expressed during recording, pseudonyms will be used in transcription. The audio-recording will be listened to and transcribed by the researcher only. The audio recording will not be accessible to anyone other than the researcher. Participants will be informed that their responses will be shared collectively in a research paper and summary report.

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

The limits to confidentiality are where there may be risk to the participant or other individuals not involved in the research. Participants will be made aware of this before giving their consent. If anything is raised relating to harm or potential harm to participants or others, both the school's and Local Authority's policies on confidentiality and safeguarding will be adhered to (BPS ethical guidelines, 2009). I have received recent safeguarding training and am therefore aware of local and national safeguarding policies and procedures.

It will be explained to participants that although they will not be anonymous to me, as I will be conducting the interviews, the data will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms when it is reported.

16. STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

All data will be kept and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and General Data Protection Regulations.

Group interviews will be recorded using an encrypted laptop computer. After the group interviews, audio-recorded data will be immediately moved to be saved in Birmingham University's secure Research Data Store, which only the researcher will have access to. The audio files will then be deleted from the audio-recorder. Written transcripts will also be stored on the secure Research Data Store. Participant names will only be included on consent forms, which will be held electronically in the secure Research Data Store.

In line with university ethical guidelines, all data will be kept for 10 years in the secure Research Data Store, during which time the researcher, supervisors and any university examiners may have access to it. After this time, all electronic data will be erased.

17. OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED? e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or NHS R&D approvals.

YES NO NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

N/A

18. SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

The proposed study will provide an insight into the types of proactive, systemic approaches that schools employ to support pupils affected by bereavement and school staff members' perspectives on their experiences of the effectiveness of such approaches. It will also provide information concerning the reasons why schools may or may not adopt such approaches. Therefore, this research will hopefully help to shape policy and practice regarding such support, in order to better assist staff to provide effective support to pupils.

19. RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

Bereavement and loss are sensitive topics, so there is a possibility that participants may become upset and experience short-term emotional discomfort. Therefore, measures will be taken to minimise any risks to participants' emotional and mental wellbeing. The information sheet will emphasise that school staff are under no obligation to participate and that if they do, their responses will be anonymised, they will retain the right to withdraw at any time, and they will be provided with information about sources of support if their participation raises issues that cause emotional distress. The researcher's training in therapeutic and counselling skills, both through educational psychology doctoral training and also through introductory counselling training, will help the interviews to be conducted in a sensitive, empathic manner. Prior to the commencement of the group interviews, participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw from the group interviews, either temporarily or permanently. They will also be reminded of their right to not answer certain questions. The group interview will be paused in a professional and supportive manner if any of the participants become upset. If this occurs, affected participants will be sensitively provided with information about accessing bereavement and counselling support, both verbally and in writing. Interview questions will be framed in a solution focused manner and participants will be reminded that their responses will be anonymised and any identifying features of the schools removed, so that any concerns that participants may have about their comments reflecting poorly on their school's practice will hopefully be minimised. I will discuss this possibility with senior leaders at participating schools in advance of undertaking the group interviews, to encourage senior leaders to be aware of this possibility and to see any such comments as positive opportunities to develop and improve practice in this area.

Emotional risk to the researcher is minimal, but to further minimise this risk, the researcher will engage in reflective practice and supervision, to monitor personal, emotional responses and address any arising issues.

It is not anticipated that there will be any physical risks to the researcher, research participants, or other individuals not involved in the research, as the group interviews will be conducted in school or educational psychology office premises, during office hours.

b) Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

It is not anticipated that there will be any risks to the environment and/or society as a result of this research.

20. ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?

Yes No

If yes, please specify

N/A

21. EXPERT REVIEWER/OPINION

You may be asked to nominate an expert reviewer for certain types of project, including those of an interventional nature or those involving significant risks. If you anticipate that this may apply to your work and you would like to nominate an expert reviewer at this stage, please provide details below.

Name
Contact details (including email address)
Brief explanation of reasons for nominating and/or nominee's suitability

22. CHECKLIST

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

- Vulnerable groups, such as children and young people aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments
- Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life)
- Risk to the personal safety of the researcher
- Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out
- Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants.
- Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes
- Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety
- Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

	ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participant information sheet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent form	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interview Schedule	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:

- The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.
- I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.
- I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

Name of principal investigator/project

Claire Kime / Julia Howe

Date:

26.4.18

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

Appendix 2 – Literature review search strategy

The following strategies were employed to review literature regarding school strategies to address bereavement and loss in schools. The review was not attempting to be systematic, as the topics covered were broad in their scope, with diverse terminology, and most of the literature was qualitative, so no attempts were made to produce a meta-analysis, nor to claim that the review was comprehensive. Grey literature was included in the search, as well as peer-reviewed literature, as much of the research in these areas has been undertaken by professional organisations and consequently has been published through their organisations. It is acknowledged that these factors may leave the presentation of literature open to bias; however, the benefits of enabling a more open and wide ranging approach, within the confines of the relatively small-scale study were deemed to outweigh this risk.

Following consultation with university librarians, the following databases were selected for the literature search: PsychInfo, ProQuest–ERIC, and EBSCO Education. The inclusion terms were as follows, subsequent to the the undertaking of scoping searches:

- Search terms were ‘death*’ ‘and’ ‘bereavement*’ ‘and’ ‘school*’;
- ‘subject terms’ / ‘key words’;
- 2011-2021;
- full text available;
- English language.

Following the removal of duplicates, Proquest-ERIC produced 29 articles; EBSCO Education Databases produced 21 articles; and PsycInfo produced 7. Abstracts were reviewed to remove those that that were not relevant to the search, with most of those that were removed

being medical articles, then the remaining articles were read. References from these articles were reviewed to find further relevant articles and publications. International literature was included, given the limited amount of UK literature, with the focus subsequently on UK research when specifically considering approaches that were directly relevant to this study.

Appendix 3 - Recruitment information provided for potential participants, sent to all the headteachers in the targeted local authority via a headteachers bulletin

Invitation to participate in research into school approaches to bereavement

Claire Kime, trainee Educational Psychologist, is looking for schools to take part in her third year educational psychology doctoral research project, looking into school approaches to childhood bereavement.

Why this project?

Research suggests that nearly 5% of children experience the death of a parent by the age of 16 and many more will experience the death of other family members, friends, pets or other significant individual in their lives. Although death and bereavement are inevitable parts of life, childhood bereavement can present as a risk factor in the development of academic, social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

Claire intends to undertake exploratory, case study research in a small number of schools to investigate the types of systemic approaches to bereavement support that may already exist and what factors promote and inhibit such approaches, including cultural factors.

Which schools can take part?

Primary, secondary and special schools in Warwickshire are welcome to get in touch about participating. Your school might be interested in taking part because you have experience of supporting bereaved pupils or have received bereavement training; however, don't worry if your school has little or no experience in proactive approaches to bereavement – you're not alone, as research suggests that this is the case in many schools.

It is hoped that by taking part in the research, schools will be provided with the opportunity to both celebrate and further develop good practice in this area.

What will it involve?

Initially, Claire would like to come along to a staff meeting to outline the project. Schools will be asked to provide copies of any policies or curriculum resources related to bereavement and a small group of staff (between three to six) will be invited to take part in a 90 minute group interview. Ideally, this would be staff who have an interest and/or experience in the topic and who are keen to explore the issues described above.

Participating schools will be provided with information and feedback based on the findings of the research that can be used to inform the development of their policies and practices in supporting pupils affected by bereavement.

Contact and further information

If you are interested in taking part and would like more information about the research, please **phone Claire Kime on** [REDACTED] **or email** [REDACTED]

Appendix 4 - Information provided to participants

Participant information sheet

Study title: A study of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing loss and bereavement in schools.

Researcher: *Claire Kime, BA, BSc, PGDip (studying for a doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology)*

I would like to invite your school to take part in my research study to learn more about schools' systemic approaches to supporting pupils affected by loss and bereavement. I am grateful for you taking the time to consider participation in this research. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it would involve for your school.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this research is to explore schools' proactive and systemic approaches to supporting pupils affected by loss and bereavement. Longitudinal studies report that 5% of children experience the death of a parent by the age of 16 and 15% experience the loss of the presence of a parent through divorce. Bereavement presents a risk factor for the development of academic, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, if pupils' needs are not met. Despite this, literature suggests that schools tend to act in reactive, ad hoc manners, rather than proactive manners, with few schools having policies and procedures in place. Therefore, I intend to undertake exploratory, case study research in a small number of schools to investigate the types of systemic approaches to bereavement support that may exist in schools and what factors promote and inhibit such approaches, including cultural factors. I will particularly focus on staff training, bereavement policies, loss and bereavement in the curriculum, and multi-agency working, including the role of educational psychologists.

Who can take part?

All primary, secondary and special schools in this local authority are being invited to participate in the research. In the first instance, headteachers are being asked to consent to their school being included in the research as one of the case study schools. Subsequently, all members of staff (teachers and support staff) in the selected schools will be invited to take part in group interviews.

Don't worry if your school has little or no experience in these areas – you're not alone, as research suggests this is the case in many schools. I am interested to undertake research in a small number of schools with a range of practice, from those that have little or no experience, to those that have more developed practice, in order to learn lessons about factors that support or inhibit such practice in this field. Schools will not be judged on their existing practice. Rather, the information they provide will be used to learn lessons about practice and need in this area, with a view to supporting professional development.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to headteachers to decide if they would like their school to be included in the study and up to individual members of staff in those schools to decide if they would like to take part in the group interview. If you do consent for your school to be included, you will be free to withdraw the school from the study at any time, without giving reason, up until two weeks after the group interviews have taken place – after this time, the information provided will have been anonymised and included in a report. Staff members who take part in the group interviews will also be free to withdraw at any point up to two weeks after the interview.

What will happen if I take part?

If you consent for your school to take part in the study, I will send information to the school to forward to staff in order to explain the nature of the research in more detail and to appeal for participants to take part in the group interviews. I will review any policies and documentation relating to loss and bereavement that the school employs. I will then undertake a group interview in each school, to include between three and six members of staff (teachers and support staff) who have consented to take part. Given the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions, this will take place remotely via Microsoft Teams and should take 60 - 90 minutes. This will provide an opportunity to explore school practice regarding staff training, policy, loss and bereavement in the curriculum, and multi-agency working, along with staff members' thoughts about the nature of this work, factors that promote and inhibit practice, and how such work may be developed in the future. The interviews will be audio recorded, transcribed and analysed.

What are the possible risks and disadvantages of taking part?

Loss and bereavement are sensitive topics, which are an inevitable part of human experience. Taking part in the research therefore brings a risk to participants of emotional discomfort and distress. Having received training from bereavement organisations, along with psychology and counselling training, I hope to conduct the interviews in a sensitive, respectful and empathic manner, ensuring that participants feel free to withdraw temporarily or permanently and are referred for any necessary professional support, if participation triggers distress. Contact details of organisations that provide bereavement support and counselling will be provided to all interview participants, in case they feel that they require personal support regarding bereavement and loss issues. The only perceived disadvantage of taking part is that group interview participants will be required to give up approximately two hours of their time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Members of staff who take part may find that participating in the study encourages them to reflect on existing and new approaches to supporting pupils who are affected by loss and bereavement. The reflections and discussions may help staff to enhance their practice in this area. By consenting for your school to take part you will allow the researcher to have a better understanding of schools' practice and needs in this area and to share these findings to promote the development of good practice more widely.

What if there is a problem or if I have a concern?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you can contact me on the email address provided below and I will do my best to answer and address any questions.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Data will be treated as confidential and will be stored in Birmingham University's secure Research Data Store, which only I and my supervisor will have access to. Data will be anonymised through using pseudonyms and any identifying features of the schools and individual participants will be removed.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results will be written up as part of my doctoral studies. Reports of the results may also be submitted for publication in academic and professional publications. If you take part and are interested in the findings, you can request a brief participant overview of the research.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by me and my supervising tutors within the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. No funding is being provided to administer the study.

Who has reviewed the study?

It has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee.

Contact information

If you would like further information about this research or have any questions, please contact me: [REDACTED] or my supervisor, Dr Julia Howe:

[REDACTED]

If you would like more information about loss and bereavement support, you may find the following organisations of use:

Child Bereavement UK - <https://childbereavementuk.org/>

Winston's Wish – <https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Cruse Bereavement Support - <http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/>

Many thanks for taking the time to consider participation in this study.

Appendix 5 – Consent form

Consent form

A study of proactive and systemic approaches to addressing loss and bereavement in schools.

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with exploring schools' attitudes to and implementation of proactive and systemic approaches to supporting pupils affected by loss and bereavement, within the School of Education in the University of Birmingham. The information that you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be stored in a secure university data store and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. Anonymised reports of the research may be submitted for publication in academic and professional publications. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act (1998) and General Data Protection Regulations (2018). No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of understanding and consent

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point up to two weeks after the interview, without giving any reason (after this point, the data will have been anonymised and incorporated into the research report). If I withdraw, my data will be destroyed.

- I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and General Data Protection Regulations (2018).

Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant:..... Date:.....

Signature:.....

Name of researcher:..... Date:.....

Signature:.....

Appendix 6 - Information sheet containing video links and resources provided to participants prior to the interviews

Videos regarding the culturally diverse ways in which young people might consider issues of death and loss in different countries

Mexican Day of the Dead in USA schools (2mins and 1.45mins):

<https://nbcpalmsprings.com/2018/10/24/coachella-valley-high-school-is-ready-to-celebrate-day-of-the-dead/>

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=how+is+day+of+the+dead+celebrated+in+schools&&view=detail&mid=B8B714C67A71F31C545CB8B714C67A71F31C545C&&FORM=VRDGAR>

‘Derry Girls’ Northern Irish wake (45 seconds):

...

Death education in Hong Kong schools (90 seconds):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STBNVRiOwNk>

Other resources

Winston’s Wish resources for schools and related Guardian article:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jun/18/schools-need-support-of-government-to-help-grieving-children>

Bereavement and stages of childhood and adolescence:

<https://health.tki.org.nz/Key-collections/Curriculum-in-action/Change-loss-and-grief/The-developmental-stages-of-children-and-their-responses-to-loss>

Bereavement and SEND:

Winston’s Wish SEND support: <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-children-with-send/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/do-children-with-send-understand-death/>

Supporting students with ASD through grief and loss:

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED576640.pdf>

Death rituals around the world:

<http://blog.finalfling.com/death-rituals/>

Appendix 7 – Interview schedule

Group Interview schedule

Initial discussion and checks:

- Thanks
- Introductions (if required)
- Confirm that technology is working, that participants are familiar with all necessary aspects of the technology, are willing for the interview to be recorded on MS Teams and that any technical queries have been answered
- Confirm reading of participant information sheets, reiterate sources of support and ethics procedures, such as the right to withdraw at any point, and confirm that participants still consent to proceed
- Questions?
- Finish time?
- Show videos

Issue / topic	Possible question	Possible follow-up questions [Prompt]	Probes
Opening questions and general questions about the school's approaches	1. Do you have any thoughts and comments regarding the videos you've just seen?	Did you like any of the examples of practice?	Anything else?
	2. Do you think that any of the approaches described in the videos might be relevant to or useful in your school?	Which approaches and why?	In what way?
	3. Are you aware of pupils in your school who have been affected by loss or bereavement and if so, whether school support has been provided?	What sort of support was provided?	Tell me more....
	4. Do you think that your school's approaches to loss and bereavement are predominantly proactive and rooted in established systems; reactive and ad hoc; or a mixture of the two?	Do approaches draw on established policies and strategies, or are they dependent on the situations and	Tell me more...

