Death of a school friend – How young people cope and what helps

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Abstract

It is not uncommon for children and young people to experience the death of a friend in their school community. However, current research literature on children's experiences of bereavement tends to focus on death within the child/young person's family and far less is known about their experience and the support they might receive from school following the death of a peer. The purpose of this research is to understand better children's experiences following the death of a friend at school and the support that schools currently offer to young people in this situation. It draws upon the theoretical framework of the New Studies of Childhood, where children are seen as active participants in society, actively shaping their own world.

The research is based on a case study approach, and uses semi-structured interviews with four staff and five young people, aged 13 – 21, as well as a visual ethnography of two R.I.P sites relating to the deaths of 2 pupils. Difficulties with gatekeepers and ethical challenges to researching a topic as sensitive as this are a key part of discussions in this thesis.

The data was thematically analysed. Staff and young people's views on teaching death and bereavement in the curriculum were explored in the context of the literature and current policy. The study discovered that social networking can serve as a support mechanism for young people. It found evidence of young people experiencing continuing bonds with their deceased friend. Post traumatic growth, valuing life and appreciating positive relationships with friends and family were significant findings.

The study contributes to a better understanding of key factors in supporting young people following peer bereavement and identifies positive aspects of long-term impact. It is hoped that schools will consider the findings of this

research to inform their practice and provide more effective support to young people bereaved of a friend. It aims to encourage other researchers to engage with children and young people bereaved of a school friend to explore further how schools can help.

Acknowledgments

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Finally, my thanks go to the adults and young people who gave up their precious time to talk to me about a very difficult period in their life. The young people were amazing and they wanted to help, because (in their words) 'If it helps other children who are in the same situation, it's only ever going to be a good thing'.

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1. Introduction

At the time of writing this introduction, I have spent nearly six years (on and off) on this project. At times it has been very difficult to stay motivated, as I had to overcome several challenges in recruiting participants and hence adapt my original research plan/design several times. It has been really important to me to write this thesis in a personal style, as seems appropriate to the sensitive nature of the topic and a better way of reflecting the nature of my own journey, both professionally and personally. As a user of English as a second language, the practice of writing in an academic style has also been a challenge and an area of new learning.

I would like the reader to accompany me on this journey which despite several challenges has also been rewarding. As I started working on the data chapters the sudden realisation that this was making a difference to me grew stronger, and that it was adding to my understanding of the long-term impact of a friend's death on children and young people. Moreover, through my use of this knowledge in my work life, it was already starting to make a difference to some children and young people.

I would like my thesis to be accessible to many; I would like to be able to share some sections with staff and young people in schools, and it is my intention to write this thesis in a way which enables me to do this.

1.1 Context of the research

When I joined the Educational Psychology Service in 2001 as a social worker, my role included the support of schools in a Critical Incident. In 2006 I took over the role of Critical Incident Co-ordinator, managing the support for schools and early years settings. Norfolk Children's Services define a Critical Incident as such:

> 'An event or events, usually sudden, which involve the experience of significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures, and coping strategies and which is likely to have emotional and organisational consequences'.

One such event may be the death of a school friend. During the past three years (2010-2013), the Critical Incident Team has been involved in supporting sixteen schools where a pupil had died. Our involvement is short term; although we advise schools on long-term needs of children bereaved of a school friend, our knowledge (based on sound research) of the long-term effects of such events is limited.

Bereavement services throughout the country support family members of children who have died, but for their friends very few services are available. In addition to parents, schools have a significant role to play in supporting these children. It is evident from research that staff in schools tend to not be confident in supporting bereaved children (Leckey 1991; Papadatou, Metallinou, Hatzichristou and Pavlidi 2002). This may be particularly relevant to children bereaved of a school friend as these events are not as common as family bereavements.

1.2 Motivation for this research

At the time of writing I have been working in the field of bereavement in schools for thirteen years. During this time I have realised that, although there is a considerable support available to children, death affects school communities in very different ways. The death of a child is particularly challenging, and the effects are long lasting.

During my investigation it has become apparent that little research-based knowledge and guidance is available pertaining to dealing with the death of a school friend. (This will be explored further in the literature review.) Therefore my research was conceived in response to this seemingly limited primary research, in particular in the U.K. Indeed, even the latest paper by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre on bereavement in childhood does not cover the death of a friend/peer, but focuses solely on the outcomes for children bereaved of a parent or sibling (Akerman and Statham 2014).

The focus of this research changed significantly during the investigation; partly on account of participant recruitment issues, and partly in response to the data emerging in my study. For example, since the majority of the young people interviewed had difficulties in recalling their experiences (in detail) about the support they received from their school, the focus of the study shifted away from this element. Whilst this was still important to me, the reduction in the data available has resulted in a much shorter section in this area.

This research is comprised of four important elements:
- Dealing with the death of a school friend: my personal and professional motivation responds to the paucity of the research in this field, particularly in the U.K.

- Positive outcomes of children's bereavement: much has been written about the negative impact of bereavement on children and young people. Having worked for many years in this field, I have met children and young people who have experienced personal growth and who have a positive outlook on life following the death of a friend. Very little seems to have been written about this specific aspect in the literature and I wanted to investigate this further.

- Children's views: it was extremely important to me to listen to young people in ascertaining their views, both in response to the limited studies which directly involve children, as well as my approach which is grounded in the New Studies of Childhood.

- Long-term effects of children's bereavement: since many bereavement services offer short-term support, we understand very little about long-term effects of the death of a school friend. This study was able to find out more about this, partly through interviews with young people, and partly by studying the ways in which they express themselves through the growing social media. As one of the young people said on the R.I.P. site of her friend who died:

  'Two years today darling :(I can't quite believe how time flies. I miss you just as much as I did the first time I heard, I still can't quite believe that you are gone :(I wish you were still here with all of us, we'd all be so much more happier if we could see your beautiful smile, hear your beautiful voice once more....' (Facebook, 2010)

In focusing on the above, I am confident that this study contributes to this specific field of knowledge and thus has the potential to influence better outcomes for children and young people dealing with the death of a school friend.

1.3 Aim of the research and development of the focus

The initial aim of this research was to find out what helps children and young people following the death of a classmate, in particular in relation to the support they receive from staff at school and their school friends. This research was undertaken with the aim that the findings would better inform schools as well as services such as mine, which would subsequently better inform support to pupils, resulting in improved outcomes for them. Exploring children's views and experiences in a manner that will inform all of the above was a key component of this research.

Consideration of the limited research available within the specific area of 'death of a school friend' within the wider field of bereavement, led me to formulate my research questions and the core focus of my study. The literature within this field tend to focus on such traumatic deaths as school shootings (Schwarz and Kowalski 1991; Broberg, Dyregrov, A. and Lilled 2005; Suomalainen, Haravuori, Berg, Kiviruusu and Marttunen 2011, among others). A.Dyregrov, the Director of the Centre for Crisis Psychology in Norway, was the exception. He was involved in a number of small-scale studies following the death of a classmate (Dyregrov, A., Gjestad, Wikander and Vigerust 1999; Dyregrov, A., Wikander and Vigerust 1999). Although most studies relating to young people bereaved of a friend focus on the negative impact on children and young people, e.g. psychological symptoms and post-traumatic stress disorder, once again A. Dyregrov et al. were the exception. He and his colleagues used the 'Hogan Growth Inventory' to study the positive outcomes of such events (Dyregrov, A., Gjestad, Wikander, Vigerust 1999). Other studies (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996; Cheever and Hardin 1999) have shown that adolescents rely on their friends for support following traumatic events. My study investigates whether such positive

outcomes apply to young people affected by the death of a school friend, and the way in which they might be manifested.

Given that most of the clinical research (Dowdney, Wilson, Maughan, Allerton, Schofield and Skuse 1999), which focuses on children and young people who receive treatment in clinical settings, considers mental health issues in children and young people, I wanted to consider how children who were not a focus of these studies (because they did not suffer from long-term psychological symptoms) might/could equally experience some positive outcomes or growth. Silverman and Worden support this view as they identify deficiencies relating to clinical research and support the view that studies should not just focus on psychological disturbance (1993). Such an approach could contribute to the growing field of studies which considers positive outcomes for bereaved children and young people, specifically relating to the death of a school friend.

The field of positive psychology relies on the concept of 'positive human functioning' (Joseph 2009, p.9), as Joseph (2009) explains in his reflections on studies on post-traumatic stress, positive psychology has changed our view of mental health issues:

> 'we can begin to replace a medically oriented perspective on posttraumatic stress with the understanding that the struggle with trauma can be ultimately be a springboard to a greater level of psychological functioning' (2009, p.341).

While my study is not underpinned by the discipline of psychology, this notion has nevertheless influenced and encouraged my approach. I consider that such a positive approach can apply to our notions of grief, and I explore this in greater detail in latter sections on post-traumatic growth.

It could be argued that focusing on positives is an ethical obligation of research (Farrell 2005). I considered the findings of this study highly likely to benefit the children and young people with whom I will continue to work in a professional capacity. In this respect I concur with Munford's and Sanders' argument that ethical research should have the possibility to improve the well-being of participants (2001).

1.4 Research questions

My overarching research question is, 'How do children cope with the death of a fellow pupil and what helps?' This was subsequently segmented into smaller specific areas of investigation (outlined below). It was also important for this research to be meaningful in that it provided a possibility to influence practice and training for school staff, to provide the basis for the information given and to improve the support available to young people. I was also interested in how schools dealt with the topic of bereavement in the curriculum and children's views about this provision once they had experienced bereavement. As I was interested in the long-term effects, I initially chose to focus on secondary school-aged children who had experienced the death of a school friend during their time in junior school. The question of 'how soon' after the event one ought to begin a research study such as mine required careful consideration (Stroebe, M., Stroebe,W. and Schut 2003). Realising that the rawness of grief might make research difficult, even potentially unethical or risky, the approach of this study was to ensure that a minimum of one year had passed, which was deemed as sufficient time for the young people to have begun to deal with their bereavement and reflect upon it. This period of time might provide enough distance from the rawness of grief, making conversation with a researcher a bit easier and reducing the potential for distress during an interview session.

In response to the current research and literature, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, my focus was confined to two areas: staff perspectives (in the school where the death had occurred) and pupil perspectives.

1. Perspectives of teachers and support staff:
- What support did staff feel was helpful to children?

- What skills, knowledge and qualities did staff feel they had to support children?

- What helped staff to support the children?

2. Perspectives of young people who experienced the death of a school friend:

- What helped young people cope following the death of a school friend?

- Did school staff help, and if so, in what ways?

- Did young people support each other, and if so, in what ways?

- Did young people learn about death and bereavement in the curriculum, and what where their views about this?

- Do young people feel that the experience of the death of a school friend had a long-term impact, and if so in what ways? Do young people feel that they experienced change or growth as a result?

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is arranged in the following way:

The literature review, chapter 2, provides an overview of my theoretical framework, New Social Studies of Childhood. It summarises a wide range of relevant literature. Essentially, very few researchers have involved children and young people directly as part of their design in studies of bereavement (McCarthy 2006). The existing literature focusing on Critical Incidents affecting schools and the types of interventions that are usually provided are considered. It also includes literature on bereavement in schools, continuing bonds, and on post-traumatic growth - ideas which emerged in the data collection phase and were analysed using this literature. I have also given a brief overview of bereavement theories as background information for this study.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and ethical considerations. It deals with methodological issues and includes a reflection on the case study design of my study and on my relationships with the researched. I write at length about the ethical considerations in undertaking a study of this nature. The ethical issues that need to be considered when undertaking research with young people in relation to a sensitive topic may have deterred many researchers from including children and young people in their investigations. My own experiences are an example of the range of difficulties facing researchers. The perception of gatekeepers, including headteachers, parents and research ethics committees plays a significant role in the extent to which research of this nature is possible with this group of people. Time constraints also play an important part– I believe that within this type of study, researchers need time to reflect and to come to terms with issues. They need time for careful consideration before making decisions and committing to

being part of this kind of research project. I will explore this in greater depth in the section on ethical issues.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the research and forms the bulk of the thesis, focusing on the various themes that emerged from interviews with staff and pupils, as well as analysis of social networking posts.

Chapter 5 summarises the findings, identifies the contribution to new knowledge both in relation to the theoretical framework, as well as in relation to the body of knowledge in this specific subject, and offers some thoughts on future research.

Chapter 6 discusses the limitations of this study in relation to the methodology, the ethical challenges and issues specific to this research project.

In Chapter 7 I write about the policy/practice implications. This is in particular relevant to me as I want to share the knowledge I have gained by undertaking this research, to improve the support that is offered to bereaved young people.

In Chapter 8 I write more specifically about how I am going to take the research forward and disseminate the findings.

I conclude my thesis with my personal reflections of the study in Chapter 9, on what is undeniably a difficult but worthwhile area of research.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter I outline the overall theoretical framework and concepts that influenced this research and then I focus on the research literature pertaining to the specific areas of interest in my study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Some of the most useful advice on how a theoretical framework can be important to studies such as mine comes from Takona:

'First, no matter how little you think about a topic, and how unbiased you think you are, it is impossible for a human being not to have preconceived notions, even if they are of a very general nature. For example, some people fundamentally believe that people are basically lazy and untrustworthy, and you have keep your wits about you to avoid being conned. These fundamental beliefs about human nature affect how you look at things when doing personal research. In this sense, you are always guided by a theoretical framework, but you don't know it. Not knowing what your real framework is can be a problem. The framework tends to guide what you notice in an organization, and what you don't notice. In other words, you don't even notice things that don't fit your framework! We can never completely get around this problem, but we can reduce the problem considerably by simply making our implicit framework explicit. Once it is explicit, we can deliberately consider other frameworks and try to see the organizational situation through different lenses' (2002, p.29).

In this respect, the body of literature that most closely resembled my developing assumptions about children and bereavement, and also the literature that made these beliefs visible and allowed me to articulate them, is what is broadly referred to as the 'New Social Studies of Childhood'. It

recognises children as active participants in society, whereas they were previously seen from an adult viewpoint, as 'adults to be', needing to be socialised in order for them to become full adults (Besten 2008). Historically, children were seen as passive members of society. They were also seen as in need of protection, in particular in relation to sensitive issues, like death and bereavement.

This was mirrored in research, with numerous studies about children and childhood relating to children as 'passive subjects of social structures and processes' (Prout and James 1997, p.8). In research then, children's voices were rarely heard. This partly explains the lack of qualitative studies in this field.

Following from the New Social Studies of Childhood, children ought to be seen in their own right, as having the resources/capacity to be active in constructing their own world, within which they live. Part of this approach is that children should be facilitated to express their views and opinions, and that adults have an obligation to listen to what they have to say. It is, arguably, an empowering view of children, where children are seen as social actors who have the capacity to control and shape their environments. Viewing children as possessing the inherent ability to actively influence their environment can radically alter adult-child relationships.

The inclusion of participation of children in decision-making processes forms part of this viewpoint of childhood, an idea which is also embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (U.N. 1989). This has given an impetus to changing the more conservative view of children as passive or as dependent creatures who are not yet developed enough to be recognised for their resourcefulness or agency. For instance, seeking the view

of the child has become an integral part of the responsibilities of social workers within Norfolk County Council and elsewhere too. Consulting with children about issues that affect them is expected, rather than optional. While there are still varying degrees to which this view of childhood is adopted, within much of the Children's Services world in which I work, this view is now rarely challenged.

In relation to children who are bereaved of a school friend, schools are advised by services such as the one I manage, that to consult with children and young people about what they feel is helpful to them; for example whether they want to be in class and get on with lessons, or whether they feel they need time out away from the classroom. It is now not uncommon for professionals like me to advise teachers to ask the children about what should happen to the empty space/chair that is left in the classroom when a child has died, rather than take the decision about this themselves. There are various alternatives and engaging the children in making such decisions for themselves gives them choices, particularly at a time where they have not been able to be in control of a situation, such as the death of their school friend. This epistemological position has the advantage that 'listening to children's views and opinions will help adults to know more about childhood' (Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher 2009, p.68).

This has particular resonance in research projects: 'listening to children and young people, children and young people as social actors and their participation in both society and research' (Tisdall and Punch 2012, p.259) is now better established amongst the research community, although as my experiences with gatekeepers show, not always at the forefront. With the increasing influence of New Social Childhood studies more researchers are actively engaging children and young people (Clark, Flewitt, Hammesley and

Robb 2014, pp.2-4), and I anticipate that in future we will see more research emerging in the field of bereavement which calls upon children and young people as valuable informants of their own lives. Ensuring that children's views are heard, recognised and valued was an extremely important aspect of my research.

As childhood is constantly changing, in particular in response to the use of modern technology and devices, new concepts and ideas are always emerging. Some authors note that whilst we have moved away from seeing children as 'human becomings' to 'human beings', there is no reason to move away from a developmental concept, as adults also continue to develop during their lifetime, and adults and children are in this 'age of uncertainty' together (Lee 2001, p.29). This view is shared by Prout (2005), who also argues that adults should not be seen as an unchanging identity either. When we become adults we do not just turn into people with static views and identities, but constantly change as we progress through different phases in our lives. Some changes in people's lives, for example moving jobs, moving house, etc., are relatively minor, whereas other changes, for example becoming parents, moving into retirement, etc., are relatively major. This view has also helped me develop my understanding of children, as well as my role in their lives, better. Where earlier a more controlling approach would have been assumed, rather unproblematically, or even justified as part of a children's protection framework, the view of all humans as becomings blurs the boundaries between adult and children's capabilities as well as responsibilities towards each other.

Prout promotes the view that childhood is not simply a social construction or a natural or biological concept, but a hybrid of both, which can best be viewed by applying complexity theory:

'Complexity theory offers an account of a system that avoids many of the dualistic problems that are encountered in current social studies of childhood. Seen through its lens, the idea of childhood as a social structure takes on a different meaning. Their systematic properties are emergent and intimately linked to the agency of the entities that populate them. Such structures of childhood may, within certain limits, be relatively stable over time but they are never static. They are always in motion and, under certain conditions, can shift from one phase state to another – or even become extremely unpredictable. In other words, complex systems have a history; they have, and cannot help but have, both being and becoming' (2005, p.75).

Kraftl describes this as 'more than social' (2013, p.17), when he explores the range of hybrid childhoods that go beyond biological processes or social relations, to encapsulate other understandings of childhood including neuroscience or 'contemporary forms of sociality' (2013, p.17), formed by new technologies. The impact of new technologies on childhood are thus another important fact to consider when undertaking research, and this forms part of my discussion about social networking.

In addition, seeing change as an ubiquitous feature of human experience also has an impact on this research. As research and publication takes time, there is a danger that research is outdated before it is even published. Whilst it needs to be recognised that the situation described in research, including my research, has changed by the time the research is completed and published, learning from past experiences can still be valuable. I refer to this issue in particular in my findings section on social networking.

2.2 Choice of Literature

My study focuses on how young people cope and what helps them to do so, following the death of a school friend. This area forms a very small part of the literature on schools and bereavement, which is set within the wider context of the literature on child bereavement.

Authors in this field write specifically about bereavement and Critical Incidents in relation to schools (Blackburn 1991; Chadwick 1994; Holland and Ludford 1995; Holland 2000; Rowling and Holland 2000; Shipman, Kraus and Monroe 2001; Holland 2003; Lowton and Higginson 2003; 2004; Abdelnoor and Hollins 2004; Davou and Widdershoven-Zervakis 2004; Holland 2004; Mc Caffrey 2004; Broberg et al. 2005; Donnelly and Rowling 2007; Morrison 2007; Holland 2008), or only mention schools and education briefly (Gurwitch, Kees, Becker, Schreiber, Pfefferbaum and Diamond 2004; Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2005). Some researchers focus on the curriculum (Urbanowicz 1994; Brown 1999), whilst others focus on the impact of bereavement on children and young people (Goldacre 1987; Papadatou et al. 2002; Abdelnoor et al. 2004), on the impact of Critical Incidents (Dyregrov, A. 1988; Yule and Gold 1993; Brown 1999; Gurwitch et al. 2004; Mc Caffrey 2004; Broberg et al. 2005; Donnelly et al. 2007), or on interventions (Currier, Holland and Neimeyer 2007). My literature review considers each of these groups of literature.

I have also given a brief overview of the main bereavement theories spanning two centuries.

This literature review will primarily consider authors who have published in the United Kingdom in relation to children and young people, bereavement and Critical Incidents, and education and schools. In addition, it includes US and Australian literature as well as publications by A. Dyregrov, K. Dyregrov

and their colleagues from Norway (Dyregrov, A. 1988; Dyregrov, A. 1991; Dyregrov, A. and Kristoffersen 1994; Dyregrov, A. et al. 1999; Dyregrov, A. 2001; Dyregrov, K. 2002; Dyregrov, A. 2004; Dyregrov, K. 2004; Dyregrov, A. and Dyregrov, K. 2005; Dyregrov, K. 2009), as A. and K. Dyregrov are prominent figures in this field. I also look at the research by Papadatou et al. (2002) from Greece, who undertook a national survey on teachers' perceptions of bereaved students in general, their experiences of bereaved students in their class, and experiences of the death of a student in their school. I write more about their research in latter sections.

As I am particularly interested in how children cope and whether they grow after the death of a school friend, I have also examined research within the field of growth. Much of this field focuses on adults, rather than children.

Another interesting area of research is social networking, and how it is used by adults and young people alike in relation to bereavement issues. As this is in a constant flux I have primarily focused on Facebook as it was the most popular medium that young people in the United Kingdom were using at the time of my research (Livingstone and Brake 2009). Young people, like adults, often set up R.I.P. sites following the death of school friends. There is growing research about these sites, which will be described in chapter 4.2.7.

2.3 Literature Reviews on the topic of bereavement

In 2006 a literature review on Bereavement and Bereavement Care was published by the Joanna Briggs Institute (2006). The purpose of this review was to inform Scottish Health and Social Care on the background, effects and outcome of bereavement and bereavement care and contains a detailed literature review, covering adult as well as child bereavement, in a broad context. In relation to education settings, it quotes the research undertaken by Lowton and Higginson (2003), which is included in this section. Staff perspectives are presented in this study, and Lowton and Higginson suggest that further research should be undertaken which investigates children's perspectives. The research by Balk (1996; 1997) focuses on college students and, although it covers a wider age range, its findings, such as young people's preference for talking about a friend's death with friends as well as the kind of coping mechanisms that young people find helpful, are nevertheless relevant to my study. Doka's (1999) writing about 'disenfranchised grief', instances where someone is not deemed to be eligible to grieve (because they are not immediate family for instance) has been of great interest and use to me, as I was not familiar with this term before. I have dedicated section 2.7 to this concept. The literature review also considers research by Holland (2000; 2003; 2004; 2008), who published a number of articles about his research in relation to bereavement training and its impact on schools, for example that schools had more in-house knowledge following the training. I am commenting on his research in section 2.6 where I consider research relating to schools and bereavement. Finally, the literature review refers to Papadatou et al. (2002) and their research in Greece.

A literature review specifically relating to children was published by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre in 2011 (Akerman and Statham). The

paper examines outcomes for children and young people bereaved of a parent or sibling, as well as providing an overview of the effectiveness of services. Within impact on childhood bereavement it focuses on psychological wellbeing, educational outcomes, long-term impact, risk and protective factors and models of impact. In relation to services and intervention it outlines school-based intervention programmes, whole family approaches as well as differentiated responses. Its findings are that most children experience an initial negative impact, but for most of them these issues are not long-term. A lack of evidence on the impact on educational achievement as well as on long-term outcomes is acknowledged. The most effective support appears to be one where a holistic approach is taken and support is offered to the child as well as the main caregiver. The study highlighted the importance of the role of schools in recognising the needs of bereaved children and referring to specialist services where appropriate.

Although not set out as a literature review as such, Servaty-Seib (2009), in her chapter about the death of a friend during adolescence, gives an overview of the existing empirical research available relating to the importance of a friend's death during adolescence, adolescence reactions and their coping mechanisms including the role of others in supporting them. She also comments on the disenfranchised nature of adolescent friends' deaths. The research she refers to in her chapter is in the main considered in this literature review. She identifies that more research is needed which will consider risk factors as well as the role others play in supporting young people. She also suggests that more longitudinal research is needed to consider healthy processing of adolescent grief following the death of a friend. Whilst my research is not longitudinal, it nevertheless captures some long-term effects of the impact of the death of a school friend and young people's coping.

2.4 Critical Incidents affecting schools

A sudden tragic event in a school, for example the incident at Aberfan (death of pupils following a landslide), Dunblane (killing of seventeen pupils by a former scout leader at school), or during a school activity, such as the sinking of the Jupiter ship during a school trip, results in a significant impact on schools and needs to be addressed immediately. As I was reading through my first full draft of this thesis (in July 2014), a teacher in Leeds was stabbed and killed by one of her pupils, and another one in France was similarly killed by a child's parent, in her primary classroom, in front of the children. Although these events are rare, they have serious and long-lasting effects on the school communities.

The most notable piece of literature on schools and disasters seems to be 'Wise before the event' (Yule et al. 1993), to which many other researchers refer. It was one of the first books to cover this topic, and I would view it as a 'classic' text within the field of Critical Incidents and schools. It aims to give advice to schools based on the case studies of the Herald of Free Enterprise, the Jupiter cruise ship sinking, the Hillsborough disaster, and two incidents where a teacher developed traumatic symptoms; one following a school coach accident and the other a serious road traffic accident, in which two pupils were killed. It is written as an accessible book for schools and, as well as describing incidents, it provides ideas about what schools can do to prepare for such eventualities. It covers immediate, short-term and medium-term action in addition to longer-term planning for Critical Incidents. Yule and Gold argue, based upon their experience of working with traumatised children and young people, that schools should be 'wise before the event' and that

> 'no-one can predict when a disaster will occur; and thinking ahead and planning will not *make* the disaster happen. Forward planning, however, may help a school to cope better after a disaster, and it may

well help to reduce the distress of young people and staff' (Yule et al. 1993, p.viii).

2.4.1 US literature

The USA has experience of a number of large school-based incidents, such as Columbine and other shootings. According to Schuster (2009), 116 students died in school-related incidents from 1999 to 2006. In addition, much is written about the impact of the 9/11 disaster on school children (Miller 2000; Fein 2003).

The Critical Incident Stress Management Model (CISM), developed by Mitchell (Everly, Flannery and Mitchell 2000), which is a post-incident educational programme, is used by several education authorities in the USA. A number of authors refer to the use of CISM, which entails the following:

> 'seven core integrated elements: (1) pre-crisis preparation (both individual and organizational); (2) large scale demobilization procedures for use after mass disasters; (3) individual acute crisis counselling; (4) brief small group discussions, called defusing, designed to assist in acute symptom reduction; (5) longer small group discussions, called Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), designed to assist in achieving a sense of psychological closure post-crisis and/or facilitate the referral process; (6) family crisis intervention techniques; and (7) follow up procedures, and/or referral for psychological assessment or treatment' (Everly et al. 2000, p.24).

Morrison (2007) writes about using the CISM model in schools. Her research focuses on the perception of teachers and staff regarding the impact and effectiveness of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) in schools, covering 14 schools and 140 staff. Incidents experienced include death of a

student, death of a member of staff, death of a parent and a violent event (gun at school). A questionnaire was followed up with interviews of intervention providers, school psychologists and school social workers. Her study suggests the model has a positive effect on perceptions, but no effect on student outcomes:

'The implementation of the CISM model had little or no effect on faculty and staff perceptions of whether crisis intervention providers providing individual consultation to teachers actually assisted students in dealing with the crises (ES=.38) and the degree to which crisis intervention providers offering individual or small group counselling to students actually assisted students in dealing with the crisis (ES=.02)' (Morrison 2007, p.112).

The scale and scope of her study prevented her from directly evaluating immediate or longer-term outcomes for students. She focused on perceptions of teachers and staff members about whether CISM helped in providing support in a Critical Incident, compared to the support that was offered before CISM was introduced to the schools in her study. Her study concludes in similar ways to the Cochrane Report (Roberts, Kitchiner, Kenardy and Bisson 2009), that Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) /Critical Incident Debriefing (CID) was well received amongst participants but made no difference to later outcomes, for example whether or not they developed post-traumatic stress disorder. This is largely based on adult studies, which were considering whether CISM or CID prevented post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). NICE guidelines, which give advice on the management of PTSD in children and adults, recommend that this intervention should not be routinely used (Health 2005), because of the lack of evidence for its effectiveness. Although it is important to consider this type of literature, the intention of most educational psychology services

when providing interventions do not usually focus on prevention of PTSD, and neither did the research I have undertaken.

2.4.2. Other European literature

Norwegian psychologist A. Dyregrov has published many articles on Critical Incidents, traumatic incidents and bereavement in relation to young people and schools, often in conjunction with colleagues (Dyregrov, A. 1988; Dyregrov, A. 1991; Dyregrov, A. and Kristoffersen 1994; Dyregrov, A. 2001; Dyregrov, A. 2004; Dyregrov, A. and Dyregrov, K. 2005). In 2005 he wrote with Broberg et al. (2005) about the Göteborg discotheque fire and its effect in relation to schools. The study looked at a fairly large sample of young people (n=275). The authors used the 'Impact of event scale revised' (IES) as a tool for measuring post-traumatic distress and then interviewed young people using the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS). The study showed that 'adolescents who reported not having had a need for public support had the lowest, and those who reported needing but not getting support had the highest IES, as well as CAPS scores' (Broberg et al. 2005, p.1283). Young people who did not receive good support were more likely to experience post-traumatic stress symptoms.

In relation to school work, the authors report that in 59% of cases, grades had gone down as a result of the fire. In addition, it documented school dropout figures following this incident. It showed that adolescents who were fully satisfied with what the school had done, and those who reported little or no school absence related to the fire, had much lower scores on all measures except the avoidance subscale of the IES. It concludes that schools which place a high value on routines and getting back to normal, may not suit those who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders. This is one of very few studies I found that considered impact and interventions

immediately following a Critical Incident, in particular in relation to schools. The study was generated as part of a 'clinically motivated follow-up' (Broberg et al. 2005, p.1280), and, although not made explicit, would probably not have some of the ethical issues that an entirely academically-motivated social science study would entail. The study was designed as a follow up to the initial support that was offered to the young people:

> 'The aims of the follow up were to give the adolescents in need of psycho-social treatment a second opportunity to get such help, and to ascertain from the victims which of the various forms of support they had been offered they had found most helpful' (Broberg et al. 2005, p.1280).

It is likely that parents would have been keen for their children to take part as there was a clear benefit to them, as those who were identified in need of support would have then been offered appropriate follow-up services.

One other study relates to crisis intervention in Norway, involving a school bus accident. A small-scale study (n=28) was undertaken by Winje and Ulvik (1998) in relation to a road traffic accident in western Norway. Twenty-eight Swedish children were assessed one year and three years after a bus accident, in which twelve children and four parents had died. The study showed that the children's symptoms improved much quicker than those of their parents, and they concluded that children 'may be in need of professional attention during the first year after a traumatic event, whereas the parents' need for professional assistance may last for several years after the trauma' (Winje et al. 1998, p. 641).

I have found very few in-depth qualitative studies in relation to Critical Incidents and the impact on children and young people, as well as on

outcomes following support that was offered. I wonder whether the ethical issues related to studies like this make it more difficult to undertake research with vulnerable children and young people. Most of the studies I have found related to clinical interventions, where I suspect the main aim would be to provide appropriate psychological support, and to collect data for the study at the same time.

2.4.3. U.K. literature

One of the main U.K. based authors who writes about bereavement, Critical Incidents and schools is Brown. She dedicates a chapter of her book to 'managing a Critical Incident in School' (1999, pp.122-134). She refers to the work undertaken by Yule and Gold (1993) and by A. Dyregrov (1991) for underpinning her concepts of support for children and young people. Her framework focuses on a school being clear about management priorities, once it has planned, drafted and disseminated its Critical Incident Plan. This is structured into 'first priority', 'secondary priority' and 'ongoing tasks' (Brown 1999, p.123). Within hours of a Critical Incident, schools need to complete the following tasks: 'obtaining factual information', 'senior management meet with school staff', 'intervention team established' and 'contact families and reunite children with families'. She then goes on to write about the schools' secondary priorities: 'calling a staff meeting and giving information', dealing with the media', 'informing pupils in small groups', 'calling a debriefing meeting of staff involved in the crisis/disaster' and 'debriefing pupils involved in the crisis', 'identifying high risk pupils and staff' and 'adjusting to normal routines'. Finally she lists the on-going tasks: 'promoting discussion in pupil groups' and 'identifying the need for individual or groups counselling or other help' (1999, pp. 125-134). In her final part of this chapter Brown writes about how schools can respond to sad events. This includes contacting parents, and providing advice on children participating in rituals

and ceremonies. Her book is written in an easily accessible style and aims to be 'a practical text with practical ideas'(1999, p.x). It would therefore serve as a very useful reference book for practitioners. Brown also includes short case examples, as she feels that 'studies do not accurately or adequately represent the reality of children's experiences'(1999, p.viii), because their voices have not been heard. She also points out that 'small-scale research findings on their own are unlikely to play a crucial role in educational policy-making or provision' (1999, p.viii), but is hoping that the cumulative value of small-scale studies which contribute to the body of the knowledge in this field will result in policy makers taking notice. Her other chapters focus on children's bereavement, children with life-limiting and threatening illness, how schools can explore death in the curriculum and on ceremonies. Her book provides a valuable educational perspective on this topic and is an essential resource for information for anyone working in the field bereavement and Critical Incidents in relation to schools.

Mallon (2011), who aims to bring together new research about working with bereaved children, dedicates one of her chapters to the role of the school. She gives an overview of how schools can support children's bereavement in the context of the school environment, including an overview of current research in relation to bereaved children in schools. She goes on to write about research on schools and Critical Incidents and gives advice on how schools can manage Critical Incidents. Her book is aimed at practitioners and includes exercises which can be helpful for reflection and learning.

The Bereavement Care Magazine, published in association with Cruse Bereavement Care, provides a space for U.K. and international practitioners and researchers to publish small-scale studies, and such a study is presented by Donnelly and Rowling (2007), who report on the impact on schools

counsellors, as they are often involved in providing bereavement support in schools following a Critical Incident. They write about their research involving twenty-one school counsellors. Their findings show that leadership in the school makes a difference to outcomes in relation to the whole school, but also in relation to how well school counsellors coped with the situation. The other important part was the framework in which school counsellors perceived themselves, both in relation to their professional self as well as their personal self.

Another author writing about the role of the school counsellor in a Critical Incident is Jo Ebner-Landy (2000), who was a school counsellor when a pupil was killed on the way back from a school trip. It is a description of what happened and her personal experience. It is added to by a member of staff who gives a view from a teacher's perspective. These personal accounts provide a valuable insight into what it is like to be caught up in such a situation. It describes in some detail different aspects of Critical Incident management within a school.

Capewell (1994) writes about the results of her six years of action research in relation to Critical Incidents in schools in different countries. She contributes to the body of knowledge in relation to the needs of children exposed to traumatic incidents by describing the observations she made in relation to the impact of trauma on children and helpful approaches to support them. She also describes hindrances which prevented support for children and different scenarios of how schools have effectively dealt with Critical Incidents in those circumstances. She demonstrates in two different diagrams how schools can effectively use their internal school system. Critical Incident Stress Management systems in education have the aim of 'an empowering culture which can contain and process stress using internal and

external resources' (Capewell 1994, p.6). The second diagram describes the external resources and roles, with the school at the centre. Her descriptions provide an insight into her personal experience of Critical Incident support in different counties. See Appendix 11.10 for further information.

2.5 Literature on Critical Incident interventions in schools

Many Education Psychology Services in the U.K. have, over the years, published plans for responding to and preparing for Critical Incidents, including Norfolk (Critical Incident Steering Group 2009). Kent has published various resources (Kent Educational Psychology Service), and their Principal Educational Psychologist has also published an article about a consultancy model for schools. McCaffrey writes about how Educational Psychology Services are 'an ideal resource to offer psychological support at such times' (2004, p.109). She says her work is based on Headteacher and student feedback. She describes using the IES (Impact of Event Scale) before and after debriefing sessions. The author sees her findings in the context of the nature of her evaluations, which she admits 'lack rigour' (Mc Caffrey 2004, p.117), and she makes criticisms about the current view on psychological debriefing, which has not considered interventions with children closely. The debriefing debate has also tended to consider whether or not it prevents or treats PTSD, which is not necessarily the aim of interventions provided by psychological services. She quotes Hobfoll who wrote about increased social support leading to a reduction in the likelihood of post-traumatic pathology. McCaffrey writes that the task for Educational Psychologists would be to 'assess whether there are individuals who are particularly vulnerable' (Mc Caffrey 2004, p.119) and 'effective interventions have been directed at social support and emotional assistance' (Mc Caffrey 2004, p.188). She concludes that interventions by Educational Psychology Services are about 'aiding cognitive restructuring and normalisation which is effective in reducing its symptoms', using group work to create the possibility of peer support, to support schools when they are 'particularly vulnerable', and to provide training programmes to help them prepare to deal with sad events (Mc Caffrey 2004, p.120).

An unusual piece of research was undertaken by Michael Mander, a Headteacher of a Junior School, who undertook his study as part of his course with the National College for School Leadership (Mander 2008). He wanted to find out whether there were relationships between Headteachers' personal history and personality, and coping with Critical Incidents and Critical Episodes. He wanted to consider what features seem to be most effective, and then to suggest a portfolio of strategies, procedures and coping mechanisms that might be adopted. This was the only piece of research I found of that kind, which considered school leadership without focusing on outcomes for children. Mander used semi-structured interviews and diaries/journals for his methodology. His findings, based on twelve participants, focused on the factors and experiences that gave the individual the capacity and capability to deal effectively with Critical Incidents and Critical Episodes. From his report it is not clear how he defined 'effectively'. He writes about successful leaders and how they are defined, e.g. in relation to expectations from support staff and leaders, as well as teachers (Mander 2008, p.22). His diary approach, in which participants entered information about how they dealt with Critical Incidents, and the questions from the semi-structured interviews indicate that participants defined themselves by what they saw as dealing effectively with Critical Incidents. Manders concludes that his findings suggest that distributed leadership was an important factor in managing Critical Incidents effectively.