		<p>responses of the individuals involved? Why? Can you provide examples?</p>	
School bereavement policies	5. Has the school a loss and bereavement policy?	<p>How did it come about? Who wrote it? Is it implemented?</p>	Anything else?
	6. If the school doesn't have a policy, why do you think this is?		Tell me more...
	7. What would be useful to include in a new bereavement policy or add to an existing policy?	<p>Does it / should it address cultural variation and if so, how? (offer examples of cultural variation, if required) (Show Childhood Bereavement UK example policy for prompt, if required, and invite comment.)</p>	Anything else?
	8. How might staff ensure that a school policy is actually implemented and adhered to by all staff?	Who and what might help this?	Anything else?
Training	9. Which members of staff, if any, have received training regarding loss and bereavement and has this knowledge been shared and acted upon?	<p>Did it address cultural variation and if so, how? (offer examples of cultural variation, if required)</p>	Anything else?

	10. If you have had any training, who provided it? If not, from whom might you seek training?	Can you tell me more about it?	
Curriculum	11. Is loss and bereavement (death education) addressed in the curriculum?	If so, how? In what lessons (PSHE, English, other subjects)? Is cultural variation addressed and if so, how? (offer examples of cultural variation, if required)	
	12. If loss and bereavement is covered in the curriculum, what resources are used? If not, why do you think this is the case?	Have you used resources from the PSHE Association; SEAL; Winston's Wish; Childhood Bereavement UK / Elephant's Tea Party?	Anything else?
External agency support	13. Have any external agencies supported the school in supporting pupils' needs regarding loss and bereavement?	What support and from whom might be helpful, if you haven't accessed any?	Anything else?
	14. Have educational psychologists supported staff?	Have you had any training or critical incident support from educational psychologists?	How?
	15. Have external professionals provided support for staff needs, for example, guidance regarding professional practice, supervision or counselling?	If so, who has provided this support and what type of support was provided? If not, is this because it has not	

		been required, or has it been required but has not been arranged?	
School events	16. Are there any events in the school calendar that address loss and bereavement and if so, please describe them?	For example, PSHE events, Remembrance Day events or events related to the Mexican Day of the Dead?	Tell me more...
	17. Could you envisage such events happening in the future?	If so, what support would you require to develop them? If not, why not?	Anything else?
Anything else?	18. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?		
	19. Is there anything you would like to know from me?		

Appendix 8 - Sample transcript, including initial ideas for codes and themes (RTA phases 1 and 2)

Participant No. 3

INT - Interviewer

RES – Research participant

	Initial codes	Initial themes
<p>INT: So, first of all, you looked at some videos before we started this discussion that showed different examples of different bereavement approaches in different places. I'm just wondering if you had any particular thoughts if you could recall, I mean don't worry if nothing came to mind, but if you had any reflections on different approaches that you've seen to bereavement support in schools in different parts of the world.</p> <p>RES: I suppose what I kind of resonated with me was the Mexican festival of the Day of the Dead. Because with regards to children that I've previously worked with actually when we've had kind of dressing up days and things where they could celebrate a festival. A child in my class came dressed very much resonating with the Day of the Dead kind of like style. And when I spoke to her about that and her costume I said, "that's fantastic you know, the face painting" and it was</p>	<p>Desire to consider ethnic and cultural diversity more in bereavement work</p>	<p>Importance of considering wider culture and its impact on bereavement work</p>

<p>just like, wow! She said, “yes you know it’s a really important festival to us, it’s the Mexican Day of the Dead and what that means is that we celebrate”. And it was a very joyous kind of experience for her and that was really interesting. Because the other children I think kind of hadn’t viewed in such a joyous type celebratory way as more a kind of mourning process. And I think that was, when I watched that I thought <i>ah, that’s really interesting actually</i>. And talking from personal experiences, my children, their school have been watching the film ‘Coco’ and it celebrates and kind of unpicks a different way of approaching bereavement and approaching the passing of somebody that you love and the mourning process. And yeah, it was just quite interesting when I spoke to the little girls’ mother about that I said, “that was you know, really interesting actually because she opened up a discussion with us”. And she said you know, “yeah within our family we celebrate every year, and we have a big party, and we have family around. And we have friends, and we dress up and we have food, and you know it’s a real joyous occasion”. So, that’s quite an interesting perspective I think kind of shift a little bit.</p>	<p>Grieving as an important and natural process Celebratory aspect of mourning is important Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement Importance of CYP’s peer involvement in addressing death and bereavement Desire to consider ethnic and cultural diversity more in bereavement work Celebratory aspect of mourning is important Remembrance as an important event for CYP Communication with families is important Importance of keeping the memory of the person who’s died alive Mourning about acknowledging family connection, history and memory</p>	<p>Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death Importance of collective remembrance Empathetic communication with CYP and families is important Attuned relationships are key Importance of considering wider culture and its impact on bereavement work Importance of collective remembrance Importance of collective remembrance Empathetic communication with CYP and families is important Importance of collective remembrance/ Time is a key factor to consider Importance of collective remembrance</p>
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<p>INT: Definitely.</p> <p>RES: Some of the children were kind of a bit, weren't really quite sure about that kind of approach. So, we did talk about different cultures and different ways that people celebrate and remember. And kind of ritualistic type aspects of celebratory and processes. And that didn't mean that that person was any less loved because it was a joyous celebration as opposed to a mourning process.</p> <p>So, it opened up quite a lengthy discussion for us at my school with quite young children actually, they were year one.</p>	<p>Questioning about what's appropriate and inappropriate in school</p> <p>Avoidance of talking about death</p> <p>Death can be considered 'scary' for CYP – lack of exposure may exacerbate this</p> <p>Celebratory aspect of mourning</p> <p>Talking about /teaching death better prepares CYP</p> <p>Talking to CYP about death is not as difficult as might be anticipated</p>	<p>Importance of considering wider culture and its impact on bereavement work</p> <p>Lack of awareness of bereavement (resources) practices</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families is important</p> <p>Attuned relationships are important</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its impact on bereavement work</p>
<p>INT: Right.</p>		
<p>RES: Which is five and six years old.</p>	<p>Young children are able to talk about death and grief</p>	<p>Need for honest unambiguous communication about death</p>
<p>INT: Yeah.</p>		
<p>RES: And that was interesting, it was interesting.</p>		
<p>INT: And how did the children respond to that notion?</p>		
<p>RES: [Pause] I asked the little girl if she would be happy just to talk just because we were talking about costumes and you know blah, blah, blah. And "what have you come as, what have you come as you know? How is that important to you</p>	<p>Talking to CYP about death is not as difficult as might be anticipated</p>	<p>Attuned relationships are important</p>

<p>blah, blah, blah". And I asked her if she would be happy to talk to the other children about that and she was like, "yeah, yeah, yeah"! And the other children were kind of really "wow" you know. And then a couple of them sort of said, "oh is that like in Coco" I think because it was around that time when the film Coco was released. The little girl was like, "yeah you know that's it and we sing, and we dance". And as I say linking in to my child, we were doing an activity for Cubs and he chose Mexico. And we looked really in detail about the Day of the Dead actually and we explored it further with him. But the children, when they were listening to her being quite so uplifted I think it was a positive experience for them actually. Because previously to that aside from when we've been reactive to the passing of somebody or an animal, and we have kind of built into the curriculum certain texts and raised passing and death, and the children have always been quite, have been quite emotionally driven by that. Even if they haven't experienced that personally for themselves or anyone within their family unit. But because of the way a text is delivered for a child, usually via an animal type of theme and somebody has passed. Then the</p>	<p>Importance of CYP peer involvement</p> <p>CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning - curious (<i>'contrast with death is scary'</i>) Celebratory aspect of mourning</p> <p>Need to normalise death (<i>compare /contrast grieving as mental health risk</i>)</p> <p>Talking about /teaching death better prepares CYP</p> <p>CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning - curious (<i>'contrast with death is scary'</i>)</p> <p>Talking about /teaching death better prepares CYP</p> <p>CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning - curious (<i>'contrast with death is scary'</i>) Death education addressed incidentally eg through literature Death can be considered 'scary'/'too emotional' for</p>	<p>Attuned relationships are important</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP (and families) is important for informing child-centred approaches</p> <p>Importance of collective remembrance Importance of considering wider culture</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP (and families) is important for informing child-centred approaches</p> <p>“ “ “</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death</p>
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<p>children feel that emotion really quite deeply. And likewise, if we're, a remembrance type song the children you will see them resonate with that in a very kind of impulsive, naturalistic manner. And you will have children crying over a song and tearful and you'll try and unpick it with them. And they'll just say, "it just touched me, it just made me feel really sad". So, actually for them to see somebody celebrating it was a really, was quite an important part for them I think. And understanding and just different viewpoints. And I think it, I certainly spoke about that the sadness aspect but then also for her the celebratory aspect. And the other children really responded to that really positively actually I felt. And it seemed to be quite an uplifting discussion about death as opposed to the previous discussions and sharing of texts and things that we've had. That have been quite a sombre experience on the passing of something as opposed to a celebrating of something so yeah.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, and they seemed to be able to have some level of understanding that it could be both a sad thing.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p>	<p>CYP – lack of exposure may exacerbate this Use of death euphemism</p> <p>Emotional impact of awareness of death Importance of remembrance</p> <p>CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning - curious</p> <p>Celebratory aspect of mourning is important Death and mourning rituals influenced by faith and culture and vary accordingly – similarities and differences Variable responses to bereavement and varying needs Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement Celebratory aspect of mourning is important CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning – curious (<i>contrast with 'scary'</i>) Use of death euphemism</p>	<p>Importance of collective remembrance Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death Importance of attuned relationships Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement</p> <p>“ “ “</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death</p>
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<p>INT: But also, a celebratory thing.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: They didn't seem disturbed did they at all by that?</p> <p>RES: No, no they didn't, I think children and I think children are very accepting of emotions if you name them and explain to them about those feelings. And I think it's sometimes children, if they don't have those emotions named and owned that it can be quite confusing. But actually, naming them and talking about them and explaining why that is and why you can feel that way about something that you've lost but also, in a joyous uplifting manner. The children, because I think it was a peer and it was talking from a personal experience, you know, were just very accepting of that actually and I felt it was really positive actually. I'd not seen a child of a year one age come to school in a celebrate their festival and custom as somebody representing the Day of the Dead before.</p>	<p>Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement</p> <p>Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement</p> <p>'Name it to tame it' emotion coaching approach</p> <p>Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos Use of death euphemism Celebratory aspect of mourning is important Importance of CYP's peer involvement CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning – curious (<i>contrast with 'scary'</i>) Possibility of learning about death through play and role play</p>	<p>Importance of attuned relationships Empathetic communication with CYP (and families is important) Bereavement practice rooted in wider SEMH practices</p> <p>Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death</p> <p>Importance of attuned relationships</p> <p>Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death</p>
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<p>INT: Good, good. And in terms of it being a different culture, did the other children, obviously it's quite young, year one, do you get any sense of how they related to that as a culture different to their own?</p>		
<p>RES: I think that they just understood it at their base level really. Because we speak about it quite a lot with regard to a few different arenas, religion, places of worship, special books. And so, it's kind of, we talk about that quite a lot in quite a few different areas. So, I think they just kind of accepted it at that level, that some people may celebrate something differently than I celebrate something but that's okay.</p>	<p>Consideration of ethnic and cultural diversity in bereavement work and wider school practice</p> <p>Exploring death in other cultures promotes awareness of diversity and also offers a useful way of depersonalising the issue</p> <p>British culture not encouraging publicly reflecting and celebrating through mourning</p>	<p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p> <p>“ “ “</p>
<p>INT: Yeah.</p>		
<p>RES: Because that is okay you know I say that to them all the time, “this may not be what you believe and that is absolutely okay. Because we all can believe different things and that is okay”. So, I say that quite a lot to the children, “that's fine you know that's great, we are all different”. And so, they kind of, they accepted that I think just at that level.</p>		<p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider SEMH and diversity practices</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP (and families is important)</p>
<p>INT: Good.</p>	<p>Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement</p>	

<p>RES: But yeah, that's kind of stuck with me a little bit actually.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, great that's really interesting to hear. So, generally a really positive experience you think for the class. Was there any resistance mong any individual pupils or any sign of concern or confusion with it?</p> <p>RES: No, no not really, I wouldn't say any, that was [pause] particularly specific to that kind of discussion. I think sometimes where children aren't particularly engaging or aren't particularly part of that or that level of understanding that that's kind of their maturation level. That they're just not at that capacity to [pause] kind of engage with that kind of discussion. As opposed to them just being resistant to it. So, some children you know wouldn't really have noticed her dressed in a particular way or understood why or you know. Because they're just kind of busy doing their own thing. So, I wouldn't say it was a resistant purposeful resistance as opposed to just a kind of natural aging stage. Some children just are at a different process or a different pathway in understanding emotions and feelings and representing. And for some children death is just, at that age just something that isn't anywhere on their radar you</p>	<p>Variable responses to bereavement and varying needs CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning – curious (<i>contrast with 'scary'</i>)</p> <p>CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning – curious (<i>contrast with 'scary'</i>) Personalised, child-led, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent</p> <p>Don't force CYP to talk about death if they don't want to</p> <p>Personalised, child-led, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent</p>	<p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support Flexible, unwritten child-bespoke policies and procedures</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider SEMH approaches</p> <p>“ “ “</p>
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<p>know it just doesn't. Although I read a quote recently which is really interesting about you know death doesn't knock on the classroom door. It just enters silently and swiftly with no cause for what lesson you're doing or something like that. And I thought <i>wow, that's interesting</i>. So, I suppose in terms of some of those children it just wasn't anywhere on their radar. Because actually they've got their own thing going on and their own thing going is sometimes different to what's going on for the rest of the cohort, but that can be for a variety of different reasons you know emotionally or socially or academically.</p> <p>[00:10:33]</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: But no, there was no specific resistance. And actually, it just happened that the little girl was a really popular engaging highly spirited entertaining member of the class. So, actually she was quite a magnetic personality so kind of, the other children were you know listening and taking on board from. She was</p>	<p>'Name it to tame it' emotion coaching approach</p> <p>Bereavement affects minority of pupils, so not priority focus for school planning (due to time pressures and lack of awareness) (<i>contrast with bereavement as priority issue</i>) Bereavement considered important / priority pastoral need to be supported (<i>contrast with bereavement as minority issue</i>) We only act after it happens, but would like to be more proactive and prepared Personalised, child-led, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent</p> <p>CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning - curious ('contrast with death is scary')</p>	<p>Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue</p> <p>Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive</p> <p>Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death</p> <p>Importance of attuned relationships</p>
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<p>explaining it at her base level, her five and six year old level you know because it was hers to own not me.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And so, I think because it was her talking about that from their level it was naturally on similar parr to many of the other children anyway.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And those are the ones that weren't kind of on board with that process and that discussion weren't on board with lots of the discussions. Because of their age and stage was just a particular different at that time you know, development wise.</p> <p>INT: Indeed. And do you think that either that approach or any of the other approaches shown in the other videos from around the world, thinking about the Far East and Ireland as well, do you think that any of those approaches might be relevant or useful in your own professional experience regarding proactive approaches to bereavement? Do you think there's anything you can develop on those themes?</p>	<p>Importance of CYP's peer involvement</p> <p>Personalised, child-led, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent</p> <p>Importance of CYP's peer involvement</p> <p>Being led by child's needs and wishes</p> <p>Variable responses to death and bereavement and varying needs</p> <p>Personalised, child-led, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent</p>	<p>Importance of attuned relationships</p> <p>Flexible, bespoke, child-led procedures</p> <p>“ “ “</p>
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<p>RES: I don't know to be honest possibly, it would probably be that I'd have to review the videos again I think to properly say.</p> <p>INT: Or thinking about your experience that you just described about the Mexican Day of the Dead. Do you think there are any lessons there for your professional practise in the way that you deal with this topic?</p> <p>RES: [Pause] I don't know, I suppose with the school and with kind of because it was quite new on our journey - not that we hadn't had the experience of bereavement because we had in many different arenas - but I suppose it was more, it's always been more reacting to a case by case or a situation by situation or family by family, as opposed to kind of trying to build up more robust practises across the board that reflect different approaches I suppose. I don't know, I probably wouldn't be able to have enough knowledge to comment about how to filter in different kind of cultural approaches to whole school at the moment, without going back and looking at those again I don't think.</p>	<p>Bespoke, reactive approaches to bereavement Being led by child's and families' needs and wishes</p> <p>Death and mourning rituals influenced by faith and culture and vary accordingly – similarities and differences</p> <p>Desire to consider ethnic and cultural diversity more in</p>	<p>Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice / Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures / Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p>
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<p>INT: No, that's fine. And thinking more abstractly, in terms of you, I mean it sounded like it was very powerful thinking about the celebratory side of bereavement and celebrating somebody's life. Do you think in a more abstract way, is that something that you might be more aware of or incorporate into your practise in the future?</p>	<p>bereavement work – need more knowledge</p>	
<p>RES: Yeah, I think so, I think that [pause] death and loss you know not just death, I think just loss is something that I think we do need to look at from different aspects for different reasons really. [Pause] a child that I'd been working with had lost not through a death but through a reallocation and then through an adoption actually five siblings. And when I spoke to her about that, her kind of feeling was about, and her take on that was celebrating that her five siblings had found new homes and isn't that wonderful. You know, she had kind of parked her own mourning for those, for her siblings. And she had been the primary care giver to those siblings because of home circumstances for a long time. And the way she spoke about it and the way she kind of processed that was looking at the benefits and the positives about the loss. As opposed to</p>	<p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC)</p> <p>Variable responses to bereavement and varying needs</p> <p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC)</p> <p>Variable responses to loss and bereavement and varying needs</p> <p>Can be celebratory aspect of loss and mourning</p> <p>Selflessness in mourning</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures/ Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support</p> <p>All emotions are valid</p> <p>“ “ “</p>

<p>how it affected, from a personal point of view kind of she projected the positives to the situation. As opposed to letting the negatives manifest I suppose. And I think that's sometimes I think how we need to try and encourage people to look at processes I think.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, so I guess that maybe sits with resilience frameworks and thinking if we've been through difficulty experiences.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>INT: What can we see in terms of reframing that for some of the positives without wanting to diminish the extent of the loss.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, yeah but how do we, I mean certainly for this little girl to be able to view it as a protective mechanism for her I suppose. Actually, was a purposeful way of engaging with her trauma and her loss. Because I felt at that point she wasn't ready to process her sadness or her feelings. So, she kind of compartmentalised them into looking at the positives and what that meant for</p>	<p>Variable responses to loss and bereavement and varying needs – different coping mechanisms</p> <p>“ ” “</p> <p>Finding positives in loss and grief as coping mechanism</p> <p>Generic SEND and pastoral processes drawn on to provide bereavement support</p> <p>Finding positives in loss and grief as coping mechanism</p>	<p>Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures</p> <p>Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and promote resilience</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and promote resilience</p>
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<p>somebody she loved. As opposed to what it, how it left her feeling which I think is quite a mature way for a child to try and manage and facilitate her journey.</p> <p>INT: Yes.</p> <p>RES: So, that's quite interesting I think and quite a thought provoking way that she explained how she was dealing with it to me.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, I think that's really interesting and I wonder if there might be parallels when people talk about taking some solace in the fact that somebody who's been suffering dies.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: And is no longer suffering, that maybe if you think about the person that you've lost.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Be it through adoption or bereavement, maybe things are better for them now. And that gives the grieving person some comfort.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p>	<p>Potential negative impact of bereavement and loss on mental health and daily functioning</p> <p>Empathetic communication and listening are important responses to bereavement and loss Variable responses to bereavement and loss and varying needs</p>	<p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p>
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<p>INT: I think there's some interesting parallels, that's really interesting.</p> <p>RES: And that's exactly what she said, and I thought this is you know an 11 year old girl, 11 year old child. Who had been as I say the primary care giver for 11 siblings actually but five of them, five of the younger ones. And three of them were remaining together and two of them were remaining together. And she even sort of said, “and that's good because they still have, Child X still has Y and Z with them and they're a unit and the other two are together”. And she was kind of removed out of that as a solitary, but she was very much [pause], “I've experienced a loss but look at what they've gained”. And that gave her comfort.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's really interesting, thank you. And you mentioned this a few minutes ago, talking about how reactive or proactive school systems are.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: I'm curious thinking about your professional experience in your school. Do you think that your school's approaches to bereavement are essentially proactive and are rooted in established systems and procedures...</p>	<p>Finding positives in loss and grief as coping mechanism</p>	<p>Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and promote resilience</p>
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<p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Or reactive possibly a little bit more responding ad hoc to individual situations, or a mix of the two?</p> <p>RES: I think that they started off being more reactive but then quickly we released that in order to provide an environment for all children actually who may have experienced loss or trauma [Pause] to feel well, for all children actually to feel you know within that environment to feel more secure. But actually, so that those systems were in place as a protective mechanism as opposed to, “Right, what can we do to firefight this particular trauma now? What can we put into place so that those systems were to become more embedded”? So, that should something come knocking on the classroom door without a plan like I just said, that the safety net was already there you know.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And that’s also kind of for parents and for children, for the community I think as opposed to just the child, but wider family.</p>	<p>Lack of prior consideration of policies and proactive approaches</p> <p>We only acted after it happened, but wanted to be more proactive and prepared</p> <p>Bereavement affects minority of pupils, so not priority focus for school planning (due to time pressures and lack of awareness) (<i>contrast with bereavement as priority issue</i>)</p> <p>Desire for prepared systemic approaches to better prepare for bereavement and loss</p> <p>School response to bereavement rooted in wider community response Ongoing, close communication with families is important (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)</p>	<p>Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive</p> <p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP and staff</p> <p>Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a rare, minority issue</p> <p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP and staff</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p>
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<p>[00:19:43]</p> <p>INT: Yeah, and when you say systems in place, what sort of systems are you referring to?</p> <p>RES: So, the raft of texts that we've got available in school to support the counselling that we've got available in school to support. The different drawing and talking therapies, people to be trained, people to be upskilled. We had lots of CPD opportunities and online training opportunities for staff to build their own internal capacity. And using the kind of emotion coaching type framework as well. We then had the attachment aware and the policy in school as a whole school approach.</p> <p>So, I think where we'd had previously staff members, losing staff members, losing parents, losing children and reacting when that were to happen. We utilised the counsellor for example, to run some sessions with staff about understanding reasons behind for example, suicide. So, that we had a better understanding and we felt better equipped. So, where something happens</p>	<p>Build capacity in school to address natural bereavements, with school as first contact with families</p> <p>School recommending bereavement books for CYP and families/ Counselling and therapeutic approaches central to individual and systemic school bereavement processes/ Importance of marrying policy with appropriate training/ Build capacity in school to address natural bereavements, with school as first contact with families/ Bereavement considered important / priority pastoral need to be supported (<i>contrast with bereavement as minority issue</i>)/ Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos Euphemisms for death</p> <p>Counselling and therapeutic approaches central to individual and systemic school bereavement processes</p>	<p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Key role of school counsellor</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p>
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<p>within the community and you're the first port of call. Because you're the first one that the parent wants to speak to or the parent you know comes in to talk to. And it so happened to be me about a really traumatic loss of her partner through suicide and the children having seen that and finding their father. I was kind of the first person that she shared a lot of that with and actually, I felt professionally and just as a human being it really traumatised me. I was really heavily affected by that an awful lot and I needed support through the counsellor to try and understand what had happened and why that had happened. And how a parent could let that happen, how a parent could let their child find them. And I really, I was really struggling because I was trying to support the children of which we had two and the mother and the grandmother. And trying to put into place all these safety measures that we could to protect the children within the space of kind of a mourning near enough. "Right, we need to do something right now for this family because this family is in absolute trauma and this happened you know last night". And so, kind of like trying to get things into place while I was also trying to understand</p>	<p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>School counsellor providing formal and informal counselling support to CYP and staff, which could be considered both proactive and reactive, individual and systemic – important role</p> <p>Ongoing, close communication with families is important (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)</p>	<p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p> <p>Importance of attuned relationships/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Key role of school counsellor</p> <p>Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider</p>
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<p>what happened. Because it didn't, I obviously have an understanding of suicide you know because I'm an adult, but I think when I saw first-hand how that had affected two children that I was responsible for in school and understanding what happened for that parent. I felt a bit out of my depth emotionally, so I had some counselling actually. And the counsellor spent a lot of time with me trying to support me through what had happened to support the parent effectively and the children effectively.</p> <p>So, I think that kind of thing, raising staff capacity internally, making sure staff have access to supervision that kind of thing. When they're either viewing material that's quite distressing or talking to people on a human level.</p> <p>So, yeah I think trying to have those, the policy in place, the attachment awareness, how to support children who are processing trauma, how that might look, how that child might behave and why that child might behave like that and what you can do to underpin that behaviour, online training, CPD opportunities, access to counselling, making sure that we've got somebody trained in varying therapies. So, that if something were, that child were to</p>	<p>Staff feeling out of their depth addressing traumatic bereavement</p> <p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all school staff, including support staff, particularly on traumatic death and complex grief</p> <p>Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training (traumatic death harder for staff to support)</p> <p>School counsellor providing formal and informal counselling support to CYP and staff, which could be considered both proactive and reactive, individual and systemic – important role</p> <p>Build capacity in school to address natural bereavements, with school as first contact with families</p> <p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p>	<p>Key role of school counsellor</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Key role of school counsellor</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Key role of school counsellor/ Bereavement as a mental health risk factor</p>
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<p>that just, “help me”. And obviously what you want to do is give all the help and I did, I did as much as I could within a very, very short space of time. But I think my understanding developed after that because I made sure I felt better equipped for that to happen again.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, you’ve raised some really interesting and important themes there. So, the secondary trauma, the impact on staff it can be really huge particularly in such a traumatic incident you’ve described. So, you feel that having those proactive systems and structures and support in place and that training and knowledge probably better equips staff to better understanding and respond.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Both professionally and also personally being better equipped.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: If all these proactive systems in place already and school have already got it on the agenda.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: And thought about how when it comes effectively.</p>	<p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>Being led by child’s and families’ needs and wishes Staff guilt re lack of proactive bereavement practices – wanting to do more</p> <p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p>	<p>bereavement as a minority issue/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice</p> <p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p>
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<p>RES: Yeah, because it's [pause] and you do firefight obviously when something completely unexpected happens, you do firefight, but that's not always a comfortable feeling is it for somebody to feel that they're scrabbling to find something to support. When you're then absorbing quite, you're absorbing other people's emotion. And I think that's part of our role and that's what we do in school, we absorb it all and absorb it all and absorb it all. Because you are the safe person and that's the same for adults you know. I feel that I spend an awful lot of my professional time supporting adults who may well have not got the networks around them. Or who haven't had a positive experience throughout their own upbringing, don't have that kind of emotional resilience themselves. So, I spend an awful lot of time with adults and it can be difficult as like I say, just as a human being. Watching somebody in such a trauma, such a state of trauma without thinking <i>I just want to reach in and just help make something better for you in any way I can now. Because I can't do much, but I can offer you know a warmth, a look, a guide, a touch, a point in the right direction.</i></p>	<p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training (traumatic death harder for staff to support)</p> <p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p> <p>Ongoing, close communication with families is important to support them and their children</p> <p>Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos</p> <p>Staff guilt re lack of proactive bereavement practices – wanting to do more</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice/ Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Attuned relationships are very important</p> <p>Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice</p>
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<p>And I think having those in place prior to something happening then you've just got a little bit more a safety belt and a safety network. And sometimes when you have to put something in to place really rapidly. Like you know the parent says, "I've got you know, we've just found out that so and so's mother is terminally ill. She's in a hospice but the children still want to come to school, they still want to be with you". So, you have to be the safety net for those children who are looking to you.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: As their trusted adult in that scenario to provide what you need to provide for them. But I think it's also really important that you don't forget that you have to attend to your own sort of safety mask.</p> <p>[00:29:41]</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And you have to look after that otherwise you can't look after anybody.</p>	<p>“ “ “</p> <p>Sometimes response needs to be fast to quick moving events</p> <p>School as a safe haven</p> <p>Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos</p> <p>“ “ “</p> <p>Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training (traumatic death harder for staff to support)</p> <p>Need to 'put on your own oxygen mask', before you can care for others</p>	<p>Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice</p> <p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider</p> <p>School as a safe haven and provider of normality</p> <p>Attuned relationships are very important</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p>
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<p>INT: Yeah, so yeah putting your own safety mask or your own oxygen mask on first before you can look after others, it's a good metaphor yeah.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Thank you. So, thinking about the specifics of those proactive approaches, has your school got a bereavement policy in place?</p> <p>RES: Yes, it has, and that was more kind of driven by the Covid situation. But it [pause] needs to grow I think now to cover, to be driven more than just by the Covid outbreak. I think that we saw in school quite a number of children and families who were affected first hand by Covid and through the lack of... because of the protocols with regard to funerals and social distancing and how we supported families was very different. So, it was kind of driven by that, but I think that the trauma informed policy also covers loss. But the bereavement policy was more specifically to do with upskilling staff and making sure that we had kind of letters in place or proformas in place to inform if there had been a loss.</p>	<p>Written bereavement policy in place</p> <p>Services disrupted by Covid</p> <p>Parallels between bereavement, other losses (divorce, LAC) and trauma-informed practice</p> <p>Build capacity in school to address bereavements, with school as first contact with families</p>	<p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p> <p>/Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/</p> <p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p>
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<p>And so, the policy I'm reviewing will be more a cohesive whole kind of school approach to bereavement not just linked to Covid. But whether that be a child that's bereaved, a parent that's bereaved, a staff member that's bereaved or a staff member that's died. Or a family member that's died, a child that's passed, even you know the school pet. Which sounds quite flippant but actually we have a therapy dog and the children who access the therapy dog are by kind of definition of needing the therapy dog, children who are quite emotionally vulnerable. And children that have been through quite a level of trauma. And so, it's with kind of even thinking about what would we do, how will school cope, what will we have in place should the therapy dog pass away? Because actually, she means an awful, awful, awful lot to some of our key children who don't engage in school really without her being there and support mechanism.</p>	<p>Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level</p> <p>Impact on staff of personal bereavements which can affect their work</p> <p>Variable responses to bereavement and varying needs – not predictable by closeness of relative; time....</p>	<p>Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p>
<p>INT: Yeah, indeed. And so, when was the original draft of the bereavement policy originally written and who wrote the original draft?</p>	<p>Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level</p>	<p>Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p>
<p>RES: I wrote it [pause] where are we now?</p>		
<p>INT: In your role as SENCO?</p>		