2.6 Bereavement Theories

I had not initially intended to include bereavement theories in this literature review, but it seems important to give a brief overview of the different models of coping with grief, at least within Britain/Europe. It helps to know how bereavement is seen within the western world, and the historical context informs our current understanding. I will write about the most influential bereavement theories, covering Freud, Bowlby and Parkes, Kübler-Ross and Stroebe and Schutt. Whilst the present knowledge amongst practitioners within the field has developed from the early theories, they prepared the way for the development of new understandings of bereavement in the late 20th and 21st centuries. Those theories continue to contribute to our understanding of the effects of bereavement and people's coping mechanisms. It is also interesting to see how the theories relate to how young people in my study actually experienced bereavement and what coping mechanisms they used.

The European tradition since the last century was coloured by the belief that grieving people need to overcome their loss. In his writing about melancholia, the psychoanalyst Freud (1917) distinguishes between those who mourn but recognise their grief and get back to reality by letting go of their loved one, and those who are unable to acknowledge reality and who sink into a melancholic state. His view was that mourners need to free themselves from their attachment with the deceased in order to be able to move on and build new relationships.

The Swiss-American psychiatrist Kübler-Ross (1969) developed her model of grief following her work with terminally-ill patients. She observes five stages with her patients: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. She emphasised that people do not move through the stages in

a linear way, some do not go through all stages, but revisit stages throughout their grieving process. With her model she made a significant contribution to the understanding of and support for dying patients, and her model has also been extended to the understanding of grief in the wider sense.

Bowlby and Parkes describe four stages of grieving as shock and numbness, yearning and searching, despair and disorganisation, and reorganisation and recovery (1970). These stages are based on the theories around attachment which Bowlby developed in the 70s.

Stroebe (1999) observed that the existing theories did not seem to adequately explain the experience of the bereaved, and developed the dual process model of coping with bereavement. He recognised that people alternate between focusing on their loss, to which he refers to as 'loss-orientation'; and avoiding that focus, which he describes as 'restoration orientation'. This model takes account of the need of people to deal with their loss, whilst also trying to avoid this focus and concentrate on coping with changes.

Worden (2002) developed a task-based model which describes stages comprised of various psychological tasks that need to be accomplished by the bereaved. These stages are accepting the reality of the loss, experiencing the pain of grief, adjusting to an environment without the deceased, and relocating the deceased and moving on with life.

Recent theories of understanding of grief include theories and research about post-traumatic growth and continuing bonds. Individual chapters are dedicated to these theories.

Whilst stage models of grieving have contributed to our understanding of grief, they do not take into account the complexity of adult and children's bereavement journeys. Whilst complicated grief was identified in early theories, as well as the possibility to return to a normal level of functioning, those theories did not sufficiently explain other changes in bereaved people, such as the experience of continuing bonds, and meaning making. I write about continuing bonds and post-traumatic growth in later sections.

2.7 Schools and Bereavement

Shipman et al. (2001) undertook a large-scale questionnaire survey with 325 schools in London, as part of the St Christopher's Candle Project. Their findings showed that, although staff did have access to resources about supporting bereaved children, like 'Wise before the event' (Yule et al. 1993), they still reported they were experiencing difficulties and that the help they received was insufficient. Examples of his were 'coping with emotions, knowing what to say and how to say it' (Shipman et al. 2001, p.6). Staff needed a more personalised response, where they could phone for advice about their particular issue. 'Flexibility and a swift response to requests for help' (Shipman et al. 2001, p.7) seemed to be key for effective support. They also needed support with dealing with their own emotions. Staff also valued a list of available literature which they could use for themselves and with the children.

Tracey and Holland also conclude from their comparative study of child bereavement in Derry/Londonderry and in Hull that 'schools are well placed to support young people after bereavement' (Dyregrov, Dyregrov and Idsoe 2013, p.264), and that more training, clear policies and procedures and loss education would help them fulfil this role. This research follows on from other research that Holland has undertaken and written about (1995; 2000; 2003; 2004; 2008). However, it appears Holland is focusing on evidencing that the training he developed in Hull has made a difference to how the schools are responding, whilst in actual fact the schools in Derry/Londonderry were doing as well in most aspects, and differences could be down to other reasons than the lack of 'Lost for words' training. E.g. 'Hull schools seem to have more 'in-house' expertise, a result of the 'Lost for words' training which has developed over a number of years' (Dyregrov et al. 2013, p.262). No evidence is given for this, and there could also be the

opposite view, in that it is good if schools seek outside advice, as schools could also become over-confident about what they can offer as a result of training. School staff need to know that they do sometimes need to access outside support for children, and that it is not part of their role to provide specialist bereavement support.

Davou and Widdershoven-Zervakis (2004) write about their work and how the emotional processes during a bereavement affect cognition. Their conclusion is that 'because emotions and cognition are so strongly interrelated, it appears the provision of emotional support to a child through the mourning process is a necessary prerequisite for the restoration of the cognitive processes that enhances learning (Davou et al. 2004, p.74). The authors are basing this on their therapeutic work, which is based on theories by Bowlby (1969) and Worden (1996) about the grieving process.

Whilst others focus on the effects of the emotional impact of bereavement on learning, A. Dyregrov (2004) considers the direct impact of trauma and loss on learning ability. He considers the academic consequences, including concentration difficulties, information processing, depression, loss of motivation, intrusions, stress and mood problems, which impact on self-regulation. He also describes how the perceived support in school impacts on learning ability. I find it particularly interesting that his research shows that the students' ratings of the support they perceived they received, directly related to their perception of their school performance:

> 'of the students who thought that their school had done enough, more than half indicated that their performance had not deteriorated. In contrast, of the students who were deeply dissatisfied with what their school had done, only one out of five indicated that their school performance had not deteriorated' (Dyregrov, A. 2004, p.81).

Lowton and Higginson (2003) focus in their research on how teachers deal with bereaved children, both in relation to the classroom as well as their own perception of their role. Thirteen staff of primary or secondary schools in London were interviewed. The researchers found that 'many school staff reported being apprehensive about talking to students about death and bereavement, despite children initiating the discussion of these issues' (Lowton et al. 2003, p.731). Also, time and curriculum pressures appeared to be an issue for teachers in relation to responding to bereaved students, but they also found that this was given as a reason for why they were not able to participate in the study. The authors conclude that further research is required to explore the factors which influence how children experience their bereavement, and in ways in which students can be involved in the school's management of bereavements.

Rosenfeld (2000) found that young people who had support from parents, teachers and peers showed the following signs: better attendance; spending more hours studying; avoiding problem behaviour more; having higher school satisfaction, engagement, and self-efficacy; and obtaining better grades. The difference that schools can make when they provide good support can be significant.

Harrison (2000) undertook research on behalf of the Child Bereavement Trust about children bereaved by sudden, traumatic and violent death. In her key findings she reports there were issues at school where children moved classes, and information was not passed on. Sometimes the importance of school is underestimated, 'as it is sometimes the only source of stability in his or her life' (Harrison 2000, p.37). Bullying can also be a common issue amongst recently bereaved children; her study found that a group of younger

children, all boys, experienced bullying at school. A. Dyregrov also writes about this: some children isolate themselves following a loss, 'caused by a lack of understanding among their peers' (1991, p.41). It is also normal that children are more vulnerable to comments because they are grieving, and this could then lead to further social isolation. Harrison also emphasises that schooling can become critical when children have to change school because of changes in their care arrangements, at a time where they most need stability.

Literature on bereavement and schools usually refers to the role of teachers. Amongst the wide literature reviewed, only Chadwick (1994) considered the role of support staff in school. She says in her introduction of a book for school staff: 'make ancillary staff read this booklet. Often it is the playground helper or dinner lady who first picks up the news of a death. There is much they can say and do to help' (Chadwick 1994, p.3). She then goes on to write about teaching opportunities across the age ranges, effects of bereavement on a school and on individuals, and she also writes about spiritual issues. In her summary she concludes that schools should not just teach about life, but also about death.

Abdelnoor and Hollins (2004; 2004) undertook a study involving fourteen young adults who had been bereaved previously. It is interesting that they found how others can be perceived as supportive by children and young people, even if this is not their primary role. The authors indicate that the role of professionals may lie within supporting and training others who have a role in children's lives. They could also then offer longer term support, which counsellors are usually not in a position to offer. 'Like other studies, this one suggests that help for children in high-risk groups may be needed, not continually, but indefinitely' (Abdelnoor et al. 2004, p.92).

McCarthy and Jessop (2005) undertook research on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, writing about the impact of bereavement on young people. One chapter is dedicated to 'The social context of bereavement experiences and interventions' (2005, p.43-60), and a small part of this chapter covers schools and their responsibilities in addressing death and bereavement. They attempt to consider a wide range of issues, including death in the curriculum, emotions and emotional literacy; school-based interventions and crisis management.

2.8 Continuing bonds

Within attachment theory (Bowlby 1980), the assumption is made that one can only develop a new meaning of life after letting go of the attachment to the person who died. Any continued attachment continues to be loaded with problems.

It seems the understanding that a continued attachment to the deceased hinders the bereaved and seen largely as a negative factor was first challenged by Klass, Silverman and Nickman (1996), who coined the phrase 'continuing bonds'. Others (Chan, Chow, Ho, Tsui, Tin, Koo and Koo 2005; Stroebe, Schut and Stroebe 2005) write about Klass et al. (1996) challenging the popular model of grief, in which 'letting go' was seen as the goal of grief work, and state that he highlighted the importance of maintaining the relationship with the deceased.

However, Klass (2006) felt he needed to clarify his views after others interpreted his writing and implied that the new aim of grief work should be to support grieving people in maintaining a relationship. He goes on to say it had not been his intention to imply that continuing bonds are part of a positive outcome for the bereaved:

> 'We wanted to show that interacting with the dead was normal, rather than pathological. The move from pathology to normal has been interpreted as if we were moving 'continuing bonds' from the harmful list to the helpful list for the evaluation of grief. This is not what we had in mind when we wrote' (Klass 2006, pp.844-845).

As with other research about bereavement, some authors (Boelen 2006; Epstein 2006) tended to focus on continuing bonds in adults, and mostly in relation to the death of close family members, although others, like

Neimeyer, Baldwin and Gillies (2006), and Field and Filanosky (2009) also included deaths of friends.

The idea that the death of a friend does not end the relationship with this person was relatively new to me, as I had previously little long-term involvement with young people as part of my professional role. In the findings section I will expand on this topic by relating the literature to the experience of the young people in my study, as well as the findings from my analysis of social networking posts.

2.9 Post-traumatic growth

In contrast to resilience, where people are able to continue to function despite adversity, or able to return to normal levels of functioning within short timescales, the concept of post-traumatic growth indicates that people change positively following the experience of trauma, including the experience of personal distress.

Post-traumatic growth can be defined as

'subjectively perceived positive changes in the aftermath of a trauma, including dimensions of detecting personal strength, changes in attitudes and philosophy towards life, novel ways of relating to other people, appreciation of life and spiritual changes' (Maercker and Langner 2001).

Chesler describes post-traumatic growth as 'the experience or the expression of positive life change as an outcome of a trauma or crisis' (in Ungerleider 2003, p.11).

The concept of post-traumatic growth emerged in particular after the Second World War. Frankl explains in his famous book 'Man's Search for Meaning' (1946) how humans can cope with suffering by finding meaning in it, and moving forward in a positive way. However, the philosophical understanding that suffering, adversity and difficult life experiences can be a source of personal growth is thousands of years old. The ancient philosopher Epicurus stated: 'The greater difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skilful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests' (Epicurus, 55 AD-135 AD). The German philosopher Nietzsche is also often quoted with the phrase 'that which does not kill you, only makes you stronger' (1889, chapter 3, 9). However, when quoting the context must not be neglected, and here

Nietzsche reflects on a common belief, but then goes on to describe images where it is clear that it does not make any sense to believe that repeated hardship and adversity could be a source of strength. He shows how that statement is used to control others, in particular in situations of war. He appears to be mocking the army context, as he was supporting peace and was concerned about the ever-increasing army in Prussia.

Linley and Joseph reviewed the literature available in relation to studies of what they termed 'adversarial growth' by considering thirty-four studies, and explicitly noted 'we did not find a single study that considered adversarial growth in children' (Linley and Joseph 2004, p.19). Having looked at all the studies available, they felt that more longitudinal research should take place, more variables should be identified that contribute to growth, and more comprehensive models should be developed to explain 'the range of mediating and moderating variables involved' (Linley et al. 2004, p.19). They conclude that once this has been done, the impact on therapeutic work can be identified, as there may be new approaches that can be developed which do not focus on alleviating distress, but on facilitating growth. Post-traumatic growth is more than well-being and coping with the adversity in a positive way (Durkin and Joseph 2009).

More specifically, Michael and Cooper recently published a systematic review of the literature on post-traumatic growth following bereavement. They looked at 15 studies and found they seem 'to prove consistently that positive growth can indeed occur for bereaved individuals experiencing different forms of growth' (Michael and Cooper 2013, p.26). They conclude that this view of bereavement as part of the positive psychology field should lead to focusing on the application of this knowledge, and recommend that 'in terms of clinical application, bereaved individuals should be educated about various

coping strategies and the benefits of active coping' (Michael et al. 2013, p.30). Growth should be encouraged and supported, but careful consideration needs to be given to how a lack of growth is interpreted, e.g. 'absence of growth should not be regarded as a failure' (Michael et al. 2013, p.31).

The terminology of post-traumatic growth comes from the research by Tedeschi and Calhoun. It was first used whilst they were developing an inventory for the purpose of measuring growth (Tedeschi et al. 1996). They described post-traumatic growth as 'the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises' (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p.1). They felt that whilst negative effects of trauma were extensively studied, there was a clear lack of evidence with regard to positive effects, despite a wealth of literature suggesting that some people who are exposed to trauma do show perceived benefits. Whilst considering studies about the negative impact on trauma, they also found reports of growth (Tedeschi et al. 2004). In their study of 604 undergraduate students they identified five growth components: relating to others, new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, and appreciation for life (Tedeschi et al. 1996).

There are currently seven different measuring scales available (Linley et al. 2004; Michael et al. 2013), in addition to the one mentioned above. There is the stress-related growth scale (Park, Cohen and Murch 1996), the perceived benefits scale (McMillen and Fisher 1998), the changes in outlook questionnaire (Joseph, Williams and Yule 1993), the stress-related growth scale (Park et al. 1996), the thriving scale (Abraído-Lanza, Guier and Colón 1998), and the illness cognition questionnaire (Evers 2001).

Joseph et al. (2004) describe the post-traumatic growth inventory, the perceived benefit scale and the thriving scale as measurement tools. They go on to describe three broad dimensions of post-traumatic growth: 'changes in perception of self, changes in relationships with others, and changes in philosophy of life' (Joseph et al. 2004, p.90).

Each inventory emphasises slightly different aspects of what can commonly be described as post-traumatic growth. However, there is currently not comprehensive comparison available which reviews the seven scales and considers differences and commonalities.

2.9.1 Post-traumatic growth in children and young people

Whilst a number of studies have considered post-traumatic growth in adults, this has only been quite recently explored in relation to children and young people. Clay et al. pose the question: 'are the domains of growth commonly observed in adults also applicable to children?' (2009, p.417). Tedeschi and Calhoun also explore whether post-traumatic growth is a construct which is less applicable to children compared to adolescents and young adults because 'posttraumatic growth implies an established set of schemas that are changed in the wake of trauma' (Tedeschi et al. 2004, p.4).

Whilst some authors (Tedeschi et al. 2004) state that little work has been done in this field, new research and literature is developing all the time. Recent research relates to children exposed to traumatic events like hurricanes, war and terrorist attacks, as well as children experiencing cancer, or the death of a parent (Meyerson, Grant, Carter and Kilmer 2011, p.954).

Versions of post-traumatic growth inventories have been developed for children and young people. There are versions by Milam, Ickovics, Cryder,

and Yaskowich (in Clay et al. 2009). Most of these are adaptations of the earlier-mentioned post-traumatic growth inventory by Tedeschi and Calhoun.

One of those adapted versions to be used with children was developed out of a project assessing children and caregivers following Hurricane Katrina (Kilmer, Gil-Rivas, Tedeschi, Cann, Calhoun, Buchanan and Taku 2009). They found that most children did not talk about post-traumatic growth spontaneously. However, they were able to evidence that spirituality was a significant factor where children experienced post-traumatic growth. A number of other psychologists have also focused on spirituality. As part of growing up young people will develop a sense of their own meaning in life, and when children and young people have experienced bereavement or trauma this is coloured by that experience. As part of a small-scale study, Batten and Oltjenbruns found that the adolescents they interviewed tried to make sense of his or her life, and the responses 'reflected spiritual growth'(1999, p.542).

Oltjenbruns (1991) also found that college students who had engaged in grief work had a deeper appreciation of life, greater caring for persons they loved, strengthened emotional attachments and increased emotional strength.

Spiritual growth may also be supported by the concept of 'continuing bonds' (Klass et al. 1996), as the understanding of grief over the last couple of decades has moved from the assumption that people have to come to terms with the loss and say goodbye to their loved one, to the acceptance that people continue to have a relationship with the person who died.

Since Linley and Joseph (2004) note that no studies involving children could be found in relation to growth, Meyerson, Grant, Carter and Kilmer

undertook a systematic review of studies relating to post-traumatic growth in children and adolescents in 2011. Twenty-five studies were included in the review. It concludes: 'results provide preliminary support for links between environmental, psychological, social and demographic predictors and PTG in youth as hypothesized by PTG theory and research with adults' (Meyerson et al. 2011, p.962). The authors also note that the research does not indicate which specific forms of coping are most effective at fostering growth, including the influence of caregivers.

2.10 Conclusion and gaps in the literature

There is a wealth of literature available in the general field of bereavement relating to children and young people. There is some research which covers Critical Incidents, and bereavement in relation to young people and schools. The research tends to focus on the impact on children and young people including their educational achievements. There is also some considerable literature on interventions, like Critical Incident Debriefing. Other researchers are considering how schools manage bereavement and Critical Incidents, and how teachers and school management appear to still lack skills and confidence. As mentioned earlier, Holland (Holland et al. 1995; Holland 1997; Holland 2000; Holland 2003; Holland 2004; Holland 2008) tries to show with his research how training for schools has made a difference to how staff deal with bereaved children, although I think that currently the evidence for showing improved outcomes for children is still quite weak.

Morrison seems to make a valid point in relation to the literature available: 'in lieu of systematic evaluations of crisis intervention service delivery, the school-based crisis intervention literature is replete with copious 'how to' crisis intervention publications and descriptive accounts of specific incidents and responses' (Morrison 2007, p.105). I too have found similar literature of that nature, and it would be difficult to cover it all in this literature review.

The two pieces of research most closely linked to the research I wanted to undertake, are Papadatou et al. (2002) and A. Dyregrov et al. (1999). Considering staff perceptions in relation to Critical Incidents in schools, I read with interest about the research by Papadatou et al. (2002), which focused on a large-scale survey with Greek teachers. Papadatou et al. did not interview children and young people, and most studies I have read did not do this unless it was linked to a therapeutic intervention. They concluded that

teachers' perceptions were that 'the impact of a death was considered to be more profound when students grieved over the loss of a relative than when they mourned the loss of a classmate' (2002, p.334). In contrast, A. Dyregrov (1999) argues that the loss of a friend can lead to reactions parallel to that of losing a family member, although currently little research has been undertaken about the longevity of reactions. A. Dyregrov acknowledges there is very little systematic research on this topic. The grief of classmates can be described as 'disenfranchised grief' (Doka 1999), as 'peers lack an identified social position in relation to the loss, with no special place in the funeral and no formal rights' (Dyregrov, A. et al. 1999, p.167). This is an interesting insight into how grief is expected to be displayed and supported in our societies – there seems to be less consideration for those outside the family who may also be affected by the trauma. In his study, A. Dyregrov et al. researched twenty-six pupils' reactions following the sudden death of a classmate. He found 'teachers were less aware of the effects of the event on students, especially over time' (1999, p.173). He also found that a substantial group of adolescents (1/5) continued to experience distress nine months after the event. He draws clinical implications for the support of classmates, e.g. follow-up support, better preparation by school staff and screening measures to identify those in need of further help. His study also showed that because of the value that teenagers place on peer support, 'teenagers may need some advice on how to help each other and how to support those who are high in the grief hierarchy (close friends)' (1999, p.174). Although not explicitly mentioned in this study, this would also apply to peer support in relation to parental/sibling death, if we accept the notion that young people offer support to each other in emotionally difficult situations.

Apart from the above study, I was wondering about the reasons for the lack of qualitative studies in relation to the experience of schools support in

relation to Critical Incidents and bereavement, and whether this is due to the difficulty level of ethical procedures. I would have expected to read a lot about ethical issues in my literature review, but many authors did not explicitly write about this, and how it may have had an impact on their research. I discuss this in detail in my ethics section. K.Dyregrov (2004) writes about bereaved parents' experience of research participation, as research with potentially traumatised populations is an issue. There have been some who have argued against any research, but others found it had a positive effect on participants. K. Dyregrov found that:

> 'in spite of the fact that it is painful, the bereaved parents pointed out the importance of telling their story to a respectful, empathic, and informed researcher, seemingly without time limits. Even the parents who reported the most distress and experienced the most pain from the interviews claimed that participation was positive to them' (2004, p.399).

I suspect that the other reason for the majority of studies to take place in therapeutic settings may be a funding issue. Those studies which are undertaken with the main aim of providing therapeutic interventions are more likely to attract funding from Health Departments.

Research on post-traumatic growth and continuing bonds, which is a growing field, tends to focus on adults, although a few studies relating to adolescents in particular are emerging. These studies tend to focus on traumatic events, cancer and family bereavement.

In this literature review I was hoping to find studies that not only cover the experience of pupils, teachers, and headteachers, but also other staff as well as the wider community. However, there seems to be little research in

relation to the sudden death of a classmate. Servaty-Seib (2009) examines adolescent experiences following the death of a peer, but most of the studies quoted relate to American college students. She argues that more research is needed in relation to how adolescents cope, what factors influence their coping mechanisms, and the role that peers, parents and education play.

I have not found any research that specifically considers other staff within schools and the school community in relation to Critical Incidents and bereavement, in particular the role of administrators, support staff and teaching assistants. I wonder whether this may be because teaching assistants have more recently become involved in relation to the emotional well-being of children, with increasing responsibilities and more training. Also, between 1997 and 2005 there was an increase from 35,500 to 100,000 teaching assistants, which would have had an impact on their role in school (Whitty 2005).

Given the limited qualitative research in this specific area relating to the death of a school friend, I hope that my study can make a significant contribution to the research available in this field.

3. Research Design and Methodology

Considering the existing literature as well as my own professional experience of working in the field I have developed certain ideas about how children may cope with the death of a friend. I observed school staff offering strategies which young people found helpful, and I have observed young people supporting each other. I thought that this mutual support would help young people to cope with the death of their friend.

The initial aim of this research was to find out what helps children and young people following the death of a classmate, in particular in relation to the support they receive from staff at school and their school friends. My research relates to other studies which have concluded that more research needs to be undertaken in this field, e.g. the publication by Fauth, Thompson and Penny (2009), which analysed material from the 2004 Mental Health of Children and Young People Data. The authors conclude that those bereaved of a school friend 'face significant difficulties' (2009, p.9), and that 'future work could usefully explore further the impact on children's lives of the death of a friend' (2009, p.39).

It was extremely important to me to involve children and young people themselves in this study. When I considered the available literature there was little research which involved children themselves, in particular outside of the clinical context. I was aware that historically little research had been undertaken: 'Traditionally, childhood and children's lives have been explored solely through the views and understanding of their adult caretakers who claim to speak for children' (Epstein 2006, p.2). Reasons for this may be because adults made assumptions about children's views, heard for example as 'children are unwilling to take part in discussions', or 'views of children are naive' (Brown and Warr 2007, p.276). As a lot of research with children and

young people in relation to bereavement is either undertaken in the clinical context, or with their parents/teachers, it was really important for me that children and young people take the centre stage in my research.

3.1 Considerations when undertaking research with children and young people

I was aware that when considering ethical issues, discussions tend to be 'centered around two preoccupations, firstly informed consent, and secondly, protection of research respondents' (Morrow and Richards 1996, p.93). Few authors consider issues concerning the rights of the child to be heard and listened to in research as equally important as, if not in tension with, the right of informed consent or protection. Within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child it is stated that States should consider listening to children in regard to all matters which affect them. Article 13 says 'the child shall have the right to freedom of expression... to impart information and ideas,' and Article 12 goes into more detail, and highlights that States should 'assure the right of the child, who is capable of forming his or her own views, to express those views freely in all matters affecting him or her' (p.13). It clearly refers to 'all' matters; this should also include questions around bereavement and death. Despite these statements, it seems there is very little research with young people around bereavement or grief (Chowns 2013). I suspect that the reason is the same that I was facing, that adults feel uncomfortable about engaging children in talking about difficult subjects. In my experience, adults are often hesitant in talking about death with children. Death is often treated in U.K. society as a taboo subject (Devlin-Friend 2006, p.31), and it is tempting to be too protective of children. Some have indeed observed that 'an overly protective stance towards children may have the effect of reducing children's potential to participate in research'(Morrow et al. 1996, p.97).

Cranwell (2003) also faced difficulties when he wanted to interview 30 children and ask them about factors they found helpful following parental death. He sent out 250 letters to UK schools, and only received a 10%

response rate. He had planned to involve children throughout the process and not just after the interviews had taken place. However, as the recruitment process for the interviews took so much time due to the lack of response and the many concerns expressed, he did not have enough time to recruit slightly older children to a consultative group before the interviews had taken place, and subsequently abandoned this approach. Concerns expressed by schools and organisations related to understandable issues like concerns about children's welfare, but also some which were difficult to comprehend, like organisations expressing concerns about confidentiality if they approached parents about Cranwell's research. One organisation expressed the view that children in the north of the country would react differently to children in the south.

However, Chowns (2013) undertook a study with nine young people whose families were affected by cancer, through the mechanism of making a DVD. Her intention was to give a voice to young people who were otherwise not heard. She writes that young people felt involved and engaged, and gave their own view of their experience. In Chowns' view, providing room for such involvement 'recognises children as the experts on their own world' (Chowns 2013, p.29). She found that children and young people had all the skills they needed to express themselves and their own views, and claimed that 'children and young people are more capable and articulate then most adults give them credit for' (Chowns 2013, p.30).

3.2 Research Design

In my research I needed to consider in detail how to involve children and young people in an appropriate manner. I considered the different opportunities when researching a subject that is focused on children and young people. Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher describe different approaches: 'children as objects of research', 'children as subjects of research', 'engaging children as collaborators', or 'supporting their own initiatives' (2009). Woodhead and Faulkner describe the dilemma of how to see children in research as 'subjects, objects or participants' (2008). Whilst working with children and young people I am very aware of how much they have to contribute, and that their views are extremely important. I would have liked to have designed a study based on a participatory approach, with focus groups involving children and young people setting the research agenda and considering how their research could be conducted, interviewing other children and young people based on those questions, and having further focus groups evaluating and commenting the data. However, I was too aware of the doctorate having to be my own work, and I also had my own agenda related to my professional role. I was very conscious of timescales, i.e. the time I had available to undertake this research, as well as potential issues around recruiting children and young people in adequate numbers to take part. I therefore did not set out to involve children as active researchers in my project, but ended up engaging them through interviews and listening to their views in the manner of most traditional research. Looking back, I realise that in my case, there is little I could have done differently, especially in view of the barriers and issues I faced even with a traditional design. I will discuss this in more detail later in the chapter.

I realised early on that in terms of methodology, there are certain approaches which are not possible due to the kind of phenomena that I am

researching. Mainly for ethical reasons, it would be extremely difficult to use approaches, like an ethnographic style or action research. Although, in theory I could have used these methods, they are by nature quite invasive. And as I was supporting schools (in my professional role) following the death of a pupil throughout the time I was undertaking this doctoral research, it would not have been right to use these kind of approaches, whilst children and staff are affected by the death of a child,

Looking back, I feel that 'case study' is the closest and most appropriate label under which my research falls. However, 'Case study' has been variously described and contested. For instance, one popular definition is:

> 'An empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g. a 'case'), set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin 2009, p.18)

And another description of case study comes from Stake:
'A case study is defined by an interest in individual cases (Stake 1994, p. 283). And Merriam, another eminent scholar of case study, sees the case study in terms of its end product: 'A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit' (Merriam 1988, p.21).

I find commonalities between all three definitions and my own study: my study was an empirical enquiry set in the real world context – the experience of the death of a school friend, where the context of school and it's community is not separable from the phenomenon of loss of a friend; my case study too has been defined by my professional interest and role with

schools, and, I have attempted a detailed description and analysis of this phenomenon.

There are certain aspects of case study research, which Stake, Yin and Merriam agree on, e.g.

'The case should

- be a complex functioning unit

- be investigated in its natural context with a multitude of methods and be

- contemporary',

(Johansson 2003, p.2)

However, they take different approaches to their understanding of case study research - Yin places emphasis on the methods and techniques within a case study. He recommends that a case study design should be chosen when the focus of the study is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions, when one cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study and when the context is relevant to the study. Stake, on the other hand, places importance on the object of the study: 'As a form of research, case study is defined by individual cases, not be the methods of enquiry used' (Stake 1994, p.236-237). According to Stake the researcher is guided by the intent of his or her research. Merriam meanwhile points out that the most important aspect of a case study is in the boundaries of the case: 'I can 'fence' in what I am going to study. The case then, could be a person such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a groups such as a class, a school, a community; a specific policy; and so on' (Merriam 1998, p.27). She makes the point that the phenomenon studied must be bounded. Of these three approaches, Stake would be the closest to my own approach, as the methods of enquiry or the

precise boundary of the phenomenon have been less important to me than the object (and subjects) under investigation.

Brown (2008, p.5-7) in her review of the literature on case study research, details the approaches these foundational writers took on case study research as such: She describes Merriam as 'an educator', whose approach, which is grounded in her philosophical paradigm, is accessible and organized. Yin is seen as a 'methodologist', he places importance on the specific components of the case study, influenced by scientific methodologies which focus him on ensuring that validity and rigour in the data is maintained. Brown understands Stake as an' interpreter', in his understanding of case studies the researcher's role is to be 'the builder of a clearer view of the phenomenon under study through explanations and descriptions' (Brown 2008, p.6).

As Brown astutely notes:

> 'The greatest challenge for the researcher is not the case study strategy itself, but in fact articulating the research paradigm and theoretical framework that is guiding every aspect of their work and ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the data and method of research' (Brown 2008, p.9).

After having considered the different approaches and values and processes embedded in them, I felt that my understanding of case study methodology lies most closely to Stake's understanding, where I hopefully aid a clearer understanding of the topic – how young people cope after the death of a school friend, and what helps – through my explanations and descriptions.

For me, the interpretative nature of my research was much more important to me than methodological rigour or being tied down by a rigid approach to the boundaries of my case. This was both due to the nature of my epistemological approach, as well as a response to the practical issues that research of the nature I was undertaking brought with them. Flexibility was needed to respond to the specific circumstances of my case study.

For me, the interpretative case study approach was chosen to provide an opportunity to describe the phenomena, which includes interpretation of the data and a meaningful presentation. As Stake describes: 'Qualitative research draws heavily in interpreting by researchers – and also on interpreting by the people they study and by the readers of the research reports' (Stake 2010, p.37). My research as a professional in the field was always going to be enriched by my experiences and interpretations I had to offer, and Stake's approach to case study seems to be most closely related to my situation.

Andrade (2009) argues in his paper how,whilst using an interpretative case study design, the criteria for effective case study research as defined by Yin, are not useful when undertaking theory building research. Whilst not attempting to build entirely new theory, I nevertheless seek to verify whether certain research based understandings in relation to the bereaved can also be applied to the specific situation I was researching, e.g. the death of his school friend.

In my case study I did not only describe my findings, but also consider them in relation to the understanding I had of the phenomenon, based on my professional experience as well as the literature.

It seems to me that the statement about research by Stake applies in particular to this kind of case study: 'Context and situation are background. They are important to the story, but they are not what the research is about' (Stake 2010, p.50).

I also considered the very vast and overlapping literature on the various 'types' of case study to reason which type I was closest to, and why. Explanatory, Exploratory, Descriptive, Multiple-case studies, Intrinsic, Instrumental and Collective (Baxter and Jack 2008, p.549) are just some of the categorisations of cases.

First of all, given the constraints of undertaking this research for my doctorate, as well as the limited possibilities to find a suitable case, I decided at the beginning that I was not going to be undertaking multiple or collective case studies. Having considered different authors' understanding of the case study approach, I decided that my case study most closely relates to the characteristics which Stake describes as 'instrumental', Yin describes as 'explanatory', and Merriam describes as 'interpretative' case studies.

The purpose of my study was to try and understand something, with the ultimate view of improving services for young people. 'The case study in this sense is instrumental; it is a means to an end' (Thomas 2011, p.98). This type of case study (explanatory) is 'facilitating our understanding of something else' (Stake, p.237), and used to 'develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering' (Merriam, p.38). In interpretative case studies the researcher will gather the data with the purpose of 'analyzing, interpreting or theorizing about the phenomenon' (Merriam, p.38). In interpretative case studies, the researcher is directly involved in gathering the data, as well as the analysis.

As a researcher I am interested in the meanings that people assign to the phenomenon. My study has the aim to contribute to a rich, from the particpants' point of view, bounded by the specific situation they were in. Andrade describes effective interpretative case study research as such: If the interpretative researcher wants to create an integral and persuasive piece of research around this phenomenon, each participant's experiences should be included' (Andrade 2009, p.45). My research design took account of this by including both staff (in their various roles) and young people.

It needs to be acknowledged that several researchers have raised questions about case study research as a methodology: 'Apparently, the methodological status of the case study is still highly suspect' (Gerring 2007, p.7). Gerring argues that this is mostly because case study research remains poorly understood. Others express concern about the lack of scientific methodology, which leads to concerns about the generalizability of the study. Whilst some argue that case studies are 'more useful for generating new hypothesis' (Gerring, p.38), and that you cannot generalize from one case (Thomas, p.3), Cohen, Manion and Morrison state that 'generalization can take various forms (p.254). Stenhouse also explains that 'case study does not preclude an interest in generalization' (Stenhouse 1994, p.644), and Stake (p.237) argues strongly that a case study can be used to provide a better understanding of a wider issue. This also takes place by interaction with the reader: 'He expected that the data generated by case studies would often resonate experientially with a broad cross section of readers, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the phenomenon' (Tellis, p.2). Here, some clarity needs to be gained about the purpose of the case study - it is not about statistical generalization. But it can aid analytical generalization, as Yin states: 'In analytic generalization, previously developed theory is used as

a template against which to compare the empirical results of the case study (Yin 2009, p.38).

My case study can offer an insight into the experience of young people and staff, which is enriched by an understanding of the available literature on the issues, as well as an interpretation of my understanding, based on the literature and my professional knowledge. The contribution to the knowledge that I make through this case study is gained by the reader who interprets my findings from their own viewpoint. This case study can offer a valuable insight into the issues, because they are presented and interpreted by someone who sees the findings in the context of their own experience. Thomas describes how he writes about his findings because of his professional background, and then concludes: 'This is the phronesis of the academic researcher's offer. Mine is different from yours, and always will be, and you may disagree profoundlywith my interpretations and judgements.It is this phronesis that enables the construction of the good case study, its critical reading and its use' (Thomas 2010, p.13). I would like to add that this case study and its conclusion will also be validated by staff in schools, and young people who continue to experience the death of a school friend. The aim of this research is to contribute to the knowledge we have in this field, and the readers will add their own knowledge and experience to the findings that I present.

I needed to consider a number of different criteria for selecting my case. As I am undertaking this study as part of my employment with Norfolk County Council, I needed to focus on a sample within the county. Given that I wanted to study the impact of the death of a classmate, there are not many schools which would fulfill this criteria and where timescales are reasonable, e.g. not

very recent, but also not too long ago. I also needed to find a school which was willing to participate.

The case needed to represent the situation I wanted to study: 'The phenomenon of interest observable in the case represents the phenomenon generally' (Stake 1994, p.243), as well as providing potential for learning. I also needed to select a case where children were of sufficient age and understanding to be able to give their agreement to being interviewed. This meant that I was looking for a school in Norfolk where a child had died between the school years of 5 to 13. I wanted to find a school where this had happened in the last six months, so it was not too recent, but also not too long ago. From September 2008 to September 2009 we had five children/young people who died. One child was from another local authority, one child had already left school. One young person attended the Sixth Form of a school where he was not well known, and one girl who died in a car accident had special needs and was mostly educated in the special needs unit of the school. The case study I chose was where a Y6 girl died unexpectedly in an accident. She died at the weekend, and children were told on the Monday morning. The Critical Incident Service I manage offered some support to the school on the day when this happened, and the school felt confident in managing the situation. When I was ready to put my research proposal forward, three months had passed since the death of this child. I anticipated I would be able to begin my interviews within the next twelve months or so, which would mean that my research could be completed within a reasonable time frame.

The spatial boundaries of my case are the primary school, I did not consider the impact of the death of a friend in relation to friends the girl knew outside

of school. The temporal boundary is identified as the time after their friend had died.

I was hoping a case study approach would provide me with rich data from interviewing participants, by using 'a way that a case study can be structured so as to provide systematic, but also rich, meaningful, data' (Hayes 2000, p.140), as my research was mostly of a qualitative nature. Ethical issues also had an impact on how I was going to design my research. Although I was not planning to adopt a fully participatory approach, as I was concerned my timescales would not allow for children's involvement in design, execution and interpretation phases, I still wanted to adhere to some of the principles, and give children and young people who would take part a voice in this research. I was guided and encouraged by Davis: 'Rather than trying to achieve a 'gold standard' of complete participation, it might be more helpful to see how this fits with your research objectives, and your ethical principles' (Davis 2009, p.155). I also wanted to present my research to the participants before it was finalised, take comments and make changes. According to Cohen et al. 'The theory so generated must make sense to those to whom it applies' (2000, p.23). I intended to write at least some of my thesis in a way which could be accessible to young people and their families, in particular the introduction and summary. I planned to use vignettes to add depth to the research, to increase accessibility of the issues to the readers of the final doctoral thesis. I took the view that:

> 'vignettes are ways of summarising observations or experiences succinctly, in such a way that they highlight the relevant features of the case, so that they can be identified and will provide important contexts within which more specific information can be viewed' (Hayes 2000, p.137).

As my initial plan of interviewing several staff and students from one school did not go ahead, I needed to adapt the way I approached my case study research. Instead of focusing on one school, I had to adapt my approach by choosing a different group of young people who had also experienced the death of a school friend.