<p>RES: Yeah, I wrote it in my role as SENCO. I can't, I don't know maybe March time I think probably something like that with the Covid.</p>	<p>Covid driving proactive practice such as writing of bereavement policies</p>	<p>Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs</p> <p>Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – reaction to events drives proactive practice</p>
<p>INT: Yeah, and that was the first bereavement policy the school had had, it hadn't had a bereavement policy until Covid?</p>		<p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Key role of counsellor and therapeutic work in bereavement support</p>
<p>RES: No.</p>		
<p>INT: Just as a trigger.</p>	<p>Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level</p>	<p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Key role of counsellor and therapeutic work in bereavement support</p>
<p>RES: It had had the SEND policy of which an aspect of that was bereavement and loss. Because it was about how the external professionals we had in place in school supported and what their remit was. So, where we had counsellors or where we had play therapy, where we had sand therapy, Lego therapy kind of like within that remit. And who would access that or what that would be available for. So, there was kind of some clarity around the holistic approaches to children's emotional and mental health and wellbeing. And a part of that was linked to bereaved children. Because we'd, I mean I don't know what the statistics are, and I wouldn't know enough about other schools. But it seemed to be that we had as a school experienced quite a lot of loss at different levels,</p>	<p>Counselling central to individual and systemic school bereavement processes</p>	
<p>Bereavement considered important / priority pastoral need to be supported</p>	<p>Bereavement considered important / priority pastoral need to be supported</p>	

<p>children, parents, staff. So, we had mechanisms in place, but I think that it wasn't kind of as just under the umbrella of a bereavement policy. It was more kind of embedded within different strands of support like special needs, like social, emotional mental health and support for children looked after, or children previously looked after- it was kind of woven in as opposed to being and standalone piece of work.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's interesting.</p> <p>RES: So, that's where the standalone policy I think was more directed and more equipped with external support that people could access. So, the kind of CPD opportunities were built into that, the texts were built into that.</p> <p>I mean we'd worked on an ad hoc basis with bereavement charities like X, for quite a number of, for many, many, many years actually. Where you know they would come in and support certain children. But that was more kind of like as I say like a distinct piece of work as opposed to - and reactive - as opposed to [pause] being within the kind of whole school systematic approach.</p>	<p>Generic SEND and pastoral processes provide bereavement support</p> <p>Signposting CYP and families to specialist agencies – useful (for families and staff)</p> <p>Importance of marrying policy with appropriate training</p> <p>External agencies used reactively</p>	<p>Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – reaction to events drives proactive practice/ Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p>
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<p>INT: Yeah, and thinking about reviewing that policy, is there anything that you feel needs adding to that policy or developing in the future?</p> <p>RES: Yeah, I think it needs to cover, no actually no I'm not sure whether it needs to cover anything differently. As opposed to just being [pause] coming at it from a wider angle as opposed to just because of the Covid outbreak I think. I think [pause] when I was looking through it to try and review it, I was looking at the rationale behind it. And I thought that still fitted, the rationale still fitted, who it was written for I thought that still resonated. I suppose it may well have increased training opportunities, increased CPD opportunities. But no, I don't think it needs a huge overhaul to be honest because it's been on the top of my list to do for a little while. Not for that long but for a little while now sort of since coming back into school in September. So, you know I need to review that, so it's not just purely linked to the Covid outbreak. But when I've looked at it and I've looked at things I need to tweak or add. It probably just needs a tiny little bit of adjustment but not, I don't think it needs a complete overhaul. I think it deals with loss of children and staff, how we would cope with that,</p>	<p>Covid driving proactive practice such as writing of bereavement policies</p> <p>Importance of reviewing and updating training and other bereavement procedures</p> <p>Importance of marrying policy with appropriate training</p> <p>Covid driving proactive practice such as writing of bereavement policies</p> <p>Importance of reviewing and updating training and other bereavement procedures</p>	<p>Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs</p> <p>Bereavement considered important / priority pastoral need to be supported (<i>contrast with bereavement as minority issue</i>)</p> <p>Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs</p> <p>Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p>
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<p>how we would inform community, how we would inform other children. How we would support other children and likewise, with parents and staff members. So, as I say, when I have moved to my new school and I said to the headteacher, “do you have one”? He said, “no, we don't have anything” and I thought <i>well, that would be a good time to look at the bereavement policy I wrote previously. And a) transfer it to a new setting with the new external agencies we have available to us. And the kind of training that the school staff have currently as opposed to the one setting I've come from.</i> But I don't think it's going to need a great big overhaul to be honest. I think we've got different PSHE curriculum in my new school as opposed to my previous school which cover different aspects of loss and kind of journeys. So, we have a different curriculum which may need dovetailing in as to kind of the threads and themes within that particular PSHE type approach. As opposed to previous PSHE type approach that we had at my old setting.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's interesting.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p>	<p>School response to bereavement rooted in wider community response</p> <p>Signposting CYP and families to specialist agencies – useful (for families and staff)</p> <p>Death education addressed in PSHE lessons</p> <p>Desire to develop death education curriculum – important</p>	<p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice</p>
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<p>INT: And did you draw on any templates or examples from bereavement organisations or from other schools? Or was it purely from your own experience?</p> <p>RES: No, no I did draw on [pause] I can't remember the website that we had, I can't remember what it was called. But they had the online training for designate teachers for safeguarding or sort of more senior lead teachers. And then they had training for other members of staff too. And they had on their website some proformas that you could utilise and kind of appendicise into your policy. Such as "here's a proforma for informing parents or informing other children or informing about the loss of a member of the community".</p> <p>So, yeah I have used proformas and templates from existing kind of charity organisations or online training tools. I mean interestingly enough when I asked staff to embark on that training, that remote training. It was one of the swiftest kind of uptakes with staff completing it and signing that they'd completed it. Kind of if there's some kind of training that I ask staff to do that's in their own time as opposed to a directed staff meeting. Then I will ask staff to</p>	<p>Importance of marrying policy with appropriate training</p> <p>Specialist agencies – useful info for staff</p> <p>Bereavement training provided for all school staff</p> <p>Specialist agencies – useful info for staff</p> <p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all staff (particularly on traumatic death and complex grief)</p> <p>Staff desire for training and more proactive approaches</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p> <p>Appropriate support and training for staff is essential due to the challenging nature of the work/ Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff/ Bereavement considered priority pastoral need to be supported</p>
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<p>sign that they have completed it and when they've completed it just as their evidence really. But the bereavement one that I asked people to do was the swiftest uptake and the most kind of rapid turnaround.</p> <p>[00:40:27]</p> <p>INT: Right.</p> <p>RES: And actually, the feedback I had from staff was "wow, no that's really equipped me. I feel much more confident now in how to support children and families" because of their level of knowledge. And I think that's something that if I hadn't directed staff to complete that I don't think that would have been on the top of their agenda really.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's interesting.</p> <p>RES: Because I think staff are so super, super, super busy that that's when you fall into the reactive phase as opposed to the being upskilled in preparation for.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p>	<p>Staff desire for training and more proactive approaches</p> <p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all staff (particularly on traumatic death and complex grief)</p> <p>Bereavement only affects a minority of pupils so not a priority focus for school planning</p> <p>Limited time for training and competing demands, (with curriculum needs often prioritised)</p>	<p>“ “ “</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff/ Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue</p> <p>Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p>
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<p>RES: So, certainly a I say the feedback that I had was, “wow, thank you so much for pointing me in that direction. Because I wouldn’t have accessed it without that but now I have I feel that I didn’t know I needed to feel more confident. But I do feel more confident and I feel that was really empowering and I feel empowered more”.</p>	<p>Absence of training previously – not high priority on staff agendas Limited time for training and competing demands</p>	<p>Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p>
<p>INT: Good.</p>	<p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all staff (particularly on traumatic death and complex grief)</p>	
<p>RES: Which was really interesting actually because I kind of said, “you know this isn't exactly light reading guys and I’m sorry for that but could you”. And literally it was the quickest turnaround I've had so that was interesting.</p>	<p>Training increases confidence and competence</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p>
<p>INT: That's great. And just back to the bereavement policy, does it include cultural variation, is there any acknowledgement of different cultures or faith responses to bereavement within the policy?</p>	<p>Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training</p>	
<p>RES: No, that's probably something that probably does need to be added actually and thank you for saying that. Because that could be something that I do need to work into or weave in or kind of embed within. Because we do have a range</p>	<p>Staff desire for training and more proactive approaches</p> <p>Ethnic / faith diversity not a factor considered in bereavement provision</p> <p>Desire to consider ethnic and cultural diversity more in bereavement work</p>	<p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p>

<p>of different children obviously from different cultures and different backgrounds.</p> <p>INT: Any examples of particular demographics in your school?</p> <p>RES: [Pause] we have Muslim children, we have many children from Asian, we have Indian families, we have French, Turkish [pause] yeah, so there's Pakistan. So, there's quite a wide variation actually.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: We have West African as well.</p> <p>INT: So, quite broad.</p> <p>RES: And actually, yeah within [pause] yeah no that would, I'm just thinking I've put on my action plan about raising profiles of different groups and of different children, of different [pause] minorities. So, actually those specific groups that would be nice to dovetail in.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: So, yeah thank you.</p>	<p>Diverse ethnic demographic in school</p> <p>“ “ “</p> <p>Desire to consider ethnic and cultural diversity more in bereavement work</p>	<p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p>
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<p>INT: No, that's interesting because some grieving, mourning rituals are quite different in different cultures and different religions.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: And finally, on thinking about policies, schools I know staff are incredibly busy, schools have lots of different policies. Often there's high staff changeover in some schools where people aren't always up to speed with the policies.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: How do you think you might ensure that, or staff generally might ensure that a school policy is actually implemented and adhered to? And all staff are aware of that and will follow it accordingly.</p> <p>RES: I mean like I sort of said to you just a moment ago, kind of when something new is implemented or shared we do have a consultation period. Where staff have to, not staff have to, but staff are required to read, to process, to feedback as part of that consultation. Before it's then taken to governors and adopted as a policy. [Pause] part of the monitoring of that would be through</p>	<p>Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level</p> <p>Written, formalised bereavement policy in place</p>	<p>SENDCO /small, pastoral team responsible for leading bereavement practice</p> <p>Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>Proactive approach provides security for CYP, families and staff</p>
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<p>not just going and you know going into classrooms but just through checking back with teachers. I mean it's difficult, for some policies it's kind of like not... I don't do a quiz! But it's kind of like, "Can I just ask you your understanding of how you feel that needs to be embedded or how you would react to that?". You know sometimes it's about staff training with regard and it's not always, not saying it's just linked to the bereavement policy but with scenarios or that kind of approach. To like well, what's our understanding from that? I mean [pause] it's difficult to I suppose test if somebody has read it as opposed to, we do have the ticking off, we have the signing off. And we have an online platform where policies are published, and you have to confirm that you've read them by selecting a certain checking box. And you have read it within a certain timeframe and if they haven't been read and they haven't been ticked off then that's alerted to us. And we can go and check and say, "you know this still hasn't been read yet, you still haven't acknowledged it as read. And confirmed as read and ticked that you've read it and signed for it. So, you know you had a period of time in which to do that".</p>	<p>Not practical for all staff to be bereavement experts – time issue</p> <p>Importance of marrying policy with appropriate training</p> <p>Importance of reviewing and updating training and other bereavement procedures</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Proactive approach provides security for CYP, families and staff</p>
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<p>So, I think aside from trusting people's personal and professional judgement, that you trust that they're you know doing what they've signed that they're doing and confirming it. Then it's, for some policies it's quite easy to sort of send out a questionnaire or a survey. Or "can you explain to me how you would you know deal with this scenario or that scenario" or whatever. But yeah, there's always a consultation period and there's also always a period of time by which you have to have read a policy. And acknowledge it and sign for it that you've read it.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, thank you. And so, moving onto training, you've talked a bit about training already, so we've sort of covered quite a few things I was going to ask. But I'd be grateful if you do have a record of the online training that you did, if it's possible just to drop me an email.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, 'm trying to.</p> <p>INT: But don't worry if you can't find it don't worry about it.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, no I can literally find it within a minute of finishing this.</p> <p>INT: [Laughing] that would be.</p>	<p>Importance of reviewing and updating training and other bereavement procedures</p>	<p>Importance of a coherent, whole school approach</p>
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<p>RES: I can find it within a minute, I just can't, I'm trying to think what charity it is.</p> <p>INT: Don't worry, that's something.</p> <p>RES: I don't know whether it's the Bereavement Research Trust, but I can literally visualise it. But I will send it to you because we.....</p> <p>INT: That would be lovely, thank you.</p> <p>RES: We all did it.</p> <p>INT: Great.</p> <p>RES: And senior leadership did a different one, different level and then the remainder of the staff did a subsequent level.</p> <p>INT: Great.</p> <p>RES: So, we all did it.</p> <p>INT: And that was what I was going to ask, which members of staff if any have received training about bereavement. And when you say all staff did it, did that include non-teaching staff?</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: And was that, you know things like lunch supervisors as well as.</p>	<p>Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level</p> <p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all school staff, including support staff,</p>	<p>SENDCo and senior pastoral team responsible for leading bereavement practice</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p>
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<p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Is, absolutely everybody in the school.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Fabulous, yeah that's great.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, it went out to, I mean all staff as in all staff.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: [unclear 00:47:58] staff, caretaking staff, lunchtime supervisor staff, teaching assistants and teaching staff and then an element above of senior leadership team.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's great.</p> <p>RES: And also, that training was also published on the website for parents as well.</p> <p>INT: Great, that's lovely. And did that training address culture variation in any manner or different?</p> <p>RES: Yeah, yes it did, yeah it did, that was part of the training. It was quite a long training session and it had varying, from varying levels. That you could access</p>	<p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all school staff, including support staff,</p> <p>Signposting CYP and families to specialist agencies – useful for families and staff</p> <p>Cultural variation covered in bereavement training</p> <p>Death and mourning rituals influenced by faith and culture and vary accordingly – similarities and differences</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p>
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<p>different pathways and embark on a different course of training throughout the programme. But yeah, that did cover that too.</p> <p>INT: Great, and when you say it was quite a long training, how long?</p> <p>RES: [Pause] I think it was, I don't know, I think you could have probably spent longer or shorter on it depending on how much you wanted to kind of delve into it. But i mean i certainly spent a couple of hours on that particular training.</p> <p>INT: Right.</p> <p>RES: The online training course [pause] sort of opened a different pathway here and a different course, that's something I'm quite interested in. And I think it's something that you could go back to and revisit and revisit and revisit and revisit. And then review and review and that's the purpose I suppose of policies and reviewing policies within a certain timeframe. Because I, whenever I write a policy I sort of give it a time frame of a formal review. Whether that be annually or [pause] every two years. But also, I will kind of put within that or as and when recommendations change or the situation changes. So, I think policy is always up for review.</p>	<p>Couple of hours training session considered a long training session</p> <p>School using specialist agency resources, advice and ideas – useful and necessary</p> <p>Importance of reviewing and updating training and other bereavement procedures and policies</p> <p>Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level</p>	<p>Appropriate support and training for staff is essential due to the challenging nature of the work</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Time is a key factor to consider/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>SENDCo/ pastoral team responsible for leading bereavement practice</p>
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<p>[00:50:02]</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's great. And I guess with the training going back to it, as you say it's almost like a spiral curriculum, approach isn't it? That you're looking at the same topic but maybe different levels or training and awareness as well.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: As you develop.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, so you know I mean it's interesting, but it would, I would say that some of the most accessible staff in school are the online front desk staff, who are the first port of call for any, many, many parents. Now, they're not the senior leadership team and they're not the ones in school that can kind of affect any kind of policy change or any kind of strategic from an operational level, but from a base human level they are the very first port of call.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: Actually, so they're one of the team that I felt needed to be equipped the most.</p>	<p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support</p> <p>Build capacity in school to address natural bereavements, with school as first contact with families</p> <p>Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training</p>	<p>Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities – first point of contact</p> <p>Appropriate support and training for staff is essential due to the challenging nature of the work</p>
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<p>together as a community to talk about and share, and you know, going to the church or visiting the temple and talking about that aspect of life and of a life cycle. And that is kind of built on and built on and built on and revisited and revised.</p> <p>And so, you know previously I remember being, doing a unit of work in reception and that was wholly linked to loss. And it was we did a piece of work at sort of the tail end of reception say six weeks before term finished in reception. Then we picked it up again into year one as a transitional piece of work and the children [pause].. we told it through a story kind of framework, and it culminated in the transition into year one after sort of six weeks. That there was a bereavement and there was a loss that happened through an animal that we were, the vehicle was an animal. But that was about transition from reception to year one and kind of bridging that, beginning something in reception, talking about feelings, growing, feelings, growing. And then moving into year one that the loss part happened at the beginning of year one. And that was a specific kind of piece of work that we did linked to bereavement and</p>	<p>Death education addressed through a spiral curriculum – age /stage appropriate, revisited in different areas at different times</p> <p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC)</p> <p>Death education addressed through a spiral curriculum – age /stage appropriate, revisited in different areas at different times</p> <p>Death education addressed incidentally not intentionally, eg through literature</p> <p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC, transition)</p>	<p>Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>“ “ “</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p>
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<p>loss. And as I say, it starts off very generally with feeling and generally told through animals. And then it's kind of more embedded within the curriculum at all levels I think through kind of more complex texts or [pause] yeah themes or loss. But I think that's generally throughout most schools I'd probably say.</p> <p>INT: And is that in particular subject areas like PSHE or English or science, life science?</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: Or across various curriculum areas.</p> <p>RES: I think it can kind of cover varying so the curriculum with regards science, with life cycles and that kind of thing is obviously a science based topic. And even you know the water cycle in that respect of a kind of continual. But then more specific with PSHE or [pause] or English if it's a text driven piece of you know, text driven piece of work.</p> <p>So, I think school is generally quite [pause] quite open I suppose to different cycles such as loss and bereavement and trying to embed them within in terms of like a resilience based approach to children. And that [pause] we want to</p>	<p>Parallels between sex ed. and death ed. / Personalised, child-led, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent</p> <p>Assumption that all schools address death and loss through the curriculum</p> <p>Death education addressed in science lessons/ Death education addressed in PSHE lessons/ Death education addressed incidentally not intentionally, eg through literature</p> <p>Importance of developing death education curriculum throughout the school and across curriculum areas</p>	<p>Flexible, child-led approaches</p> <p>Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and promote resilience</p>
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<p>obviously, equip children for life in that way so that if there was to be a loss in whatever arena you wanted to call that loss. That children have had previous support to underpin.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And understand and to be able to rationalise what's happened.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, and do you use any resources things like the PSHE Association, Child Bereavement UK, Elephant's Tea Party resources, or Winston's Wish curriculum resources? Have you drawn on any of those professional organisations?</p> <p>RES: Yeah, Winston's Wish we've used previously and also X Charity we've used previously.</p> <p>INT: Specifically, within the curriculum, within teaching have you used any of their resources?</p> <p>RES: Yes, yeah, yeah I mean this was, I wouldn't be able to tell you specifically which ones, but I know that Winston's Wish was a charity that we worked with actually. Again, that was more born out of a particular response to a particular</p>	<p>Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos</p> <p>Desire to further develop death education curriculum – important to prepare children to be resilient in life</p> <p>Awareness of external agencies for support</p> <p>Awareness of external agencies for support School using specialist agency resources and advice – useful and necessary</p>	<p>Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them</p> <p>Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them</p> <p>Awareness of bereavement resources and practices/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Awareness of bereavement resources and practices/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p>
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<p>case and Winston’s Wish worked with us. But I know that they ran some assemblies actually, they were involved in supporting staff as a whole actually. And Guy’s Gift as well, they delivered only this week a sort of tote bag full of books and full of resources and lesson plans and assembly type plans. And it just so happened that, just coincidentally actually, a member of staff, her mother works with X Charity. And she had said, “oh my mum said she was coming to deliver a package to us and oh she’s brought this”. And when I looked in it was, I haven’t had chance to explore it thoroughly yet because it was at the tail end of this week like Wednesday or Thursday I think. But within it there were lesson plans and ideas for assemblies and a range of texts, that was X Charity.</p> <p>INT: That’s great, and do you know if cultural variation has been addressed in any of those curriculum resources?</p> <p>RES: I haven’t looked, I haven’t looked through the bag enough to know, to say to you or not yes or no to be honest. Because as I say it was like Wednesday they</p>	<p>Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both - reaction to events drives proactive practice</p> <p>School recommending bereavement books for CYP and families</p> <p>Awareness of external agencies for support School using specialist agency resources and advice – useful and necessary</p>	<p>Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both - reaction to events drives proactive practice</p> <p>Awareness of bereavement resources and practices/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP’s, families’ and staff’s needs</p>
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<p>got delivered and I thought <i>that's pretty timely actually because I'm just doing this bereavement policy.</i></p> <p>INT: Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>RES: So, I said I'll have to have a look through that because I'm writing a policy for the school about that. And she said, "oh yeah you know mum brought them". And they've kind of sat by my desk because I've been in class.</p> <p>INT: Right.</p> <p>RES: So, I haven't had chance to look.</p> <p>INT: No.</p> <p>RES: No, I wouldn't like to say yes [laughing] in case they didn't.</p> <p>INT: No, that's fine, that's fine and I guess when you talked about other texts or life cycle work or that kind of thing. Has cultural variation been addressed in any of those previous curriculum areas?</p> <p>RES: [Pause] I'm not sure through kind of life cycle type approaches for science based kind of. It's a bit tricky to kind of.....</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p>	<p>Ethnic / faith diversity not a factor in bereavement provision re. curriculum, due to lack of awareness and knowledge of how to do it</p>	<p>Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support re. curriculum</p>
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<p>RES:link it in and kind of generalise it across the different culture. Especially kind of how school used the life cycle type processes as a form of.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, thinking maybe more PSHE or whatever is it.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, yeah possibly not as much as potentially we could. Because from my memory and from my experiences, I don't think many of the non-fiction texts really that we've shared have kind of led us to sort of, about other cultures aside from. I know I said it before, but I think Coco was one that we have utilised and tried to use as a vehicle to show. But I don't think probably enough to be honest.</p> <p>INT: No, that's interesting.</p> <p>RES: But I mean we do have, what we do tend to have is kind of parents come in and talk, we've had [pause] parents talking about their own experiences. But again, that's kind of more at a level of when something particularly has happened as opposed to providing I suppose yeah. It's something I think we probably need to look at more.</p>	<p>Ethnic / faith diversity not a factor in bereavement provision re. curriculum, due to lack of awareness and knowledge of how to do it</p> <p>Death and mourning rituals influenced by faith and culture and vary accordingly – similarities and differences/ Ongoing, close communication with families is important (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)/ School response to bereavement rooted in wider community response/ Desire to consider ethnic and cultural diversity more in bereavement work/ Desire to consider ethnic and</p>	<p>Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support re. curriculum</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p> <p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p>
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<p>used our school based resources to provide a couple of pieces of work actually, for other family members that linked in with the child support as well. So, the child had counselling within the school and the parent had counselling within the home. It's kind of like a twofold way of supporting a particular family or particular family unit. Because we felt very much that the parent, other adult within the situation also needed a form of counselling to support.</p> <p>So, we've worked with counsellors, we've worked with EPs, we've worked with clinical psychologists as well. And we've also worked with charities such as X Hospice. And we've spoken to the counsellors within the X Hospice organisation that have provided support to children who have lost parents.</p> <p>And they've come into school and they've supported the child in school and the adults in school, to help understand the processes by which the child or which stage of grieving process the child is currently within, in that cycle of kind of acceptance. And then how it kind of can, you can go back and back and back, back to the beginning cycle. And kind of move forward and then come back again. So, we've worked with X Hospice as well.</p>	<p>(School) Counselling offered for (pre and) post bereavements, for CYP and families (and staff)</p> <p>Ongoing, close communication with families is important to support families' and CYPs' needs (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)</p> <p>EPs involved in casework to support CYP and families</p> <p>Only using specialist agencies when required, not referring all CYP for counselling automatically – build capacity in school to address natural bereavements, with school as first contact with families</p> <p>Grief not linear process</p>	<p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support/ School is a key part of community support for CYP, families and wider community - first point of contact</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Key role of (school) counsellor</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider</p>
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<p>And we've had, we've worked with play therapists and we've worked with drawing and talking therapists. [Pause] so, we've worked kind of like, we've worked with children's services as well. In terms of sort of thoughts and wishes and wishes and feelings type of work. And so, we've worked with social workers and we've worked with the virtual school for particular children who are in care or children who are looked after. So, yeah, quite a few.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, and with the counselling, you mentioned X Hospice counselling. Do you also have a school counsellor who's employed by the school for beyond bereavement?</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: So, some of the counselling will be provided by your school counsellor and some has bene provided by the specialist services like the X Hospice.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, yeah generally the school counsellor well, the school counsellor is there for a whole day a week every week. So, there's quite a lot of capacity there and if there had been a sudden bereavement then we've utilised the counsellor in a kind of reactive capacity to provide support because something has happened</p>	<p>Awareness of external agencies for support</p> <p>School using specialist agency resources and advice – useful and necessary</p> <p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC, transitions...)</p> <p>Counselling central to individual and systemic school bereavement processes</p> <p>Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both - reaction to events drives proactive practice</p>	<p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Key role of school counsellor</p> <p>Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both - reaction to events drives proactive practice</p>
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<p>that needs supporting. So, it's not planned in because nobody knew that was gonna happen the previous night you know or at the weekend.</p> <p>And so, she's there for a full day a week so within that, her timetable we've used her as a kind of person in school who the child recognises because she's very familiar to them. And then we've also used X Hospice counsellors and support network if there's a terminally ill parent [pause]. That you know death is going to be an inevitable part of that child's journey within a relatively short timeframe.</p> <p>And so, it's kind of complementary I guess and we've also, if there's as I say we've used our counsellor to provide in home counselling at the home for the parent. Or for siblings actually or for close family members. So, the counsellor will, under our directive, spend time with that family in their home or you know, wherever they want to meet. The pub you know, we've had them meet at the park, we've had them meet at Costa. Wherever kind of they feel that that counselling session is appropriate. And that's been from our kind of traded time or our bought in time.</p>	<p>Importance of utilising good pupil / staff relationships to support bereaved CYP</p> <p>Counselling offered for pre and post bereavements, CYP, families and staff</p> <p>School response to bereavement rooted in wider community response</p> <p>Ongoing, close communication with families is important to support families' and CYPs' needs (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)</p>	<p>Attuned relationships are very important / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support/ School is a key part of community support for CYP, families and wider community - first point of contact</p>
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<p>INT: Indeed, yeah and you mentioned earlier on a really important point about potential impact of secondary trauma when staff are dealing with supporting families through very traumatic situations and the impact on staff. And you mentioned supervision which is an interesting one because there is a culture of supervision in counselling and in social work., but there isn't really a culture of supervision in education, so it's really interesting that you mentioned that.</p>		
<p>RES: `Yeah.</p>		
<p>INT: Just wondering how those external agencies, [unclear 01:05:57] school counsellor as they're kind of external, kind of internal I guess. But what sort of support for staff needs you found has been helpful [unclear 01:06:09].</p>		
<p>RES: Yeah, so I decided quite a while ago that staff members who were, and that's every staff member really that can be exposed to something traumatic. Needed space to have supervision because [pause] there seemed to be a shift away from educators just educating the children, to being more kind of utilised in a kind of social work capacity. So, quite often you know and I'm doing, in my</p>	<p>Supervision would be (is) a useful tool for staff for professional reflection and support</p> <p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>Supervision is a useful tool for staff for professional reflection and support</p>	<p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>School is a key part of community support for CYP, families and wider community - first point of contact – schools moved beyond being educators</p>