The next step in my methodology was to clarify my research question. Or as Merriam describes this: 'The first task, in conducting a qualitative study is to raise a question about something that perplexes and challenges the mind' (Merriam 1998, p.57). I returned to consider the limited research within the specific area of 'death of a school friend'. Where research did consider deaths within a school, these tended to be focused on traumatic deaths, e.g. school shootings, (Schwarz et al. 1991; Broberg et al. 2005; Suomalainen et al. 2011, and many others). Most studies which involved children and young people focused on the negative impact on children and young people, e.g. psychological symptoms and post-traumatic stress disorder, although A. Dyregrov and Gjestad (1999) used the Hogan Growth Inventory to investigate the aspect of growth after bereavement. But considering the research within the field of post-traumatic growth, I wanted to find out more by talking to young people in detail about what helped them cope in the long term. As mentioned earlier, I felt that focusing on positives should be part of ethical research (Stroebe and Schut 2005). Studies (Tedeschi et al. 1996; Cheever et al. 1999) have shown that young people and children reaching the adolescent stage rely on their friends for support following traumatic events. I wondered how this applied to the death of a friend, and how exactly young people support each other. Hence my research focus was on two areas: perception of staff and those of the pupils.

When designing my research questions I ensured that I offered a coherent structure, that both the number of questions and the content of each one

were not too long, that the language used was appropriate and that they put staff and children and young people at ease (Brown et al. 2007). Questions included some warm up questions, core questions covering all the main themes I wanted to explore, follow up questions to explore more details, and clarifying questions to ensure that I understood what the participants had said.

3.3 The researcher and her research

I needed to decide on the most appropriate methodology for my research project, but with little experience in this field I sought advice from the methodology literature. It seemed that that the choice of methodology would partly depend on the researcher's own view of the world, whether one tends to be more of a constructivist or a positivist, has a subjective approach or an objective approach to social science. Consideration also needs to be given to whether there are particular methods which lend themselves to the particular research better than others. Although Guba and Lincoln state that 'the naturalistic paradigm is the more useful for all social-behavioural inquiry', they also acknowledge that

> 'in any case, the choice between paradigms in any inquiry or evaluation ought to be made on the basis of the best fit between the assumptions and postures of a paradigm and the phenomenon being studied or evaluated' (1981, p.56).

However, Norris points out that there is an issue with using an eclectic approach, based on using different paradigms depending on the situation. Norris concludes that 'the choice of strategy and method is irrevocably linked to the paradigmatic prison within which one works.' (1990, p.117). It seems to me that I ought to be explicit about the paradigm I subscribe to. As a new researcher I find this quite a difficult task and a new challenge for me.

The researcher in this study is me; I am interviewing staff and young people, analysing social networking sites in memory of children who have died, in expanding the understanding of what helps young people when a friend dies. I am doing this partly to understand the problem, but also partly to help me in my everyday job. Any researcher needs to be aware of the influence of their own self on the outcome on the study they undertake. As I am also

working in this field, I needed to be aware of the advantages and pitfalls of being part of the system. As a researcher who is immersed in this work on a day to day basis, the boundaries sometimes become blurred. My research informs my practice, and my practice informs my research. Whilst interviewing staff and young people, I was able to ask them about their views on what I had thought previously. Although being open to their response, I expect this has influenced them in how they answered. However, I certainly experienced a few occasions where I had hoped that staff or young people would answer in a certain way, but they did not, e.g. I asked Heather about how she knew what to do and she answered that it was just instinct. I had thought Heather's answer would be based on what she had learnt from policies, training or previous experience; I did not expect the answer she gave. Indeed, on occasions they contradicted my assumptions, e.g. all young people had talked about the support they received from their family, until one young person was very clear that he did not call upon his family for support.

I can only conclude from this experience that my questions were open enough, and that I made people feel at ease, to answer in a way they thought was right, no matter what my personal view was.

As my doctorate is funded by my organisation, I needed to be aware of how this influenced my research as a whole, especially as I am expected to report back my findings. This had in a way influenced me in taking a more directive role in the research rather than allowing it to be led by children. In addition, this was always going to be a small scale, qualitative piece of research, and 'critics of qualitative research argue that over-involvement of researchers in the research process means that they are unable to remain objective' (Brown et al. 2007, p.281). The issue of 'bias' creeping in and distorting what are

meant to be 'objective' findings is always a concern, but it is also true that acknowledging one's personal stance and influences can lead to a better-informed reader who can judge for him/herself how to read the results. I am aware of the opposite too, that in large-scale studies of the kind commissioned by public agencies, it is very important to be aware of the influence of politics and political relations on the study and the reporting of findings. There is a danger that 'research ceases to become open-ended, pure research and, instead, becomes the evaluation of given initiatives' (Cohen et al. 2000, p.38).

My research is clearly based within not only my work context, but that of staff in schools, too, and has been greatly influenced by this, as I struggled with the concept, role and perspective of gatekeepers in educational institutions, who had the power to grant access (or not) to young people attending school. I have been very clear I wanted to keep an open mind about where the research was going to take me, and I feel I have not been restricted in this way.

3.4 Method for analysing data

I had initially planned to use a grounded theory approach. Ideally, grounded theory seemed to me a well-suited approach as it was a deductive approach, where data was collected, and then ideas developed. Considering grounded theory in more detail, it is an approach which is much more than that though.

> 'Grounded theory seeks to fold induction into deduction, back and forth, collecting data, formulating theories and then seeking to test these theories with new data collection and analysis, which itself may lead to more than just testing' (David and Sutton 2011, p.110).

I soon realised there were several reasons why I would not be able to follow the grounded theory approach. Firstly, I would not have the opportunity to collect new data after the initial data-collection process; and secondly, I did have some pre-formed ideas about what I might find. In addition, grounded theory relies on a quite large sample size so that 'saturation' of codes/themes can be achieved. I was fairly sure that I would not be able to work with a large base and this too dissuaded me from this avenue.

I worked for many years in this field and gathered a lot of experience. I have supported a number of primary and secondary schools following the death of a pupil, I have spoken to many staff and young people in those situations. As a result, I cannot help but have built up some ideas and assumptions about what helps children and young people. I thought that primary as well as high-school children offered each other a considerable amount of support. I noticed that children spoke highly of some staff support, but also experienced some staff who were not helpful in the way they managed the situation. I wanted to be open to what the research would show me, whether in support of these ideas or in contradiction to them. In this sense, there was a sense of openness and even excitement in undertaking this research. In

addition, there is very little research which has involved children and young people directly, talking to them to find out their reflections on what support they had received and what helped them through their difficult times. Some areas are relatively new to me, for example the long-term consequences of experiencing the death of a school friend, and here I made no assumptions of what I was likely to find.

Given that my research is a comparatively small study, it would have been very difficult for me to design this research study in a more open way, where I had no pre-formed ideas about the outcomes. As I am undertaking this research in the context of a professional doctorate, and I do have some experience of what support mechanisms children and young people use, I could not pretend I would undertake this research project without any preconceived ideas. Willig is critical: 'using preconceived variables would lead to the imposition of researcher's meanings and it would preclude the identification of respondents' own ways of making sense of the phenomenon under investigation' (2001, p.9). I do not entirely agree with this, as the awareness of those preconceived ideas and the openness of the researcher surely makes a difference in how the research is approached and how the interviews are conducted. The reflexivity of the researcher is vital in this method. As Alvesson and Skoeldberg state, research of different kinds are acceptable, as long as 'researchers consider carefully the constructed nature of data and are open to their ambiguities and ambivalences as well as the richness of alternative meanings' (2000, p.307).

Considering the small scale of my research I needed to narrow down the assumptions I wanted to explore.

My ideas were as follows:

- Children and young people offer each other a considerable amount of support and do not primarily rely on support from parents or other adults.

- Staff at school offer a considerable amount of support to children and young people.

- All staff are involved in providing this support, whether they are teachers, secretaries, support assistants, midday supervisors or others.

These assumptions contributed to the shape and design of my research, but during the interviews, further assumptions and predictions were formed.

3.4.2 Analysing social networking posts - an ethnographic approach

In addition to interviews of children and staff, I also made use of the rich data provided by contemporary phenomena that are used by young people: social networking sites, like Facebook. I hoped that material from social networking sites, which are open to anyone, could also provide some rich data for my research. A case study should make use of different approaches, 'in looking from several directions, a more rounded, richer, more balanced picture of our subject is developed – we get a three-dimensional view' (Thomas, p.4).

I chose to analyse R.I.P. (Rest In Peace) Facebook posts as I was aware from my professional work that this was the most used site by young people. Analysing Facebook posts is akin to ethnographic research. Reading young people's posts on Facebook is like observing them in their interactions. Flick (2003, p.271) calls this a 'virtual ethnography'. He also suggests that this approach is most useful when it is linked to real-world activities. Carroll and

Landry (2010) in their research of Facebook memorial groups combined an ethnographic analysis with a quantitative survey. Some people may view R.I.P. sites more as shrines which young people set up to communicate with the deceased and the rest of their friends who are united in their grief. However, the ability to interact with each other from any location that is chosen, including home, makes this quite different to shrines. I will be writing more about social networking in section 4.2.7.

The quotes obtained from social networking sites I have reproduced verbatim, as I felt that it was helpful to see what and how young people posted in their own words and expressions. I have not corrected the spelling, grammar or punctuation or changed the expressions into more formal English.

3.5 Informed consent, assent and gatekeepers

As in most qualitative studies, consent needs to be obtained from participants. I also needed to seek consent from gatekeepers, and I will be writing more about this. Initially I sought permission from the primary school where the pupil had died, and then permission from the parents of the child who had died. I also sought permission from the Critical Incident Steering Group, which oversees my work. I then planned to seek consent from parents who would then ask their children if they wanted to take part in my study.

Informed consent means that

'participants should know exactly what they are letting themselves in for, what will happen to them during the research, and what will happen to the data they provide after the research is completed' (Flick, Kvale, Angrosino, Barbour, Banks, Gibbs and Rapley 2007, p.8).

Participants are also given the option to withdraw from their agreement at any time, although in practical terms this needs to be some time before the thesis is written up. Informed consent applies to both adults and children who are participating in my study. I also set out to seek informed consent from the parents of the children who might participate. A letter was sent to all parents, via school, so that anonymity was provided and no personal data was given to me, until consent was given. Parents then had the option to pass the participant consent form on to their children. Agreement was then sought from the current (secondary) schools of those children.

Young people in my study were approached via Facebook and, as all of them were over the age of 18 years, I did not seek permission from their parents.

3.6   Ethical considerations and challenges

<u>3.6.1 Ethical considerations when undertaking research in online communities</u>

Cupit (2012) writes about a number of different studies involving the investigation of social networking sites and analyses of posts. There are ethical issues about whether researchers should try and obtain permission from online communities when undertaking research. There is an argument that where spaces are accessible to anyone, they are public spaces and therefore permission may not necessarily need to be obtained. It could however also be argued, that individuals have a right to confidentiality and should be contacted for informed consent.

When I started my doctorate, I was not aware of any guidelines on undertaking research in online communities. Since then, ethical guidelines have been published, most recently the Ethics Guidelines for Internet - mediated research by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2013).

Previously I had accessed social networking sites in a professional capacity, not just reading posts on R.I.P. sites of young people who had died and where I was supporting the school, but I also posted on those sites, reminding young people of the support available through their schools. As I was used to being present on R.I.P. sites, I did not consider asking for individual agreement from everyone who posted material there for using the data for my study. As those sites are publicly accessible to anyone, including the data I used in my study, the practices of young people would not be different to what they do when they make any other public post, for example their comments could be and can be seen by anyone. This is quite different to personal pages which are usually only open to friends and acquaintances who have been invited to view them. I was aware that some of these young

people were under the age of 18 but, as Facebook allows them to use the site, I also subscribed to the belief that they have sufficient understanding to post on this public site, and were aware that their postings could be read by anyone. Knobel summarises: 'In most cases, arguments over whether informed consent should or should not be obtained from participants in an online community boils down to the arguments over which online spaces are public and which are private' (2003, p.194). I viewed the R.I.P. pages as public spaces, as they were accessible by anyone. This complies with the BPS guidelines which state that 'observation of public behaviour needs to take place only in public situations where those observed would expect to be observed by strangers' (BPS 2013, p.6). They also advise that as no privacy is expected, research data could be used without gaining valid consent. In hindsight I think it is worth exploring this issue further.

I think there is something to the argument that by contacting all young people on the R.I.P. site and making them aware of my role as a researcher would have some impact on their usage of the site: '[the] subject modifies their behaviour as a result of being aware of being part of an observed study' (Phippen, Davey and Furnell 2009, p.44). I acknowledge that this is true of all sites of observation or ethnographic research, but I felt strongly I needed to minimise any interference, and part of this was not to ask for permission to 'observe' posts on the site. It was important that young people were able to continue to use the R.I.P. site for the purpose for which it was up.

I was also aware of practical problems, as I knew that young people only accessed this site very irregularly. By the time of the research, it would be unlikely I would be able to get in touch with young people to obtain permission to include their postings in my research.

It is important though to offer people confidentiality, and the BPS advise that researchers need to be careful as direct quotes could be traced by using search engines, which means that anonymity and confidentiality, which individuals should be offered, in particular to protect them from harm, would be an issue (BPS 2013, p.18). It is suggested that a solution to this could be to paraphrase the quotes, but ideally I did not want to do this, as I wanted to retain the completeness of the quotes, which give a flavour of how young people express themselves. To minimise this risk I ran the quotes I used through the most used search engine, Google. I found no results which linked the quotes to the R.I.P. pages I looked at, which means that the chances of the quotes being traced is extremely low. Knobel advises that researchers should represent participants 'fairly, respectfully and with dignity' (2003, p.199). I felt that I could do that best by not editing posts, but I had changed all names so that users could not be identified.

However, where I recruited young people from their social networking site, I very clearly identified myself and the purpose of my contact with them via this site:

Dear friends of Melvin,

I am posting this message in the hope that you might be able to help me find out more about what helps young people following the death of a school friend.

I work for Norfolk Children's Services as the Critical Incident Co-ordinator, and for the last few years I have been a part-time student at the UEA Norwich. I think that it is extremely important that we listen to young people and their experiences, if we want to offer the right support to them. I was wondering whether any of you might be prepared to talk to me about what helped you cope with the death of your friend, and what school and others did to support you. I have spoken to Melvin's mum and she is aware that I am contacting

you in this way. If you will help me, I would be grateful if you can email me at b.finger-berry@uea.ac.uk, and I will then give you more information about what would be involved.

Thank you for reading my message, Bianca.

I also sent individual messages to young people who subscribed to the site, so they had the choice to respond or ignore my message. I am aware that some researchers advise against online researchers following up on cyberspace observations with face-to-face interviews (Knobel 2003), but my scenario was different in that I had planned face-to-face interviews with this group of young people from the outset, and Facebook was a means of contacting them, as the mother of the child who died did not feel she wanted to contact friends herself. I did have some positive responses from young people who then got in touch with me and who gave me permission to contact them via email or telephone to then arrange a face-to-face interview.

When I started my research, I knew I wanted to include some data from social networking sites. I therefore looked at R.I.P. sites set up on Facebook. I was aware that younger children were also using other sites, as they were not 13 years of age yet and officially were not allowed to use Facebook. I found that the children at the primary school had set up an R.I.P. website on Bebo, a site for younger children. Children were remembering their friend who died, and some of them accessed the site every day and seemed quite distressed. I was concerned as I did not know whether they were able to access adult support. I needed to decide what I should do with what I found out, whether to ignore it or speak to the young people directly. I needed to consider whether it was part of my responsibility to ensure they were appropriately supported, as it was clear from their posts that these were young people who would not feature in my study as they were friends, but

not attending the same school. I felt that as a professional, as well as a researcher, I had a responsibility towards those young people, and should do something about what I found. This is also what Gallagher recommends, information might need to be passed on, 'if you think that passing on information could help to solve a child's problem' (2009, p.21).

However, it was not quite as easy as that. I did not know to whom I should pass the information. I decided to talk to the young people, to see whether they felt they wanted any support. With the permission of the young people on the site, I contacted their schools, as in my professional role I could offer some advice. Two of the young people felt they would like to meet with me, and their parents agreed to this too. The other young person had agreed to meet with me, but their parent did not give their agreement. As I still wanted to ensure they had access to support, the school gave the young person information about confidential counselling, for which they did not need parental permission. This is not unusual and most schools have this information accessible for young people as a matter of course.

The other two young people I met with, in my role as Critical Incident Co-ordinator for Children's Services, rather than in my role as a researcher. One of them seemed to be coping well and did not need any additional support, but the other young person was directly referred to a youth counselling service. Staff made contact with the young person and arranged ongoing support. I am not sure how I would have resolved this dilemma if I did not have an official role in supporting young people, but I strongly felt I had a duty towards these young people, and support needed to be offered to them.

3.6.2 Considerations when undertaking research dealing with sensitive topics

Undertaking research in the field of death and bereavement requires, like most research in sensitive areas, special consideration and planning, with both children or adults. I know there is little qualitative research in the field of bereavement which is not relating to clinical interventions. One of the principles of the British Psychological Society for conducting research is about 'maximising benefits and minimising harm' (Davies 1995). Professionals, as well as universities and their ethics research boards/committees have been concerned about the potential of researchers or the research itself to cause harm to participants (Buckle 2010). These concerns focus on the possibility of making interviewees upset and thereby causing emotional pain. I am aware of this issue from my own professional practice, however, I agree with the view of this author (Buckle 2010), as this is also the advice I give to reluctant staff who find it hard to find the courage to speak to children and parents. It is unlikely that people get upset because someone talks to them about bereavement; if they do get upset they are upset because they are sad about what happened. Staff, and researchers, are witnessing the pain those families are experiencing. K.Dyregrov (2004) found this in her study with sixty-four parents who were asked about their experience of taking part in interviews as part of qualitative research about the death of their child. She found that 100% of parents experienced their participation as positive and no parents regretted taking part, despite it being painful talking about the death of their child: 'Even the parents who reported the most distress and experienced the most pain from the interviews claimed that participation was positive to them' (Dyregrov, K. 2004, p.399) .

A number of researchers argue that positive aspects are not taken into account when concerns are expressed. Bereaved research participants often comment on the benefits of taking part in qualitative studies, including 'the

personal benefits they derived from the process of sharing their perspective in a detailed manner with an interested and engaged researcher' (Buckle 2010, p.112). Buckle interviewed five bereaved mothers and fathers and all parents said that they had gained from the experience of taking part in the study. I take the view other researchers have taken, that the qualitative interview, like a counselling session, can often provide people with an opportunity to share their memories with an interested adult, and that this can be beneficial. However, I do also acknowledge that the purpose of the interview in traditional research has been for the interviewee to help the researcher, and not the other way round. But as a professional working in the field, I would always consider the needs of my interviewee and ensure their needs are also met. This includes, for example, allowing people to talk in more detail about what they feel they need to talk about, rather than stopping them and moving onto a different theme, which is important for my research. Developing a rapport with interviewees, and a trust which enables people to talk about their experiences is a key to good quality and ethical research. It is also true that not every researcher would be equipped with the personal and professional skills to be able to deal with the issues that bereavement research might provoke, but I feel that my training and professional experience has equipped me well for this task.

I followed ethical guidelines of anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality, and many others (UEA 2011), and my research was conducted as set out in my proposal which had been approved by EDU ethics committee. As I work within the educational psychology service I also considered the guidelines published by the BPS (2010).

Participants received a written letter about the projects, including all the information required (see Annex 1). I paid particular attention to the issue of

potential risk, including psychological harm, discomfort or distress. As I was aware that my questions could potentially cause distress, I discussed this with my participants in advance of the session. I gave them options about what they might like to do, if they got distressed, in advance, as well as during the session:

'They sort of, make it easy, they didn't force us to do anything we didn't want to do. There were people there for us to speak to.' (Oscar)

(Oscar getting upset)

Sorry. (Oscar)

Pause

Do you mind, are you happy to keep going? (Researcher)

Yeah. (Oscar)

Do you want a tissue? (Researcher)

Yeah, thank you. (Oscar)

During the interviews I paid particular attention to these issues, I gave participants the option of a break or stopping the interview, but all of them wanted to continue until the end. I also identified appropriate follow-up support for participants; staff were given a leaflet with information about confidential counselling, either by telephone or by face-to-face, and young people were given a leaflet with details about a local counselling organisation for young people.

Young people felt they had done something worthwhile by talking to me; they wanted to make sure the knowledge I gained from them would help other children:

'If it helps other children who are in the same situation, it's only ever going to be a good thing, because it's horrible, when you are 15/16, you don't understand it, and it's not fair, but, like Melvin used to say, if it's going to

have to be anyone, why not him, and if it can help other children, young

people, when they are feeling like that, it's only going to be doing them

good.' (Grace)

3.6.3 Research with children and young people - ethical challenges from gatekeepers

I knew that one of my main challenges was to obtain permission from all stakeholders involved to include children in my research. However, I did not anticipate the difficulties I experienced, which are worth considering as they exemplify the sorts of barriers which exist to doing research with children on sensitive topics. Effective participation by children can be hindered by adults (Reddy and Radna 2002).

When I started my doctorate in 2008, I initially set out the wider plans of my research to my manager, and then to the Steering Group which oversees the Critical Incident Service, of which I was the manager. I sought their agreement to my involvement in this research, as well as funding for it. All members of the group were pleased I was going to be involved in trying to find out more about what helps young people deal with the death of a school friend, which would inform the work we undertake in supporting young people. In October 2009 I outlined my research proposal to Norfolk Children's Services Research Governance Advisor, and it was approved there too.

I identified a school where a child had died six month earlier. Before putting the proposal forward to the ethics committee, I felt I needed some agreement in principle from the school I was hoping to involve in my research. In October 2009, I therefore approached the Headteacher of the primary school, where the child had died. He agreed to meet with me the

same month. He was very helpful and encouraging, and was happy for me to approach his staff and to write to pupils, once the research had been approved by the EDU ethics committee.

Finally, in April 2010, the research proposal (Appendix 11.2) was presented to the School of Education and Lifelong Learning's research ethics committee. The Chair of the Ethics Committee commented that '*ethical issues were very well thought through*', approved the research, and wished me all the best.

After agreement from my manager, the Steering Committee, the headteacher, and the university, I was finally ready to go ahead. I strongly felt I also needed to seek agreement from the parents of the child who died. I wrote to them in May 2010, detailing my research, and asking for their agreement (see 8.2):

Although this research need not involve you directly, I feel strongly that I should seek your approval before starting the research. Although this is not a strict 'requirement' for me, I feel that your approval and understanding of the value of the research is essential for me to go ahead. I am hoping that the research will give us new knowledge about what helps children, and will result in improving the support that schools give to children. Hopefully it will also help me and my colleagues within the Critical Incident Service to give better advice and support to schools, based on evidence.

It was an anxious wait for me until I heard back from the family at the end of May. The mother of the deceased girl called the office to say she was happy for the research to go ahead and left a mobile telephone number. I then spoke to her and agreed to meet up with her early June 2010. We had a good meeting, and she said she was still keeping in touch with a number of her daughter's friends, who come and visit the family on the anniversary, some

with their parents. She showed me the memorial garden they had created for her, with a wishing well and lots of teddies. She gave her permission and said:

'I hope that something good might come out of something so terrible'.

In mid June 2010 I met with a small number of staff from the school and talked about my research. I left them with information sheets and permission forms, which I collected a couple of weeks later. Four members of staff agreed to talk to me.

The school sent letters to all parents of children of this year group on my behalf. These were sent by post as the children had left school and now attended different high schools. I included a letter to the children, explaining my research and asking whether they would take part, which parents were asked to give to the children.

Eleven families gave agreement for me to interview their children, and another couple of parents wrote or emailed, saying their children did not want to be part of the research, but they still wanted to wish me all the best as they wanted to support my research. One parent emailed:

'I think the work you are doing is VERY important, and I hope you have other pupils who are willing to help with your research project.'

This was very encouraging to me. I also received an email from the headteacher, saying:

'I met 2 children from Y7 at x school last week & we were talking about your project. They said that some children had not received letters.'

I explained that parents had not passed the invitation of participating in the research to their children. Some parents, as gatekeepers, had chosen not to

discuss the invitation of participating in my research with their children, and those children were not enabled to make their own choice of participation.

Because I was very aware that in my research I was not able to include children more in the planning and execution of the research, and my research was not constructed as participatory research, I wanted children to be able to have some choices. I wanted the children to feel at ease when I talked to them. I also wanted to give them the option of being interviewed together, which, logistically, would be much easier to set up at school then it would be if it was one of their homes, or a neutral venue. When I asked children where they wanted to be seen, most of them chose school as a venue. I subsequently wrote to the schools to ask whether it was possible to see the children at school. One school responded that this would be fine as long as they could see the parents' permission letter. When I arranged to interview the child, an interview at home was preferred, which then went ahead.

The headteacher of the other high school objected. Initially, it seemed he did not want the interviews to take place in school (partly because of another child's death in his school), but after another couple of emails, where I tried to explain my research, he then objected against my research as a whole as I had not consulted with him before the parents and children were approached, and because I had not asked him for permission. He strongly objected, writing that he felt that I was taking control of a situation that I should not have any control over, and that he had not given permission for me to contact parents and children who he was responsible for. He felt I had overstepped the mark and that I should reconsider.

I tried to explain that it had not been possible to involve him in the planning,

as I did not know at the planning stage of my research which high schools the children had moved to, and it would not have been possible to involve five different headteachers with the setting up of this research. Also, the research was not primarily interested in how they were doing at high school, but focused on the time when they were still at primary school, when the death had occurred. Parents and young people had already given their permission. Various emails were exchanged, which involved my doctoral supervisor, my manager, as well as the ethics committee, and a meeting with the headteacher was arranged. Unfortunately, my primary supervisor was on study leave, and was not there to support me by attending this meeting. I had hoped to focus on the rights of the children to participate in this research, the hopes of the parent of the child who died who wanted something good to come out of something terrible, and on the possible outcomes my research could have for informing the practice of our Norfolk Critical Incident Service, as well as those around the country. The meeting in early February 2011 did not achieve the hoped for outcome. I emailed my supervisor and the university's ethics committee:

'The headteacher was adamant that he did not want the research to go ahead and that I should start afresh with a new project. I feel very disappointed, upset and angry if I may express my feelings, because this is not about me and my failure to ask for his permission from the outset (this research is not about his school, it's just that the pupils happened to have moved on to his High School), but also about the rights of young people to be heard and listened to, for their views to be taken into account, and I do not wish to lose all the hard work and commitment of the Head of the Junior School and his staff who have already been interviewed, as well as one young person from a different High School.'

Given that there is very little research which involves young people, especially outside of a clinical context, I felt that it was very important to listen to the children themselves. In my view, children and young people have an inalienable right to have their views expressed, and I felt that research of the kind I was conducting had to include a direction conversation with them. Kinchin and Brown also state:

> 'The right of children to have their views heard is of prime importance. This right extends to the area of research, and it is my belief that studies do not accurately or adequately represent the reality of children's experiences and responses unless some of their own accounts are taken into consideration' (2003, p.IV).

I understand that the Headteacher also has responsibilities for his pupils, but in my opinion the wishes of the children and their parents for participation in my research project were paramount.

My manager did not feel he could support me to continue with interviewing the young people against the wishes of the headteacher, as it could have adversely affected the relations between the school and the county council for the full range of services which are offered. I was extremely disappointed.

I submitted another proposal to the ethics committee (see Appendix 11.6), requesting that my interviews could be opened up to other young people. I suggested posting a questionnaire for young people on the R.I.P. Facebook site. The ethics committee wrote back to me in May 2011; they felt this would raise too many ethical issues, and that I should not continue with the research as had been suggested. I had hoped that by posting on the R.I.P. Facebook page of the girl who was deceased I would be able to reach at least 10 young people, as at that time her site was visited regularly, including by

those friends who I had been in touch with because of their presence on Bebo site, but who attended different primary schools.

This was extremely disappointing to me; a lot of time had passed, in which I had been unable to progress my research. I particularly felt disappointed, as I felt children and young people had been deprived of their right to have their views heard. I felt I had let them down. I know that it is not uncommon for researchers to encounter problems with gatekeepers. Thomas and O'Kane also explain: 'It remains a concern that some children were not given a choice to take part in the research because adults thought it better to exclude them' (1998, p.346).

For me this had raised a number of ethical issues. As a researcher I felt that involving children in giving their views about support they receive from schools was not just a duty (U.N. 1989, Article 12, p.4), but also important to inform practice. However, in this case, it was not possible to continue and give these children the chance to make their views known.

I still wanted to find out what sorts of support from schools helped young people, and how they coped with it longer term. However, I knew I would continue to face hurdles with gatekeepers if I tried to interview children. I decided to change my research design slightly and reconsider my case study methodology. My case of 'the death of a school friend in the specific primary school' was not going to provide me with enough data. I needed to reconsider the definition of my 'case', and went back to the case study literature. I considered different possible definitions of a case. Thomas (How to do your case study, p.12-13) describes three different kinds of cases: 'The case as a container', 'The case as a situation, event' and 'The case as argument'. Whilst I was initially looking at my case study 'as a container', a

unique event in relation to a specific school, I am now considering my case as 'the experience of the death of a school friend', which encompasses more than one specific event.

I then tried to try and find young adults who had experienced the death of a school friend. This way I would still be able to capture the impact of the death of a school friend, but I would gather their views as young adults, who would be able to give consent themselves.

Given that I was a student at the university I hoped to recruit other young people who were studying there. I wrote to the ethics committee again to ask for permission (see Appendix 11.7), which was agreed. However, following some leafleting and trying to get information onto university websites and emails, I was unsuccessful in finding volunteers for my study.

3.7 Death of a young person in Year 10 who had leukaemia

Despite my difficulties in recruiting volunteers for my study, I was determined to find young people who had experienced the death of a school friend and were willing to be interviewed. I was aware that a few years ago my team had supported a school where a Year 10 boy had died following a terminal illness. Those young people would be young adults now and would be able to give permission to be interviewed, without any other adults being involved. Because of my previous experiences, I wanted to minimise the number of gatekeepers who needed to give permission for me to go ahead with my data collection. However, I did need to submit another ethics proposal, but I also felt that it was necessary to ask permission of the family of the deceased child first. I was also hoping that the family may be able to put me in touch with his friends, although I was already aware that there was a Facebook website, which had been set up by friends at the time of his death. I wrote to his mother (Appendix 11.8), and she gave me permission to go ahead. However, she did not feel in a position to be able to help me in regard to recruiting volunteers for my study. She said:

' I know that leaves you in a difficult place with your research but I'm afraid I do not have the emotional capacity to re-visit that time in our lives and speak with his friends about it, to pave the way for you- however I do not want you to think you've done the wrong thing in contacting me.' (Email, 17th January 2012)

I did check with her to make sure she would not object to me contacting his friends myself, and she said:

'I have no objections to indirect contact to his friends- just not via me! Glad you understand. Appreciate the fact that you have spoken to me.' (Email, 18th January 2012)

With her permission, I was then able to put forward another proposal to the ethics committee (see Appendix 11.9), which included approaching his friends, who were adults, via Facebook, which was agreed.

I then posted a message on the R.I.P. site for Melvin, and one young woman responded she would be happy to talk to me. However, she had her own health problems, and three months later I had still not been able to interview her. Another woman (Veronica) came forward who responded to a private message I posted, and I interviewed her. A young man (Luke) also responded to my message and so did another young person (Oscar) who was a friend of the brother of the young person who died. He then put me in touch with another young person (Grace).

3.8 Data collection

As my research focused on obtaining qualitative data, I chose semi-structured interviews and then applied thematic analysis to the transcripts I made of these interviews.

Semi-structured interviews, also called semi-standardized interviews (Flick 2009, p.217), or focused interviews (Merton and Kendall 1946, p.541), were chosen because they seemed most suitable for my study. Merton and Kendall (1946) describe the characteristics for choosing this type of approach: the interviewees have all been involved in a specific situation, in my case they have all experienced the death of a school pupil; the interviewer has already formed a hypothesis regarding the situation. This was true in relation to several aspects of my research, e.g. from my practice I was aware that staff other than teachers offered a significant amount of support of young people, yet I was unable to find any research about this. In regard to other areas of this investigation research has shown how young people respond following a family death, from my work I expected that this would probably be very similar in relation to a friend's death, e.g. in relation to peer support and the longevity of the impact. Another requisite is that the investigator has issued an interview guide which addresses the main areas of inquiry and the hypothesis, please see the Appendix 11.3, 11.4 and 11.9. The interview should focus on the subjective experiences of the interviewee, this leads to the possibility of the validity of hypothesis already formed, as well as opening up opportunities to ascertain unanticipated responses which could lead to new hypothesis being formed. This was achieved by open questions and follow up questions to ascertain the subjective views of the participant.

Flick describes the elements of semi-standardized interviews as open questions, theory-driven/hypothesis directed questions and confrontational questions (2009, p.218).

I devised my interview schedule such that different kinds of questions were part of my structure. Open questions were used, especially at the beginning, to make the interviewee feel at ease. They were also used at other times during the interview to ensure that the interviewee was able to share their thoughts they had about the matter discussed. On occasion theory-driven questions were asked in a very directive manner, e.g. about post-traumatic growth. Confrontational questions were only used when a good rapport had been build up with the participant, mostly towards the middle/end of the interview, so that the co-operation of the interviewee was not in jeopardy.

I understood semi-structured interviews as Drever describes:

> 'The name 'semi-structured' means that the interviewer sets up a general structure by deciding in advance what ground is to be covered and what main questions are to be asked. This leaves the detailed structure to be worked out during the interview. The person interviewed can answer at some length in his or her own words, and the interviewer responds using prompts, probes and follow-up questions to get the interviewee to clarify or expand on the answers' (Drever 2003, p.1).

Semi-structured interviews offered me the opportunity to ask the same questions to all staff and all young people, and ensure that the general topics I wanted to explore were covered, but it also gave me the flexibility to respond to the interviewee, and to further explore the ideas and themes they brought up in the interview. I was able to adapt my questions to the

interviewee, and to respond appropriately when questions triggered an emotional response.

I am fully aware that the type of interview I chose had an impact on the data I was able to collect. The structure meant that I still remained, on the whole, fairly focused on my research questions, whilst open ended interviews for example would have enabled me to explore wider issues that participants may have wanted to discuss. This, however, was a deliberate choice, as within my research project I was not able to expand on wider issues as I needed to keep within timescales. For example, it would have been interesting to explore further young people's views on religion and spirituality within the context of the experience of the death of a school friend, but this was not possible within the boundaries of my research project: 'The type of interview selected should therefore be aligned with the strategy, purposes and the research questions,…' (Punch 2009, p.146).

I took some notes during the interviews, however, I tended to take fewer notes as the interview went on as I wanted to pay my full attention to the interviewee, which I was prevented from doing so whilst writing. In the end I did not use my notes for the purpose of analysis as they were not complete and added little additional information to the recordings of the interviews.

3.8.1 Gathering data and participants in the study

Death of a child at junior school

Following a meeting with a small number of interested staff, I provided an information pack to all of them.

I undertook interviews with four staff, two teachers and two members of office staff. These interviews were conducted July to October 2010. All staff

chose to be interviewed at school, and I saw them at the end of the school day, as the headteacher wanted to ensure staff would not be upset after their interview when they had to continue to work/ teach.

I had written to all parents of children at the junior school with an information pack, and a number of parents gave permission for their children to be interviewed. Young people also agreed. One pupil attended a different high school to the one where the headteacher consequently objected to my research, and I arranged to interview her. Although she had initially indicated she wanted to be seen at school, when I got in touch with the family they preferred me to visit her at home. When I met with Mum and the young person in September 2010, I was advised that the girl, although she had initially agreed, was now reluctant to see me. However, her Mum told me she had persuaded her daughter to do the interview as she wanted to be supportive of my work. I found out that her Mum worked for an Early Years Setting and had previously attended a training session I had delivered. I do not think this had any influence on what was said during the interview, but I suspect that the interview would not have taken place without Mum's persuasion and positive views in relation to my research. Children should have had completely free choice of taking part in my interviews, but unfortunately this had not been the case here.

Young adults who experienced the death of a school friend:

I communicated with young people via facebook and texts. They were all given various options of location for their interview; their home, a neutral place near their home location to be identified, or the main local authority offices. Grace, Luke and Veronica chose to be interviewed at the local authority office, whilst Oscar wanted to be interviewed at home.

Interviews lasted 30 minutes to 1 hour, and were recorded, via a variety of means. My main recording equipment was a small digital recorder, but I also used some back up, mainly my mobile phone and my laptop. I am glad I did, as in one interview I had not pressed the recording button of the digital recorder, and therefore relied on my backup recording on my mobile telephone. I did not take any notes during this interview as from my previous experience it was difficult for me to respond appropriately to the participant whilst writing.

The interviews involved active listening, paying close attention to the subject. There was a balance of allowing the young people talk about the things they had a need to talk about, but also to remain focused on my research questions.

Interview questions were pre-set (see Appendix), but many clarifying questions were also asked, which varied from participant to participant.

3.8.2 Summary of participants

In my first group of interviews, which relate to the death of a Y6 pupil (Anna) following an accident, I undertook interviews of two teachers (Heather and Felicity), two members of support staff (school secretaries) (Doris and Christina) and one Y8 pupil (Anita) from my original study.

Heather was Anna's teacher, whilst Felicity was another Y6 teacher. As the school only had two year 6 classes, they worked together for some subjects, mainly maths and english. Heather and Felicity were both interviewed at school, about two years after Anna's death.

Two members of support staff agreed to talk to me; they were working in the school office. I had hoped the learning support assistants working in the two classes would also take part in the interviews, but neither of them volunteered to do so. One of them felt that she wanted to put that painful experience behind her:

'I am very sorry, but I do not feel able to talk about the incident last year. It has been a year and I feel that now the anniversary has passed I want to let the memories settle. I realise that this is not helpful to you, but I am going to be selfish and put my feelings first.' (Email, September 2010)

I interviewed Anita, who was thirteen years old, at home, with her mother present, about two and a half years after Anna's death. Anita was in Anna's class; she was part of a small group of five children who were due to go up to the same high school (out of catchment).

In my second group of interviews, which relate to the death of a Y10 pupil (Melvin) with leukaemia, I interviewed three of Melvin's friends, Grace, Veronica and Luke, and one friend of Melvin's brother, Oscar. Young people were interviewed six years after Melvin's death. (For a timeline of the research and interviews, please see Appendix 11.1)

3.9 Data analysis:

I transcribed all semi-structured interviews verbatim from digital recordings, which took a considerable amount of time, as I had little experience in doing this. Although it is sometimes suggested that it is not necessary to transcribe all that is said in the interviews (Flick et al. 2007), I felt that as I had not enough experience with analysing data; I needed to transcribe everything, so I could see all of the data. Also, although I had some idea of the codes I wanted to apply, by transcribing all the data, I found interesting aspects which I had not initially considered in detail.

I also found the process of transcribing the interviews helped to gain greater familiarisation with the data, and I was able to start thinking about the themes which were emerging.

3.9.1 Ethical considerations during data analysis

Approaching analysis in an ethical way, research should be worthwhile and have a positive impact, 'your research should produce some positive and identifiable benefits' (Flick et al. 2007, p.101). It was extremely important to me to keep this in mind during my analysis and to consider what new knowledge my study could contribute, which could be of benefit to children and young people experiencing the death of a school friend.

3.9.2 Coding/Thematic analysis

I had initially set out to explore what effective actions schools can take to help young people following the death of a school friend. As participants changed from children who had experienced the death of a friend two years earlier, to young adults who experienced the death several years ago, the content of the collected data changed and therefore partly the focus. I still wanted to ensure that the result of my research would contribute to an

improved understanding of what helps young people following the death of a friend, particularly in relation to the support schools offer.

The coding I initially applied included this focus, but as new themes emerged I was excited about how the data could contribute to a better understanding of school support and long-term effects, which could potentially have a positive impact on the support which is offered to young people by professionals like me.

The analysis of the interviews was conducted as follows:

1. I examined the transcripts I made, wrote comments, important points, interesting or unusual comments, as well as potential themes in the margins. I looked out for repetition, I read all transcripts several times. Coding was undertaken in a systemic way across each transcription set.

2. I then began searching for themes, initially looking at each data set, and then considering the data sets as a whole. Some themes related quite closely to the research questions and the ones I had identified at the beginning of my research, based on my own experience as well as previous research I had read about, which can be described as a concept-driven coding. But I also intended to be open and consider the data without pre-conceived ideas, and new themes emerged from my data. This can be considered as data-driven coding (Flick et al. 2007, pp.44-45).

3. I then defined the emerging themes. I identified categories and sub-categories under which the themes could be analysed. I then

identified the major themes which emerged. I went back to the data, and subsequently consulted the literature to see how it related to my themes. These were common across a number of participants, as well as being identified in the literature, and several also appeared in the analysis of social networking sites. I was expecting some of those themes, for example 'remembering the person who died'.

The concept-driven overarching categories in my study were 'school supporting young people', 'young people supporting each other', and 'teaching death and bereavement in the curriculum'.

Other themes were completely data driven, informed by the literature, e.g. communicating with the deceased, which I was aware of in social networking sites and through the literature, but I had not expected this to feature in the interviews as well. Data driven overarching themes included 'post-traumatic growth', and in particular 'continuing bonds'. Towards the end of the thesis I added another theme, 'disenfranchised grief'.

4. Once all the themes were identified, all transcribed interviews were read again to check the themes that had been identified in each interview and to see whether any had been missed out.

5. During the writing of the data chapters, with the help of my supervisor, some adjustments were made to the naming of over-arching themes and I went back to the data to check that this was in line with what I had found. The analysis of the data was also related back to the research question and the literature.

3.9.3 Validity

The issue of validity is important to consider, in particular in small-scale studies like mine.

In his paper, 'Examining the validity structure of qualitative research', Johnson (1997) describes how validity issues can be addressed. He sets out the three types of validity which are usually considered within qualitative research studies: 'descriptive validity', 'interpretive validity' and 'theoretical validity', as well as the validity types usually looked at within quantitative research, but also often discussed within qualitative research, 'internal validity', and 'external validity'.

It is important to discuss issues of validity, as research should be 'plausible, credible, trustworthy and therefore, defensible' (Johnson 1997, p.282). Being a reflexive researcher is an integral part of this, to which I have already referred in the previous section 'the researcher and her research'.

Descriptive validity

Descriptive validity is important in relation to whether I describe and write about what I actually saw and heard. This could be obtained by involving others in research, so other people could cross check what was observed and what was written. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity of working with another colleague. I have tried to address this partly by giving my supervisor a selection of participants' quotes from the interviews. She could then see how this related to what I wrote about in my data chapters.

Interpretative validity

Interpretative validity refers to capturing what the participant meant (in as far as one is able to determine) when they spoke about various themes. It is

important to accurately understand what was said, which should result in no or few misinterpretations taking place. 'The key here is that the interpretations are not based on the researcher's perspective but that of the participant' (Thomson 2011, p.79).

There are a couple of ways in which the researcher can ensure that interpretative validity is kept to. One of these would be involving the participants. However, I did not feel I had the capacity to be able to do this, so participants were not involved in reviewing my findings. The other way is to include quotes which help the reader engage with the participant, and see for themselves that what was said relates to the conclusions I have made, which I did. On several occasions during the interviews I checked back with the participants to ensure that I understood what they meant.

Theoretical validity

Theoretical validity is about ensuring that the theory I derived from the data I obtained does actually relate to my data, and is therefore 'credible and defensible' (Johnson 1997, p.286). I needed to ensure that the conclusions I have drawn can be explained by my data, and is not based entirely on my professional experience, reading of the literature, or other possible influences. Again, there are different strategies researchers could use to ensure that theoretical validity is complied with, for example by involving other researchers or by collecting additional data after analysing the first set of data. Again, I have not been able to do this, and therefore need to accept that the validity of my findings is not as strong as in other studies where this has been done. However, I hope the reader does see that I have given a coherent explanation of what I have found.

Internal validity

Internal validity ensures that the conclusions which the researcher has drawn from her findings, in particular to cause and effect, are accurate. As my study was small I have only drawn a few conclusions in this area. For example, I could have concluded that children and young people coped better because they experienced good support at school. However, I did not feel I could say this, as I did not have enough data from which I could draw this kind of conclusion. I would have liked to say more about cause and effect, especially as I want to improve the support which is offered to children and young people, as I work in this field, but I do not discuss this. However, by talking to children and young people I was able to write about their experiences and their views, and this understanding will hopefully have an impact on services.

External validity

I think it is helpful to consider the specific circumstances in which my research took place. I had hoped to interview about ten young people who had experienced the death of their friend a couple of years earlier, and four or five members of staff. Even then, my example would have been quite small. In the end I was only able to speak to four staff and five young people.

My new sample does represent the young people with whom I am usually involved; these are school friends of young people who died. I therefore do think they represent well the group I wanted to research from the outset. I take heart from the following comment about quality over quantity in terms of sampling: 'A well-chosen, but relatively small sample is far more useful than a larger but badly chosen group of respondents' (David et al. 2011).

However, I am able to give examples and show certain findings which are common across the young people to whom I spoke. As I am undertaking this

research as a professional doctorate, I will be adding my professional knowledge and experience, which I have gained working in this field for several years, to the results of my research. I acknowledge that these are based on my personal experiences, but I believe they form a valuable contribution to the data from my study.

Summary of validity issues

I am fully aware of the limitations of my study, and I accept that my conclusions need to be considered within the context of this study involving a small number of participants. I do feel that I have some important findings to show, and that my study contributes to new knowledge in this field. My conclusions could have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people bereaved of a school friend, and will hopefully encourage further studies to be undertaken.

3.9.4 Analysis of social networking sites

I analysed two different R.I.P. sites, both relating to the young people who died in the two schools. This analysis took place to enrich the data I had obtained from the interviews, and was therefore concept driven. I applied the concepts and themes that had emerged from the interviews, e.g. social support including expression of feelings, remembering and continuing bonds. I printed screenshots of the sites and then analysed the available data. In addition to analysing the content of what was written, I also considered linguistic features, e.g. mode of address. I have written more about this in the findings section.

3.9.5 Privacy of participants and data protection

In line with data protection protocols I will not be disclosing any of the personal details of the participants in my study. However, due to the nature

of my research and the small number of people taking part, it may be possible that someone who knows the schools and the people involved could identify individual staff and young people. This was discussed with all participants, and all of them agreed that they still wanted to go ahead with their interviews, and they agreed to quotes from their interviews appearing in my thesis.

4. Research Findings

This chapter presents the key issues arising from my fieldwork. There are six sections here of varying length and discussion but all are vital to the picture that they contribute to.

The first section starts in school, focusing on staff roles and relationships with students and the practices (remembering the deceased, practical support) and ethos (being honest, sharing) that help support bereaved young people. The second moves to look at young people themselves, their relationships amongst their peer groups and salient features (laughter, sharing memories, social networking) that helped them cope. The third section takes a reflective approach to understanding the concept of 'continuing bonds' as it manifests in the lives of the young people. The fourth theme is that of post-traumatic growth as narrated by young people in their reflections over the death and their subsequent challenges and growth. In the fifth section I focus on the concept of 'disenfranchised grief' and question its place in the literature based on the context of this study. Finally, I return to broader issues of curriculum and pedagogy (policy, research literature, practice and opinions) regarding the teaching of bereavement in schools, including views of young people and staff in my study.

4.1 The role of staff: relationships, practices and ethos in providing support

4.1.1.Staff roles and relationships

This section discusses the support offered by schools in my study, following the death of a pupil. It does so in relation to the sorts of practices highlighted in the literature on this topic.

Many local authorities in the U.K. provide guidance to schools on how they should deal with a death in the school community, but little research is available despite calls for more evaluative and explorative research (Servaty-Seib 2009). This is not surprising as practical and ethical issues make it a prolonged and risky project to undertake.

The purpose of this section is not to focus on what needed to be done in relation to 'crisis management', but rather on what young people experienced as helpful, or what teachers observed as being helpful to children. This differs from the literature on crises management, where the focus is on managing the school, as well as how schools should respond to individual children when they are affected by a family bereavement. In my interviews teachers spoke in detail about the support they offered to children, whilst young people spoke about the support they received from school, about the support that was offered to pupils in general and whether or not they found it personally helpful.

The literature about staff supporting children and young people in schools focuses almost exclusively on the support offered by teachers (Dyregrov, A. and Dyregrov, K. 2008; Lowton et al. 2003). However, from my experience as Critical Incident Co-ordinator, I am aware that teaching assistants, school secretaries, midday supervisors and other school staff make a significant contribution to the support that is offered to children. As part of my research

I had hoped to be able to speak to the support assistants in the primary school, but unfortunately they declined to participate. One support assistant emailed to explain her reasons: she was still struggling to come to terms with what had happened and did not yet feel ready to talk about it. This provides one indication of the extent to which support staff may be emotionally involved when supporting children through these difficult times.

Most of the young people interviewed found the support offered to them by the school immensely helpful. They talked about how supportive all staff were, whether it was teachers, school secretaries, lunchtime staff or even the groundskeeper, who talked to upset children who were on the field:

'Every single member of staff that the school employed were fantastic.'
(Grace)

Very little research considers the role of support staff in providing support to bereaved children. Allen and Ashbaker (2004) considered the role of paraprofessionals in crisis prevention. (Paraprofessionals are described as staff 'who are often called teacher aides or instructional assistants' (2004, p.141). In the U.K. equivalent staff would be teaching assistants.) They argued that often these professionals work in the same community they live in, and therefore have an additional motivation to support the community. They also argue that these members of school staff often have more time available to support children, as they are not engaged in teaching. They call upon schools to utilise all staff to support children in a crisis. In the schools I studied, support staff were able to provide this support. Veronica felt that she could talk to all staff:

'There was always someone to talk to.'

Support staff, like teaching assistants, would walk around school and offer support to those young people who wanted to talk, being proactive:

'They were quite good at recognising, and also picking up if you needed to be left alone.' (Veronica)

Young people talked about what support was offered, as well as the way in which it was offered:

'They were all, like, a bit more gentle, with anyone, not as demanding, you know what I mean, they all did their bit, and make everyone feel comfortable, and just be in a happy environment. I think they have done well.' (Oscar)

It was important to young people that staff were empathic, and aware of how the children were feeling. Staff were able to anticipate when young people wanted company, and wanted to talk, and when they wanted to be on their own.

Young people were very positive about the support received:

'Our school in particular could not have done more, they did everything they could have done, they arranged everything so quickly for us, they found out the evening, same as we did, and the next day everything was in place so that we could be there.' (Grace)

All professionals within the school were involved in providing support to pupils, and young people valued being able to speak to any member of staff. One young person listed a number of staff with different roles in the school, all of whom offered to support young people. This seems a very important point to me, as the literature very rarely refers to staff other than teachers. Klicker (2000), in his writing about staff responsibilities in a Critical Incident, writes about support staff: 'It is not unusual for support staff members in a

school to develop a good relationship with some students. They may be the people with whom a student feels most comfortable talking' (Klicker 2000, p.48). I wonder whether the role of support staff is not discussed in the literature because a great amount of literature is not U.K. based, and support staff, like teaching assistants, may not work in schools and/or play the significant role that they play in U.K. schools. In the U.K. the number of teaching assistants doubled between 1997 and 2005 and today make up a significant proportion of staff in the schools' workforce (Groom 2006, p.199). I had hoped to investigate the role of support staff in more detail, but as I was unable to recruit learning support assistants to my study I can make relatively few comments. Further research is needed in this area, as support staff seem to play a significant role in bereavement support in U.K. schools.

One of the primary school teachers talked in detail about the importance of having a positive relationship with the children prior to the death of another pupil. She felt that this relationship, as well as good PSHE teaching, laid a good foundation for supporting the children through this difficult time.

Positive relationships and empathic teachers are key when discussing death. Staff need specific attitudes: 'For teachers to be empathic when talking to children about death, they need to have a particular sensitivity towards children's search for meaning …' (Adams 2009, p.15).

The teachers felt that the children were used to talking about their emotions and feelings, and they were used to showing respect to each other and listening to each other. All of these skills helped them, when they were dealing with the death of their school friend. Teachers had worked with children throughout the school to foster children's emotional intelligence:

'They had all the basics, through the curriculum, through the entire school'. (Heather)

Young people talked about the positive relationship they had with individual members of staff, for example the RE teacher, staff in the SEN department, and how they were able to speak to the individuals they trusted. On the other hand, another pupil spoke about the fact that even though she did not get on well with certain members of staff, on that day their differences were put aside, and staff offered help to young people who needed it, no matter what their previous relationship had been.

4.1.2 Staff support on the first day back

When children are affected by the death of a school peer, they show the expected reactions such as grief, sadness and anger. School staff in general are known to offer support to enable the expression of those feelings (Leaman 1995). There still remains though the practical logistics of progressing through the school day whilst also having to deal with their own emotions. In terms of organising the first day back, the literature emphasises the importance of maintaining normal routine. Keeping to normal structures is seen as key for children and young people who may otherwise be in turmoil: 'The key to working through this first day is to make the day as normal as possible with regard to routines and familiar schedules. Structure, order and stability are critical' (Carroll et al. 2010 p.79). Whilst acknowledging that time needs to be given for pupils to express their feelings and adjust to what happened, providing normality and routine - with its sense of belonging and familiarity in an uncertain atmosphere is often quoted as being helpful to pupils when they are affected by bereavement in school. 'But it is also important to establish normal routines so that pupils feel secure' (Brown 1999, p.129).

At secondary school, on account of the large size of the year group, not everyone had a close relationship with the person who died. Hence structured lessons were offered to those young people who found this helpful, or who were not directly affected by the death.

However, young people were also given the option to have time out from lessons and spend time with friends and staff.

In the primary school, the day on which children found out that their friend had died started with unstructured class time:

'No, no because like everyone was all upset and everything and we didn't do any work for the rest of the day because they told us in the morning. We didn't do any work for ages, actually, after that, because, no one really wanted to do any work.' (Anita)

'And then it was just a case of going with the flow.' (Felicity)

Staff, in particular teaching assistants, showed flexibility and provided an individual response to children.

Keeping to routines and normality helped both staff and pupils to deal with what happened. This applied to everyone in the school, staff and children alike:

'I mean I just felt the most important thing was to carry on as normal and just provide the service we always provide.' (Christina)

After a while, the teachers gently introduced certain subjects again, like art and Physical Education (P.E.), before building the timetable to its normal

structure. This helped all the children, and was particularly important for those who did not know Anna, the deceased student, that well.

Even when young people wanted to be in lessons, teachers understood when they were not able to follow the lesson as usual, as young people found it hard to concentrate:

'Teachers were flexible about the work that should have been completed, so that there was no pressure.' (Veronica)

Young people were also able to leave lessons when they felt they needed to.

When a friend dies, unsurprisingly, young people may not always feel like going to school to do academic work, but many still want to see their school friends. One young person felt strongly about the expectation that the school conveyed to the young people - the school explicitly said that they wanted to be there for the young people, and that they wanted everyone to be in school - whether they felt like taking part in lessons, or just being there with their friends*:*

'We want you in school, where you are looked after, but we don't expect you to do anything today.'(paraphrased by Grace)

Part of offering flexibility was also allowing parents to support their children if they needed that support, in particular in primary school. Children were given the opportunity to phone their parents. Some of them spoke on the phone and gave their children reassurance. Others came into school to comfort their children, giving their child a hug, and sharing tears with them. However, all parents went home again, and left their child at school, even though the children had been allowed to go home. Children preferred to stay with their peers:

'It was the bond that that class had, to each other.'(Felicity)

A bereavement counsellor (Cranwell 2003) reports in his study that children who had experienced a bereavement found support from friends helpful, and this was the main motivation for children to be in school after the death of a parent. Dopp also states that peer support 'can serve a protective function and relate to improved adjustment' (Dopp 2012, p.56), although in parentally bereaved children that peer support is not always available. I explore this in greater depth in the section about young people supporting each other.

The children and young people in my study indicated that their schools got the balance between flexibility and structure right for them. Key features were that staff were sensitive to the needs of groups as well as individual children, and responded in a way that was helpful to them.

4.1.3 Remembering the deceased

Grief theories, like Worden's task-based model (1996), refer to the fact that bereaved people need to be able to accept the reality of the loss. Remembering the person who died and talking about the person in the past tense, is part of that. Engaging young people in activities of remembering the person who died seems an important part of staff responsibilities. Balk reports in his study of college students that 80% had remembered things they had done with the person who died, 'reminiscing was common to the majority of the students' (Balk 1997, p.214). I wanted to find out in my study how staff supported children in remembering the person who died and whether young people themselves perceived this as helpful.

Primary school teachers in my study spoke about giving the children an opportunity to remember the person who died in their classes, whilst in

secondary school this was done in particular lessons. In both schools the whole school provided opportunities for young people to remember, both on an individual level, and as a community in special assemblies.

In primary school, teachers spoke about how they enabled the children to remember their friend by actively doing something that they found helpful, e.g. making a book, writing messages, and remembering her. According to one of the teachers, the children were an active part of that process:

'I do think it helped. It helped because they wanted to do it. They had done all those pictures and drawings and we channelled it into a book for the parents. We didn't say: now we are going to sit down and write how we felt about her, it was very natural.' (Heather)

Often children took the initiative:

'Some were starting to get scraps of paper out, and drawing, so we did decide we were going to make a scrap book.' (Felicity)

This was echoed by the young person I interviewed:

'We made this book for Anna's Mum and Dad, that's in Anna's room at the moment, it's got, like, memories in it and things like that.' (Anita)

One of the pupils talked about making a memory box, into which children could place things that the deceased girl had done or had liked. Children chose a song she liked for the leavers' disco, and they included this in the plans that were already made.

High school pupils also talked about opportunities that their school gave them to remember the young person who died. A room was available where children could go to quietly remember the deceased boy. Johns describes

this kind of strategy as being helpful for young people: 'It is good practice to have a pre-designated room where students can go for emotional support and relief from the classroom when a crisis situation is new' (2010, p.80).

However, the way that the school provided this did not work for a number of pupils. They talked about how they did not use this facility which was described as dark, with candles in, and a picture of the young person who died. One young person said this about it:

'I found it all a bit weird.' (Veronica)

Another young person who did not find this helpful described it like this:

'I do remember that there was a room set up for it, and it was, it was really morbid, it wasn't very nice, it was a black room, there were candles, and it was like, not dull music, but like it was like a funeral parlour, and that's not how I wanted to remember him, there were people in there, sitting in there, but that's not the right way to remember him, that's just really daft and horrible'. (Luke)

It seems that although schools need to provide opportunities to remember the person who died, they need to consider that young people may use different ways to remember. It seems the room mentioned above was used by some young people, but it was not the right way for everyone to remember their friend.

Another young person recognised that other people may have benefitted from it:

'Everybody is different, so that obviously helped some people, but it did not me.' (Veronica)

As I was in this particular school to offer support, I remember the room these young people talked about. I know that it was used by some individual young people, quietly, throughout the day. Oscar, who was the best friend of Melvin's brother, talked about using the room for quiet time and to pay tributes:

'You could also have alone time, sort of dwell, or pay your tributes.' (Oscar)

Grace talked about the long-term support the school offered, which included further opportunities to remember, even some time afterwards, e.g. a video at their final assembly, at the prom, etc:

'It's things like, the care that they showed us carried on, until the very end of our school time. They never said, 'snap out of it, it's been eight months, if you need to talk come to us, we are right here'. (Grace)

It seems that schools can and should provide children and young people with the opportunity to remember their friend. I write later about how remembering was also an important factor in young people supporting each other. Schools are in the position where they set an example to the children and young people. When they allow discussion, activities and opportunities to remember the person who died, where they are allowed to express themselves and be open about what happened, they seem to be enabling children and young people to start their journey through their grief. Young people found different strategies helpful, which suggests it is important that schools offer different options, and are able to respond to children's individual needs.

4.1.4 Practical support

Teachers talked about some of the practical support required such as how to deal with 'the empty chair'. This primary school teacher decided that she

would take action without consulting the children, as she did not want to burden them with the decision of what to do with it. She considered the impact on the children when they came back from lunch; she thought it would be hard on the ones who were sharing the table, to come back to an empty space. She decided to move the furniture around and make the layout of the room completely different, so that all children moved. Some schools leave the space until an appropriate point, for example if the school holidays are close, then the start of a new (half) term might be an appropriate point. A. Dyregrov though suggests that it is better if the chair is left empty for some time: 'When a child has died it is best to let his or her desk remain empty throughout the school year. This marks the fact that the memory of the dead child is present in the classroom' (1991, p.161).

In my experience this strategy is often very hard for the child who usually sat next to the child who died. Usually, tables are moved around earlier than the start of a new school year as suggested by A. Dyregrov, but after a discussion with the children in the class. Other reminders in the classroom, like the child's tray, his or her work on display around the classroom, are left for longer, before being removed following discussion with the children.

The primary school considered how children were prepared for the funeral. The local vicar was asked to come into school, and he supported the children by encouraging and enabling them to ask questions about the funeral. He was the same vicar who held the funeral later, so the children were already familiar with the process.

At high school, young people talked about other practical issues that they were supported with. Luke and his friends wanted to get a card for Melvin's family, so staff allowed them to leave the school premises to go to the shop

and purchase the card, which was signed by him and his friends. This was very important for these young people, and they valued this opportunity.

Grace provided another example of how staff offered practical support. As the children spent time with their friends because they were feeling upset, some of them did not get to the canteen in time for lunch. Staff anticipated this, and held some food back for them:

'When it was lunchtime, the ladies knew that we weren't going to be going in with the rest of the school, so they kept some back for us.' (Grace)

Such practical strategies may seem minor or relatively insignificant, but they were considered to be important by the young people who were mourning their friend. That some young people remembered this kind of detail even after six years may seem remarkable - and it highlights the difference that staff made and the care they all showed towards the grieving young people. Staff were remembered as empathic and thoughtful and they seemed to have considered what would be most helpful to children and young people, either pro-actively or in their response to the children.

4.1.5 Being open, honest and sharing emotions

Teachers, children and young people talked about how being open and honest helped them in coming to terms with the death of their school friend. One of the teachers emphasised that children were allowed to just be:

'There wasn't a taboo way of behaving.' (Felicity)

She describes how different children behaved in different ways, all of them acceptable. Children were allowed to ask questions and their teacher Felicity talked about being very open with them. Being honest was a significant factor in the support that was offered. Felicity mentioned this several times

during her interview. Both teachers talked about sharing emotions, and they felt that this helped the children:

'How often does a teacher show lots of genuine emotion with children? They don't… they knew me more as a person, .. they got a different side to me, and they responded to it. And they learnt from it.' (Heather)

They felt that as the children saw that their teacher was also emotionally affected, they had permission to express their emotions, too.

Young people realised that their teachers understood, because they too were affected. It was the whole community was in grief:

'We were all crying, it's not a problem really, everyone was upset, and they are talking to us, and they are helping us, as much as you can on the first day, which was just wonderful.' (Grace)

Young people felt that teachers treated them as adults. One of the young people, who did not feel that he relied on any school support, said that teachers were *'trying to be sympathetic' (Luke)*.

He did not want to be supported by school staff. He was very clear that this choice did not relate to staff approaches:

'You don't want to pour your emotions out to them, but I don't think there is anything more they could have done, they did what they could.' (Luke)

Again, this emphasises the diversity of needs of young people, and the importance of responding to individual needs in specific ways.

Chowns, who talked to adolescents who were facing parental death, found that the young people wanted teachers to be honest and understanding. It

was important that young people felt supported, which could be achieved in different ways, depending on the needs of the individual child: 'for some, being left alone or given space was helpful, while for others, talking and being heard was supportive' (2013, p.28).

4.1.6 Providing physical comfort

I introduce this section by sharing my professional experience when I was recently offering support to a high school following the sudden death of one of its pupils. Members from the Critical Incident Team, which I manage, were offering support: 'Can I give you a hug?', a secondary pupil asked one of her teachers when her friend died. The teacher replied: 'I am not sure'. However, members of the Critical Incident Team had been present earlier, when the headteacher had explicitly said: 'Today you are allowed to hug the children.' They were therefore able to reassure the teacher that the headteacher had cleared this 'out of the normal' practice and given permission. This incident provides the background to this section, where I present my findings on staff offering physical comfort to children. This issue is common in primary and secondary schools when someone from the school community has died.

Schools have to take the safeguarding of children very seriously. As a result, many of them have a 'touch' policy, as did the primary school where the teachers worked. Some excerpts from this policy help understand the general school practice and context better:

> 'Hugging'
>
> At this school we encourage staff who are using touch for comfort or reward to use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limits the ability of the child to turn themselves into you.

'Lap-Sitting'

At our school we actively discourage lap-sitting. Children should be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example the school hand hold or hug. If a child attempts to sit on your lap, explain to them that this is not what we do here, and ask them to sit next to you if it is appropriate.' (School 2009)

However, the policy also states this:

'At times, children may be in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above. If this happens, please ensure that you have informed a senior member of staff to protect yourself. You may be asked to make a note of this, this will be in order to record and monitor the amount of times the student is doing this to staff to see whether this is a 'controlling' behaviour, or whether the child is displaying distressed behaviour regularly.'

Teachers are aware that they can face serious consequences if they do not keep to policies. There are many examples of this, shared amongst teachers and a common one is the example of a teacher in Winchester who was dismissed and banned by the GTC (General Teaching Council) following complaints from colleagues about him that he had allowed children to hug him and was seen with a child sitting on his lap. The GTC ruled that his behaviour amounted to 'a breach of the standards of propriety expected, and that his behaviour demonstrated a failure to establish and maintain appropriate and professional boundaries in his relationships with children in his care' (Leach 2011).

The guidance for safer working practice (Akerman et al. 2011) advises staff that physical contact may be appropriate, in particular in relation to young

pupils, in response to a particular need, and it should be of limited duration and appropriate to their age. It warns that physical contact can be misconstrued.

However, the guidance also allows for staff making a professional judgement, 'there may be occasions and circumstances in which adults have to make decisions or take action in the best interest of the child or young person, which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists' (Akerman et al. 2011).

In the primary school studied, physical comfort was offered to the children because they wanted hugs and cuddles. This was challenging for staff who needed to ensure that school policies were adhered to and that they protected themselves against potential allegations. Teachers described how children asked for hugs and wanted to sit on their lap:

'And a lot of it, it puts the schools' touch policy to test. We were all very aware of what is and isn't acceptable. You had that, the balance of keeping yourself safe, and safeguarding your children, and being human at the same time, there was a lot of maternal instinct I think.' (Heather)

Providing that physical support, which a child needs in this kind of situation, was one of the greatest challenges to staff. This member of staff was unsure whether she had done the right thing, she was concerned that she should not be hugging children and allow them to sit on her lap, but on the other hand she knew that this was what the children needed:

'But going round in the back of my mind was, I could be in serious trouble, I can't stop myself from doing it, because I wouldn't, because that's what the children wanted.' (Felicity)

It was clear in the interview that the teacher felt she had done the right thing by offering the children physical comfort. On reflection, she wondered though whether this behaviour would get her into trouble. Brown states that teachers should be empathic, and find out what the child needs. Supporting children is about' being present and in touch with the child at their point of need' (Brown 1999, p.90). It seems to me that the primary teachers responded to the children's need for physical comfort.

It seems that information about how children's need for physical comfort should be addressed in schools is insufficient. I have not come across much literature where this has been mentioned. I wonder whether this is because it is seen as a very problematic subject to address, as children and young people need to be safeguarded, as well as responded to appropriately by teachers. In my research I have not been able to find out more from the students' perspectives as the young people I talked to did not discuss this issue in any depth.

Klicker writes about children's needs for physical closeness. 'Physical closeness such as hugging, touching and handholding are very important to most bereaved children' (Klicker 2000, p.63). However, he does not give any details of how this can be achieved in contemporary schooling, where teachers are not usually permitted to provide that physical comfort to children on a day-to-day basis.

The dilemma of 'touch' is extensively discussed in the paper by Piper (2003), who describes a very similar situation to that faced by my interviewees: 'A male teacher in a secondary school described how he had responded to a girl crying because of the death of her grandfather by putting his arm round her shoulder when accompanying her to the next lesson. Whilst his actions were

spontaneous, he found himself panicking, and immediately went to tell a female member of staff what he had done and why' (Piper 2003, pp.884-885). Staff know what is needed and want to respond in the right way, by offering physical comfort. Piper, as well as the staff I was supporting, described this as an instinctive reaction. However, staff are too aware of the rules within policies and guidelines, and the threat of being accused of improper behaviour. 'A moral panic has led to the production of guidelines that are concerned with protecting children from abuse and adults from false allegations, but where the needs of children are lost' (Piper 2003, p.890). In my view the issue of touch and hugs should be raised when supporting distressed children. As part of my professional role I have made representations to add to the current guidelines (School 2009), as I feel insufficient emphasis is placed on allowing staff to respond positively to the needs of distressed children by offering physical comfort.

4.2 Young people supporting each other

The context of young people supporting each other is one that is coloured by the influences of school, home and peer groups. I had hoped that this study would add greater depth to what is known about pre-teen children supporting each other, but details are limited because I only have the information from staff and one young person from the primary school. This section therefore focuses on the support that teenagers offered each other.

In adolescence, stable peer relationships are extremely important for young people. As children grow older the time they spend with peers increases, in particular leisure time. The importance of friends is a major influence in adolescent behaviour and decision-making (Hurrellmann 1989; Dopp 2012). Cotterell (2007) writes about young people choosing to spend more time with each other. In addition to spending time in person he includes time spent communicating via personal mobile phones. I presume this also encompasses communicating to each other via a range of programmes across diverse electronic platforms (like chatting over internet and social networking sites whether through smart phones or computers).

Young people talked about the support they received from their parents as well as their friends. This is in line with the understanding that parents remain a very important part in young people's lives, during their teenage years (Bø 1989). However, Cotterell also states: 'A word of caution is that the preference for proximity to peers rather than parents does not eliminate parents as providers of deeper forms of comfort, reassurance and support' (2007, p.22).

Although both family members and peer are important to young people, the scenario of the death of a friend has some features that are different to the

experience of death in general. In the scenario of peer bereavement, young people share the experience; it is common to them all in a way that they cannot share with their family members. This section focuses on the support that young people derive from each other - exploring the meaning of relationships, talking with friends, providing emotional support to each other and sharing memories. I will briefly touch on long-term support before writing about how young people use social networks for mutual support.

4.2.1 Relationships

In adolescence, young people establish meaningful and lasting relationships and 'peer relationships play an important part in adolescent development' (Brown et al. 2007). When these relationships have been formed, young people are able to rely on each other in difficult times. Felicity spoke of how the relationship that the children had with each other at the end of primary school (after they had been together for many years) made a difference to their ability to come to terms with what happened because of the bond the class had.

It seems that the positive quality of classroom relationships helped in dealing with the tragic event. Ryes describes this as the classroom emotional climate: 'The quality of social and emotional interactions in the classroom— between and among students and teachers (e.g., teacher and peer support, student autonomy)—creates the classroom emotional climate' (2012, p.700). Children in the study were supportive to each other because of the positive relationship they had previously developed. Felicity's classroom appeared to demonstrate the following features: 'Classrooms high in positive climate and low in negative climate are characterized by a sense of connectedness and belongingness, enjoyment and enthusiasm, and respect' (Reyes 2012, p.8).

This feeling of connectedness and belonging was also described by young people at high school. Veronica describes it like this:

'I don't know, the year group as a whole, came really together, and all the teachers, that knew Melvin, really came together'

Young people supported each other in spite of not always having a close relationship with each other. Grace talks about an encounter with a young person she had known since primary school:

'I remember, I walked out of my Mum's car, and there was a lad that I had known since primary school but we had never really got on, and the first thing he did was he gave me a really big hug, and that was, in a horrible way, it brought us really close together, because we had all gone through it, and people, that day, were just all in the same state, no matter what.'

It seems this year group became a social support network, a peer group that extended to over 100 people. Grace said that all of her year group came to school that day, because the young people wanted to support another:

'... so we could all be there with each other'.

She felt that Melvin's illness and death had brought them all together. Those peer relationships were obviously good across the year group, and formed a basis for their feeling of mutual belonging. In addition to the contribution that staff made, which I have discussed in the previous section, young people clearly indicated that they contributed to the sense of belonging. Goodenow (1993) found this in her research on classroom motivation: 'Peer relationships contribute to the adolescents' sense of classroom belonging' (in Cotterell 2007, p. 218).

Grace describes in detail what young people did to support each other, even if they were not close friends:

'If someone was crying in the toilets, even if it was someone who you have never spoken to before, someone would go up, put their arm around them, and take them off for a little chat, or even just a hug, or whatever they needed. '

In her research with young people in Gaza who were exposed to traumatic events, Punamaki (2004) found that a feeling of group identity and belonging was a protective factor for young people. It seems the young people I spoke to experienced this to a certain degree at their high school, too.

Luke felt that the girls were more affected, having days off school, but also receiving more support. He describes how the girls sought the support that was offered by the teachers, whilst he and his friends just wanted to be there for each other. Grace also describes how the boys met up at the park, played football and laughed together, giving each other companionship and an opportunity to talk if they wanted to. This mirrors my own experience, where boys seem to support each other by engaging in activities together, which then provides opportunities to talk as well. Silverman (1992) reports that boys are less likely than girls to talk about a death (parental) with their friends and Leaman (1995) found in his research that boys were less likely to express their emotions as freely as girls.

The reasons for the differences in emotional expression of boys and girls has not been explored in detail in this study. It may be that the differences reported by young people is a reflection of social and cultural expectations about masculinity and femininity rather than a set way for boys and girls to behave in these kind of situations. The literature which covers the area of

gender differences in regard to emotional responses is extensive and it is outside the scope of this study to consider it in greater detail.

Grace talks about how they supported each other in the coming days - they kept in touch regularly, via text or phone calls, meeting up at each other's house or at the park. The social support they offered each other during the school day extended much more into their time at home than usual.

4.2.2 Talking with friends

Adolescents rely on support from their friends in a variety of situations - but in particular during bereavement. Balk (1997) reports in his research that 87% of college students favoured a friend for discussion about a friend's death. Over 80% reported that they found talking to a friend very helpful or somewhat helpful.

Cotterell writes about the function of talk amongst friends: 'Talking or gossiping with a group of one's friends promotes group solidarity' (2007, p.86). This group solidarity is helpful when experiencing a traumatic experience.

All young people I spoke to talked about support from their friends. Anita, at her last year at primary school, talked about the importance of peer discussion:
'We talked to each other more than we talked to the teachers and all that.'

She felt that because they were all friends, they supported each other, and talking about it helped.

'Students may need to spend time in the processing phase of coping with traumatic loss with peers rather than with parents or other adults' (Carroll et al. 2010, p.80). Talking about grief, feelings and memories is helpful, and students with whom I spoke to seemed to agree with this. This seems to concur with the findings of Balk: 'Talking provides a means to maintain relationships and thereby to invest in attachments outside one's self' (1997, p.217). By talking to others, young people do not isolate themselves, instead maintaining social contacts.

I also received an email from a mother, whose son did not want to be part of the research. She wanted to share with me that her son mostly talked to friends about what happened, and that pupils deal with the incident by talking to each other. This stands in contrast to Rask, Kaunonen and Paunonen-Ilmonen's statement about the other research: 'Support from classmates seems to be rare. However, adolescents who had lost a close friend received almost no support in their grief' (2002, p.138). In their study they investigated what adolescents found helpful following the death of a loved one, which, amongst others, included friends.

When talking about a family death young people may be concerned that their friend might not understand, but in this instance young people within their friendship groups shared the same situation. It seems that the support young people were able to provide for each other stemmed from the very fact that they were all in the same situation, and this made a significant difference.

A. Dyregrov et al. (1999) also found in their study that young people found it easy to talk to friends about their loss. Some young people only talked to

their friends about it, so it is extremely important that there are opportunities for young people to talk to each other:

'It was just solely my friends, who I talked it through' (Luke)

Although children in the primary school were given the opportunity to speak to their parents, either in person on school premises, or on the telephone or by parents in the school, all the children wanted to stay in school and be with their friends to offer each other mutual support.

Although talking can be helpful, sometimes people also needed to have some quiet space. Grace talked about young people being good at recognising when someone wanted to talk, as well as when someone needed to be left alone:

'It was things like, if someone just wanted to be on their own for a little bit, you give them that bit of space, but if someone wanted to talk about it, there would be someone there.'

Being alone and not talking was also catered for; a room was set aside in school and was used by some pupils. It was important for some young people to have some quiet space, as well as having opportunities to be with friends.