<p>new setting I'm doing this, this week. I'm going out to do three or four home visits for children who are dealing with not just a bereavement loss, but a trauma, traumatic loss - being removed from a mum in one case and also, an attachment type presentation in another case. So, I'm going out to do those home visits in my new setting.</p> <p>So, as the person providing that I think you need the space to offload a little bit emotionally to somebody within a safe arena. Before you then come home and have to start parenting and being available for your own children emotionally.</p> <p>So, I've had you know, I've had telephone supervisions and I've also had group supervisions and I've also had one to one supervisions. And that's something that I spoke about in my new setting actually, because I'd had quite a traumatic case conference. And it was supporting a child who had a loss, not through a bereavement but through being removed from family care into a foster care placement. And that child had quite a significant amount of trauma going on and the case conference I was at was really difficult for me. You know, as</p>	<p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC, transitions...)</p> <p>Supervision is a useful tool for staff for professional reflection and support</p> <p>Supervision not common in educational settings</p>	<p>School is a key part of community support for CYP, families and wider community - first point of contact – schools moved beyond being educators</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential, but not always provided</p>
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<p>emotionally and [pause]. It was a tough one to contain three hours of quite difficult information and then go back to teaching.</p> <p>So, I sort of said at my new setting, “we give supervision for TAs but where’s the supervision for the more, for [pause] people within certain roles? That are dealing and listening to quite graphic, quite troubling graphic information first hand you know, where’s the supervision there”? So, that's something that my new school are currently trying to unpick how we provide for that. And I kind of said it may be that within the cluster, which is what happened at my previous setting. Within the cluster we funded supervision for a group, and it was kind of like a joint financial burden across five or six schools.</p> <p>[01:09:33]</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And we combined, pooled resources, and paid for that for a group.</p> <p>INT: That's great, and who delivered the supervision?</p>	<p>Supervision not common in educational settings</p> <p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>Collaborative approaches between schools to provide support</p> <p>Collaborative approaches between schools to provide support</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential, but not always provided</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential, but not always provided</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential, but not always provided</p>
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<p>RES: That was from a counselling service, that was from a counselling service.</p> <p>INT: That's great.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, yeah [pause] and that was a really useful tool actually, especially if you are new to roll or you'd had a particularly distressing case. Or a distressing [pause] distressing situation that you'd been involved in quite heavily. And I've had quite a lot of those, quite a lot of those over the last couple of you know number of years, really quite tricky ones. So, I think it's really important that you have that space and time. Because actually, to re-enter back into your own home environment is really difficult.</p>	<p>Counselling central to individual and systemic school bereavement processes</p> <p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>Supervision is a useful tool for staff for professional reflection and support</p>	<p>Key role of school counsellor</p> <p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Bereavement as a mental health risk factor</p> <p>School is a key part of community support for CYP, families and wider community - first point of contact – schools moved beyond being educators</p>
<p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: If you're not emotionally in it, in a secure place. So, we had, and from a clinical psychologist actually, I was having some supervision for a particularly distressing case that I'd worked with over a couple of years. For two years it kind of really involved in very, very heavily. And the clinical psychologist from a different authority used to provide my supervision kind of once every three weeks or so. And she taught me a lot about how to manage my own emotions</p>	<p>Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families</p> <p>Counselling central to individual and systemic school bereavement processes</p> <p>Supervision is a useful tool for staff for professional reflection and support</p>	<p>Bereavement as a mental health risk factor /Time is a key factor to consider</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs;</p>

<p>and about how important that was to you know. Like I said tend to your own kind of oxygen mask. Knowing what you could do for yourself to manage that.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's great. And what role have the educational psychology service provided in bereavement support for pupils and staff?</p> <p>RES: I think there's, we've had training sort of through emotion coaching or being trauma informed. And we've had coaching, kind of resilience and building resilience. And obviously, through the Covid outbreak they had their open access telephone call line didn't they? Where parents could phone and book in a kind of session with an EP. And parents really responded really positively to that actually, many of my parents specifically were really delighted with that level of support. [Pause] and I know not specifically for bereavement, but I think the EP seminars that you guys were running and that parents could access I think just about children's emotions and how children present. I think we're really well received.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p>	<p>Need to 'put on your own oxygen mask' before you can care for others</p> <p>EPs involved in training to support pastoral and bereavement needs</p> <p>Covid pandemic exacerbating SEMH needs</p> <p>EPs providing generic SEMH support for families and CYP</p> <p>EP support well received by families</p>	<p>Challenging issue for staff/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and promote resilience</p> <p>Covid pandemic exacerbating SEMH needs</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p>
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<p>RES: And certainly, I published that a lot with my own parents at my previous setting about what you could access as a parent. How you could you know, direct yourself to understand your child's presentation or your feelings or equip you to feel a little bit more empowered</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that's great. So, the educational psychology support has been more generic about emotional support and wellbeing and resilience. Rather than specific support for individual bereave pupils or, per say.</p> <p>RES: We've had, again kind of bereavement and loss and kind of... I guess it's whether you see the bereavement as somebody sadly you know, who has passed away. Or for some children a bereavement is knowing they're never gonna see their mum and dad again because they've been taken, they've been adopted, or they've been taken into care. And you know they know that they can't see their parents again. And where we've had children who I've had significant concerns about presentation emotionally and behaviourally and how they're processing trauma. Then I've liaised with our EP who has supported on a more direct basis with that specific child. And actually, linked in with other</p>	<p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC, transitions...)</p> <p>Euphemism for death</p> <p>Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC, transitions...)</p> <p>EPs involved in casework to support CYP and families</p>	<p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p>
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<p>services that are available and open to that child. If that be a different authority or social care. And they've been part of wider network professional discussions about how best to support a particular child in a particular situation.</p> <p>So, yeah I think that where we've had concerns for a specific child I think the EP service has been something that I've called on to say, "Can you help us to more effectively manage, more effectively support this particular child? Because the level of trauma that they've sustained, level of trauma is impacting massively on development and engagement", and in aspects of children being highly vulnerable and how they present in kind of that fight or flight within a school scenario. Making sure that school staff are understanding the language of communication as opposed to just being reactive to a behaviour.</p> <p>So, I think that where we've needed specific support it's been linked to a particular child. And where the more whole school strategic support has been is linked to the emotion coaching type of language. And the attachment type</p>	<p>Awareness of external agencies for support</p> <p>Usefulness of team around the child</p> <p>EPs involved in casework to support CYP and families, particularly following sudden death and trauma</p> <p>EPs involved in providing support and training to support pastoral and bereavement needs</p> <p>EPs involved in casework to support CYP and families, particularly following sudden death and trauma</p> <p>EPs involved in providing support and training to support pastoral and bereavement needs</p> <p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all school staff,</p>	<p>Awareness of bereavement resources and practices</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Appropriate support and training for staff is essential</p>
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<p>theory and the secure base you know that kind of arena and whole school training.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And then more bespoke one to one with key children who we feel that we need an escalated approach I guess.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, so it’s maybe thinking about the longer term impact of developmental trauma is more where the EPs come in. Rather than maybe the shorter term immediate consequences of bereavement per say.</p> <p>RES: Yeah, I think that where we've had immediate consequences of bereavement we've been able to underpin that with the support we've already had in place.</p> <p>Through the counselling I think and kind of a play theory approach. I mean I know that for example, some children just don't want to deal with bereavement yet. And I specifically had a conversation with one child once via the counsellor actually where the counsellor said, “you know you do”. She was a very, very, very eloquent, very able, very articulate child. But he said to her in a group meeting that I’d had with her, “You do know you are going to have to</p>	<p>including support staff, particularly on trauma and complex grief</p> <p>Monitoring CYP’s needs over time and providing support accordingly</p> <p>Don’t force bereaved CYP to talk if they don’t want to or assume they need to see a counsellor – needs child-led, bespoke response</p> <p>Counselling provided following bereavement</p>	<p>due to the challenging nature of the work</p> <p>Bereavement as a mental health risk factor</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider</p> <p>Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support/ All emotions are valid</p>
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<p>deal with this at some, you will need to deal with it at some point or other”?</p> <p>And she said, “yes, I know, I just don't want to yet” and so she said that she had shut the door on it. And she said, “oh, I just don't wanna deal with it yet”. So, I think where we've kind of put into place some counselling and play therapy and sometimes that hasn't been of any use at all, because the child just hasn't been ready to engage with it.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And they've been able to verbalise that themselves.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And we've had monitoring and checking in and not direct work. But the child knowing that there's a support network there in school, accessible as and when they're ready to access it. But actually, you know we've had that in place for a particular child I can remember we had in place, that on a weekly, fortnightly, monthly monitoring basis for her for four years. Waiting for her to be ready to begin any kind of grieving work or work underpinning her feelings and her</p>	<p>Don't force bereaved CYP to talk if they don't want to or assume they need to see a counsellor – needs child-led, bespoke response</p> <p>Importance of utilising good pupil / staff relationships to support bereaved CYP</p> <p>Don't force bereaved CYP to talk if they don't want to or assume they need to see a counsellor – needs child-led, bespoke response</p>	<p>Key role of school counsellor</p> <p>Time is a key factor/ Flexible, child-coherent policies and procedures/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support/ All emotions are valid</p> <p>Time is a key factor/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support/ All emotions are valid</p>
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<p>emotions. And what had happened and processing the trauma. She didn't ever engage.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: Until she left in year six when she sort of just, "I don't want to yet".</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: "You know I've got SATs to do, I've got this to do, I've got my life to live. I've got this to do, I've got the other do" and she was supporting a younger sibling. And [pause] all the support was there, and it was always there ready. All those pathways were open, all those doors were open for her to go through. But she said, "I don't wanna go through them yet".</p> <p>INT: Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>RES: So, it's delaying that part of her grieving process.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: Which she acknowledged and understood and knew she was doing.</p> <p>INT: And it sounds like school were doing a god job of being vigilant over time and seeing it as a long term process which is great.</p>	<p>Variable responses to bereavement and varying needs – not predictable by closeness of relative; time....</p> <p>Importance of utilising good pupil / staff relationships to support bereaved CYP</p> <p>Don't force bereaved CYP to talk if they don't want to or assume they need to see a counsellor – needs child-led, bespoke response</p>	<p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Time is a key factor/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support/ All emotions are valid</p>
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<p>RES: Yeah, yeah and then at that point then it's the transition discussion when children move to different settings.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: You know, to making sure that there's been a kind of robust transition package between settings or if children have moved settings. So, that there's a clarity of understanding between settings. So, I mean we also, this just kind of came to mind then actually, some parents, I remember parents saying to me, "She may well discuss her father in this way and that's because we've always talked to her about him in this way. When it's Father's Day and X, Y and Z you know she'll always, we'll always want you to make cards and things. And we will you know, we will make a card to daddy. And then what we do is we put them on, put them in like a little fire pit at that time and we watch them rise and the smoke and "that's going to daddy" kind of thing". I just remembered that just then.</p>	<p>Transitions can trigger need for support</p> <p>Importance of information sharing between settings</p> <p>Being led by child's and families' needs and wishes</p> <p>Importance of time-sensitive intervention that acknowledges variation over time and context – in advance of bereavement, soon after, and long term, child-led</p>	<p>Time is a key consideration for support</p> <p>Need for honest, clear communication</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures</p>
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<p>So, yeah I think it's about being vigilant and about being open and those little stories that parents tell you. That are significant and key to the child that if the child moves setting that that's been fully shared.</p> <p>[01:20:22]</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that sounds important.</p> <p>RES: With receiving settings.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, and anything else finally, that you've either found helpful in the past or feel that you would benefit from and you could need from external agencies? That we haven't mentioned.</p> <p>RES: [Pause] No, probably not to be honest, I think [pause] I think that at the moment I feel quite well supported actually between many external services. So, I don't really, I think from kind of the mental health like CAMHS, MIND, all of those kind of organisations, I feel, I do feel well supported. So, no probably not.</p>	<p>Being led by child's and families' needs and wishes</p> <p>Importance of time-sensitive intervention that acknowledges variation over time and context – in advance of bereavement, soon after, and long term, child-led Transitions can trigger need for support</p> <p>Awareness of bereavement resources and organisations</p> <p>School using specialist agency resources and advice – useful and necessary</p>	<p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p>
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<p>INT: Good, yeah.</p> <p>RES: Because I think there's certain strands of bereavement that are more tricky to navigate and more tricky to understand. And more complex with more complex nature. Such as sort of like a suicide as opposed to a death that we knew was going to happen. What I always do is I always go to funerals of you know, if a child has been bereaved and they are at a funeral or their family members is at a funeral. Then I always make sure that school is represented, and the child sees us at the funeral. [Pause] and that's quite important to the children.</p>	<p>Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training (traumatic death harder for staff to support)</p> <p>Bereavement training needs to be provided for all school staff, including support staff, particularly on traumatic death and complex grief</p> <p>School response including attendance at funerals</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential / Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities- schools moved beyond being educators</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture/comunnity and its potential impact on bereavement work</p>
<p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: You know one child said to me, "You came to my mummy's party didn't you"? And I said, "I did come to mummy's party" you know, and she said, "oh I remember cos you had this piece of cake didn't you and I gave it you"? And I said, "I did" and she said, "I wore my beautiful dress" and I said, "you did". So, it's kind of like that link that school is there to support cohesively as opposed</p>	<p>School response including attendance at funerals</p>	<p>School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities- schools moved beyond being educators</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture/comunnity and its potential impact on bereavement work/ Importance of attuned relationships</p>