4.2.3 Providing emotional support to each other

The bonds that the children had formed in their class, and in their year group, had an impact on how young people continued to be there for each other. Children offered each other support by chatting to each other, hugging each other, holding hands, and comforting each other. Heather describes that the children were a very close year group anyway:

'but they were particularly close after that.'

Children and young people offered each other emotional support through touch, building on the relationships they had already formed. Felicity, in describing how children supported each other, mentions the qualities of the children in the year group as such:

'a very touchy feely year group'.

School secretary Doris also observed the children giving each other physical comfort:

'I think most of them wanted to be together, you know, they sort of wanted to support each other, hugging each other, and crying.'

They hugged each other and put their heads on each other's shoulders. In addition to hugging each other individually, staff and young people talked about group hugs as well. Luke was unsure how much it helped to talk to friends, because it did not change anything, but he did think that it was comforting to be able to talk to someone who knew how you felt. He also described how young people cuddled each other:

'all my friends were, mass huddle, we cried when we found out, we all fell apart.'

Both Felicity and Heather describe how one young person provided emotional support in a practical way. He appointed himself in charge of tissues, and walked around offering tissues whenever they were needed, for a period of time:

'And for the first week or so, when there was an assembly, or so, are we going to mention Anna? Who wants a tissue? I can see just see him, going up and down.' (Felicity)

Veronica also felt that offering practical support to other children helped her cope, since the act of offering each other support was beneficial to the giver as well as the receiver:

'they just kind of got each other through it' (Heather)

4.2.4 Laughter as the best medicine

Some might hold the view that laughter is inappropriate following the death of a friend. However, Grollman describes how laughter can help:

> 'Human tragedy may be so overwhelming that bereaved young people must reduce it before they can put it into words. That is why serious things are often said in jest. They release nervous tension with a joke, and laugh to keep them from crying' (2000, p.104).

It is very interesting how shared humour can help people cope. This obviously worked for Luke, whose strategy for coping was laughter:

'Because laughter is the best medicine.'

He felt that he was not able to express his sadness:

'Whatever you say, whatever you do, is not going to bring someone back, they passed on, so keep laughing, just remember them in a happy way, just keep moving on, that's all I could think about, that's all I would want to do, for a year or so, I was cut up on the inside, but I just wanted to make people laugh and laugh myself, so just kind of suppressed it'.

Tedeschi and Calhoun suggest that 'humour may also be helpful in this process because it can relieve emotional distress and even provide a measure of stress relief and temporary physical comfort' (1995, p.130).

4.2.5 Sharing memories

Sharing memories about the loved one who died is part of the grieving process (Worden 1983), for young people as much as for adults. It played an important part in how young people supported each other in coming to terms with the death of their friend, in addition to the formal opportunities that were offered by the school (memorial assemblies) and in general (funeral, visiting the grave). Rosenblatt and Elde researched shared reminiscence amongst siblings where a parent had died, and suggest that it was helpful because 'people seemed to feel more understood by somebody who could share the reminiscing because of personal knowledge of the deceased' (1990, p.208). Doris describes how the children in school shared their memories:

'A lot of children did things like, they wrote, they drew pictures, or wrote poems, or …'

'They were all doing little bits and pieces like that, they were allowed to do that, which is a way of sort of getting your grief out, I suppose, isn't it.'

Luke talked about the importance of sharing memories with friends. He did not want any support from staff, but just from his friends, and they tried to remember Melvin in a positive way:

'A lot of people turned to their friends, to talk through it, more or less to try and have a laugh, just to remember the good times.'

In the next section I write about longer-term support, which also includes opportunities for young people to share memories with each other. I will also write more about 'remembering' in the context of social networking.

4.2.6 Longer-term support

Young people also offered each other longer-term support, with a number of young people gathering together on special occasions. Grace talks about how friends kept in touch for a number of years afterwards and got together for meals on special occasions. Grace said that even now she tries to meet up on Melvin's birthday:

'Every year we still all, sort of say happy birthday to him, all in our little ways, if that's going for a pint, or whatever, we are going to do something even if it's just two of us that do it.'

The support that young people offered each other was very valuable, in particular if they were part of the group of grieving friends. Veronica talks about her best friend, who knew what she needed:

'I think my friends, one of my close friends, Hannah, she was really good. She made me talk about it. Because I have a habit of not talking about things. And she recognised that I wasn't talking about it, and she kept bringing it up every now and again, because she was friends with Melvin as well.'

She helped Veronica keep the memory of her friend alive by starting conversations actively, for some time after the death. After a few years, as is common with young people, they did not see each other as often, and they did not think about it as much. However, from time to time they were reminded of what happened, and actively sought opportunities to remember him:

'Occasionally me and Charlotte will message, but it's not like..., I did a run for cancer the other day just little bits of support. And every now and again I see her, on Facebook, but life changes, life moves on, doesn't it, it's probably healthy.' (Veronica)

Young people seemed to achieve a healthy balance between keeping the memories of their friend alive, whilst also moving on with their own life.

4.2.7 Social networking

During the past few years, in my work as Critical Incident Co-ordinator for the local authority, the topic of social networking has become increasingly relevant when I am supporting young people in schools, in particular in high schools. According to research carried out by the London School of Economics for the European Commission, it is estimated that 88 % of 13-16 year olds (2011) in the U.K. have a social networking profile (www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-13129150).

When considering my research questions, it seemed highly relevant to include questions about the use of social networking in the interview schedule. I was interested in finding young people's perception about their use of social networking in relation to their deceased friend, in particular for the longer term, perhaps after three, four or five years.

In addition to being aware that the children who died had an R.I.P. Facebook website set up for them, I recruited participants through the website, as well as by word of mouth. As membership to those sites was open, it enabled me to be part of that community and to view the postings from young people. Younger children had also used Bebo for a short period of time, as they were not old enough to have a Facebook site.

As a researcher I did not consider it unusual for me to study Facebook sites, since I looked at those sites as a practitioner. Neither was I a complete outsider, as I had visited both schools immediately following the death, and I knew some of the young people who were members of the group. Therefore I was not, like some other researchers, 'a 'lurker' whose presence was

invisible and passive' (Kasket 2012, p.64). I posted messages on the sites as a practitioner, shortly after the site was set up. As I did not want to be a secret member, I was open about my membership.

In my study, children and young people used Bebo as well as Facebook, and set up a site in memory of their friend. This was done within hours of the death. In addition, people also posted on the young person's Facebook site itself. However, only approved friends would have had access to that site, which I did not have.

Kasket describes what often happens after a death of a Facebook user:

> 'What may additionally happen is that someone creates an in-memory-of group. This has many of the same functions as an in-life profile. Ongoing accessibility of the dead person's images is made possible. Mourners communicate with one another; they share memories of their unique relationship with the deceased in a communal space, allowing a more 'complete' picture of the person to emerge' (2012, p.63).

As I was undertaking this research as a practitioner, I became concerned when analysing some of the posts I saw on Bebo, which the younger children were accessing. Some children were still posting nearly every day, more than a year on from the event. The posts indicated strong feelings, and in one case I was concerned that a young person might be suffering from depression. As a practitioner, I felt that, although these children were not going to be part of my research group, as they had not attended the same school, I still had a duty of care towards them. I contacted young people, sought parental permission, and saw them in school as part of my role as Critical Incident Co-ordinator for Norfolk Children's Services. One of them was referred to a

counselling service to help her deal with the death of her friend. As Sofka states: 'However, when learning about and using ICT [Information and Communications Technology] and spending time in an SNS [Social Networking Services] to assist grieving adolescents, it will be important to remember to use some good old fashioned TLC [tender loving care]' (2009, p.170). In my case, I needed to use my professional knowledge and expertise, and was able to arrange for external support. This is in line with my professional role, where posting on R.I.P. websites has become a regular occurrence, raising awareness of support that is available to young people, either through their school or in other ways.

Active membership of R.I.P. sites changes over time. Initially family members, close friends, the wider peer group as well as people who are not directly connected with the person who died but who are touched by the sadness of the death of a young person, will post messages on the R.I.P. site. Over time, in particular a few years after the death, active posting on sites lessens, and then tends to be from close friends. This can be observed on the sites I analysed, and has been reported by other researchers: 'visitation often continues long after death and, while much lower in terms of frequency, seems to hold fairly steady over time' (Carroll et al. 2010, p.347).

Occasionally adults post on social networking sites, mainly parents of friends of the person who died:

'I didn't know you personally but my daughter went to SOS and holiday club with you and often spoke of you. I can see from this wall that you were a very special person and loved by many. I would like to pass on my sincere condolences to your family and friends and hope that you are now at peace xx.'

Teachers, both in my study, and many others I have asked about their direct involvement with Facebook, said that they either do not use Facebook or they do not use it in a professional capacity.

'I am adamant, that I am not going to put my name on Facebook.' (Felicity)

'I haven't looked at it. That's because I don't do Facebook.' (Heather)

Staff who do have a private profile may look at the R.I.P. site, but since their professional duties and standards prevents them from posting comments as part of their personal profile, many do not take part in this online support mechanism for young people. Facebook seems to be very much about young people supporting each other.

Melvin's R.I.P site was set up within hours of his death, whilst Anna's site was not set up until approximately 9 months after she died. The reason for the later set-up of the site was that children were still at primary school and too young to be allowed to use Facebook. However, within days they did have a Bebo site set up in memory of Anna, which was used by her friends.

Since I undertook my field work, the use of R.I.P. sites has been exposed to the threat of troll attacks, where offensive postings and disrespectful messages were posted. The police are taking active steps in dealing with these issues, e.g. a man was convicted and jailed in 2011 for leaving abusive posts on a R.I.P. site for a teenager (www.thetelegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8760504), but trolling appears to continue (also see Panorama: Hunting the Internet Bullies, BBC1, 6.2.2012). This may lead to a different perception of the helpfulness of social networking sites, particularly by adults, such as school staff or parents, who do not use those sites themselves and may already have particular views on this. ' However helpful it may be for a mourner to continue to interact with a

deceased person's Facebook profile, social networking sites have the power to excite strong opinions in many' (Kasket 2012, p.668).

This had a significant impact on the use of R.I.P. sites very recently, and has led to more closed sites, where only close friends who are invited/approved by the page owner can post messages.

The following themes emerged from conversations with young people and analysis of R.I.P. sites:

Social support, including the expression of feelings:
Social networking sites are available for young people, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, depending on how their internet use is restricted by their parents. The young people I interviewed did not experience any restrictions imposed on them by their parents. Parents seemed to be aware of the need for peer support, and enabled their children to make use of this facility, in particular in the first few days after the death. The availability of those sites gives young people certain freedoms. Being able to share their feelings with their friends, via social networking, gives them the opportunity to express their feelings whenever they feel the need to do so. This is particularly relevant to round-the-clock availability, and longevity, when weeks or months after the death, the R.I.P. site is still there, and still receptive to receive messages, after other social support has decreased.

Although not mentioned by the young people in my study or seen on the R.I.P. sites I analysed, it could be possible that the constant checking of facebook sites perpetuates the grief. Facebook users may find it difficult to decide to change their automated notifications so that they do not read other's updates whenever they are posted.

As young people experience the whirlpool of grief (Wilson, in (Hindmarch 2009)), where emotions are visited time and time again, social networking can provide them with the support when they are feeling particularly low, at any time of date and night. This is even more relevant now as many young people have access via their mobile phones and other electronic devices with internet access.

Social support is particularly evident in the early posts in the first year after the death; children comment on each other's posts and click on the 'like' button.

M.B.   Anna, I miss you so much. I never realised how much I really missed you until you were gone.   You mean the world to everyone who knew you, including me. I still can't believe you are gone. It seems like only yesterday we were giggling away, singing, dancing and having a fabulous time.   I   will never forget your beautiful smile, that amazing voice, those beautiful eyes. I wish I could fly up to heaven and bring you back down here where you belong with all your wonderful family and friends. You were and still are the prettiest, most popular girl I know. You would have been at high school now, making even more friends. It's not fair that such a young girl, full of life, has gone. I can imagine you up in heaven now, reading all these comments, singing, dancing and riding all those horses up there. I will never ever forget you sweetie. I love you so much ♥ x

E.P.   xxxgeorgous megaanxxx

M.D.   It is lovely megan love youu if you wanna talk im like always her for you babe.

M.B.   I know you are Molly. I love you both so much x

E.P.   i love you tooo<3 yeahh same i am alwaayss here for youu<3 X

Getty, Cobb, Gabeler, Nelson, Weng and Hancock refer to these kind of comments as 'front stage grieving', including expressing sorrow ('*I can't believe you are gone');* 'social orientation index', where people refer to others *('I am always here for you');* and, thirdly, the 'positive memory index' ('*I will never forget your beautiful smile')* (2013, p.999).

Two young people I interviewed talked about how Facebook had helped them; one of them in particular used it extensively. Knowing that other people had also posted regularly on the site, made it feel like a shared sense of loss to Grace:

'A sense of knowing that other people still missed him.'

It was also an opportunity to express herself at any time of day or night, as she had difficulties sleeping. Sometimes Grace would go on Facebook in the night:

'If it wasn't an acceptable time to ring a friend, no one would shout at you when you went on there at 3 o'clock in the morning.'

She talked about a feeling of connectedness with other young people who were grieving. Vanderwerker and Prigerson also found this in their study of bereaved individuals, where social support via technology is a protective factor and 'leads to better psychological and quality of life outcomes' (2004, p.55).

Also, posting comments online gives young people the opportunity to express their feelings, with which they may otherwise not feel comfortable.

Luke accessed the Facebook site and describes how it was good to see how many people cared for Melvin:

'You are not the only person still thinking about him and missing him.'

Although he did not use the website to post himself, he felt that it was helpful to read the comments posted by others.

As young people left school a year after Melvin's death and no longer saw each other regularly at school, his R.I.P. site provided them with an opportunity to stay in touch and support each other through the time they were still grieving for their friend. They used the site to organise face-to-face meetings, e.g. on Melvin's birthday, when they got together for a birthday meal.

'Hey everyone are we going to be doing something i.e. all meet up for a drink???or meal............contact me and let me know any suggestions you have!

megz xx'

Writing for others, and taking comfort from what others write, was important to some young people in my study. Lattanzi (1984) found in her study about writing about bereavement, that individuals do write with the hope of others finding comfort from reading their experience.

Remembering:

R.I.P. sites provide a particular opportunity to remember the person who died, and this opportunity is used shortly after the death of the young person, as well as long term, when young people post messages on particular dates, e.g. on their birthday, Christmas or the anniversary of the death.

In 2011, five years after Melvin's death, ten comments were posted. The content ranged from:

'Thinking about you'

to

'Love you'

and

'Hope you are doing okay up there'.

These were quite short comments, but longer ones were also posted:

'Thought of you again this morning it always make me sad but so happy i got to spend the time with you all the funny things you bright my day. i will always have the picture of me and you close by love you always xxx. '

Anna's R.I.P page is also still quite active; in 2012, three years after her death, there were 21 posts, mainly at special times, like her birthday, anniversary and Christmas. Children are still using the site to remember their friend, one child writes in great detail:

'Honey, you have no idea just how hard today has been. To think that you left this world three years ago today is pretty unbearable but what gets me (and I'm sure many other people!) through is the amazing memories we share. I can still remember at Panto Camp when we were joking around about our atrocious plaiting on Tommy's mane and how you stood up for me and how we danced to "School's Out For Summer." And when we read your scrapbooks and you put in it that I loved Tommy - well guess what? I have Tommy now! I wish you were still here Anna, we all miss you soooo much, but I know that you're in a much nicer place now. God clearly needed one more angel up in heaven and trust me gorgeous, He picked a good one!! Keep smiling Anna, I love you so so much ♥ xxxxxxxxx'

Facebook gives young people the opportunity to remember their deceased friend, whenever needed. Hieftje also found this in her study with college students, 'for many participants, the social networking web pages provided a

way to keep their deceased friend's memories alive and to feel their ongoing presence, even years later' (2012, p.39).

Although Veronica did not take an active part in posting messages on the Facebook site that was set up in memory of her friend, she did still access it and valued reading what other people wrote:

'It was nice, to go on there, and see that people still remember him.'

It was a way for young people to remember Melvin:

'It was very positive, everyone writing lovely messages on there, putting videos on, …'

Reading the messages that other people posted provided some comfort to Veronica and others who were reading them, 'clearly, the mourner is not alone' (Roberts 2012, p.59). The postings on Facebook kept the memories alive for them:

'Christine did some really brilliant videos, like memory videos, with music in the back ground, and pictures of him, and little funny jokes underneath, and like things he used to do, and people he used to know, and stuff, so for us, it was a brilliant thing, because we could go on there when we wanted, see what other people wrote, even if were just thinking about him.'

Facebook R.I.P. pages allow friends to take part in open mourning. It can prevent them from becoming disenfranchised mourners (Doka 1999) and gives them the opportunity to be part of the grieving community:

> 'Friends have traditionally been a disenfranchised group of mourners, but have been admitted in to the community of mourners via social networking, even if they had not known the deceased person well' (Kasket 2012, p.66).

Many posts on the Facebook R.I.P. pages indicate that young people continue to have a relationship with the young person who died:

'There's not a day that goes by that I don't think of you, I love you and miss you loads.'

It is hard to find any posts that indicate that young people have let go, but as Getty et al. states: 'If people are choosing to let go of the deceased, they do not appear to be using Facebook posts to do so' (2013, p.1000).

The next section considers post-traumatic growth and includes a deeper analysis of aspects of social networking as part of this theme.

4.3 Continuing bonds

4.3.1. Introduction - personal and professional experience

I want to start this section with some anecdotal evidence. As I write this, one of my family members reposted this on her Facebook site:

Dear Dad

I thought of you today, but that is nothing new. I thought about you yesterday, and days before that, too, I think of you in silence, I often speak your name. All I have are memories, and a picture in your frame, your memory is a keepsake, from which I'll never part.

God has you in his arms, I have you in my heart....... Put this as your status if you have a dad you love and miss very much that is in heaven.

This Facebook posting has 73,436 shares, demonstrating how many people want to share their continued bonds with the loved person who died, in this particular case, their dad.

When I designed my study I had not intended to write about continuing bonds. However, when I spoke with young people, and when I read their social networking sites, this was a recurring theme. Still, although an interesting finding - young people still think about their friend a lot, even some years after the death - I wanted my study to focus on what makes a difference to young people and I wondered how this knowledge about continuing bonds would.

I want to share my professional experience as well. I was asked by a school to see a young person, five months after the death of her friend, as she was *'very wobbly'* about the death of her friend. When I went to see her she talked about still thinking about her friend most days - she felt that she hadn't been able to forget about her friend and move on. When I explained

that I had spoken to a group of young people and that some of them were still thinking about their friend every day - five years after he died - she was amazed and realised that her experience was normal. This gave her permission to continue to think about her friend and she expressed great relief when she knew that other young people were experiencing the same.

4.3.1 Understanding of continuing bonds

I, like many others, understand continuing bonds as the ongoing inner relationship with the deceased person by the bereaved person (Field, Gal-Oz and Bananno 2003; Stroebe et al. 2005). In addition to identifying examples of continuing bonds in my study, the question of whether continuing bonds are a help or a hindrance seemed an important one to explore. Or as Stroebe et al. put it:

> 'Is it necessary to work towards loosening the tie to a deceased person to come to terms with loss, or can bonds be retained during and after the acute grieving period without detrimental— or even with positive— effects for the bereaved person? ' (2005, p.48).

Considering the available literature, I found that researchers, who mostly focus on adults, are reporting contradictory findings (Stroebe et al. 2005), with examples of good and poor adjustment. Long-term research relating to the death of a spouse found that continuing bonds after five years related to more severe grief reactions, whilst earlier in the study (six months after the death) continuing bonds were seen as adaptive (Field et al. 2003). In a later study, Field and Filanowski (2009) considered different types of continuing bonds and concluded that externalized bonds tended to be associated with poorer adaption to bereavement, whilst internalised bonds were more likely to lead to personal growth. Neimeyer et al. (2006), in their study with psychology undergraduates, found that strong continuing bonds indicated

more distress, but only where meaning-making had not taken place. I will come back to this theme in the next chapter.

The concept of continuing bonds and the role it plays in the grieving process should also be seen in the context of culture and religion. As Chan, Chow, Ho, Tsui, Tin, Koo and Koo describe: 'Thus, grief is usually considered a universal experience, but ways of reacting to or handling the experience are inevitably shaped by one's culture through various prescribed rituals, beliefs, and family rules' (2005, p.924). For example, in Chinese culture most people believe in an afterlife, and continuing bonds are anchored in traditional Chinese folk beliefs (Stroebe et al. 2005). Whilst Japanese culture also encompasses traditional rituals and ceremonies, how individuals then incorporate these into their lives is still an individual and personal choice (Valentine 2009). Several researchers have examined continuing bonds across the world (as quoted in Foster, Roth, Contreras, Jo Gilmer and Gordon 2012). It seems that continuing bonds have traditionally been much more embedded in other cultures than they are in Britain and other Western cultures, as other cultures contain many more traditions and rituals surrounding death, and treat death less as a taboo.

This may be because the European tradition since the last century has been coloured by the belief that grieving people need to overcome their loss. In his writing about melancholia Freud (1917) distinguishes between those who mourn, but recognise their grief and get back to reality by letting go of their loved one, and those who are unable to acknowledge reality and who sink into a melancholic state. His view was that mourners needed to free themselves from their attachment with the deceased in order to be able to move on and build new relationships. As detailed in section 2.3, grief theories in the 20th century focused on the mourner coming to terms with the loss of

their loved one. Concepts of continuing bonds, which were first discussed by Klass et al. (1996), have only been developed fairly recently in the western world. Although interesting, discussing the understanding of death, grief and continuing bonds across cultures in detail goes beyond the scope of this study. I therefore continue to focus on young people growing up in Western traditions.

4.3.2 Young people and continuing bonds

A. Dyregrov et al. (1999) mention that research indicates that young people also continue to have an attachment with their dead brother, sister or parents. I experienced this when I saw a teenage boy a few years ago. His sister had died about four years earlier. As quite a lot of time had passed, staff were unsure about whether to talk about his sister, as they did not want to upset him. When I spoke to him, the opposite was true. He complained that no one would speak about her or mention her name. He felt that she had been forgotten. However, he was still thinking about her every day. Whilst staff were concerned about upsetting him by talking about his sister, he wanted the opposite. He still wanted people to remember her, and still had the need to talk about her, as his bond with his sister continued.

Whilst there is some knowledge about continuing bonds in people bereaved of a family member, there is little written about whether this is also true for young people who experience the death of their classmate.

Analysing my interviews and Facebook posts, I considered internalized and externalized continuing bonds, as described by Field (2009). I found many examples of internalized continuing bonds, where young people show 'an ongoing connection with the deceased that involves use of the deceased as an internalized secure base that includes items addressing the deceased as a

role model and safe haven' (Field et al. 2009, p.10). For example Veronica, who talked about how she still relates to Melvin as her friend, and how when she makes new friendships she talks about Melvin, so that others know that although he is not physically part of her friendship group, for Veronica he will always remain a friend. One of the young people said on Anna's R.I.P. page:

I hope you are having a fab time up there in heaven, I can imagine you sitting up there saying, "Stop crying, don't be silly! Chin up, you'll see me again soon." You always were the one who would help us through any hard situation. Now, we're going to be strong together, and just remember all the fantastic memories we all shared. I love you so much sweetie. Rest in peace

However, I did not find any examples of young people talking about externalised bonds, which Field and Filanoski describe as: 'expressions involving illusions and hallucinations with the deceased' (2009, p.1). Despite their writing about externalised continuing bonds as an indicator for complicated grief, it seems there may be a cultural dimension to this, as Chan et al. found that their participants, who reported 'feeling, hearing or seeing the deceased' treated this as a positive experience (2005).

As I had not designed my study to focus on continuing bonds, I needed to consider how to represent the way that the young people in my study talked about continuing bonds. It seemed appropriate to group the responses into sections, and I followed the themes used by Foster et al. (2012). They explored how the bereaved experience continuing bonds in their research with 19 children and 30 adults who experienced the death of a loved one. As their research focused on deceased family members, I have not included some items as young people I spoke to did not refer to these, e.g. personal belongings of deceased, locations occupied by the deceased when alive,

keeping ashes of the deceased. In the next sections I look at reminders in the context of continuing bonds.

4.3.3 Purposeful reminders

Young people chose to remember their friend in particular ways. This was a 'purposeful, voluntary and conscious action' (Foster et al. 2012). In both social networking sites and interviews, there was mention of these reminders. Examples of purposeful reminders from young people in this study follow.

Visual (and audio) representations about the deceased

I have added audio in this section, as one young person talked about both:

'I have got this one picture of him, on webcam, because we used the webcam a lot, because he was at hospital and I was at home, and I have got this picture of him, and he was making monkey faces, and I have got recordings of him, where he was singing lots of different songs with his brother'. (Veronica)

Young people also accessed pictures and video clips by looking at the Facebook websites as well as another website set up by the young person who died, and Bebo which they used when they were younger. Being able to access those visual and audio images from their childhood is an opportunity which only young people in the 21st century are privileged to have:

'Charlotte did some really brilliant videos, like memory videos, with music in the background, and pictures of him, and little funny jokes underneath, and like things he used to do, and people he used to know, and stuff, so for us, it was a brilliant thing, because we could go on there when we wanted, see what other people wrote, even if were just thinking about him.' (Veronica)

Thinking about the deceased

The theme on Melvin's R.I.P. site in 2010 indicated that young people were still thinking about their friend, and missing him:

'oh m8 how i could use you right now. 4 years now not a day goes buy where i think about you. i miss you so much m8. we all do. love you boss x x'.

Children on Anna's R.I.P. site also expressed:
'Hey Anna :) Merry Christmas beautiful girl. I hope you're having a fantastic time up there because you truly deserve it. We're all thinking about you gorgeous, you'll be in our hearts forever. You're such a truly wonderful girl. All my love ♥'

13 year old Anita also still thought about her friend. When I asked her how often she said:
'Quite a lot still. I just, think about her when I see things she liked, things like that.'

Anita then tends to be on her own in her room,
'... just thinking'.

It mostly happens on occasions where she is reminded about something that Anna had liked.

One of the young people said that she still thought about her friend every day, but most young people said that they thought about him less now, mostly on special occasions or when reminded of their friend:
'Where he never had the opportunity, he never turned 18, go out with his friends and go drinking, celebrate things, or go out and learn to drive, I mean at those points, when I went, I had my first driving lesson, I passed my test,

went out for the first time, celebrated my 18th, 21st, those times I really think about him, he was a really good mate, and I would have wanted him here, all my other mates are here, he's not here, it's times like that.' (Luke)

Because Melvin was a good mate, they would have celebrated those things together.

Veronica talked about how it was important to her to remember her friend who died. She talked with great affection about various little memories she had of her time with Melvin:
'I have got loads of little things that made me laugh.'

All young people talked about thinking about their friend who died. A.Dyregrov et al. also found in their study a continued level of grief, 9 months after the death, and conclude that this may reflect 'an ongoing attachment to their classmate' (1999, p.171).

Communicating with the deceased

I did not ask a specific question about this and young people did not mention this much in their interviews, although two young people said that they raise a toast to him on special occasions, for instance on his birthday or at New Year, even after five years:

'It's always when it's someone's birthday, or New Years, when I see them, we will always do a toast to Melvin in that as well'. (Grace)

Grace also described how she still has the feeling that Melvin is aware that friends continue to remember him:

'It was something of letting him know, that we were still thinking of him, I like to think that, although I don't necessarily believe in heaven or anything, but somehow he was seeing it and knowing we still care.'

Comments on the R.I.P. sites I reviewed as part of this study, as well as other sites that I come across as part of my work, address the person who died.

Hey beautiful, happy birthday!! 15 today gorgeous girl - I hope you're having a fantastic time up there!! Keep smiling beautiful - we all love you so so so much!! I can't wait for the day that I can finally see that beautiful smile again but, until then, have an amazing time and just know that everybody loves you millions and squillions! And have an amazing day!!!! I love you lots and lots angel, rest in peace xxxx

Williams and Merten (2009) describe this as the most interesting finding from their study of 20 Facebook profiles, where other young people had posted posthumously. The key aspect within Facebook R.I.P. pages is one of continuing bonds, which is demonstrated by people communicating with the deceased:

'Im trying, everytime its a full moon, or a ramow, i look up and say hello to S. and wish her the best, i tell her things and i know shes listening.'

Kasket (2012) describes this as the mode of address. She found in her study of Facebook posts that 77% of posts used the second person address (i.e. you). This can also be seen in the posts that I looked at. When I analysed twenty-five posts from 2009-2011 on the R.I.P. site dedicated to the young person who died following cancer, twenty-two of those expressly addressed the young person directly.

Young people seem to have a need to continue to communicate with their deceased friend, and Facebook sites provide an opportunity for people to express themselves in this way. Hieftje also found that 'most participants felt that the web page was an important link to maintaining their relationship with the deceased' (2012, p.41). Hieftje interviewed six college students, aged 19-23, who had experienced the death of a school friend, 2 months - 20 months previously. Communicating with the deceased via Facebook was also a finding of her study: 'For almost all of the participants the social networking web pages provided a way to personally communicate with the deceased' (Hieftje 2012, p.38).

Young people in my study demonstrated this in their postings. Their relationship continued, even some years after the death of their friend:

'Hey beautiful, I haven't posted in a while but I just want you to know that I haven't stopped thinking about you, and I never will. It's so unfair that you have had to leave honey; you left behind those who loved you so much and you had so much left to do. But you're probably having a fantastic time up there and I know that it's the right place for you to be. You're probably looking down on us and screaming, 'stop being so depressed you lot; cheer up! I'm alright!' I can't wait until the day I get to see your beautiful smile again and hear your beautiful voice. Hope you're having a wonderful time up there... keep smiling and singing. Lots of love.'

Young people also talked to the young person who died, hoping that they were in a better place.

'You really been on my mind these last couple of days f., i really missing you and that smile of yours. i guess it becaus its coming to that time again. i no your not in pain now and your living your new life where you our but what i

wouldn't give to have you back again in all our lives. love you now and always matt xxxxxx'

Doing things the deceased would have liked or chosen

Young people often thought about their friend when they were reaching some of their adolescent milestones, which their friend was unable to do. It started off with celebrating his 16th birthday:

'The first birthday after he passed away we were all off at college, and we all went out for a massive meal, well, everyone went out for a nice, big meal, for his 16th birthday for him, it was nice, because we were all still there celebrating his birthday for him, and doing things together and supporting each other for that, people we didn't even speak to, had been arranging it, and saying 'oh, come along, we are meeting here at this time, we are going to do this, and then we are going to do that, and then we are going to go home.' (Grace)

It was not just that friends wanted to meet up together to remember him, but they went out because they still wanted him to have a birthday meal:

'We are going to celebrate it for him, we are going to make sure that he still has his 16th birthday'. (Grace)

For the first birthday celebration a lot of people attended:

'...about 20 or 30 people that went. There was a lot of people that couldn't, because they had moved, or they, some people just didn't feel up to it, but there was about 20 or 30 people that went to that birthday meal for him.'(Grace)

Every year, Luke continued to be part of a group of a small number of friends who still met up and went for a birthday meal together:

'We keep that tradition going.'

A number of people talked about how they valued what they were able to do, like having their first alcoholic drink, taking their driving test, going to college or university, starting a family, and remembering their friend at the same time:

'Every now and again I just think, what would Melvin give, to be here, just right now, to be doing what I was doing, you know, even if it was shit. What would he be giving to be at uni, he would be working his socks of trying to work a grade, you know, and I just think, sometimes when we think that everything just gets too much, just think about him. Trying to grab yourself.' (Veronica)

Activities honouring the deceased

Young people talked a lot about thinking about their friend during activities he did not have a chance to do. One of the young people talked about going out more often because his friend did not have the chance to do that:

'We do celebrate them more. If I go, I go out for, I go out to really enjoy myself. But I have found that I do go out more, obviously when I was 15, 16, I go out anyway, but I went out more, socialised more, I made myself available more, some people are, are you going to this party, oh, I can't be asked, but I made myself available more, you know what, he can't celebrate, so I celebrate for him type thing. I think it's hard, that's how a lot of people thought about it at the time.' (Luke)

A number of young people undertook charity fund raising activities:

' I did a run for cancer the other day, just little bits of support.' (Veronica)

Another young person talked about doing charity work, partly because he felt guilty that he did not come forward when they were looking for a bone marrow match for his friend:

'I get involved more with charities, not actually doing major things, but I always raise money, I always wear bands and stuff, and get involved in charity xxx, because I feel like, I lived a life, but I haven't given anything back to it. So if I can do it through little things, like charity and stuff like that, then I know I can play my little part towards it, and I can give a little back, because I don't feel like I did enough at the time. I really didn't, I didn't go through it to see if I was a match for him, I kind of hate myself for not doing it.' (Luke)

Oscar organised an annual football match in memory of his friend:

'I try to run these fundraisers every now and again'

'We normally do a football match every year in memory of Melvin, and play for the Melvin trophy'.

He has also organised some other charity events and fundraisers at school. It was really important to him:

' I like to try and honour his memory'.

Their friend Melvin had recorded a clip before he died, and gave his friends a message about what they should do with their life, Grace explains it like this:

'We have all got to learn that we have got to do what makes us happy and not everyone else, because that's what he has asked us to do, that's what he told us to do, to make sure that we enjoy our lives so that he knows that we are. He told us that, that we still got our lives, and we have got to live it for two people instead of the one, and we have got to make sure we are happy, and do the things that we want to do.'

She was very clear that she needs to make use of the opportunities that present themselves, because he gave her that message.

Visiting cemeteries

I did not specifically ask about this, but one of the young people mentions that quite a few friends visit his grave on a regular basis, five years after his death. Grace also mentions that she visits his grave every couple of months.

Although not a cemetery, the family of the young girl who died created a memory garden at their house. Lots of young people went to visit it:

'We went to their house, and have seen the garden. It's nice.' (Anita)

4.3.4 Non-purposeful reminders

Foster et al. (2012) describe non-purposeful reminders, where these were involuntary and happened unexpectedly. Luke describes it thus:

'Yes, he still pops into my head'.

Veronica gave several examples of how Melvin continued to be a part of her life.

'They are gone, but they are still here.'

She talks about little reminders, which will make her think about her friend who died:

'It's just little things'

She also talked about mistaking someone for her friend:

'The other day I saw someone in the street who just looked like him, and it just reminded me, it was just all over my head, that's really weird.'

Veronica did not seem concerned about these non-purposeful reminders. They did not cause any upset to her, or to Luke and were accepted as part of their normal adjustment to Melvin's death.

4.3.5 Effects of continuing bonds

Maintaining the relationship with their deceased friend seems an important factor to young people, which Williams and Merten (2009) also found in their study for online social networking following the death of a peer. Being able to access friends' Facebook accounts gives young people the opportunity to remember their friend whenever they want to. Their accounts still lie in the control of family members, who have a right to request Facebook to remove those pages. However, with the opportunity to set up their own R.I.P. pages, and the possibility for friends to share pictures and video clips, some control can be regained by friends. It may be the opportunity to use social networking sites gives young people a chance to express their continuing bonds and to minimise the possibility of becoming excluded from the grief community. This therefore reduces the chance of experiencing disenfranchised grief (Doka 1999).

The young people spoke with great compassion about their continuing activities in remembering their friend, most of them by actively undertaking charity events, visiting the cemetery, or meeting up with friends and talking about the deceased. The interview process itself, in creating an opportunity to talk about their friend, seemed to provide comfort rather than anxiety. When I asked what young people felt when talking about their experiences, one of them said:

'All right. I love talking about it. I don't get upset or anything, in general. I was watching videos, things people made in school, at the time, and I was crying about that. But it's emotional to watch. I like to talk about it, bring things into the open, and I like to help other people, if it will help.' (Luke)

One view of the postings on Facebook may be that they seem rather morbid, and that the way that young people express themselves might show an unhealthy way of dealing with the death of a friend. However, when talking to young people, I did not form that impression; it seems to me that Facebook captures feelings and expressions in a moment of time, and that this expression can be very helpful. I wonder how many opportunities young people have in their discussions with family and friends to talk so openly about their beliefs, e.g. about heaven, about meeting their friend again when they die, about their friend being an angel, etc. . Conversations on R.I.P. sites, in particular closed sites and where only friends and invited members are posting, the approach seems to be non-judgemental and comments tend to be very positive. Facebook can provide a supportive environment for young people (Hieftje 2012, p.38).

However, social networking is constantly changing and developing, and RIP sites can range from being sources of great positivity in remembering dead children to sites of great cruelty depending on the posts and interactions they attract.

The question remains whether or not continuing bonds are always part of a positive outcome. Should we encourage children and young people to maintain a relationship with their friend who died? Klass seems to indicate that there is no real clarity about how and in which context continuing bonds with the deceased are helpful in grieving (2006).

Some research indicates that an attachment to the deceased continues to lead to complicated grief. Field and Filanoski examined a small number of studies undertaken and found that continuing bonds can be connected with negative outcomes. However, where the grief experience involved meaning-

making and personal growth, then 'continuing bonds may serve as an important resource in facilitating integration of the loss'(2009, p.25).

It seems that the quality of the continuing bond is the important factor in this, 'based on our research, we propose that the type of continuing attachment expression and the extent of its use at a given point after the death are both important factors in determining its influence on the grief process' (Root, p.43).

Neimeyer et al. in their study of young adults, also found that continuing bonds seem to produce a positive outcome where people were able to give a meaning to their experience: 'Continuing bonds appear to interact with meaning making in response to loss, such that those survivors who are able to make sense of the loss in personally meaningful terms experience fewer symptoms of complicated grief'(2004, p.735).

Not surprisingly, Field et al. write that the relationship between connections maintained with the dead person and adjustment to bereavement is more complex. I concur with their conclusion that future research needs to 'determine more precisely the effect on adjustment to bereavement of various types of continuing bond expressions at different times after death' (2003, p.43).

Based on reading Facebook comments 2005-2013, speaking to young people about their views, my professional experience and considering the available research, it seems young people express their continuing bonds on social networking sites in a positive way, and it seems helpful to them.

4.4 Post-traumatic growth

In this section I write about my findings in relation to my research question: When young people experience the death of a school friend, do they experience any positive outcomes? I relate my findings to the literature that has been written about the subject of post-traumatic growth, in particular in relation to young people.