<p>to. And I think just being represented and showing that you are there is quite important in that part.</p> <p>INT: Absolutely, that's great. And the very final thing, and you've mentioned already, I was just going to as about school events. You mentioned Remembrance Day, are there any other events in the school calendar that address loss and bereavement? You've mentioned Remembrance Day, anything else?</p> <p>RES: No, not that really spring to mind other than as I say Remembrance Day. I suppose is, I mean we do have certain days within school that we remember. But I think that's more specific to key members, to our school as a standalone school.</p> <p>INT: Right.</p> <p>RES: As opposed to you know, we have remembrance things all around school for certain members of staff that have passed away. Or children that have passed away you know. We have pyjama days and dressing up days and things to raise money for say for example, X Hospice. Because that's where you know so and</p>	<p>Talking to bereaved children (or child facing bereavement) is not as difficult as might be anticipated</p> <p>Limited whole school events acknowledging death and loss, both universal and targeted (Remembrance Day)</p> <p>Euphemism for death</p> <p>School response to bereavement rooted in wider community response</p>	<p>Importance of attuned relationships</p> <p>Importance of collective remembrance / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue</p> <p>Importance of collective remembrance/ School is a key part of community support for CYP, families and wider community -</p>
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<p>so’s mum died, child X and Child Y and their mum died there. So, then we always do something as a whole school or within the unit. And the children know that that's because, and the children of the mum know that that's for their mummy.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And “so, we’re all dressed in pyjamas today, why are we dressed in pyjamas? We’re dressed in pyjamas because”, you know.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: “Little girl’s mummy died” and then they talk about it and you know. So, kind of from that respect we have days within the calendar which remember specific events. And that then highlights again, coming together I think to support.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: And you know, and school will enter a team in, school will always enter the, when we could, the X Hospice Race for Life and things like that. And we’ll be racing for so and so’s mum and they see that. And the Santa Dash is for that</p>	<p>Ongoing, close communication with families is important (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)</p> <p>CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning – curious and ok (<i>contrast with ‘death is scary’</i>)</p>	<p>first point of contact – schools moved beyond being educators</p> <p>Time is a key factor to consider /Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support/ Importance of honest, unambiguous communication</p>
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<p>parent or that parent or that parent. And the child's there with us and we're doing it together so that kind of thing we do as well.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, so it's not just an abstract fundraising, it's linked to people and members and staff. So, when you say about if a member of staff or a member of the school, wider family community has died. You have events that remember that, that would be like an anniversary remembrance or would you do that as well the fundraising?</p> <p>RES: Yeah, I think we've had sort of anniversaries and remembrances and we've had you know the launch of this bench you know in honour of and that kind of thing. And then we've had remembrances and anniversaries and then linked to that. We've then had you know, "today we're going to walk 20 laps around the field and we're doing that because we're remembering our colleague". Or "we're dressed like this today you know, we're going out on a Sunday and we're racing around Lamington dressed as Santa because we're raising money and were supporting this family". And yeah, so there's kind of like a combination.</p>	<p>Importance of keeping the memory of the person who's died alive</p>	<p>Time is a key factor to consider / Importance of collective remembrance/ School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p>
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<p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: But like you say it's not just an abstract thing that's happened, it's about supporting [pause] in a more kind of cohesive cyclical way I suppose.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, indeed. And just a very final question to take us back to where we came in on. You mentioned the little girl coming in in the Mexican Day of the Dead costume and talking about the Day of the Dead. And I don't know if you remember in the videos that I sent with the American school near the Mexican border that acknowledge the Day of the Day – they had a whole school event where the children made alters to think about remembering loved ones and they put them all in the library and they had whole school event.</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: I appreciate there are issues around cultural appropriation and how appropriate it would be to pick up something from one culture and dump it in another...</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p>	<p>School response to bereavement rooted in wider community response, including deaths of ex-pupils</p>	<p>Importance of coherent, whole-school approach/ Importance of collective remembrance/ School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities</p>
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<p>INT: ...that might not always work or be appropriate...</p> <p>RES: Yeah.</p> <p>INT: ...But could you ever envisage those kind of whole school events that acknowledge loss and bereavement happening?</p> <p>RES: Yeah, yeah, yeah I do, yeah I do. I think, I mean my partner works in a faith school and I think that they are probably kind of more open and more [pause] more open I guess at having whole themes or a whole display or a whole day. Because he was just talking to me actually about the display in his classroom which is all about loss at the moment and that was...and the Reverend coming in and talking about it. And I think that maybe within certain settings that's kind of woven in a little bit more – a kind of seamlessness- because of the whole ethos.</p> <p>But yeah, I mean I don't see why that wouldn't be a theme that you could cover under an umbrella term of wellbeing or resilience or understanding, or you know at all. And I wouldn't, I certainly don't feel [pause] like I would shy away from anything that was raising an understanding of bereavement or loss or</p>	<p>Whole school bereavement events anticipated as a positive idea</p> <p>Faith school shapes school culture</p> <p>Faith school shapes school culture and possibly more open to discussing bereavement and death</p> <p>Whole school bereavement events anticipated as a positive idea</p>	<p>Importance of whole school, coherent approach</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p> <p>Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work</p> <p>Importance of whole school, coherent approach</p> <p>Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive /</p>
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<p>trauma anymore. I think I'm much more proactive at wanting to shout about that kind of thing. As opposed to thinking <i>I don't really want to talk about it because it's uncomfortable</i>. And I think I'm probably, that's where I'm saying to people, "no this is you know, we need to have a more thorough understanding of trauma. We need to understand how early trauma can impact on children - we need to". And I have been sharing resources like that with parents as well at home and kind of how trauma might well, how children might behave at home. And how that might impact on home life and trying to raise awareness kind of all around. As opposed to thinking <i>oh, you know it doesn't happen here</i> or being worried about it. I mean obviously nobody, nobody, nobody wants anything like you know to happen in the school. But as I say I don't feel quite as worried or as reluctant to engage with that topic.</p> <p>INT: Yeah.</p> <p>RES: Anymore as opposed to actually, get it on the agenda.</p> <p>INT: Yeah, that sounds like you're doing some fantastic work. And just to conclude is there anything else that you'd like to share or would like to ask?</p>	<p>Ongoing, close communication with families is important (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)</p> <p>Bereavement affects minority of pupils, so not priority focus for school planning vs. Bereavement considered priority pastoral need to be supported</p> <p>Staff feel confident to address death and bereavement in school</p> <p>Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo</p>	<p>Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support / Time is a key factor to consider</p> <p>Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/</p> <p>Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs</p> <p>SENDCo /Small, pastoral team responsible for leading bereavement practice</p>
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<p>RES: No, I think that it's [pause] going through something which is tricky for you and is all about just being open as a human I think. And just you know, obviously not any kind of level and I'm not saying it's on a similar level. But actually, if a parent is coming to you and he's just lost his wife and his two little girls have lost their mummy at a very young age. And he's coming to me and he's openly crying and sobbing in my classroom saying, "please look after my girls". You know you can't help but as a mum want to know that if my children ever lost me that there would be a school that was equipped to give them the emotional support that I would want to give anybody. And that i would want to know my children were feeling safe. And so, I think that, I think as that mum said to me, cos I met her not long before she died, cos we went to see her at the hospice, and you know we took her lots of nice things like fluffy socks and smellies and this, that and the other. And we went to visit her cos we were, I built a really nice relationship with her. Yeah, and I remember her saying to me, "just make sure that at school that they're loved". And I sort of absolutely promise you know, and I thought that's what I would want as a mum, yeah.</p>	<p>Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training (traumatic death harder for staff to support)</p> <p>Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos</p>	<p>Challenging issue so staff support is essential</p> <p>Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support / Attuned relationships are very important</p>
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INT: Yeah, absolutely, I can't thank you enough.		
RES: Oh, you're more than welcome.		
INT: I'll stop the recording now		

Appendix 9 - Tables of generated and collated initial codes and initial themes (RTA phases 2 and 3)

9a - Participant 1: Initial codes and themes

Initial codes	Line numbers (continuing)	Possible themes
Use of death euphemism	28; 33	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death
Covid pandemic complicating grief and increasing need for bereavement support	34; 314	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Time is a key factor to consider/ Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs
Empathetic communication and listening are important responses to bereavement	38; 50; 58; 162; 351	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
Signposting CYP and families to specialist agencies	39; 54	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
School using specialist agency resources and advice	40; 160	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
Counselling offered for pre and post bereavements	43; 95; 103; 111	Time is a key factor to consider/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs; Key role of school counsellor
School recommending bereavement books for families	47	Miscellaneous
Ongoing, close communication with families is important	50; 150; 155; 162	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support / Time is a key factor to consider

Being led by child's and families' needs and wishes	50; 77; 160; 357; 395; 402; 532; 545	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
Phased school return following bereavement	51	Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures / Time is a key factor to consider
Personalised, child-led approaches following bereavement	53; 130	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
School staff acting as advocates	57	Miscellaneous
Bereavement training provided for all school staff, including support staff	67; 255	Challenging issue so staff support is essential /Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Training not followed up and embedded due to Covid pandemic	281; 300	Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs
Importance of reviewing and updating training and other bereavement procedures	351	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Time is a key factor to consider/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach
Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level (<i>is support consistent across school, eg supervision meetings for PLT, but not class teachers?</i>)	71; 232; 482; 487; 490; 532; 545; 552; 557; 715	Small, pastoral team responsible for leading bereavement practice (Holland - 4 staff roles) / Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice /

		Importance of coherent, whole-school approach / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
No formalised bereavement policy or procedures to allow for flexible approaches	73; 90; 94; 155; 172; 395	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Flexible, unwritten child-bespoke policies and procedures / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Personalised, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent	76; 90; 94; 160	Flexible, unwritten child-bespoke policies and procedures
Lack of prior consideration of policies and proactive approaches	89	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Generic SEND and pastoral processes provide bereavement support	95; 234; 314; 337; 459; 482; 490; 552	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach/ Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Bereavement considered important / priority pastoral need to be supported (<i>contrast with bereavement as minority issue</i>)	96; 103; 111; 496	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach

Variable responses to bereavement – not predictable by closeness of relative....	132; 163	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
Negative impact of bereavement on mental health and daily functioning	135	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Importance of time-sensitive intervention that acknowledges variation over time and context – in advance of bereavement, soon after, and long term, child-led	155; 44; 166; 496; 522	Time is a key factor to consider/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures
School counsellor providing formal and informal counselling support to CYP and staff, which could be considered both proactive and reactive, individual and systemic	170; 507; 513; 520	Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs; Key role of school counsellor
Diverse ethnic demographic in school	182	Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support
Ethnic diversity not an apparent factor in bereavement provision – differences between and within cultural groups	202; 208; 224; 293	Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support / Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support/ Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
EPs involved in training to support pastoral and bereavement needs	314	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement	337	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support / Attuned relationships are very important /

		Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Importance of keeping the memory of the person who's died alive	351	Time is a key factor to consider / Importance of collective remembrance
Talking to bereaved children is not as difficult as might be anticipated	362	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Attuned relationships are very important
Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos	70; 262	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Attuned relationships are very important / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue /
Importance of utilising good pupil / staff relationships to support bereaved CYP	362; 549	Attuned relationships are very important / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Death education addressed in science lessons, but not PSHE	376	Miscellaneous
Uncertainty regarding how death education is or might be addressed in school and lack of awareness of resources (contrast with referral to specialist agencies in other aspects of bereavement support)	378; 391	Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Importance of CYP's peer involvement	403	Attuned relationships are very important
Focus on anticipated positive reaction to death ed. from staff and negative from parents / carers	421; 658; 667	Attuned relationships are very important / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach
Parallels between sex ed. and death ed.	421	Miscellaneous
EPs involved in casework to support CYP and families following sudden death, but not critical incident referral	463	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support	513; 522; 532	Challenging issue so staff support is essential
Staff experiencing 'survivor guilt' of sorts	522	Challenging issue so staff support is essential

Supervision a useful tool for staff for professional reflection and support	566; 585	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential
Limited whole school events acknowledging death and loss, both universal and targeted (Remembrance Day)	606; 631	Importance of collective remembrance / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Remembrance event as a positive 'lovely' experience for CYP	608	Importance of collective remembrance
Whole school events have a historical rather than SEMH focus	644	Miscellaneous
Whole school events with an SEMH focus anticipated as 'nice' but 'tricky'	656	Importance of coherent, whole-school approach / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Bereavement affects minority of pupils, so not priority focus for school planning due to time pressures (<i>contrast with bereavement as priority issue</i>)	710	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Staff guilt re lack of proactive bereavement practices	709	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Not practical for all staff to be bereavement experts	715	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach

9b - Collated initial codes and themes after first analysis of all six interviews

Initial codes	Initial themes
Absence of training – staff want to / are addressing this	Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive
Addressing death within wider current and world affairs	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work
Avoidance of talking about death	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death/
Awareness of impact on staff of their personal bereavements supports development of wider bereavement practices	Challenging issue to staff support is essential
Awareness of external agencies for support	Awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Being led by child's and families' needs and wishes	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
Bereavement affects minority of pupils, so not priority focus for school planning (due to time pressures and lack of awareness) (<i>contrast with bereavement as priority issue</i>)	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Bereavement considered priority pastoral need to be supported (<i>contrast with bereavement as minority issue</i>)	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach
Bereavement support part of nurturing, compassionate school ethos	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Attuned relationships are very important / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach/ Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Bereavement training needs to be provided for all school staff, including support staff, particularly on traumatic death and complex grief	Challenging issue so staff support is essential /Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
British (? -undefined 'our') culture not publicly reflecting and celebrating through mourning	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work / /Importance of collective remembrance
Celebratory aspect of mourning is important	Importance of collective remembrance/ Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work

Collaborative approaches between schools to provide support	Collaborative approaches between schools to provide support
Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both - reaction to events drives proactive practice	Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice/ Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both
Core team of specialist pastoral staff addressing bereavement, led by SENDCo; but all staff are involved at some level (<i>is support consistent across school, eg supervision meetings for PLT, but not class teachers?</i>)	Small, pastoral team responsible for leading bereavement practice (Holland - 4 staff roles) / Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Counselling central to individual and systemic school bereavement processes	Key role of school counsellor
(School) Counselling offered for pre and post bereavements, CYP, families and staff	c/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs; Key role of school counsellor
Covid driving proactive practice such as writing of bereavement policies	Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs
Covid pandemic complicating grief, anxiety and increasing need for bereavement support	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Time is a key factor to consider/ Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs
Cultural shift required to facilitate greater focus on death in UK schools – needs bereavement ambassadors to push for this	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue
CYP can be shielded from and therefore are ignorant of death and grief	Importance of collective remembrance
CYP open to discussing and learning about death and mourning – curious and ok (<i>contrast with 'death is scary'</i>)	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support
Death and mourning rituals influenced by faith and culture and vary accordingly – similarities and differences	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work /
Death can be 'scary' for the young – lack of exposure may exacerbate this (<i>contrast with 'CYP curious about death'</i>)	Bereavement as a mental health risk factor/ Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Death education addressed in RE lessons	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them

Death education addressed in science lessons	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them
Death education addressed in PSHE lessons	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them
Death education addressed incidentally not intentionally, eg through literature	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them
Death education addressed through a spiral curriculum – age /stage appropriate, revisited in different areas at different times	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach
Desire to consider ethnic and cultural diversity more in bereavement work	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work
Desire to (further) develop death education curriculum – important	Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice/ Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them
Differences between bereavement and other losses – staff not as experienced in addressing bereavement, therefore need more support	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Diverse ethnic demographic in school	Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support / Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work
Don't force bereaved CYP to talk if they don't want to or assume they need to see a counsellor – needs child-led, bespoke response	Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support/ All emotions are valid
Empathetic communication and listening are important responses to bereavement	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
EPs involved in casework to support CYP and families, particularly following sudden death and trauma	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
EPs involved in support and training to support pastoral and bereavement needs	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
EP support well received by families	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
Ethnic / faith diversity not a factor in bereavement provision, due to lack of awareness – (differences between and within cultural groups)	Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support / Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
Exploring death in other cultures promotes awareness of diversity and also offers a useful way of depersonalising the issue	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work /

Faith school shapes school culture	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work
Focus on anticipated positive reaction to death ed. from staff and negative from parents / carers	Attuned relationships are very important / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach
Generic SEND and pastoral processes provide bereavement support	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Importance of coherent, whole-school approach/ Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Grief not linear process	Time is a key factor to consider
Grieving as an inevitable and natural process (contrast grieving as mental health risk)	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death/
Impact on staff of personal bereavements which can affect their work	Challenging issue to staff support is essential/
Importance of acknowledging significant emotional impact of this work on staff and providing appropriate staff support and training (traumatic death harder for staff to support)	Challenging issue so staff support is essential
Importance of developing death education curriculum throughout the school and across curriculum areas	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures / Time is a key factor to consider – age /stage apt.
Importance of CYP's peer involvement	Attuned relationships are very important
Importance of honest, factual conversations with CYP re death	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death/
Importance of keeping the memory of the person who's died alive	Time is a key factor to consider / Importance of collective remembrance
Importance of marrying policy with appropriate training	Challenging issue so staff support is essential
Importance of reviewing and updating training and other bereavement procedures	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Time is a key factor to consider/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Importance of coherent, whole-school approach
Importance of time-sensitive intervention that acknowledges variation over time and context – in advance of bereavement, soon after, and long term, child-led (not always the right time for support)	Time is a key factor to consider/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures
Importance of utilising good pupil / staff relationships to support bereaved CYP	Attuned relationships are very important /