As I was initially reviewing the literature available, I found that early literature relating to bereavement and trauma focused more on negative effects, before considering the concept of resilience. More recently the focus on the literature on negative life events has shifted to how people can experience positive outcomes, including following bereavement. Most studies focus on adults, as a lot of research initially does, but some studies, mostly quantitative, have been undertaken with young people (Barakat, Alderfer and Kazak 2006; Cryder 2006; Kilmer et al. 2009; Levine, Laufer, Stein, Hamama-Raz and Solomon 2009).

A conceptual question exists as to whether young people, who are still developing their identity, are able to show post-traumatic growth. Tedeschi wonders whether psychological growth is limited by the level of cognitive development. He says: ' Even so, it would be interesting to see what children and adolescents are capable of' (1995, p.114). I was particularly interested to see whether young people, at the beginning of their adolescent life, would experience growth following the death of a friend.

4.4.1 Understanding of post-traumatic growth in my study

As I had some anecdotal evidence from my experience of working with children who had previously been exposed to the death of a school friend, and who displayed an incredible understanding of life beyond their years, I

hoped to find out whether younger teenagers who had just left primary school also experienced this. However, I was not able to show this with the younger group, as I was unable to include a reasonable number of participants of that age group in my study. I succeeded in seeing only one young person at the beginning of her teenage development. At the age of thirteen she felt that her bereavement experience had not changed anything in her life, neither her outlook nor her beliefs. This was eighteen months after the death of her friend. I had hoped to find out more about whether younger teenagers who were affected by the death of a friend would show positive outcomes, but the study was not able to do so.

As I discussed my research with a colleague recently, she told me that she is still in contact with a number of young adults who experienced the death of a school friend at primary school, and who talked to her about their careers and the value they place on wanting to do well because their friend never had the chance. Such anecdotal evidence does lead me to suppose that this is possible even when people have experienced death at a young age.

However, the other young people, aged 19-22, who experienced the death of their friend when they were 14/15, talked about a different perspective on their life. They all talked about how they valued their relationships, and how life has a different meaning for them now. Young people said:
'I like to think that it made me a better person.' (Oscar)

Another young person initially said that things had not changed much, but then went on to say:
'Apart from more respect for things more, my family, more respect for my friends, my view of life.' (Luke)

This supports Oltjenbruns' (1991) study, where he found that 96% of adolescents reported at least one positive outcome following a bereavement. More than half reported: 'a deeper appreciation of life, greater caring for loved ones, strengthened emotional bonds with others and developed emotional strength' (1991, p.48).

Chesler, in his interview with Ungerleider about survivors of childhood cancer, thinks that young people in particular are able to integrate a new way of seeing life into their experience because they are still developing their identity:

> 'Youngsters and teenagers diagnosed and treated at an age or developmental stage where their identities and life stories are just beginning to be formed may find it more necessary and easier to integrate the cancer experience into this story' (in Ungerleider 2003, p.11).

I found in my study that young people talked about topics that can be identified with post-traumatic growth, in particular about a change in relationships with others, as well as a changed view on life, including a different way of how they see themselves.

Post-traumatic growth seems to occur as a result of the 'developmental process of self-motivated engagement' (Durkin et al. 2009, p.232). Young people who were faced with the death of their friend are prompted to think about their own life. Veronica talked about the long-term impact of her friend's death, and how she started to think about what she was going to do with her own life, as her friend did not have the chance to do all the things that Veronica did:

'What would he be giving to be at uni.'

Balk (1997) found similar responses in his study with college students, where two thirds of his respondents thought about things that the deceased would never have the opportunity to. He describes this as 'reminiscing' (p.214), but it may be seen that it is more than that. It provided young people with the motivation to do well and see a purpose in their life. Thinking about their friend who died prompted young people to consider their own life, their ambitions, and their purpose in life. Sometimes a death of a friend can have the opposite effect, e.g. young people could become depressed: 'fear of death, depression, intrusive thoughts and a sense of loneliness made coping hard' (Rask et al. 2002, p.140). The young people in my study did not feel like that, maybe because they had the support of each other, and because Melvin had inspired them to do well in their life.

Veronica talked about how Melvin's death had a significant impact on her view on life:

'But it definitely changed the way I think about everything.'

She had matured quickly; I asked her if she valued her life more, and she replied:

'Yeah, I think you are probably right.'

As Tedeschi and Calhoun put it 'for growth to occur, there must be some positive evaluation, and this must include some positive change in self' (1995, p.82). The death of their friend confronted young people with thinking about what it means to be human. The message Grace took from Melvin's death, was that she has to get on with her life:

'And he told us that, we still got our lives, and we have got to live it for two people instead of one.'

It almost seemed like young people felt a duty to succeed in life, although everyone interpreted this differently. Grace said that although her friends have chosen different paths to follow, some have gone to university, some have chosen specific professions and some have children:

'We have got to learn that we have got to do what makes us happy'.

'The horrible thing has happened, but it has taught us a lot about ourselves.'

Grace talked about using the opportunities that are open to her:

'Because I might not get the chance again.'

4.4.2 Interpersonal relationships

According to the literature, post-traumatic growth often has an impact on personal relationships, family and friendships. As young people experienced the death of someone they valued and loved, they were confronted with their own sense of vulnerability and inevitability of their own death and those of other people they love. They confront the inevitability of death:

Yeah, I mean, I have always been quite good with death. It's a natural thing that is going to happen. Melvin is one that shocked me, to be honest. Previously before that it was great-grandparents, and older family members, in like obviously not happy, but quite strong with that, it's going to happen, it's one of life's things. But the Melvin one did shock me, it's brought me to reality, you don't have to be 80 odd to die, it could happen at any time, that makes me think about that a lot more. (Luke)

So, I guess when you are younger, old people die, and that's normal? (Researcher)

Yeah (Luke)

But you don't think about a young person dying? (Researcher)

Yeah, it was a real shock. (Luke)

And the next thing you think about, it could be me? (Researcher)

Yeah, definitely, I often thought, that could have been me... (Luke)

As a result, they gained a new appreciation of life. This also included appreciating relationships with others. Grace felt that she does value her friends and family more because of what happened:

'I like to let my friends and family know that I love them every day, because there might come a day when I am not here to tell them.'

She knows and reminds herself of the possibility that neither she, nor her family, may be around forever. 'Some people recognize as never before that their time and their relationships are precious' (Tedeschi et al. 1995, p.38).

Another young person describes how the support she received from her family during that difficult time also had an impact on her relationship with them. At a time when young people often have difficult relationships with their parents, during adolescence they become more independent from their parents - these youngsters seem to suddenly rely even more on their parents for emotional support. This had a positive impact on their on-going relationship. Grace describes how the support she received from her family changed the way she felt about family relationships:

'I had so much support from them, that it was almost a turning point in my teenage relationship with them, because, they were there, night and day for me, not really understanding it, they weathered it, and they were just there for me, no matter what mood I was in or what I needed.'

The impact of positive supportive relationships for these young people seemed to have had a permanent impact. Apart from realising that friends and family might not be around forever, young people also seemed to have developed more empathy and an understanding of how other people feel. One young person talked about how he appreciated things more, especially

friendships. He also thought that he respected things more, like his family, friends, as well as his view of life:

'Yes, it has made me appreciate things more, and want me to cherish things a bit more.' (Luke)

Luke felt that the experience accelerated his maturation, as he was quite 'laddish' beforehand. Afterwards he calmed down and was more thoughtful. He is still friends with a number of people from high school; he sees them very regularly, and is still very close. Tedeschi and Calhoun note: 'Part of the positive development of social relationships among survivors comes from their increased compassion and greater sensitivity' (1995). Luke also felt that he is now more helpful:

'I feel more inclined to help people'.

He takes his little brother out and spends time with him, as well as raising money for charity:

'so if I can do it through little things, like charity and stuff like that, then I know I can play my little part towards it, and I can give a little back because I didn't feel like I did enough at the time.'

Another young person talked about how it had changed him; he valued friendships more, which he talked about on a couple of occasions in the interview.

'It made me more cautious and weary, and I definitely value friendships more.' (Oscar)

This relates to a number of other studies which also reported post-traumatic growth in particular in relation to relationships: 'many adolescent survivors

and their parents also noted changes for the better in how they treat others' (Barakat et al. 2006, p.417).

4.4.3 School performance, educational achievement and careers

Research seems to indicate that children who are parentally bereaved are at risk of low academic success. A. Dyregrov (2004), who undertook a study with young people following a traumatic event, found that school performance and attendance deteriorated. 23% of children had dropped out or repeated a class, whilst a further 44% reported that their schoolwork was affected a lot or to some degree. He also found that 59% of young people experienced lower grades as a result of the incident they experienced (a school fire in which 63 young people were killed). This was an extreme event, and in addition to dealing with bereavement and loss, these children were also dealing with an extremely traumatic experience.

Abdelnoor and Hollins (2004) found in their study of 97 pupils who had lost a parent or sibling that they significantly underachieved in their GCSE exams.

The young people I spoke to, however, seemed to have been spurred on to do well. Veronica felt that the death of her friend had a very brief impact on her school performance, only for the first couple of weeks. Afterwards she felt that it probably had a positive effect, as her friend would have wanted her to do well:

'We became quite motivated'.

It was her impression that the year group did quite well in their exams that year.

Dowdney mentions this in her annotation of childhood bereavement following death: 'Both clinical experience and research interviews indicate

that some bereaved children determine to do better at school as a form of tribute to their dead parent' (2000, p.822). Broberg et al. (2005) found in their study with pupils following a fire, in which a number of students died, that those pupils who felt that their school had been supportive reported that their school performance had deteriorated less than those who felt less supported by their school.

Grace felt that her school performance was initially affected, in particular in subjects where she used to sit next to her friend, as she was reminded of him. However, she reported that a lot of young people thought that they should do well, not just for themselves, but also for Melvin, because he would have done very well.

'So he is not going to have the chance to prove it, so we will prove it for him, by doing well ourselves.'

Grace said that her results were better than expected. Silverman and Worden (2000) also reported that one year on from the death of a parent as many participants reported that their school work had improved as those who reported that it had deteriorated.

Rosenfeld (2000) found that young people who had support from parents, teachers and peers showed the following signs: better attendance; spending more hours studying; avoiding problem behaviour more; having higher school satisfaction, engagement, and self-efficacy; and obtaining better grades.

Luke felt that the bereavement did not impact significantly on his results, as he never revised much anyway. He told me that he achieved grades A* and A in several subjects. Grace will go to university, and she thinks that she

probably would not have done this if the event had not occurred. She talks about being more impulsive and ensuring that she takes the opportunities that are offered to her. She travelled for a while:

'So you may as well go out and do what you want to do whilst you still can.'

She goes on to talk more about how the young people in her year group approached their exams a year later:

'Yeah, most people did quite well in our GCSEs. I like to think that's how we were, how we were thinking, there was one of our English literature questions, where we had to write about our hero, and our teacher said once she looked through them all, about 95% of us had written about Melvin anyway, so that just shows that right through the end he was our inspiration for so many things. And that was a piece that we had all done so well on, because it was such a personal piece of work, it wasn't just like some other student might have written about superman or something, we wrote about someone we had known, and who had got through so much, and he helped us to do well in that particular exam, because we were writing about him.'

This approach seems to relate significantly to the personality of the young person who died. Melvin was very highly motivated to do well in school, and before his death he encouraged his friends to do well for themselves.

I have not encountered other studies that examined the educational achievement of a year group following the death of a classmate, in particular when the death was anticipated. A. Dyregrov, Wikander and Vigerust (1999) found that nine months after the sudden death of a classmate one quarter of the participants still felt that their schoolwork was affected, but to a lesser extent. It would be very interesting to see a study which considers the longer-term consequences of the impact of the death of a classmate, and

considers in greater depth if and how young people can be inspired to do well.

4.4.4 Spiritual growth and meaning-making

A number of authors write about the spiritual growth that occurs in people following bereavement (Park and Cohen 1993; Batten et al. 1999; Cranwell 2003; Leighton 2008; Mallon 2011). I wanted to include a question about beliefs in my study because I wondered whether this had a significant influence on outcomes for young people. Becker et al. (2007) attempt to answer whether religious or spiritual beliefs influence bereavement. They examined a number of studies. However, 'as religiosity and spirituality vary according to different religious traditions and beliefs' (2007, p.215), no statistically significant findings could be reported from the 32 different studies they examined, although the majority of studies reported positive effects of religion or spirituality.

When I asked young people if the experience of a friend's death had changed their beliefs, none of them felt that anything had changed. It is my view that they interpreted my question about their beliefs in the sense that they were considering it in the traditional sense of faith and religion. The experience of the death of a friend seemed to have more of an opposite effect. Luke put it like this:

'I never believed in it, I don't want to believe in it, and it solidified it all for me.'

Neither of the young people reported that they had strong spiritual views to begin with; this is how 13-year-old Anita talks about it:

'I don't really believe in anything. And that's not changed either.'

None of the interviewees mentioned their religious beliefs in the interview at any other point, but it must be remembered that my sample was small (5 young people). According to a large survey by Robbins and Francis of Year 9 and Year 10 pupils (13-15 year olds), approximately 40% of pupils believe in God (2010). It seems the young people I spoke to were not religious, although, given the above mentioned survey, I would have expected at least one or two of them would believe in God, either currently or when they were in Year 10.

However, when discussing 'spiritual growth', different interpretations can be made. Some authors write about it in the sense of religion (Park et al. 1993; Becker et al. 2007), whilst other authors view spirituality in a much broader sense, where spirituality represents the 'human quest to understand life's meaning' (Batten et al. 1999, p.530).

Adolescence is a time where young people are developing their identity. This can be described as involving a subjective feeling of self-sameness and continuity over time (Erikson 1968). Young people are trying to work out what life means. The death of a school friend is a significant experience that may lead to young people questioning their developing identity. This can lead to a turning point for young people, referred to by Erikson as an 'identity crises'. Experiencing the death of a school friend can be considered a key point and a time when young people question the meaning of life and their purpose within it. 'At such a turning point, one is propelled to seek answers or resolutions to questions of life's meaning and one's purpose in it' (Kroger 2007, p.11). The ability to question and to develop the capacity to make sense of their experiences, as well as the ability to think abstractly is a requisite for these thought processes (Batten et al. 1999).

The young people suddenly realised that people who die are not necessarily elderly - and young people also die:

'I used to be very naïve about it, more than anything, thinking that it's only the elderly that would pass away.' (Grace)

Another young person felt that experiencing the death of a friend made him realise that anyone could die, even at his age:

'You don't have to be 80 odd to die, it could happen at any time, that makes me think about that a lot more'. (Oscar)

Oscar felt that Melvin's death had a significant impact on him. He felt that he matured quite quickly through that experience. A.Dyregrov and K.Dyregrov talk about how young people experience an 'abrupt maturity' (2008).

The death of their friend led them to consider their own mortality.

'After Melvin passed away, it's one of those things that we all, it shocked us all, we are not invincible, we are not going to live forever.' (Grace)

This realisation led them to think about what life is all about. Batten and Oltjenbruns describe this as the 'quest to understand life's meaning' (1999, p.531). A number of the young people I interviewed talked about growing up quite quickly following the event. When these young people were faced with their own mortality, they began to think about their purpose in life. When Frankl (1946) experienced the horror of living in a Nazi death camp, he observed that those who were able to find meaning in their life were more likely to survive. However, finding meaning in our life is more than just managing to get on with life. 'Meaning imbues life with value and purpose, making it worth an emotional commitment' (Tedeschi et al. 1995, p.71).

Young people found different ways to find meaning, but they all realised that they wanted to do something with their life:

'I think that, I used to be really afraid of the world, and stuff, and it really changed the way I thought - if you can't do it, I've got to do it. I've got to grab it with both hands.' (Veronica)

Meaning making can be viewed in different ways. The young people in my study tried to make meaning by understanding and making sense of what happened, both cognitively, as well as emotionally.

Another view of meaning making could also be 'as part of the human quest for a response to the spiritual or existential challenges of life and death' (McCarthy 2009, p.24). Hogan and Balk (1990) noted that young people have a deepening understanding of human existence. The process of making meaning of their experiences does not happen by itself. Meyersen et al. (2011) report in their overview of studies relating to adolescents and post-traumatic growth that young people may require assistance with regard to making meaning of their experience. It seems to me that the young people in my study were assisted by the young person who was ill and who subsequently died:

'And (he) told us that, that we still got our lives, and we have got to live it for two people instead of the one, and we have got to make sure we are happy, and do the things that we want to do.' (Grace)

This message, left for them by their friend who died, guided them in their thinking about making meaning of his death.

McCarthy found that 'attention to meaning may be highly fruitful for the greater understanding of young people's experiences of death and bereavement' (2009, p.34).

Young people found different ways to lead their lives, but they all wanted to do something purposeful. Oscar talked in detail about the fundraising activities he had undertaken since Melvin's death. This helped him and his friends to get through a difficult time, whilst raising money for a good cause. He also felt that, in regard to his career, he was taking definite, well-considered decisions, rather than copying what his friends were doing:

'And not just pass time.'

Their approach to life had changed: Grace describes that her way of seeing things has changed:

'The way of coping was to find little bit of goodness in everything.'

As meaning-making can be different for different young people, depending on their background and culture, etc., some careful consideration needs to be given to why meaning-making is a positive outcome. McCarthy (2009) emphasises that social scientists 'are interested in meaning as sense making, without wishing to advocate the need for meanings as purposefulness and without wanting to evaluate any particular meanings as more desirable and worthy than others' (2009, p.35). However, it would be important to be explicit about whether any value is given to the meanings that young people make. Whilst we have some evidence that meaning-making in itself is likely to result in better outcomes for bereaved people (Neimeyer et al. 2006), it seems likely that the young people in my study will continue on their positive journey.

4.5 Young people as disenfranchised mourners

It goes without saying that, when a young person dies, friends are affected by this death. Deck and Folta recognise the significance of the impact of a friend's death, especially in adolescence. When a friend dies, young people are confronted with the possibility of their own death: 'it could have been me' (1989, p. 84). It has been noted that society tends to focus on affected family members, whilst others, who are not immediate kin, are often inadvertently ignored or even deliberately excluded. Doka uses the term 'disenfranchised grief', which he defines 'as grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned or publically mourned' (Doka 1989, p.4). Amongst others, the role of friends in the grieving process is often not acknowledged, and they are excluded from the close circle of the grieving family.

The problem of disenfranchised grief is that the mourners are not recognised, and therefore are left out of the rituals around the grieving process, and lack the support from those grievers. This can intensify grief reactions and lead to difficulties in resolving the death.

Cowan writes: 'The grief of children is often disenfranchised, and children are frequently referred to as the invisible or forgotten mourners' (2010, p.226). She goes on to write about what schools can do to help and to ensure that friends' needs as mourners are met. Williams also reports that adults exclude young people from their grief: 'adults don't understand the significance the death of an adolescent has on the surviving peers' (Williams et al. 2009).

The notion that children and young people, who are friends of the person who has died, are excluded from grief is not common to my professional experience, nor to the findings of this study.

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When I first visited the family of Anna, the girl who died, they talked about having regular contact with her friends. They showed me the memorial garden they had made for her in their garden, and told me how they were expecting Anna's friends to visit them as the anniversary of her death was approaching. Anita also mentions this in her interview:

We went to their house, and have seen the garden. It's nice. (Anita)

In both schools in my study, and from my professional practice, young people are usually invited to funerals. All the young people I spoke to attended. In the primary school, children were also invited to the wake, and most of Anna's friends attended.   From my interviews, and my professional experience working with schools, families are usually welcoming towards members of the school community, and take their own comfort from the grieving friends.

Not only did the families include the friends in their mourning, but the friends also considered the families. Children and young people in school undertook activities and made things that they considered would be helpful to the grieving family:

They decided to do things, like, we did a book. They wanted to do something to show the parents how much they cared. (Heather)

This did not happen solely spontaneously, but also in the longer-term:

And I know that his parents were really touched, because, it was, I think they were worried, because I think they were just expecting us to glaze over it, to make it a bit easier, because obviously they couldn't do, and instead we thought, instead of being sad about the fact that he is not here for his birthday, we are going to celebrate it for him, we are going to make sure that

he still has his 16th birthday, and goes out with his friends for a meal, I think Pizza Hut we went. (Grace)

Friends' grief may be acknowledged more in children, than in adults. As children spend a large amount of time with their friends and classmates at school, everyone misses the presence of a school friend. Because the grief at school is not managed by parents but by teachers, a sense of community is cultivated, wherein the loss of a member of the community is acknowledged and the ensuing grief amongst the children is supported. Within the school there seems to be a community spirit that brings everyone together, aided by the structures and relationships within the school. Perhaps disenfranchisement, which 'seems to stem for a failure or unwillingness to recognize that a real loss actually has taken place' (Corr 2002, p.39), does not occur because the bereavement and its impact on young people is recognised by the school community.

Since Doka (1989) first wrote about disenfranchised grief, it has become more common to include children and young people in grief rituals. Efforts have been made to include teaching and learning about death and bereavement in the curriculum, although more time could be dedicated to this. In his later book on disenfranchised grief, Doka writes about groups where the griever is excluded, in particular 'the very young and the very old' (2002, p.13). In my professional experience, older children and adolescents are, on the whole, no longer excluded from the grieving process.

Many children and young people take an active part in remembering the person who died. They do not just attend funerals, but often contribute actively to them. They also engage in long-term activities where they meet together to remember the person who died. Luke, for a number of years,

organised a football match in memory of his friend, with his friend's brother taking part, as well as Melvin's parents watching.

'Whilst schools and colleges as organizations are sources of disenfranchisement in their policies, practices, and lack of preparedness to acknowledge the breadth and depth of grief in students' (Rowling 2002, p.284), the opposite can also be the case. 'A little help given at the right time can make a big difference towards positive outcomes and schools are well placed to provide this' (Adams 2012, p.450).

My study, and my professional experience, shows how schools can include children and young people in a positive way and ensure that they are actively involved in the grieving process. I am sure that this contributes, among many other factors, towards positive outcomes to those children and young people who are affected by the death of a school friend.

4.6 Teaching and learning about death and bereavement in schools

In this section I present the data I collected on teaching and learning about death and bereavement in schools and consider this in relation to the international and national literature on this subject. I do this in three sections: I start by first considering the rather ambiguous policy context in the U.K. regarding death and bereavement being taught in schools, and discuss the literature which argues for this to be an integral part of the school curriculum. To complete this argument I then present the literature on what young people in my study think about the teaching and learning of death in schools. In the second section I look predominantly at the data I gathered, focusing on ways in which death was taught in schools, considering both adults' perspectives and young people's experiences. I am presenting young people's general thoughts about this kind of education and whether they felt addressing this subject through the curriculum helped them at a time of their own bereavement. In the third section I return to the literature to discuss the barriers to teaching this difficult topic within schools as well as material on how it can be taught. Taken together, the three sections explore my research question of whether children and young people think that teaching and learning about death and bereavement in schools helps them to deal with the experience of the death of a school friend, and how and why.

4.6.1 Policy on the teaching and learning about death and bereavement in the curriculum

Since I have been working in this field in 2001, UK government guidance has changed in regard to the teaching of death and bereavement in the curriculum. This is part of a much wider view of the government to give individual schools more freedom about the content of their curriculum, in particular in subjects like PSHE, where previous government was also non-statutory: 'beyond that core, to allow teachers greater freedom to use their

professionalism and expertise to help all children realise their potential'
(Gibson 1991). However, in the past, guidelines were much more specific.

Going back to the mid 90s, Casdagli states clear expectations of what
children should learn at the different key stages, based on the 1990
guidelines on Health Education:

'Key Stage 1:

To know about the rituals associated with birth, marriage and death
and be able to talk about the emotions involved.

To begin to recognise the range of human emotions and ways to deal
with these.

Key Stage 2:

To know about the needs of the old/ill and understand what happens
with death.

To understand that individual responses to events vary and respect to
other people's emotions and feelings.

Key Stage 3:

To recognise the changing nature of relationships within the family

e.g. children gaining independence, new members of the family group,
death.

Key Stage 4:

To be aware of partnerships, marriage and divorce and the impact of
loss, separation and bereavement.

To recognise the causes and effects of stress; be able to identify ways
of reducing/managing/preventing stress; know how to ask for and give
support.'

(1995, p.6-7)

One could argue that various forms of government guidance did encourage schools to integrate teaching about death and bereavement in the curriculum, in particular the Education Act (1996), which emphasized the importance of promoting the personal, social and spiritual development of children and young people. The National Healthy Schools Programme, which started in 1999, as well the SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) programme, (2005/2006 primary; 2007/2008 secondary), contain some materials for how schools could teach bereavement issues.

The 2000 National Curriculum, revised in 2004, gave some guidelines about how to include death and bereavement in the Key Stage 3 and 4 of the P.S.H.E curriculum, but guidance was non-statutory:

'Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities

Pupils should be taught:

To recognise the stages of emotions associated with loss and change caused by death, divorce, separation and new family members, and how to deal positively with the strength of their feelings in different situations.

(Key Stage 3)

About the impact of separation, divorce and bereavement on families and how to adapt to changing circumstances

(Key Stage 4)'

(Leaman 1995, p.134 and p.216)

The statement, 'There is a clear guidance framework to support schools covering death and bereavement' (Job and Frances 2004, p.8), however, no longer stands true.

The new National Curriculum, which was published in October 2013 (DfE 2013), and should be in place from September 2014, is going to give schools more freedom about what they teach, in particular in subjects like P.S.H.E (Physical, Social, Health Education) which continue to be non-statutory. Schools have a choice of how or if they include teaching about death and bereavement in the curriculum. The new guidance which is given on teaching P.S.H.E does not give any detailed guidance on any areas, and does also not refer to bereavement and death (Education 2013).

In the new national curriculum in science, primary schools are expected to teach children about death in relation to the natural world, e.g. 'explore and compare the differences between things that are living, dead, and things that have never been alive' (Key Stage 2) (Education 2013).

The teaching of Religious Education (R.E.) continues to be guided by each local authority, so varies widely across the country. Some local authorities have produced guidance for schools for teaching death and bereavement as part of the RE syllabus, e.g. Bexley (Party 2007) and Leicester (Group 2005).

Without specific guidance, schools can refer to the introduction of the new national curriculum:

'Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and

- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.'

(DfE 2013)

Schools need to interpret these guidelines for themselves. It can be argued that the duty to prepare young people for later life includes equipping them for the inevitable experience of death. Teaching about death, dying and bereavement brings opportunities for young people to learn about what will eventually happen to every living thing. In what follows, I will present the literature which argues why death ought to be an integral part of the school curriculum.

4.6.2 Why death and bereavement should be part of the curriculum – literature:

In my search for reasons why children and young people should learn about death and bereavement in schools I found several compelling arguments.

Firstly, schools can provide a safe place for this to happen: 'Educators are in a position to provide a safe environment where children and young people can explore the concepts of death and bereavement' (Mallon 2011, p.50). Every school has a duty to keep children safe, and creating a safe environment for children to learn in is part of the responsibility of a school. Where staff focus on the child as a learner, the child is at the centre of their learning, and consequently teachers are able to respond to each child individually where they can explore difficult concepts.

McCarthy and Jessop (2005) suggest that death education could dispel a lot of misinformation and myth, which would lead to children being in a position where they could better deal with death and bereavement, whether they experienced it themselves or a classmate was affected. When children do not know how bereavement impacts on children's lives, they will be less able to support their friend. From my professional experience I am aware that children want to be supportive of their friends, for example when a parent

dies, but they are uncertain about how to behave and respond to their friends. Those children report that very little, if any teaching about death and bereavement has been delivered in their schools. Job writes about how learning about death

> 'will be valuable in developing the emotional literacy of children and young people by death, giving them greater understanding of their feelings, and increasing their ability to seek support. It will also have an impact on the response of their peers, making them more likely to be sympathetic and less likely to stigmatise the bereaved children or young person' (2004, p.15).

Her book, by providing case studies and teaching materials, encourages staff to teach about death and bereavement.

Stevenson (2000) identified that when undertaking death education, young people identified a lessening of fear and anxiety regarding death, and increased communication. Students who had been talking about death in school felt more able to talk about death and bereavement at home with their families. In my own work I have found that children naturally talk about death and, unless influenced by adults, may they be teachers or parents, are not aware of death as a 'taboo' subject.

Especially in primary school, where some of the learning should be child initiated, teachers need to be ready to deliver death education because they need to respond to children's enquiring minds. Many school teachers talk about children starting a discussion about death, maybe because their pet died, or they have come across a dead animal in the school grounds. 'Death and decay are subjects that aren't normally talked about, but children often have questions about them, and will want to know the answers' (Chadwick

1994). Leaman found in his work with schools in England, which was funded by the National Children's Bureau, that 'it (death) is a subject that naturally interests children, and teachers have a responsibility to respond to this interest by talking to children about death' (Leaman 1995, p.xii). Jackson and Colwell found in their small study where they explored attitudes of Y9 pupils about the teaching of death, the majority wanted to talk about death at school and felt it should be introduced at primary school. The authors felt it is time that we should 'once again acknowledge that curiosity and need to understand death' (Jackson and Colwell 2001, p.325). Teaching about death and bereavement brings opportunities for children to learn about what will eventually happen to every living thing.

Rowling and Holland (2000) argue for death education, as it can deliver the following objectives: better preparation for life, enhancing appreciation of life, loss and grief as a life experience, to be less afraid of death and bereavement. They found in their comparative study of Australian and English schools that in Australia 29% of schools included grief education as part of the curriculum, in contrast to 9% of schools in England, which seemed to be related to a different socio-political and educational context, as well as a lack of mandatory requirements about professional developments. Including death in the curriculum can achieve better outcomes for children:

> 'Grief and suicide need to be integrated as part of ongoing curriculum perceived as a natural part of school and an essential ingredient in young people's educational experience. This would enable children and young people to see grief as part of their normal experience, so when it happens in school, they are prepared for it' (Rowling et al. 2000, p.37).

Stevenson (2000) summarises the broad range of benefits which arise when death and bereavement become a recognised part of the curriculum. Arguing strongly about death education in schools, he highlights the benefits for students in terms of preparation for coping with future losses, improved communication, increased knowledge and academic skills, lessening of death-related fear and anxiety, greater feelings of personal control of life, life is felt to be more precious, greater appreciation of cultural diversity and possible therapeutic effects.

The literature review (The Joanna Briggs Institute 2006) analysed research in relation to education settings (Gibson 1991; Leaman 1995; Holland 1997; Papadatou et al. 2002; Daniels 2003; Holland 2003; Lowton et al. 2003; Group 2005; Party 2007; Education 2013). It concludes that 'death and bereavement should be part of the curriculum in primary and secondary settings' (The Joanna Briggs Institute 2006, p.51).

4.6.3 Literature on what young people think about the teaching of death and bereavement in the curriculum

Whilst some literature on what educators think are the benefits of addressing the issues of death through the curriculum is available, there is considerably less research on what young people themselves think about the topic. I have summarised these below. It becomes apparent that young people value this topic rather more highly than adults and professionals.

Bowie (1996) found in her study, which involved 107 high school pupils in the U.K., that pupils indicated that death and bereavement is a topic they do think about. 'Of the pupils questioned in this research, 73% think about death and dying to some extent, 36% reveal this is a topic which causes them most concern and 36% would like this discussed in their classroom' (Bowie

2010, p.26). Similarly, in a survey on health care priorities amongst students, 'pupils of all ages accorded a far higher importance to talking about death and bereavement than did teachers or even health care professionals' (Casdagli et al. 1995, p.7). This is echoed in a recent study undertaken by Ofsted (2013) about PSHE teaching: 37% of students stated they wanted to learn about how to deal with bereavement.

However, there are some interesting subtleties which emerge in the study which Jackson and Colwell (2011) undertook. They interviewed 14 – 15 year olds as part of a small-scale study with a U.K. secondary school, which intended to review its teaching of death and loss. In this study, 65% of young people suggested that the topic should have been introduced at primary school, and 62% agreed they would prefer to talk about it, rather than avoid it. However, a significant number of pupils (51%) also suggested they would prefer talk with their parents about it, rather than with school staff.

4.6.4 Data from the study: Current teaching and learning practices
In this second section I present data from my study, focusing on the current practices followed in school, and pupils' opinions of these.

In the two schools in my study, according to the teachers and young people, the discussion of death and related matters happened as part of two main subject areas, RE and PSHE, as well as by teachers responding to particular events.

Teaching as part of the RE curriculum
The primary teachers in my study included some teaching about death, mainly in the RE curriculum, where they discussed such issues when teaching the Easter Story, for instance. However, this tended to be focused on biblical

events and topics, for example the discussion of the religious notion of 'resurrection'. A more detailed discussion, in particular around the finality of death, may not have been possible here. The teachers themselves felt that this teaching was quite distinctive and had little impact on the children and their experiences. They seemed to think it was the immediacy of death and bereavement which would contribute to a deeper understanding of the topic:

'But I think that until it actually happens to them, in the here and now, I don't think that [RE teaching] would have helped.' (Heather)

One of the children who had experienced teaching about this topic at primary school, echoed this sentiment, saying that learning about death through RE was mainly about learning about religious concepts like heaven. It is likely that most children would have experienced some teaching about death as part of the RE curriculum:

> 'All Religious Education syllabi incorporate the topic of death in some form, particularly through the components of learning about religions, their teachings about death and the afterlife and associated ceremonies' (Adams 2009, p.13).

Whether this teaching included a wider discussion about children's views and an opportunity to reflect on the issue and relate it to their own experiences varied amongst participants in my study.

In my study, teachers reported that they undertook very little teaching of death and bereavement as part of a planned curriculum. When they taught about those topics they were based on religious concepts, or to teach young people about rituals like funerals.

Teaching as part of the PSHE curriculum

Some young people said they had experience of learning about death and bereavement in the curriculum through PSHE. They learnt about the process of grief, as well as about what happens during funerals. They describe learning about death thus:

'and also, we did talk about it in lessons, beforehand, because it is in the curriculum, you learn about death, the stages of mourning, all that, and funeral scenario.' (Luke)

Teaching seemed to help in the way of understanding a bit more about the processes, but whilst young people lacked the personal experience, they were not entirely able to relate what they learnt to a real situation.

Teaching as a response to a particular event

The teachers in my study seem to find it easier to engage with the teaching of death and bereavement when children raised this topic themselves, maybe when a grandparent died, or perhaps a pet. When there is a need to respond to a particular issue, brought up by the children, there seems to be a more natural way of talking about these difficult matters. In one teacher's words:

'So I think it's always been, as the need arises, rather than Spring Term, second half of, it's more been through need and necessity'. (Felicity)

One young person talks about *'an incredible person'*, a teacher who brought up the topic of death and bereavement with them, because something happened to him – the teacher's parent had died at the weekend. He is said to have approached the topic honestly, sharing the impact that this death had on him with his pupils:

'I don't want to teach you today. My mother has passed away. But I want to talk to you about how I am feeling, and I want you to tell me your feelings about it.' (paraphrased by Grace)

The young person said he very openly spoke about his feelings, and the emotional impact of parental death, even as an adult. As well as talking about emotions, he also discussed the longer-term impact, and about how one can keep on living without the person they loved. He gave them hope, and permission to get on with their lives:

'…don't be afraid to be happy again, because you can't be miserable with the person who has gone.' (paraphrased by Grace)

Young people's views on the teaching of death and bereavement in the curriculum and its impact

The young person who spoke about her experience of the lesson delivered by her RE teacher, was very clear this lesson had a positive impact on her understanding of death and bereavement when her friend died. This was in relation to both the content of the lesson, as well as the way in which it was delivered. She felt her teacher had valued them as pupils, treated them as young adults:

'…that was a lesson that was stuck with me, because it was the first time we were spoken to as adults, by a teacher who wanted to know our opinion, trusting us with how he felt about something very personal, and it gave us all a chance to talk about it.' (Grace)

He was inspiring to this pupil; he gave the young people an opportunity to explore feelings associated with the death of a loved one, and a chance to think about the challenge of being faced with such a situation.

When considering why this lesson helped this young person later on, when she experienced the death of a friend, several points can be identified here. Young people were treated as adults, their views and opinions were being sought, and taken seriously. The teacher trusted the young people with his own precious, personal experience, and this impacted on the young people in his class.

Key points here were a positive relationship with the teacher and a personalised learning approach, which was the reason for why this lesson was so well remembered by Grace, and why she felt it made a difference to her life. Without wanting to analyse this in any great detail, this seems to be coherent with the research on learning centred approaches:

> 'it is important for children to feel that their needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence are being met. For example, in classrooms where children reported that their teachers had incorporated practices that addressed these needs, students were more motivated, placed a higher value on learning, and were more meaningfully engaged in schoolwork and activities' (Daniels 2003, p.103).

Another young person talked about how she found it helpful to learn about death and bereavement in RE and PSHE lessons:

'Obviously we learned about it in RE and PSHE, and that came really helpful afterwards when we could talk about it more, because, really, I think lessons like that is a time where you just have to be open with people.' (Luke)

Staff who are willing to be open and honest with pupils whilst discussing the difficult topic of death and bereavement seems to be a vital ingredient to successful learning for children. This is confirmed by Gross' study (2010)

about reflective teaching as a path to religious meaning-making and growth. He found that a small minority of teachers, who use a reflective approach to teaching, had a meaningful impact on their students' religious socialization processes. 'These moments where the teacher 'sacrifices his own humanity' are 'teachable moments' that had a long-lasting educational impact on students' (Gross 2010, p.278). This seems to mirror the same kind of experience that Grace described.

One young person, who did not experience this kind of teaching, talked about how much she would have liked to have experienced this though:
'it would be good to actually understand the process, .. if you could maybe learn about the process of grief, …, that would be quite good, because I didn't understand about the process of grief, at all, I didn't even, now I look back, I definitely went through every single process, but at the time I was doing my thing, I didn't realise…, and you know…, I didn't realise.' (Veronica)

Another young person, who had not covered that topic at school, was very clear that it should be taught. His view was that it should start at primary school, because the likelihood of a young person experiencing death at high school is very probable, and it would be much better if children are prepared for it before it occurs. He felt that schools should prepare children:
'…because at high school, it is going to happen, when I was at high school, we lost three students, so I think it's going to happen, and I think the earlier schools can teach younger people about what's going to happen, and how to deal with things, and what could happen, the better it would be, to prepare them and that, when it does happen.' (Oscar)

The messages from the young people in my study seem very powerful to me. They all felt that teaching about death and bereavement in the curriculum is

valuable, whether they had experienced it themselves or not. One of the young people made it very clear:

'It would be good to actually understand the process, I think, you know, in RE, and stuff, you touch on anything but death...,because then you know what happens, and everything.' (Veronica)

These young people wanted to learn about the process of grief, the rituals associated with death. They also wanted to find out more about the impact that death has on them. Being given the opportunity to think about death before it happens, both in abstract terms, as well as relating it to their own experiences, can help young people to prepare for a time when they themselves experience the death of a school friend. As Veronica puts it:

'I think the idea of teaching children about grief and stuff, would be quite good.'

4.6.5 Teaching and learning about death: barriers to teaching the topic

In this final section I return once more to the literature to assess what seem to be the dominant barriers to the teaching of this subject, as well as ways of supporting schools, and considering the ways in which the topic can be approached and taught.

Lack of knowledge and confidence

Even at a time when teaching of death and bereavement was more explicitly referred to in the government's policies, teachers seemed to be unaware that they should be including teaching of death and bereavement in the curriculum. Brown (1999, p.103) found in her research project with primary schools, that although 90% of her participants agreed that it was appropriate to include death education, very few were actually aware that their syllabus

required them to teach about death and bereavement. It seems government guidance was not well published amongst staff working in primary schools.

When Brown then supported primary schools in embedding the teaching of death and bereavement into their curriculum, she encountered reluctance of staff. She found that this was due to a lack of staff confidence. The lack of confidence may also relate to staff's personal experience. Leaman suggests that 'teachers should try to put aside their personal anxieties regarding this topic and provide a context within which they can discuss it with their pupils in a rewarding manner' (1995, p.91). It seems to be that this is easier said than done. Staff also felt inadequately trained. A long-term project overseen by Holland (Holland 1997; Holland 2000; Holland 2003; Holland 2004), which focused on helping staff to support children following bereavement, found similar results, including staff not having received training about bereavement issues.

Even when staff feel that it would be useful to include teaching about death and bereavement, it does not necessarily mean that they have the skills and confidence to do this. 'Accepting that death and related issues should be part of the schooling process is not to answer the question of how to do it' (Leaman 1995, p.88).

According to Papadatou et al. (2002), who undertook a large study in Greece, very little teaching is done in Greek schools, mostly because staff feel that they themselves have not enough training to deliver this. However, staff do not always put themselves forward for training either. When I asked staff about whether they felt that training might have helped them prepare, one of them responded:

'I am not sure that would have necessarily been helpful'. (Doris)

It would be worthwhile exploring in more detail why staff do not always put themselves forward for training, or why they think that training may not be helpful. Another member of staff responded in a similar way:

'I am not sure how helpful training would have been.' (Heather)

In my interviews staff discussed training in relation to responding to bereaved children, rather than training about teaching death and bereavement in the curriculum. I did not explore this further as I undertook staff interviews before speaking to young people, and I was unaware of their viewpoint at that moment. Training currently offered in Norfolk by the Critical Incident Service which I manage includes both aspects, preparing staff to support bereaved children as well as giving staff the confidence to teach about death and bereavement in the curriculum. From my experience of delivering training, evaluations are always positive. Staff say that they find it helpful to attend, and formal evaluations indicate that the training gives them the confidence to address bereavement issues within the classroom. However, unless training is delivered to a whole set of staff, there will always be the concern that those staff who need the training most, may choose not to attend such a course. I am sure that most professionals who deliver training are familiar with the concept of 'preaching to the converted', and having great difficulty in attracting staff, who need it most, to their training. I found that training also addresses the issue of a lack of confidence, as well as any associated anxieties. Rowling and Holland found that 8% of staff in New South Wales, compared to 20% of staff in England expressed concerns that 'educating young people about loss and grief on the grounds that this will create anxiety' (2000, p.41).

On reflection, teachers' stated reluctance to be trained or their belief that training may not really be useful may be a case where what is understood by,

required of and expected of 'training' by teachers is varied. In retrospect, I would see this as a worthwhile area to explore in future research.

Death as a taboo

The literature suggests that schools do not teach about death and bereavement because death and loss are taboo subjects (Brown 1999; McCarthy et al. 2005; Holland 2008). Holland frames it eloquently: 'Despite some changes in attitudes, death still seems to be a taboo subject, which is perhaps remarkable as it is the one sure certainty' (2008, p.414).

Only recently I was delivering school training about supporting bereaved children, when a member of staff mentioned that they had hatched some eggs. She told me that unfortunately two of the chicks had died over the weekend. She then questioned her colleagues' actions of removing the dead chicks before the children came back. She realised that they had missed an opportunity to talk about death in the normal context of life. She reflected on what she had learnt from the course I delivered, and was now very keen to talk about death and bereavement with the children in her setting. She realised how important it was to discuss death and bereavement and not treat it as taboo.

When death is a taboo subject, teachers are less proactive in approaching the topic as part of the curriculum, as well as less able in supporting individual affected children. In Brown's study (1999) this was overcome to some extent by providing in-service training, which entailed an opportunity for teachers to explore their own attitudes, as well as providing practical guidance. This led to teachers feeling better equipped to deal with reactions and perceptions of children. Following the project, all teachers agreed that they would continue with teaching death in their lessons.

4.6.6 Literature on teachers' views on how death and bereavement should be taught

Bowie (1996) undertook a small-scale study in which she used a questionnaire with staff in schools about their views on teaching about death, as well as asking children about their views. Bowie refers back to other researchers (Doyle 1989; Wells 2007) who suggest that death education should take a more prominent place in the curriculum. Some staff in her study agreed that it should be included in the curriculum, however their opinion was that this should take place as the need arises, either when a death occurs in the school community, or a death which is publicly discussed, or if a pupil raises this as an issue. There seems to be a reluctance to proactively teach about death and bereavement in the curriculum.

Urbanowicz (1994) described her whole school approach to teaching about grief and loss, in which she enabled staff to explore their own feelings before asking them to incorporate some of the issues of death and bereavement into the curriculum. This seems to relate to Brown's work (1999); she overcame reluctance of teachers by providing them opportunities to reflect on their own experiences.

Tracey and Holland (2013) found that 51% of schools in Derry/Londonderry and 61% in Hull covered loss in the curriculum through different subjects, like Religious Education, Citizenship, as well as during circle time. Teachers used fiction, as well as responding to children who brought the subject up themselves. The authors conclude that the programme 'Lost for Words', which was previously introduced in schools in Hull, accounted for the higher percentage of schools in Hull which covered death and loss. However, death is still not talked about in schools on a regular basis, and the authors suggest that 'finding additional ways of integrating loss into the curriculum will also

help to shift the taboo and to raise awareness of the issue at all levels' (Dyregrov et al. 2013, p.264).

Higgins (1996) takes a different approach; she argues that that teaching about death should happen because the curriculum should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepare them for adult life. Children should have the opportunity to 'explore life's great questions' (1996, p.78). Rather than a taboo subject in today's society, teaching about death is one of the school's responsibilities. Ofsted tasks schools with the following: 'Search for meaning and purpose – asking 'why me?' at times of hardship and suffering; reflecting on the origins and purpose of life; responding to challenging experiences of life such as beauty, suffering and death' (1985, p.10). Higgins emphasises how teaching needs to be developmentally appropriate, but also take into account that 'children's experiences affect their development' (1996, p.83). Children, who have experienced the death of a loved one are likely to have a different understanding to those who have never experienced death first hand. In Higgins' research, which involved a class of Year 5 children, she found that children were able to think in the abstract and discuss and explore different views on the afterlife. 'The researcher discovered many examples of deep thinking and abstract ideas' (Higgins 2010, p.89). Children talked about a variety of views, and the author felt that children's thinking was developed and their mental and spiritual needs were addressed. By using death education in the curriculum, Higgins supports the view that this 'helps to eliminate the fear of the unknown' and 'provides the language for the child to talk about death when the situation arises' (2010, p.89).

Death and Bereavement can be taught as part of various subjects, and Winston's Wish, a childhood bereavement charity, make various lesson plans

available on their website. Devlin-Friend (2006) discusses in her paper the resources that are available for schools to use, including the local cemetery and funeral directors.

Most authors discuss the teaching of this topic either as part of RE or PSHE lessons. Kathy Salmon (1991) writes about how schools could integrate dealing with death in the curriculum. She wants to encourage schools to teach death as part of the PSHE Curriculum. Others argue that it should be embedded in the broader scheme of developing emotional literacy (Mc Caffrey 2004).

4.6.7 Summary

I have been long aware of the literature, which argues for the inclusion of death education, and government guidance, in particular the detailed guidance in 2003/2004, when I started as Critical Incident Co-ordinator for Norfolk County Council. At that time clear guidance was given on teaching about death and bereavement in the curriculum, which was a compelling argument for encouraging schools to include this in their curriculum.

However, as the political landscape changes and the government gives schools much freedom on the content of the curriculum, in particular in relation to subjects like P.S.H.E., it is important to revisit the arguments of why teaching about death and bereavement is important.

For me this was a very important part of my research, as the views of children who have experienced death and bereavement have not previously been taken account of.

Teachers and young people indicated that the current situation about death education has not changed much in the last years; teachers are reluctant to cover the topic proactively in the curriculum. Teachers said that they would respond if children brought those issues into school, for example when they spoke about the death of a grandparent. However, this topic was very seldom covered as part of a planned lesson. Adults continue to have reservations about teaching the subject, which is contrary to children's openness (Adams 2009).

Young people, however, suggest that death and bereavement should be taught as part of the curriculum. Three young people stated that they had not experienced any teaching about the topic, but that they would have appreciated this. They identified RE and PSHE as the main subjects in which they could be taught about this.

The other two who had experienced death education valued this. Being given the opportunity to think about death beforehand, both in abstract terms, as well as relating it to their own experiences, helped young people to prepare for a time when they themselves experienced the death of a school friend, which was a very difficult time. Knowing about how they might react and how grief might affect them before it happens, can make a difference to how young people can cope with death and bereavement.

5. Summary of findings and future research

In this section I identify the distinctive contribution my study has made to the knowledge in this field. I relate the contribution I have made to the theory I have discussed in my thesis, as well as to the theoretical framework. I also discuss limitations of my study, and consider areas which could form a basis for future research.

5.1 Contribution to the theoretical framework – New Studies of childhood

In this section I want to reflect on the role of this study in relation to the theoretical framework. My research is situated within the new studies of childhood, where children are viewed as active participants in society, where they hold rights and can actively contribute. This view of children within research leads to an approach which engages children and young people actively, seeking their views on issues that affect them, with some researchers supporting children in actively influencing many aspects of their research. This view is also closely related to the understanding about children's rights, which are enshrined in the UN Convention of the Rights of the child. Within these approaches there is a prerogative to listen to the child's view.

Whilst this has meant for some researchers to engage children as active partners, involving them in setting the research agenda, I have in my research aimed to seek the views of children on their experiences, in my case their experience of the death of a school friend.

This study did not attempt to actively engage children in setting the research, the intention was to listen to children's views about their experiences, and to involve children at a later stage to consult with them on the research findings within focus groups.

However, whilst the research community has for many years now actively engaged with the new studies of childhood and many more children are engaged in research, this has not necessarily been embedded into everybody's practice.

> '…, on occasions gatekeepers may display an over-protectiveness which amounts to a denial of the right of children and young people to take part in research in the first place, whilst on other occasions their actions may result in a failure to provide them with genuine opportunities to exercise their agency and competence in relation to issues of informed consent' (Heath, Charles, Crow and Wiles 2004, p.6).

And my study, like others, has shown that gatekeepers, in particular institutions like schools, continue to deny children and young people the opportunity to take an active part in research.

Powell and Smith (2009) also found this in their study on perspectives of researchers: 'The gatekeeping in these projects were a consequence of significant adults wanting to protect children' (2009, p.134). Where a sensitive topic was researched, the project had to be modified to the extent that interviews with children were not carried out. 'The experience of these researchers not being able to talk to these children meant that their voice could not be heard' (2009, p.134).

My research has shown that researchers, who intended to seek children's views on an important topic, but who are unable to do so because of gatekeepers, do have an alternative option. Seeking the views of young adults who can reflect on their earlier experiences, in my study, has given a

valuable insight into the experiences of children. Even if not ideal, this is not unheard of and offers a realistic alternative. Heath et al. (2004) for instance describe how a researcher focussed on the experience of gay young people in school. When the school insisted that parental permission was sought - which he viewed as unethical as young people would have had to out themselves - took a similar approach to the one I took: he interviewed young gay adults about their past experiences in school.

Studies have raised concerns about retrospective studies on childhood experiences, in particular in relation to negative life events, like childhood abuse. Concerns raised include a degree of forgetting, a tendency to seek meaning in memories, only being able to recall what one is aware of at the time, infantile-amnesia and memories being influenced by the mood at the time of reporting (Hardt and Rutter 2004, p.261). Whilst I acknowledge that these issues can influence responses, it is my view that these need not adversely affect the results. In my study I tried to circumvent this by considering meaning making within the context of these experiences.

This study has thus added to the knowledge about the impact of the death of a friend by researching adults, children's and young adult's perspectives.

5.2 School Support

Whilst the literature (Yule et al. 1993; Capewell 1994; Brown 1999; Holland 2008) has previously identified key factors of good school support for bereaved children, mostly this did not take account of the views of young people themselves. The most recent study about how schools should follow-up with bereaved students by K. Dyregrov, Endsjø, Idsøe, A. Dyregrov (2014) explores the views of staff. My study has contributed to the body of knowledge about good practice by adding views of young people who experienced this support. Young people identified the following as helpful: school offering normal routines with flexibility to meet their individual needs; opportunities for quiet reflection; the option to spend time with their friendship group. Young people valued a relief from the pressure of completing school work during the initial stages. More research is needed on children's views of effective school support, in particular within shorter timescales than this study was able to achieve.

Our knowledge of the role of school staff other than teachers remains limited and whilst this study has not been able to investigate this in detail, it has nevertheless identified that all members of school staff play an important role in supporting children. This should be investigated further, as in particular in the U.K., support staff impact significantly upon the care and education in the classroom.

5.3 Young people supporting each other

Whilst researchers (Worden 1996; Dopp 2012) found that peer support after the death of a parent is not always available, the situation following the death of a school friend is different as the whole peer group is affected by the death.

Common factors of helpful peer support were identified as remembering together and providing emotional support to each other. It may be surprising that humour and laughter can be helpful to some young people in dealing with their experiences. This mutual support is often provided long-term.

My study has contributed to the growing research about the role of social networking in young people's lives, specifically in relation to bereavement. It shows how the use of R.I.P. Facebook sites can be extremely helpful to young people in dealing with the bereavement of a peer. Social networking is used as a medium for social support and provides opportunities for remembering their deceased friend, as well as a place where mutual support can be provided. The long-term and around-the-clock availability of those sites is valued by young people as they come to terms with the death of their friend.

The opportunity for young people to communicate with each other without parental involvement, from their own home as well as when out and about, using computers, mobile phones or other internet enabled devices, has made a significant impact on children's lives. It must be remembered that some children may be excluded from these activities as parents either do not enable them or do not give them permission to access modern technologies.

My findings on social networking in particular need to be considered within the ever-changing context of modern technologies. The increasing availability

of internet-enabled phones will have an impact on how young people use social networking. Whilst the young people in my study did not share any negative experiences in this area, I am aware that more recently young people I support professionally have complained about negative and insensitive comments. This is likely to have an impact on how young people feel about the benefit of these sites. It is important to recognise that this research only provides a snapshot of social networking as used by young people in my study. Ongoing research will be needed in this field to understand the role social networking plays in young people's lives in the U.K.

It was hoped that my study would also investigate how older children, on the cusp of the teenage years, were supporting each other. This was however not possible owing to changes in the participants taking part. I would like to encourage other researchers to engage with young people in this age range.

5.4 Contribution to the understanding of continuing bonds in children and young people following the death of a school friend

Whilst we know from the literature that adults (Field et al. 2003; Klass 2006), as well as children who experience the death of a parent or sibling (Silverman and Nickman 1996; Packman 2006), can experience continuing bonds, very little has been written about the possible experience of continuing bonds in relation to children and young people who have experienced the death of a school friend.

Young people in my study talked about how their relationship with their friend had continued. They remembered their friend on special occasions, as well as on special markers for themselves, for years to come. Memories about their friend were also triggered at times when they did not anticipate this. The young people in my study interpreted this ongoing attachment as a positive experience.

The majority of the participants in this study were inspired by the young person who they had not expected to die, despite having leukaemia. He had left messages for them, encouraging them to value their life. This is a fairly unique situation and is likely to have influenced how young people felt about their friend who died. Whether young people who experience the sudden, rather than expected, death of a friend also value continuing bonds and accept this as part of their ongoing relationship with their deceased friend should be explored further. It is important to investigate in which circumstances continuing bonds are experienced as positive, and helpful to the grieving process. Further research is needed to give clear guidance to professionals so that knowledge is gained about whether or when it is appropriate to encourage or support continuing bonds.

5.5 Contribution to the understanding of post-traumatic growth in children and young people following the death of a school friend

Whilst several researchers (Linley et al. 2004; Joseph 2009) have explored how some adults show post-traumatic growth after a significant life event, like the death of a close relative, it has been debated whether young people are also capable of this. My research contributes to the view that young people can also demonstrate post-traumatic growth, not only after the death of a close family member, but also after the death of a friend. This involved young people being capable of making sense of their experiences and thinking about their purpose in life.

Whilst my participants also reported that the death of their friend had improved their school performance as he had been a positive role model, it would be interesting to study this in greater detail as little has been explored about the potential of improved school results, rather than a decline in their academic performance.

5.6 Teaching about death and bereavement in the curriculum

Current literature about the teaching of death and bereavement in the curriculum has predominantly focused on professionals' views on what helps children and young people (Chadwick 1994; Urbanowicz 1994; Casdagli et al. 1995). This study adds to the body of knowledge by presenting the views of young people who experienced the death of a school friend, who reflected on the usefulness of experiencing the teaching of this topic, or the absence of learning about death and bereavement at schools. Their lobbying for the inclusion of teaching about death and bereavement is one of the key findings in this study.

I would like to encourage other researchers to explore this further on a much larger scale, as this study only reports on the views of a few young people.

6. Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study can be discussed in relation to the methodology, the ethical challenges, and any issues specific to my case study.

Whilst a case study approach would usually be characterised as 'the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is - at least in part- to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)' (Gerring 2007, p.20), I accept that the extent of my case study may not be understood as 'intensive'. This is due to the limited number of participants, as well as the time constraints I faced as I needed to complete my doctorate. I need to acknowledge that within my approach to this case study I focused on certain aspects which I was mostly interested in due to my professional background. For example, I did not explore the role of parents in supporting their children following the death of a friend in any detail.

Whilst the study was set up with a much larger group of young people who had just left primary school, this proposal did not go ahead due to the refusal of the secondary headteacher to allow me to interview these children. Whilst I would have been unable to involve all headteachers in the planning stages, in hindsight I should have designed a study that involved a number of different gatekeepers, so that the impact of no permission being given would not have been as significant.

However, various approaches have contributed to the mitigation of some of those issues, e.g. using different sources: interviews with young people, interviews with staff, analysing of social networking posts, and finally contributing my professional knowledge in this field. Anderson suggests that 'findings based on conclusions suggested by different data sources are far stronger that those suggested by one alone' (Anderson 1990, p.159).

My research needs to be viewed within the parameters of the specific situation the young people I interviewed found themselves in, they discussed their experience of the death of a friend who had been terminally ill, and who had a specific personality, with an inspiring attitude. It must be remembered that the explanation a case study offers is 'limited to the background the provided by the case study's circumstances' (Thomas 2011, p.101). Using a multi-case study would have provided more breadth to this study, but realistically this was not possible for me within my constraints. I would like to encourage other researchers to undertake further studies in this field, which include research with younger children, as well as research with children who experienced the sudden death of a friend.

7. Policy/Practice Implications

I am writing this section both as a researcher as well as a practitioner working in this field. It is important to me to share my findings with schools and colleagues, so that we can take into account young people's views when supporting schools in relation to the issue of bereavement. I would like to encourage others to listen to children's views and to embed this in their practice.

7.1 Support offered to young people by school staff

As many educational psychology services support schools in helping children come to terms with the death of a school friend, services, as well as schools, should be aware of the components of helpful school support as identified by young people. School communities which foster good relationships amongst young people and encourage mutual support can contribute to positive outcomes. This is particularly important in the view of schools focussing on exam results and performance tables, sometimes without considering the positive impact that the investment in the development of good relationships can have.

The issue of physical touch would benefit from a wider discussion amongst school communities. It is important that schools give staff clear guidance on providing touch in particular circumstances.

<u>7.2 Young people supporting each other</u>

Professional implications of my study include the importance of school staff's understanding of the long-term impact of bereavement. The assumption of some adults that young people will 'get over it' is misplaced. The mutual support that young people offer, whether via social networking, or directly, is often long lasting. Schools need to consider how they can support this mutual support, as friends of grieving young people are rarely supported in their own right. Services supporting schools, as well as schools themselves, should engage much more with social networking, and realise the benefits that social networking can have, and not only the issues that social networking can sometimes create. Schools and services which support schools will benefit from keeping up to date with the developments within the field of social networking and perhaps learning from it in order to support pupils effectively.

7.3 Continuing bonds

It is my professional experience that young people benefit from knowing that others also experience continuing bonds and that this can be a common feature of the grieving process. Schools need to understand that young people do experience continuing bonds and that certain occasions will trigger memories about their friend who died. It will be helpful for schools to specifically consider this at certain times, for example at transition points, when children are leaving school and remember their friend who is no longer with them. It may be helpful to appropriately mark such occasions.

It is evident to me that it is important for young people and school staff to be aware that young people are likely to continue thinking about their friend who has died, for months and years after the event. It seems to me that the long-term impact of bereavement is still not anticipated. Although school staff are aware that young people have not forgotten, I do not believe they are aware of the extent to which young people continue to think about their friend who died.

7.4 Post-traumatic growth and meaning making

It will be of interest to schools to know that following the death of a pupil in their school community, young people may be questioning the meaning of life in a much wider sense. Staff need to be prepared and able to accompany young people in their journey of finding meaning. Young people will benefit from knowing that it is normal for events such as the death of a school friend to impact on them in a way that may lead to deep philosophical questioning.

7.5 Teaching and learning about death and bereavement

Young people in my study clearly stated that they wanted to learn about death and bereavement at school, they felt that teaching should happen proactively, and not just in response to an event. As the new curriculum gives schools much freedom about what they teach, in particular in subjects like R.E. and P.S.H.E., schools will seek guidance on which content they should cover. In R.E., schools tend to turn to the syllabus agreed by each local authority, on advice of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), which each local authority hosts. It would be helpful to schools if SACRE boards across the country could include teaching about death and bereavement in R.E., and provide detailed guidance and resources, which could help to give staff more confidence in delivering this topic. In my professional role I will be sharing the message that children and young people feel that they greatly benefit from teaching about death and bereavement, and I shall encourage schools to take a whole-school approach, rather than working only with individual teachers who attend training courses, often because they already agree that this topic is important.

8. Next steps

Whilst recognising the limitations of my study, including implications from the case study approach I have taken, there are nevertheless important messages to take forward. Tisdall raises the concern that 'research evidence is not effectively used by practitioners' (Tisdall et al. 2009, p.194). As a researcher, as well as a practitioner, it was extremely important to me that my research is well disseminated, with the potential of improving outcomes for children. Tisdall discusses how research needs to be engaged with, it seems that approaches which actively involve practitioners seem to be more successful, examples are workshops/seminars, demonstration projects which carry research into practice, and personal contacts between researchers and practitioners/organisations. She lists a possible checklist for engagement activities, which covers the activities I will be engaged with:

- o Be proactive

- o Translate your research findings into messages for your target audiences

- o Provide accessible summaries and keep any research report brief and concise

- o Consider outlets your target audience will be reading or participating in anyway.

- o Be strategic. Some goals may be particularly time- and resource intensive, and the potential benefits need to outweigh such costs. Conversely, there may be very efficient and effective ways to achieve certain goals

- o Be clear on roles, responsibilities and deadlines, and ensure all involved in your research are aware of your engagement strategy and have been adequately consulted

(Tisdall et al. 2009, p.204)

Since submitting my thesis I have produced a short document with key messages from my research, which I have shared with staff who attend the training that I deliver on behalf of Norfolk County Council. I will also share this with the Critical Incident Steering Group, which agreed to fund me to undertake this doctoral research.

Whilst research has always been included in training, I have tended to share knowledge about supporting children with staff who attend the 'supporting bereaved children in school communities' course, many of whom are not senior teachers or headteachers and have little influence on a change of practice on a whole school basis. I have therefore now included various learning points in my training for headteachers/senior leaders, and I have provided them with quotes from young people: to share young people's views about school support as well as to encourage school leaders to consider teaching about death and bereavement in the curriculum.

I am promoting this also in other ways, I recently met with Norfolk SACRE to discuss the RE curriculum, I have also delivered a workshop for P.S.H.E. students (primary phase) at the University of East Anglia. I am due to join the Norfolk P.S.H.E forum (secondary phase) in March, to share my findings, as well as provide teaching resources for staff.

I am in the process of setting up a new website for Norfolk schools and academies which subscribe to the Critical Incident Service. I will include my findings in several sections of the website, as well as dedicate a specific section to research. We will soon be launching our sample bereavement policy, which also contains a section on the importance of teaching about death and bereavement in the curriculum.

The Critical Incident Team, which delivers support to schools in Norfolk when they experience critical incidents such as the death of a pupil, have met in December and I have shared with them the key messages from my research. They will be able to share this when they are supporting young people following the death of a pupil.

I am planning to run a large conference on behalf of Norfolk Children's Services in Norfolk in October/November, inviting not just Norfolk Schools, but opening this up to anyone in the field who is interested in attending. The topic for this conference will be wider than the topic for my research, but I am intending to share my findings with all delegates.

Sharing my key messages with Norfolk Schools is a priority for me, as my research was funded by Norfolk County Council. Opportunities for this are readily available and I was able begin this last year. However, longer term, I am intending to publicise my study much wider. As my key audience is not the academic community, but staff working in schools, with young people, I approached the 'Bereavement Care' magazine editor, as this magazine is read by many professionals working in the field, such as myself. I am intending to write an article for them later this year. I am also hoping to contribute to some national conferences for schools run by the Child Bereavement Trust and by Brake, a charity offering support following sudden death.

I am sure that opportunities to share my findings will be wide and varied, I am also hoping to continue some research in my current post and look at some of the issues that I was unable to address in this study.

9. Personal reflections

When I first started thinking about undertaking this research, I could find very few studies relating to the death of a school friend: 'Much research has been conducted on death and grieving, but adolescent bereavement of a peer has not been a major focus of these studies' (Williams et al. 2009). A few more studies have since been undertaken, for which I am very grateful.

Undertaking this research has been challenging, disappointing, and rewarding.

I was disheartened when I was unable to proceed with the research I had planned, and unable to propose an achievable alternative. I felt that I had let down the young people who had agreed to be interviewed by me, and that I had not fulfilled my obligations as a researcher to listen to children and include their views in my research.

However, I felt that I had a duty towards the family who had initially agreed for my research to go ahead, to finish my research and contribute to the knowledge in this field, as this could influence the quality of support available to children and young people who experience the death of a school friend, and may contribute to improved good outcomes for their lives. These perspectives, together with the support of my colleagues and my supervisor encouraged me to continue. I found interviewing young adults who experienced the death of a school friend when they were teenagers a highly rewarding experience. I felt honoured that they trusted me with their deepest thoughts and I was impressed by their enthusiasm for wanting to support other young people by sharing their views with me.

I feel that my research has been extremely worthwhile.

It is now my task to share my findings with others. I intend to publish articles in research journals, lead training and conferences for schools, and engage with other researchers. I am planning to work in collaboration with schools to build on my research and continue with some small-scale studies to further explore the issues I have raised.

I hope that others will expand upon my small-scale study, in particular considering continuing bonds and post-traumatic growth, and engage with young people about the support they receive from their school, and from other children and young people.

I intend to encourage schools to include teaching about death and bereavement in their curriculum, and would welcome other studies which show the contribution this makes to positive outcomes for children and young people.

In future I would like to encourage others to engage with children and young people about their experiences following the death of a school friend, however difficult this may be, because I believe that we need to listen to their views if we are to gain an insight into their experiences.

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Appendix 11.1 Timeline of Research

April 2008

Application for doctoral studies

May 2008

Funding agreement from employer

September 2008

Start of doctoral studies

November 2009

Research ethics agreement by employer

November 2009

Agreement from primary school headteacher to take part in study

April 2010

Research proposal accepted by Chair of Research Ethics Committee

May 2010

Agreement from deceased girl's family to go ahead with research

June 2010

Staff meeting at primary school

July 2010

Letter and permission form to parents

July 2010

Interviews with Doris and Christina

September 2010

Email to secondary school headteachers

September 2010

Objection email from Headteacher

September 2010

Interview with Anita

October 2010

Interview with Heather and Felicity

October 2010

Meeting with Manager, Supervisor and Chair of Ethics Committee

January 2011

Meeting with Manager and Headteacher

May 2011

New proposal to ethics committee (approaching more young people via R.I.P. Facebook site) – not agreed

June 2011

New proposal to ethics committee (Research with UEA students) – agreed

January 2012

Letter to parent of deceased boy – permission given

January 2012

New proposal to ethics committee (Research with young adults – recruited via R.I.P. Facebook site) – agreed

May 2012

Interview with Grace

July 2012

Interview with Oscar

September 2012

Interview with Veronica

November 2012

Interview with Luke

Doctorate in Education (EdD7)

Research Proposal

Death of a fellow pupil – how do children cope and what helps?

A case study involving Year 7 High School pupils and school staff at their previous primary school.

Bianca Finger-Berry

29th of March 2010

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1.   **Introduction and Background Information**

This research proposal is written for my final assignment for my Doctorate in Education at the University of East Anglia. It will also be submitted to the research ethics committee for review and suggestions for how I might best carry out research in an important and sensitive area.

I am planning to undertake this research within the context of my work as Critical Incident Co-ordinator for Norfolk Children's Services. My work involves supporting schools following a Critical Incident, which could be the death of a child or a member of staff. As my employer is supporting my research, I will also give consideration in this proposal to my work environment, including ethical as well as data protection issues.

2.   **The research topic, aims and objectives**

The proposed title of my research is: 'Death of a fellow pupil – how do children cope and what helps? - A case study involving Year 7 High School pupils and school staff at their previous primary school.'

This research aims to find out new knowledge about what helps children cope with the death of a classmate. It will consider the role that school staff have within that, in particular support staff, where there is currently very little, if any research. By support staff I mean staff other than teachers, e.g. school secretaries, support assistants and midday supervisors, although I will also take into account the role of classteachers and the school as a whole. It follows in the footsteps of other research, namely by A.Dyregrov (1991; 1994; 1999; 2001, 2004) and K.Dyregrov (2002, 2004, 2009), and others who have stated that more research is needed in this field (Dyregrov, A., Gjestad et al. 1999, p.174; Lowton and Higginson 2003, p.717). It also relates to the recent publication by Fauth et al (2009), which analysed data from the 2004 Mental Health of Children and Young People Data. The authors conclude that those bereaved of a school friend 'face significant difficulties' (2009, p.9) and that 'future work could usefully explore further the impact on children's lives of the death of a friend' (2009, p.39).

My research is situated within the area of children's experience of bereavement, as well as literature in relation to schools and Critical Incidents in more general terms. I will write in the next section more about the current field of literature.

It is my intention to involve children directly in this research, by interviewing them, asking them to fill out questionnaires, and hopefully presenting to them the findings in a focus group. I would like to find out directly from them how they experienced the death of a classmate, because most research with this age group in particular is undertaken with parents (Dyregrov 2004) or with teachers (Papadatou, Metallinou, Hatzichristou and Pavlidi 2002). I would like to see whether this age range still relies much on parental support, or is starting to use each other for support, like older teenagers do, as well.

A number of studies focus on the negative aspects of children's experiences following the death of a friend or relative, look at the negative impact on their mental health (Weller, Weller, Fristad and Bowes 1991) or on their academic achievements (Dyregrov 2004). I would like to focus my research on positive aspects, on the contributions that others make to help young people, but also whether there are particular aspects that contribute to children's resilience, and any post traumatic growth aspects of their experience. 'As several thantologists suggest, learning through death experiences is life enhancing, since students learn to identify their values, priorities and goals in life and come to a deeper understanding of life experience' (Papadatou et al. 2002, p.337).

For my methodology I have considered case study as an approach and will use thematic analysis for my data analysis. I am planning to undertake my research in relation to a single event that occurred in one Middle School near Norwich. It will focus on the Year 6 group, which experienced the death of one of their classmates. They will all have been part of the same group, same location, same organisation and part of the same event. However, this group has now dispersed and the children now moved to different High Schools. I believe that although this could be a difficult topic to discuss, by the time of my fieldwork, it will be over a year since the tragic incident and this is a sufficiently long period for the young students to have recovered from the immediate shock and trauma and be able to re-visit this incident. I would also like to consider how the transition to High School has affected them, and whether children who have moved to different High Schools have different experiences about the support they received since that move. I am hoping that this

case study will provide me with 'a way that a case study can be structured so as to provide systematic, but also rich, meaningful, data' (Hayes 2000, p.140).

I have already spoken to the Headteacher of the primary school I want to base my research in, and he has given me permission for this, although of course, staff will need to give permission individually to being interviewed and taking part in this research. However, he felt confident that a significant number of staff would be happy to partake, as he thought that they would see the benefit of this research. Although a very sad time, he felt that the situation was dealt with well. Staff felt proud of what they had achieved during this difficult time, and it is likely that they would want to share this with others. I will be approaching the Headteachers of the High Schools in due course, and I hope that they will all be open to my research. However, as there are a number of schools involved, I do not see this as a major concern, as I can also meet with young people outside the school context if needed. Why am I doing this research? Because I have experienced in my work that there is not enough knowledge and evidence about what support children need, and the role that schools should take. Also, I think that the contribution that support staff make, especially in small primary schools, is significant, but I have so far found no research or evidence about this group of people, the roles they play and the support they themselves might need. Our service (from Norfolk County Council) does offer training for them, but I have not heard about other local authorities doing this. If my research can show the significance of the contribution this group of people make, then hopefully other services will also offer better support and training to them and we ourselves would be able to provide even better support than we do at present.

3.   The research within the current field of literature

This section aims to set the research within the current literature. However, it is only a brief overview, and a full literature review will be undertaken as part of the research.

As previously mentioned, this research is undertaken within a wide field of research into issues surrounding bereaved children. In relation to schools, research focuses on two different aspects, either on bereaved children in schools, or on Critical Incidents

in schools. My research will fall within both of those areas, it will need to consider the research about bereaved children, in particular those who loose a friend, but also cover Critical Incidents in relation to school staff including support staff.

As part of my literature review I will endeavour to cover the main authors who published in the United Kingdom in relation to children/young people, bereavement/Critical Incidents and education/schools. I will include some US based literature, as well as publications by Atle Dyregrov and his colleagues from Norway (eg. Dyregrov, 2009), as he has published widely in this field, as well as a few others.

Norwegian psychologists A. and K. Dyregrov have published many articles on Critical Incidents, traumatic incidents and bereavement in relation to young people and schools (Dyregrov, A. 1988, 1991; Dyregrov, A. and Kristoffersen 1994; Dyregrov, A. 2001, 2004; Dyregrov, K. and Dyregrov 2005). As part of a large scale study following a discotheque fire, Dyregrov found that 'Of the students who thought that their school had done enough, more than half indicated that their performance had not deteriorated. In contrast, of the students who were deeply dissatisfied with what their school had done, only one out of five indicated that their school performance had not deteriorated' (Dyregrov, A.: Educational consequences of loss and trauma, 2004, p.81). I need to look at this study in more detail to see what makes a student feel more supported by their school.

Children can be affected by the death of a classmate for a long time. A clinically motivated study looking at reactions following the sudden death of a classmate (Dyregrov, Gjestad, Wikander and Vigerust 1999) found that nine months after the death a high proportion of students were still showing high levels of distress. Further services were offered to these young people following the study. Although my study will not have this focus, I will still need to consider how I will address the issue of children in need of health services. I will write about this in more detail as part of my ethical considerations.

Many authors (Dyregrov, A. 1991; Leckey 1991; Brown 1999; Holland 2003) write about the lack of expertise within schools to deal with bereaved children. Leckey

obtained 158 teacher questionnaires from Belfast primary schools, and found that 'in the majority of cases they felt ill-equipped in dealing with the loss in the classroom and in meeting with families' (Leckey 1991). I wonder whether this is still true in Norfolk, where a lot of training and awareness raising has taken place over the last 15 years. It is likely that during the interviews with school staff I will hear about how staff in my case study felt. However, as a researcher from within the service that is responsible for providing support and training for schools, I will need to be aware of the limitations of my findings, as my job role can influence their responses. I will need to reflect on the issue that 'the Researcher affects the Researched' (Wellington 2000, p.41).

When considering the impact of the death of a school friend, several authors talk about the difficulties in relation to disenfranchised grief. The grief of classmates can be described as 'disenfranchised grief' (Doka 1999), as 'peers lack an identified social position in relation to the loss, with no special place in the funeral and no formal rights' (in Dyregrov et al. 1999, p.167). Rowling (2000, p.151-162) also writes in detail about the issue of disenfranchised grief in schools. She considers the reasons why, what impact this has on members of the school community, and the implications for practice. This will also be an interesting aspect to consider in my research with young people and school staff.

Having found very little research on support staff in relation to bereaved children in school, Allen (2004) writes about the involvement of who she calls paraprofessionals in crises prevention and intervention. She places particular importance on utilising the skills of all adults in the school during crises situations. When a crises occurs within the community, their particular strength is often that they come from this community, and can provide culturally appropriate support, as well as having a 'vested interest in the school's success because their children, grandchildren, and extended family often attend the school' (Allen et al. 2004, p.141).

Apart from the research of this group in relation to bereavement, I need to reflect upon more general research in relation to the role of school support staff in schools, as I need to be aware of how my research fits in with general findings of their contribution to supporting children in relation to their mental health and well-being.

The role of this group of staff is becoming increasingly more important as the number of support staff, in particular teaching assistants, has grown extensively over the last few years. Bedford notes that since 1992, TA numbers have risen by 110%, now making them 25% of the workforce (2006, quoted in Pugh 2007). How do all adults in school contribute to children's well-being, and offer a supportive environment to them when they are experiencing difficulties? Beck (1994) writes in her book about reclaiming educational administration as a caring profession. She sets out the role that administrators can have within schools, and the difference they can make if they embrace this caring ethic.