	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Importance of validating all emotions through bereavement	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support / Attuned relationships are very important / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Lack of awareness of external agencies for support	Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Lack of prior consideration of policies and proactive approaches	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Limited time for training and competing demands, with curriculum prioritised	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue
Limited whole school events acknowledging death and loss, both universal and targeted (Remembrance Day)	Importance of collective remembrance / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
More accessible resources required for staff on loss and bereavement	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
Mourning about acknowledging family history and remembering	Importance of collective remembrance
Need to normalise death (<i>compare /contrast grieving as mental health risk</i>)	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death/
Need to 'put on your own oxygen mask' before you can care for others	Challenging issue for staff/ Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
No formalised bereavement policy or procedures (to allow for flexible approaches)	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Flexible, unwritten child-bespoke policies and procedures / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
No whole school events addressing loss and bereavement	Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive/ Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue
Not practical for all staff to be bereavement experts – time issue	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ (Importance of coherent, whole-school approach)
Ongoing, close communication with families is important (both following bereavement and when addressing proactive approaches)	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support /

	Time is a key factor to consider
Only using specialist agencies when required, not referring all CYP for counselling automatically – build capacity in school to address natural bereavements, with school as first contact with families	Utilising external agencies to support CYP’s, families’ and staff’s needs/ Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive
Parallels between bereavement and other losses (divorce, LAC, transitions…) (<i>overlap with ‘loss’ as euphemism</i>) (<i>compare with ‘differences between bereavement and other losses’</i>)	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Parallels between sex ed. and death ed.	Miscellaneous
Personalised, child-led, bespoke responses, age, stage context dependent	Flexible, unwritten child-bespoke policies and procedures/ Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
Phased school return following bereavement	Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures / Time is a key factor to consider
Possibility of learning about death through play and role play	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death/
Potential negative impact of bereavement on mental health and daily functioning	Bereavement as a mental health risk factor; Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Questioning (and anxiety) about what’s appropriate and inappropriate in school	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Recovery also part of process of life, death & grief at possible death	Miscellaneous/ Time is a key factor to consider
Remembrance event as a positive experience for CYP	Importance of collective remembrance
School as a safe haven	School as a safe haven and provider of normality
School counsellor providing formal and informal counselling support to CYP and staff, which could be considered both proactive and reactive, individual and systemic – important role	Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Utilising external agencies to support CYP’s, families’ and staff’s needs; Key role of school counsellor
School recommending bereavement books for CYP and families	Miscellaneous
School response including attendance at funerals	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work
School response to bereavement rooted in wider community response, including deaths of ex-pupils	Importance of considering wider culture and its potential impact on bereavement work/

	School key part of community support for CYP, families and wider communities
School staff acting as advocates	Miscellaneous
School using specialist agency resources and advice – useful and necessary	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
Secondary trauma experienced by staff when supporting CYP and families	Challenging issue so staff support is essential
Services such as counselling disrupted by Covid	Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs/ Key role of school counsellor
Signposting CYP and families to specialist agencies – useful for families and staff	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
Staff desire for training and more proactive approaches	Appropriate support and training for staff is essential due to the challenging nature of the work/ Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff/ Bereavement considered priority pastoral need to be supported
Staff experiencing 'survivor guilt' of sorts	Challenging issue so staff support is essential
Staff feel confident to address death and bereavement	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs
Staff guilt re lack of proactive bereavement practices – wanting to do more	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/ Flexible, child-bespoke policies and procedures / Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential/ Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices/ Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire for more proactive practice/ Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff
Staff perception that overt expression of grief signifies level of distress	Miscellaneous
Supervision would be (is) a useful tool for staff for professional reflection and support	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential

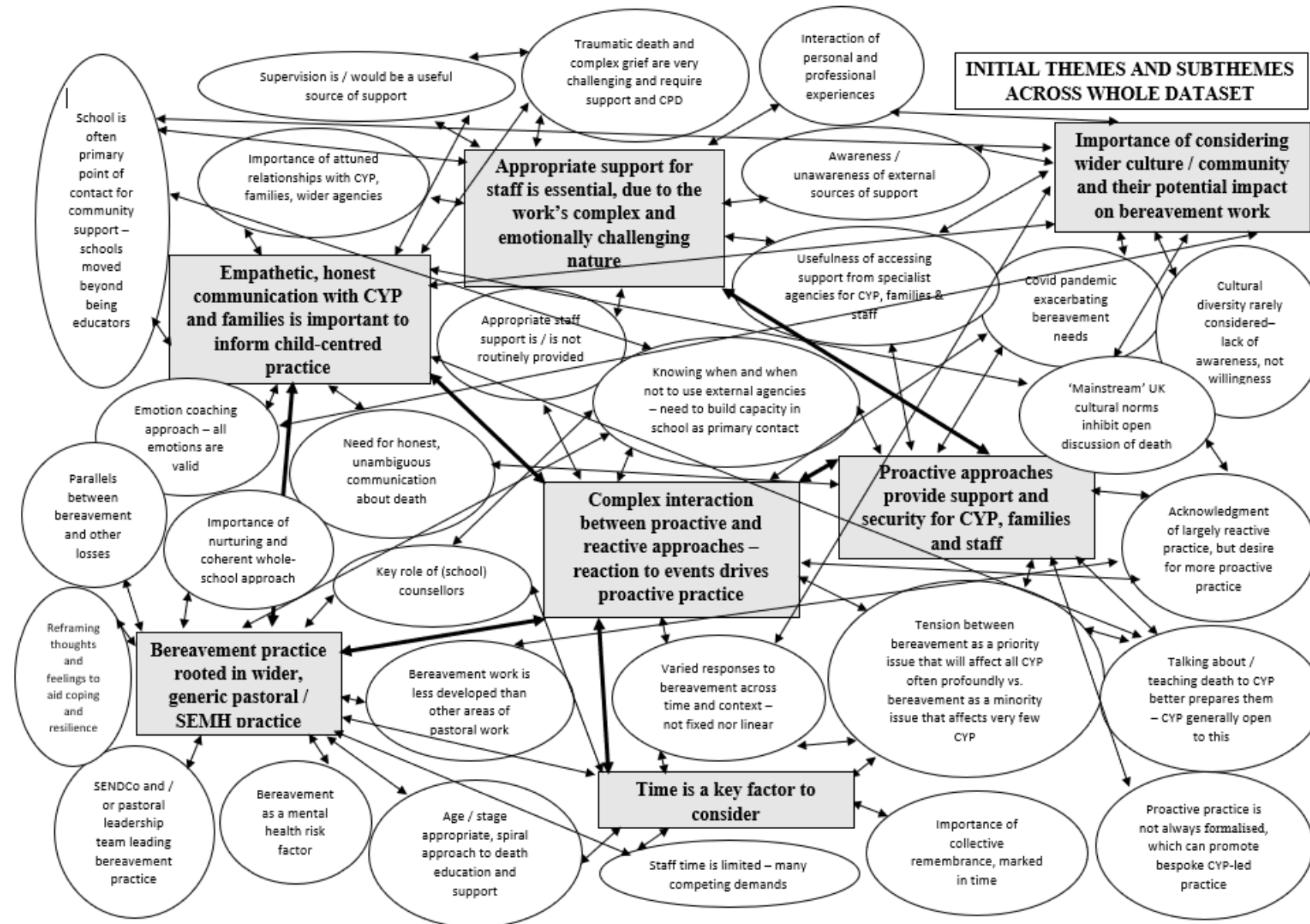
Supervision not common in educational settings	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families' and staff's needs/ Challenging issue so staff support is essential
Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them	Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them / Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support
Talking to bereaved children (or child facing bereavement) is not as difficult as might be anticipated	Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice/ Attuned relationships are very important
Tension between considering bereavement and loss as rare events vs common, inevitable events	Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue
Training not followed up (and embedded) due to Covid pandemic	Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs
Transitions can trigger need for support	Time is a key consideration
Uncertainty regarding how death education is or might be addressed in school and lack of awareness of resources (contrast with referral to specialist agencies in other aspects of bereavement support)	Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Use of death euphemism (<i>contrast use of 'died'</i>)	Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death
Variable responses to bereavement and varying needs – not predictable by closeness of relative; time....	Empathetic communication with CYP and families important to inform child-centred support
We only act after it happens, but would like to be more proactive and prepared	Acknowledgment of reactive, but desire for more proactive / Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff
Whole school events have a historical rather than SEMH focus	Miscellaneous
Whole school events with an SEMH focus anticipated as 'nice' but 'tricky'	Importance of coherent, whole-school approach / Tension between bereavement as a priority issue and bereavement as a minority issue/
Would consider using EPS for bereavement support in future	Utilising external agencies to support CYP's, families and staff's needs
Written, formalised bereavement policy in place	Proactive approach provides security for CYP, families and staff
Young children are able to talk about death and grief	Need for honest unambiguous communication about death
Finding positives in loss and bereavement as a coping mechanism	Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and promote resilience

9c - Initial ideas for themes and subthemes (RTA phase 3)

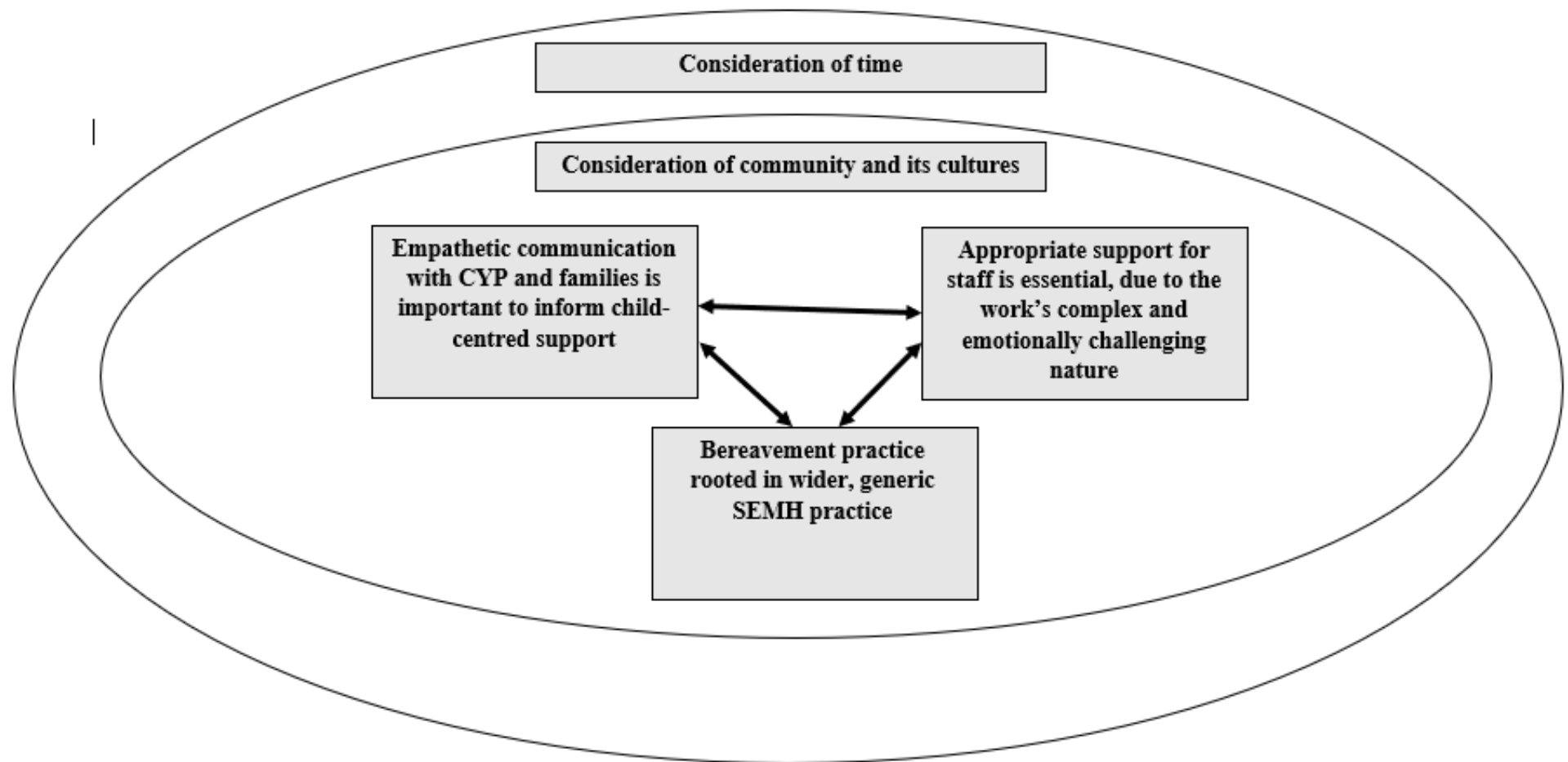
Acknowledgment of largely reactive practice, but desire fo more proactive practice also
Appropriate support for staff is essential, due to the challenging nature of the work (but not always provided)
Attuned relationships are very important
Bereavement as a mental health risk factor
Bereavement practice rooted in wider, generic SEMH practice
Complex overlap between proactive and reactive approaches – not clear cut and needs consideration of both - reaction to events drives proactive practice
Covid pandemic exacerbating bereavement and SEMH needs
Cultural diversity not been considered in bereavement support (contrast ‘cultural shift required’ and ‘faith school shapes culture)
Empathetic communication with CYP and families important informs child-centred support
Flexible, unwritten child-bespoke policies and procedures
Importance of coherent, whole-school approach
Importance of collective remembrance
Importance of considering wider culture / community and its potential impact on bereavement work
Key role of school counsellor
Lack of awareness of bereavement resources and practices
Miscellaneous
Need for honest, unambiguous communication about death
Proactive approaches provide security for CYP, families and staff
Reframing thoughts and feelings to aid coping and promote resilience
School is a key part of community support for CYP, families and wider community - first point of contact – schools moved beyond being educators
SENDCo / small, pastoral team responsible for leading bereavement practice
Talking about / teaching death to CYP better prepares them
Tension between bereavement as a priority issue that will affect all pupils at some point, often profoundly, and bereavement as a minority issue that affects very few pupils
Time is a key factor to consider
Utilising external agencies to support CYP’s, families’ and staff’s needs

Appendix 10 – Production of thematic maps and definition of themes (RTA phase 4 and 5)

10a - Initial thematic map of themes and subthemes



10b - Final thematic map: Staff perceptions of effective, proactive bereavement provision



10c - Final thematic map: Development of proactive bereavement practice

Final themes across dataset:

Developing proactive practice