As I want to focus on positive aspects, post traumatic growth and resilience, I will need to write about more general literature and research in this field, if possible in relation to bereaved children. Lin et al. (2004) examined variables that differentiated resilient children from those with mental health problems. Her findings focus on parental death and factors that may predict mental health problems in bereaved children. She states that 'future research should use expanded criteria for resilience that includes the presence of competence as well as the absence of problems' (Lin et al. 2004, p.681). I am hoping to find out more about these positive aspects in my research.

4.   Research questions

Following on from the summary about my research, I need to be clear about my research questions. My general question, 'how do children cope with the death of a fellow pupil and what helps', needs to be broken up into smaller, workable chunks. Given the current research and literature, I want to focus on support staff, as well as on positive outcomes. I also want to find out about how the High School supported students following transfer. I want my research to be meaningful to others, to influence future practice and training. Considering all these aspects, I have formulated more specific research questions:

1. Teachers' and support staff's perspectives in the middle school:
      - How do they remember the incident?
      - How did they perceive what the children had experienced?

- How did they organise support for the children and for themselves?
- Reflecting back on the period, with the help of hindsight, what would they do differently if they were going through the same period now?

2. Children's perspectives:
- How do the children remember the incident?
- How do they remember the support they were offered, from various sources (family, friends, teachers, support staff, any others) at this time?
- Do they still receive formal and informal support from staff, teachers, family or other sources?
- Do they believe this incident had an impact on them and how have they changed, grown or developed as a result?
- Did they give and receive help from each other during this time?
- How would they deal with the incident if they were going through this now?

5. <u>Research Design</u>

My research is broadly going to be based on case study design. Why am I choosing a case study approach? There are certain approaches that are not possible due to the kind of phenomena that I am researching, due to ethical reasons, and to the incidence rate. There are also practical constraints. As I am undertaking this study as part of my employment with Norfolk County Council, I need to focus on a sample within the county. Given that I wanted to study the impact of the death of a classmate, there are not many schools that would fulfil that criteria and where timescales are reasonable, e.g. not very recent, but also not too long ago. I also needed to find a school that is willing to participate. For ethical reasons it would be extremely difficult to use other methods, like say an ethnographic approach or action research.

I am hoping that a case study approach will provide me with rich data from interviewing participants, so my research will mostly be of a qualitative nature. Ethical issues also have an impact on how I am going to design my research. Although I am not planning to adopt a fully participatory approach, as I am

concerned that my timescales will not allow for children's involvement in design, execution and interpretation phases, I would still like to adhere to some of the principles, and give children and young people who will take part a voice in this research. I am guided and encouraged by Davis: 'Rather than trying to achieve a 'gold standard' of complete participation, it might be more helpful to see how this fits with your research objectives, and your ethical principles' (Davis 2009, p.155). I also want to present my research to the participants before it is finalised, take comments and make changes. According to Cohen et al 'The theory so generated must make sense to those to whom it applies' (2000, p.23). I am also intending to write at least some of my thesis in a way that is accessible to young people and their families, in particular the introduction and summary. I am also hoping to use vignettes to add depth to the research that is accessible to the readers of the final doctorate thesis. 'Vignettes are ways of summarising observations or experiences succinctly, in such a way that they highlight the relevant features of the case, so that they can be identified and will provide important contexts within which more specific information can be viewed' (Hayes 2000, p.137).

My research will focus on the school community of a primary school on the outskirts of Norwich, which in June 2009 experienced the death of a Year 6 child. Once the proposal has been agreed, I will be meeting with the staff group, explaining my research and distributing participation information sheets. I will then undertake semi-structured interviews with all support staff who agree to participate, the Headteacher and the other teachers.

I will also interview some of the sixty children who were in the same year group as the child who died last year. The selection for the interviews from that group of children will depend on the numbers who volunteer to be part of this research. Ideally I would like to interview those children and young people who had a close relationship with the child who died. Children may either be interviewed on their own, or with another friend from that group. The individual interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Depending on the data generated, I am also considering the possibility of using a questionnaire with the children of the Year Group. By doing this, I am hoping to put to a larger group some of the findings from my interviews. This would also give all children the opportunity to partake in this research, as I

expect that some do not want to be interviewed, but may be happy to complete a questionnaire.

I will be using thematic analysis to explore the richness of the data. Boyatzis describes it as 'a way of seeing' (1998, p.1). It is a process that helps to analyze qualitative data, including converting it into some quantitative data.

Because I do have some hypothesis in relation to what I want to find out, e.g. support staff offer considerable support to children, children support each other, I will be partly using a hypothetico-deductive approach. My hypothesis is based on my work practice, and given that this is a professional doctorate I am undertaking, it is important for me that I can contribute to this doctorate with my knowledge as well as my experience. It is also based on previous research, some of which I have mentioned in this short literature overview, but I will go into more detail in my thesis. However, I do not want to completely leave out inductive thematic analysis, as there may be other themes that are worth considering.

I will be trying to address reliability issues by involving a work colleague who will apply the coding manual independently on a selection of interview scripts. Unfortunately I will not have access to a second researcher who can code the whole set. I am also hoping to test the interview with one or two children who are not part of the study, to address any issues around questions, language, timings, etc.

The process of the thematic analysis will be as follows:

1. Familiarization with the data: Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.

2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.

3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis with vignettes to give richness to the report.

6.   **Ethical considerations**

Interviewing children who have experienced the death of a school friend brings a number of ethical issues with it. How do I protect the rights and interests of the children I want to work with in terms of not disturbing painful and traumatic memories that may have been laid to rest? How, on the other hand, do I give children and young people the opportunity to be heard and to express their views on a topic that may be important to them?

It seems to me that these ethical dilemmas are some of the reasons as to why there is so little research directly with children in relation to bereavement. However, 'the right of adolescents to participate in research can itself be an ethical issue' (Cook 2009, p.41). According to the UN Convention of the Rights of the child, children and young people do have the right to be heard, if they wish to do so, and in my research I will aim to give children this opportunity. Dyregrov found that her research into bereaved parents research participation resulted in '100% of the parents experienced participation as positive/very positive, and none regretted participating' (Dyregrov 2004). Parents found it helpful to be able to tell their story. I am hoping that the same will apply to the children that I am interviewing.

A very recent article (Buckle, Dwyer and Jackson 2009) considers the particular issues around bereavement research, and comments on the issue that research ethics boards often raise, which are in contract to the experience of participants, as mentioned above. Research ethic boards 'flag the method of data collection (generally consisting of in-depth, open-ended, one-to-one interviewing) as the most concerning or potentially harmful aspect of the research process for potential participants' (Buckle et al. 2009, p.112), which contradicts 'the experience of bereaved research participants, who frequently comment on the personal benefits they derived from the process of sharing their perspective in a detailed manner with an interested and engaged researcher (2009, p.112). Although this paper focuses on adult participants, it is likely that young people would feel in similar ways, possibly depending on their maturity and insight into their experience.

In addition to ethical issues for school staff and children who I will be interviewing, I also feel that I am ethically obliged to inform the family of the deceased child that I am undertaking this research. It is my intention to write a letter and invite the parents to discuss this in more detail. Although I will not be asking for their 'permission' as they will not be directly involved in the research, I want them to be aware of it, as I feel that I have an ethical/moral duty to do this. I would hope that they will be supportive of my research, as without their agreement I am not sure whether I could go ahead. If this happens, I may need to choose another school and another incident. I would specifically welcome the thoughts of the Ethics Committee on this matter.

My ethical considerations need to include the issue of informed consent. There are different arguments as to whether or not children can give consent, or if their parents need to. Following the Gillick principle, children under 16 can give valid consent if they understand the relevant information and can make a choice that takes into account their best interests. However, as this is a sensitive topic, and I am also undertaking this research in a work context, I would be expected to obtain parental permission before undertaking individual work with children.

I will therefore need to obtain consent from parents first, so that I can approach their children. From a data protection point of view, it is likely that the primary school will need to send out these letters initially, as I have no right to parents' personal

data. I will then need to give them information about the research itself, in a language understood by this group. Attached is my participant information sheet for parents (Appendix 1). I feel that I also owe it to the particular High School the child is currently attending, to inform them in advance before engaging the child in this research (see Appendix 5). It will be challenging for me to ensure that I have a big enough sample of children to interview, whilst respecting parents' and children's rights to decide whether they want to participate in this research. I will need to be careful not to unwittingly coerce them into participation, due to my enthusiasm and commitment to this research project. It is of utmost importance that young people know that they can stop taking part at any point, and that their welfare is paramount, or as Buckle et al. reassure participants, 'our utmost concern lies with the welfare of the participant, not the welfare of the research' (2009, p.116).

In my research, there will be a potential for harm in relation to emotional or psychological distress. I will need to be clear about how I address this. I should, before the interviews, talk with children about what they would like to do if they get upset. Would they like me to stop the interview? Carry on another time? It will be important to give a 'transparent explanation of the risks and the elements of the research design intended to address those risks' (Allen 2005, p.21). Buckle et al. point out that research ethic boards are concerned that there is a potential for research to 'induce a negative mood state or cause emotional pain' (2009, p.117). The authors argue, and I would like to agree, that in this kind of research 'we are bearing witness to the pain that is already there' (2009, p.117). However, I will need to clearly address follow up support as well, and ensure that if any young people need additional services, that they would be offered. I am planning to give children information about local counselling services that they can access if they feel the need, and encourage them to do so if I identify this during the interview process. I will make sure that there is a qualified counsellor available in case I need to refer any pupil to their attention. I will also need to be clear about confidentiality.

7. **Summary**

My research aims to fill some of the gaps that exist within the current research and literature. My particular interest is the role of support staff, as well as focussing on

positive aspects in relation to the children and young people who experienced the death of a school friend. I am hoping that I will find out more about children's resilience, identify factors that helped these children within the school setting, and see if children talk about growth following their experience. I know that many authors, in particular Dyregrov, write about the lack of support from schools and their inexperience in relation to supporting children. Reid also writes in her case study research about this: 'In the schools there was avoidance of communicating about death' (2002, p.201). I wonder, whether following many years of promoting the Critical Incident Service in Norfolk, this is still true? I am hoping to contribute with my research to the broad field of bereavement, schools and children, but in particular in relation to the death of a school friend. As Dyregrov states, 'while the things that help and hinder adolescents following the death of a sibling has been researched, we need to study this in more detail following the death of a classmate and/or friend' (1999, p.174).

The recently published secondary analysis of the 2004 mental health data also focuses on the experiences of those bereaved of a friend, and states that 'Further work is needed to explore in more detail the impact of the death of a friend on children, including qualitative work with children and young people and research into the impact of a death within a school or a community' (Fauth et al. 2009, p.9). I am hoping that my research will produce findings which will be of significant meaning to others within this field.

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Appendix 1: Proposed Time Scales

26th of February 2010

Submission of Research Proposal

February – April 2010

Planning and finalising interview schedules

April 2010

Approval and suggestions from Ethics Committee

May – June 2010

Writing to the family of the deceased child

Presentation of study to school staff, including distribution of participation

information sheets and consent forms

Writing to High Schools to inform them about the research

Testing of interview schedule and revision

June – November 2010

Interviews with school staff

Writing to parents/meeting with parents

Preliminary meeting with children

Interviews with children

November 2010 – February 2011

Transcription of Interviews

Starting with writing the thesis, e.g. literature review

March 2011 – September 2011

Analyse data and compile results

October 2011 – December 2011

Sharing of results with participants

January 2012 – February 2012

Questionnaire sent to all children in year group

March 2012

Evaluation of questionnaire

April 2012 – July 2012

Continue to write final thesis document

August 2012

Submit final thesis

Appendix 2: Letter to parents of bereaved child

Dear Mr and Mrs xxx,

This is a really difficult letter to write, and I hope that it does not cause you pain or distress, as it is my intention is to help and improve support for the bereaved.

You may be aware that after the tragic death of your daughter, xxx, the Critical Incident Service based within Norfolk Children's Services offered support to xxx school. I have been co-ordinating the Critical Incident Service for the past few years, but I have become aware that there is very little research about what schools can do to help children following the death of a school friend.

In the light of the lack of research and understanding on the topic I decided to start a Doctorate at the University of East Anglia. I have just submitted my research proposal, and my topic is: Death of a fellow pupil – how do children cope and what helps?

I am writing to you because I am planning to undertake this research at xxx school, and I would like to speak to the children who left last year, who experienced the death of their friend and classmate, your daughter xxx. I have discussed this with Mr xxx, Headteacher, who has agreed in principle, although individual staff as well as individual young people and their parents would also need to give consent.

Although this research need not involve you directly, I feel strongly that I should seek your approval before starting the research. Although this is not a strict 'requirement' for me, I feel that your approval and understanding of the value of the research is essential for me to go ahead. I am hoping that the research will give us new knowledge about what helps children, and will result in improving the support that schools give to children. Hopefully it will also help me and my colleagues within the Critical Incident Service to give better advice and support to schools, based on evidence.

If you would like to meet with me to discuss any details of the proposed research, or wish to contribute to it in any way, I would be very happy to do that. I would really appreciate you contacting me, by any means you wish, post/email or telephone. I do

not hold any of your details, as the school is sending this letter to your home address on my behalf.

Yours sincerely,

Bianca Finger-Berry
Critical Incident Co-ordinator

Home, email & Phone details:

Appendix 3: Parent Letter and Consent Form

Dear Parents,

This letter was sent to you by your child's previous primary school. I got in touch with them a few months ago, as I would like to undertake research to find out more about how we can support children effectively following the death of a school friend.

I work for Norfolk County Council and part of my work is supporting schools in a Critical Incident, like the death of a child or a member of staff. As we would like to offer the best possible support, I have tried to look at other research to find out what works best. However, there is a lack of knowledge about what helps children, especially in relation to the support they receive from staff at school. I would like to speak to children directly and find out their views; I would also like to know how much they support each other at this age, during their transition between childhood and adolescence. My particular focus will be on children's resilience, and positive aspects. I wonder whether their outlook on life has changed because of their experience.

I am hoping that the findings of my research will improve the support we can offer to children and young people via their schools. I will also speak to the staff at your child's previous primary school.

The interviews are planned for some time between August and November 2010. I would like to carry them out at school, but I would also be happy to see them at home. It may also be possible to interview your child with another friend from primary school if that is preferred. If the interview is going to happen at school, I will get in touch with your child's school and make arrangements to see him/her there. I will initially meet your child at school, explain the research to him/her, answer any questions, and ask him/her to sign a consent form. I will write to you at home to let you know the exact dates. If your child would prefer to be interviewed at home, I will contact you at home to arrange a suitable date.

Please find attached the information sheet about this project. If you have any questions please get in touch with me. I am happy to meet with you if this would be helpful. If you are consenting to your child taking part, I would like to ask you to pass the information sheet to your child, and discuss this with him/her. If your child also agrees, please sign the consent form below.

Please return your form in the self-addressed envelope. As I currently have no details about you, please also complete your full name and address.

Thank you very much,

Bianca Finger-Berry
Critical Incident Co-ordinator
Norfolk Children's Services
Tel. 01692 409524 or bianca.finger-berry@norfolk.gov.uk

Currently undertaking a Doctorate of Education at the University of East Anglia, Norwich

Parental consent form

I have read the information in the parent's letter as well as the children's participation information sheet. I have discussed this with my son/daughter, and he/she has agreed to take part in this research project. I am aware that more information about this research will be given to my child, that consent will be sought from him/her, and that he/she can withdraw at any time before completion of the research project.

I know that the information obtained from my son/daughter will remain strictly confidential and will not be shared unless there are welfare concerns.

I would prefer if my son/daughter is interviewed at school/at home (please delete as appropriate).

I hereby give permission for my son/daughter _____ to take part in the research project led by Bianca Finger-Berry.

Parent's name:

Address:

Telephone number:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4: Children's participation information sheet and consent form

Dear xxx,

I am asking you and other young people who previously attended xxx primary school if you would take part in a research project to find out more about children's experiences following the death of their school friend. Before you decide whether you will take part in this study, you need to know what this will mean for you.

You may ask why I am doing this research?

I organise the support for schools in a Critical Incident, like the death of a pupil or member of staff, and to be able to give children and young people the best support possible, I feel that I need to know more about children's experiences, what helps them, and what is good about the support they get from their school. I am doing this research project as part of a doctorate course at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. As you all have experienced the death of a school friend, I have asked permission from your previous Headteacher to ask you about becoming involved. I will be inviting all the children who were in Year 6 at your primary school last year to take part.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is completely up to you whether you wish to take part. Also, if you do decide to take part, you can withdraw your permission at any point during the next two years before the research is complete.

What will happen if I take part?

I would like to speak to you in detail about what it was like for you when you found out that one of your classmates died. I would like to know how you felt, and who supported you. I would like to know what kind of things helped you deal with this. I really want to focus on the positive things that you experienced during this time. I also wonder what you think now about what happened. I would like to talk to you, either on your own or in a small group, probably at school, or if you prefer at home or at another venue. The interview will be recorded on a tape recorder, and I will later write down what you have said.

What happens if I get upset during the interview?

I think that it would be good to talk about this beforehand, and agree with you what you would like to do. You may want to stop the interview and continue another time, you may not want to be interviewed any further, or you may feel that although you might get upset, it is good to talk about it and you will feel better afterwards. If you need any extra support after the interview, or later on, I will discuss this with you. I will also give you a leaflet about how you can access confidential counselling.

Will you talk to anyone else?

I will also meet with staff at your primary school and ask them questions about how they felt about what happened and what they thought helped you through this difficult time.

What about my parents?

I have sent this information sheet to your parents, and I expect that they are sharing this with you because they agree with your participation in this research project. I am very happy to speak with your parents further, if they have some more questions.

What will happen with the information you gather?

I will be considering what all children have said, and your views will remain confidential. This means that neither your school, nor your parents will know what you said, unless I am worried about your health and safety, at which time I would have to consider sharing information with others under the child protection procedures. If I am concerned about your well-being, I will agree with you how you can access appropriate support. If you like, you can choose a research name, which I will use if I quote anything that you have said. I will write a report about what I found out, which you can read afterwards if you want to. I would also like to meet with you and your school friends to discuss with you what I have found out.

What if I have more questions?

If you would like to find out more, you can either call me, Bianca Finger-Berry, on 01692 409517, and leave a message so I can get back to you, or you can email me at bianca.finger-berry@norfolk.gov.uk.

<u>What will happen next?</u>

Once I have received your parents consent form, I will arrange to meet with you either at school or at home. I will then explain again what this research is about, answer any questions, and I will then ask you to sign a consent form if you agree to take part.

Pupil's consent form

Please circle all you agree with:

Have you read the information about this project?

Yes   No

Do you understand what this project is about?

Yes   No

Do you have any questions to ask?

Yes   No

Have you asked all the questions you want?

Yes   No   Not applicable

Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?

Yes   No   Not applicable

Do you understand that it's okay to stop taking part?

Yes   No

Are you happy to take part?

Yes   No

If you don't want to take part, don't sign your name.

I, _____, hereby fully and freely agree to take part in this research project which has been fully explained to me. Having given consent, I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time without any problems until the project is completed in two years.

Participant's name (BLOCK CAPITALS) _____

Participant's signature _____

Researcher's name _____

Researcher's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 5: School staff participation information sheets and consent form

Dear Staff at xxx School,

Following my meeting with you I would also like to provide you with some written information before you decide to take part in this research project.

I work for Norfolk County Council and part of my work is supporting schools in a Critical Incident, like the death of a child or a member of staff. As we would like to offer the best possible support, I have tried to look at other research to find out what works best. However, there is a lack of knowledge about what helps children in relation to the support they receive from staff at school. This is true for all staff, but also in particular to staff other than teachers, e.g. teaching assistants, school secretaries, midday supervisors, etc.

As you have experienced a pupil death in your school, I have asked your headteacher if I could approach you. I would value if you were prepared to share your experience with me. I would like to find out how you supported children, and what helped you doing that. I hope to focus on the positive experiences, on children's resilience and the things that contributed to good outcomes for these children. I am also planning to talk to some of the children who were in that year group.

I am hoping that the findings of my research will improve the support we can offer to children and young people via their schools.

The interviews are planned for some time between June and November 2010. I would like to carry them out at school, but I would also be happy to see you at home or an alternative location, like a Children's Services office.

The content of the interviews will remain confidential, unless there are child protection concerns, in which case I would have to follow child protection procedures. You also have the right to withdraw from the research project before it is ready for submission.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email
bianca.finger-berry@norfolk.gov.uk.

<u>Consent Form:</u>

I have read the information relating to the proposed research in which I have been asked to participate. The nature and purpose of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential, unless there are child protection issues.

I hereby fully and freely consent to participate in the study which has been explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to at any time without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's name:...

Participant's role within the school:...

Participant's signature:..

Date: ....

Appendix 6: High School Information School

Dear Mr/Mrs xxx,

I am writing to you to let you know that I am planning to undertake research involving some of your pupils, and I would like to ask your permission to talk them at school.

As you may know, I work for Norfolk County Council and part of my work is supporting schools in a Critical Incident, like the death of a child or a member of staff. As we would like to offer the best possible support, I have tried to look at other research to find out what works best. However, there is a lack of knowledge about what helps children in relation to the support they receive from staff at school.

Last year, all the Y6 students at xxx school experienced the death of their school friend. I am planning to talk to some of the children in that year group, to find out about their experience; in particular in relation to the support they received from their school. I may also ask them about how things are for them now and if they still need any support.

The purpose of my research is to find out new knowledge about what helps children and young people, and I am hoping that this will influence the work of the Norfolk Critical Incident Service in relation to the support, advice and training that we offer to schools, but may also have an impact on other services across the country. I want to focus on the positive experiences children have had, on their resilience and find out whether this has changed their outlook on life in a positive way.

I have already written to parents to ask for their permission, and they will tell me if their children would prefer to be seen at school or at home. I would be grateful if it was possible to see them at school if this is their preferred choice, and I would then liaise with the most appropriate person at school as identified by you, to arrange times/dates.

Thank you very much for your support,

Bianca Finger-Berry

Consent Form:

I agree/don't agree (please delete as appropriate) for the named children below to be interviewed by Bianca Finger-Berry at school.

Headteacher Name _____

School Name _____

Date _____

Signature _____

I would like to ask that the following people are contacted in relation to arranging a suitable time/date.

Pupil Name   Teacher contact at school

Appendix 11.3 Interview schedule Staff

Staff interview

Thank you very much for giving up your time to talk to me about the events last year. I would be grateful if you could be as open as possible.

Once I have spoken to everyone, I will analyse what was said, and see if there are common themes. I will also be using some vignettes, small sections of what has been said in my thesis. Do you have any questions about that?

I will definitely make my thesis available to you if you would like to read it at some point. Is that okay?

At the end of the interview I will give you the leaflet for Norfolk Support Line. If you feel that you would like to talk further in confidence, or would like to use counselling, please do not hesitate to get in touch with them.

I – The day of the event
As you know, I am doing research on what helps children following the death of a school friend. I want to focus specifically on Anna's death. I wonder how you first found out about how she died. Can you go back to the day that Anna died, and describe the sequence of events as they happened on the day? Just imagine yourself back to that day. If you can try to be as detailed and as accurate as possible, to describe the day's events, that will help. If you want to take time to think for a few minutes before you answer, that is fine with me. If you want to change the order of events or add in details as you remember them, which will be ok too - don't worry if you can't remember exactly – that is a very normal response when we ask people to recall events that are not immediate. It would be great if you can tell me a bit about how you felt as well.

II – Supporting each other in the aftermath
Looking back both about that day itself and the days and weeks that followed, I'd like you to think about the ways in which you supported people. How did you talk to children and parents in a supportive manner? Do you remember anything specific where you acted in a different way to how you would usually act? What kind of support did you offer children? And their parents? Can you describe this in detail for me please, no detail in unimportant.

What do you think you did that may have been of help to children or staff?

Did you feel you knew how you could support children? How did you know?

Overall, who do you think supported the children most? Why do you think so?
In relation to what staff did, what do you think helped the children most?

Do you think children supported each other? How did children support each other? And were there any instances where perhaps you felt they could have supported each other better than they did? Do you think there is more that could have been done to facilitate such peer group support?

How do you think the children were affected by what happened?

How did this change as time from the first few days to the next few weeks until they left in July?

How do you think the staff were affected? Did this affect you in the way you were able to do your every day work?

Did you have support available for yourself? Was it enough? What kinds of support would you have liked yourself?

In general, what do you think worked well for staff and children?

III – Talking about the event

It has been recognised that talking about difficult events is not easy. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how comfortable did you feel about talking with the children about Anna's death?

Do you remember any other occasion where you have ever talked to children/parents about death and bereavement, maybe a grandparent or pet death?

Did you know that the children had set up a site on Bebo and Facebook in memory of Anna? Did you look at any of these sites? Did you post anything on it?

IV – Your role in the school
Now, I would like to specifically focus on your role in the school, as you see it:
Did you have a sense of what your 'duty' or 'role' was? How did you know? Was it intuition, empathy, training, something else…?

Do you think that you responded to children/parents differently to other professionals in the school because of your role, relationship with the children because of that role?

V – Training
I want to move on to issues of training now:
Did you feel equipped for what you needed to do? Did you feel that you had the knowledge and experience? Why do you say this? What do you mean? (Make sure you probe further at each point otherwise there may be too little detail for you to interpret or analyse).

Do you think it would have been good if you have had some training to prepare yourself for these sorts of situations before this happened?

Do you think there are limits to training and that these events are so powerful and unusual that there is no 'complete' way of preparing for them? What is your own opinion based on this experience?

VI Anything else

Is there anything else that was really important to you during that time, anything else that you would like to mention?

VII – Next steps

Thank you very much for your time. I will now go away and transcribe this interview. In the meantime, if there is anything you remember, or want to add, or change, please let me know, you can email me any time. If you don't mind, I would like to give you a transcript of this interview so that you can go through it and see if you'd like to make any additions or amendments. Would this be ok with you? Here is the leaflet for Norfolk Support Line, please make use of it if you feel you would like to.

Appendix 11.4 Interview schedule children

Questions for children

I am doing this research, because a lot is written about what should be done to help children and young people, but not many people have actually spoken to children and young people, most researchers have just asked teachers or parents. I think that it is really important to ask you about your experience, because you are the only ones who have been through this and really only you can tell us what helped you, and I hope that I can learn from you and me and my colleagues can improve what we and the schools do to help others like you in the future.

If you get upset during this interview, what do you think you would like me to do? Do you think you will want to stop, or would you like to continue? We could also continue another time? I will ask you again later, but sometimes people do get upset, but are still okay about talking about what happened. I will do whatever you would like me to do.

I – The day of the event

How did you find out that Anna had died?
How did you feel?
What did you do, when you first found out about her death?

II – The aftermath

In the days that followed, did you find it difficult to make sense of what happened? Did this change as time went on?

III – Support received from primary school

What sort of support did you receive from your school then? Apart from the teachers, did you also get any support from Teaching Assistants? What about midday supervisors? What about the school office staff?

What was helpful? Was the support you received from support staff different to what you received from teachers, or was it quite similar?

III – General support

May I ask, how do you generally get on with your parents?

Thinking back, did you parents do anything that helped? What did your parents do that helped?

Thinking about support as a whole during the first few weeks, who do you think was most important for you as support, e.g. friends, parents, brothers or sisters, teachers, support staff, others?

Now that you can look back and think about this time, is there anything else they could have done to help you? Or anything they could have done differently? In an ideal world, what support would you have wanted the most and by whom?

III – Social Networking

Did you access any social networking sites re. Anna, either Anna's own site, I don't know if she had one, or one of the ones that were set up in her memory, either on Bebo or Facebook?

Which ones did you access?

Did you just read them, or did you post any comments as well? Do you remember what sort of comments you posted? Was that immediately after her death, or some time later? When did you last look on her site and/or post something?

Do you think it's a good thing to have a site like that? Did you find it helpful? How did it help? Are there also negative aspects of it? What sort?

What did you think about what other people posted? Was it used just by young people or by adults as well? What did you think about that?

III – Moving up to High School

Do you think that your performance at primary school was affected? Did that last into High School?

Did you receive any support at High School? Did you feel you needed anything? Did the teachers know what happened? Do you think they knew how you were affected and what you might need?

Do you think that now, you are doing as well as you would have expected, or do you think you could do better? What is stopping you from doing better?

III – One year on (long term and positive outcomes?)

What do you think helped you with dealing with what happened? Parents? Friends? Something about your personality that helped?

Some people talk about something called post traumatic growth, they say that they value life more, after the death of someone close to them, more than they did before. Or that they value friendships more. Or they think about some things differently. What do you think?

Did it make you think about your own life? If so, in what way? Has it changed your beliefs in any way?

Did it have an impact on your relationships with your parents, brothers/sisters, friends?

Why do you think that you dealt with what happened so well/not so well?

Do you still think about Anna? How often is that daily, weekly, once a month, special occasions?

VI Anything else

How did you used to think about death? Is that different now? Have you experienced the death of a family member previously?

Do you remember whether you learned about death in the curriculum? Did that help in dealing with Anna's death? Or do you think that you didn't know enough, and that you it would have been good to have learned more about it in school beforehand?

Have you ever written down anything about Anna and/or how you felt about it? How did you find that, was that helpful?

Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you finish school? Do you have any particular aspirations about what you want to do when you are older?

Is there anything else that you think I should really know, anything that you wanted to tell me?

VII – Next steps

How did you find talking about Anna's death and the impact it had on you?

Why did you decide to agree to this interview? Did you have a discussion with your parents about it?

We have arranged for a counsellor to be on hand if you think that you need further support? Do you think you need any support this afternoon? Can I give you a leaflet about Off Centre Youth Counselling, if at any point you do feel you need to talk about it with someone trained in supporting young people.

Thank you for talking to me, you've been very helpful…

Appendix 11.5 Letter Ethics Committee

4th of May 2011

Dear members of the Ethics committee,

I would like to update you about my research as unfortunately it has not been possible to follow through my original proposal.

The original topic of my research is: 'Death of a fellow pupil – how do children cope and what helps? - A case study involving Year 7 High School pupils and school staff at their previous primary school.'

My plan was to interview staff at a primary school following the death of a pupil, and then to interview the children who were in the same year group.

As all children had moved to High School, I contacted the Heads of Year in each High School to seek permission, and then contacted all parents. I also sought permission from staff at the primary school, and subsequently interviewed four members of staff.

After receiving permission from parents of twelve children to interview them, I contacted Headteachers to arrange visits, and unfortunately the Headteacher of one High School, where eleven of those children attend, decided that he does not want my research to go ahead as I had not consulted him from the beginning.

As potentially there could have been five different High Schools involved, I did not have any detailed discussions with any of them, as my research focussed on the children's experience when they were still at Primary School.

The Secondary Headteacher was not agreeable for me to see these children either at school or at home, he stated that 'I never gave you permission to contact the parents and children that I have overall responsibility for'. My line manager and I met with him, unfortunately my supervisor was away and the Headteacher was very clear that he felt that I should not interview these children. My manager did not wish for me to go ahead with my research against the wishes of the Headteacher. This is a really difficult dilemma, as the children, whose parents have already given permission, are now missing out on their views being heard.

I am attaching a letter which I am planning to send to all parents/children who had given permission, with an apology for not being able to see them. I am also letting them know that there is still a Facebook site, where they can meet to write about Anna who died.

My plan is to post a link to a questionnaire onto the site.
https://spreadsheets.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGctVGY5REdId3luQllOamFDVTdIX3c6MA I am hoping that children and young people will complete this, some of whom who were also in Anna's school. I am aware that some

of the children who I was going to interview are members of this R.I.P. Facebook group.

Facebook members have to be at least 13 years old, there will be no younger children who have access to this questionnaire. As you can see from the content, I have also given young people contact details if they would like to speak to anyone about how they are feeling. Youth Counselling is available to these young people on a self referral route, and parents do not necessarily have to be involved as young people are over a certain age.

The questionnaire is hosted on my google site, which is password protected and only I can have access. The data is therefore protected.

I am confident that I have taken into account possible ethical issues with posting this questionnaire on Facebook, and necessary safeguards are in place.

I will also be speaking with Anna's Mum, who I have previously visited, and give her details of the questionnaire, which she could also distribute via parents to other young people.

However, if I do not get enough questionnaires back through this, I will need to consider further possibilities in detail.

There is the possibility that I could post a similar questionnaire on other R.I.P. Facebook sites, and I am asking for agreement to do this also.

Yours sincerely,

Bianca Finger-Berry

Appendix 11.6 Revised research proposal 2011

Appendix 1: Revised Time Scales and proposal details

June 2011

    Re-Submission of Research Proposal

July – October 2011

    Recruiting and Interviews with 5-10 adults (students at the University of East Anglia, or Norfolk Children's Services Employees), who have experienced the death of a school friend when they were younger

November 2011 – March 2012

    Transcription of Interviews

    Writing of literature review and methodology for thesis

April 2012 – July 2012

    Analyse data and compile results

August 2012 – October 2012

    Writing of final thesis document

November 2012

    Submit final thesis

Appendix 2: **Adult participation information sheet and consent form**

Dear xxx,

Thank you for getting in touch with me following my request for volunteers to talk to me about their experience about the death of a school friend. I am undertaking this research project to find out more about children's experiences following the death of their school friend. Before you decide whether you will take part in this study, you need to know what this will mean for you.

You may ask why I am doing this research?

I organise the support for schools in a Critical Incident, like the death of a pupil or member of staff, and to be able to give children and young people the best support possible, I feel that I need to know more about children's experiences, what helps them, and what is good about the support they get from their school. I am doing this research project as part of a doctorate course at the University of East Anglia in Norwich.

What will happen if I take part?

I would like to speak to you in detail about what it was like for you when you found out that one of your classmates died. I would like to know how you felt, and who supported you. I would like to know what kind of things helped you deal with this. I also wonder what you think now about what happened. I would like to talk to you at a mutually convenient venue. The interview will be recorded on a digital recording device, and I will later write down what you have said. You can withdraw your permission at any point during the next twelve months before the research is complete.

What happens if I get upset during the interview?

I think that it would be good to talk about this beforehand, and agree with you what you would like to do. You may want to stop the interview and continue another time, you may not want to be interviewed any further, or you may feel that although you might get upset, it is good to talk about it and you will feel better afterwards. If you need any extra support after the interview, or later on, I will discuss this with you. You can contact the UEA counselling services on 01603 592651 for support.

What will happen with the information you gather?

I will be considering what everyone has said, and your views will remain confidential. If I am concerned about your well-being, I will agree with you how you can access appropriate support. If you like, you can choose a research name, which I will use if I quote anything that you have said. I will write a report about what I found out, which you can read afterwards if you want to.

What if I have more questions?

If you would like to find out more, you can either call me, Bianca Finger-Berry, on 01692 409540, and leave a message so I can get back to you, or you can email me at bianca.finger-berry@norfolk.gov.uk. You can also write to me at Bianca Finger-Berry, Education Services Centre, Market Street, North Walsham, NR28 9BZ.

How do I make a complaint?

If you have any concerns about the research, please speak to the researcher first. If you are not happy with the response, you can make a complaint by contacting the Head of the School of Education at the University of East Anglia, Dr Nalini Boodhoo, n.boodhoo@uea.ac.uk, tel: 01603 592630.

Participant consent form

Please circle all you agree with:

I have been given full information regarding the aims of this research and have been given information with the Researcher's name and contact details if I require further information.

Yes   No

I have asked all the questions I wanted to ask and are happy with the response?

Yes   No   Not applicable

I, _____, hereby fully and freely agree to take part in this research project which has been fully explained to me. Having given consent, I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time without any problems in the next twelve months.

Participant's name (BLOCK CAPITALS) _____

Participant's address _____

_____

Participant's signature _____

Researcher's name _____

Researcher's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 11.7 Letter to parents of deceased boy

Dear Mrs Xxx,

I really hope you don't mind me writing to you, as I don't have your home address I am sending this to your work address.

It has taken me a few months to have enough courage to send this letter, as I am concerned about not doing the right thing. Please forgive me if you don't think it was right for me to approach you.

I think we have met a few years ago, and I am sure that you are aware of my role as Critical Incident Co-ordinator for Norfolk.

I strongly believe that schools have a significant role in supporting children when they come to terms with the death of a close relative, a friend, or a member of staff, and I also believe that we always need to strive to improve what we do (e.g. supporting, advising and training schools about supporting bereaved children).

For that reason I embarked on a doctorate in education at the UEA a few years ago. My aim was to undertake research in regard to 'the death of a school friend –what helps'. During my work as Critical Incident Co-ordinator I found that there was very little research, where people had actually talked to children and young people directly. However, I know now, why, because I have so far also not succeeded. I had wanted to talk to a group of young people whose friend had died, but unfortunately the Headteacher of the high school would not allow me to go ahead. I have also tried another way to talk to young people, but no one came forward.

I am writing to you, as we were involved a few years ago in supporting students at R. High School when your son died. I am so sorry, I know that I can never really understand how you and your family felt and how you are feeling now, but I am hoping that you may support me in my quest to improve support for other young people. I strongly feel that if we want to do the best for children and young people, we also need to listen to them directly.

As your son's friends are now adults, and I know that you still have contact with some of them (I read about your annual football match), and probably through your son James as well, I was wondering whether you would be happy, if they agreed, if I could talk to them about the support they received at school, and what helped them.

I would be very happy to meet with you and talk with you further. I do, of course, also fully respect your wishes, if you don't want me to do any of what I suggested.

However, if you will help me to contact Melvin's friends and ask them if they would be prepared to speak to me about the support they received and what helped them in coming to terms with the death of their friend, then I would need to have this agreed by the Ethics Committee of the university as well.

I really hope that you don't mind me contacting you, if I have upset you or done the wrong thing in writing this letter to you, please accept my sincere apologies.

I would be very grateful if you would get back to me and let me know what you think.

You can email me at work: bianca.finger-berry@norfolk.gov.uk, phone me at work 01692 409540, email me at my university email address: b.finger-berry@uea.ac.uk or phone me on my mobile: 07887 832413.

You can also write to me at work: Bianca Finger-Berry, Education Services Centre, Children's Services, Market Street, North Walsham, NR28 9BZ.

Thank you very much,

Kind regards,

Bianca Finger-Berry

UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING RESEARCH
ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

This form is for all staff and PGR students in the School of Education who are planning research that requires ethical approval. Applicants are advised to consult the school and university guidelines before preparing their application. Completed applications (including the required attachments) must be submitted electronically to Dawn Corby d.corby@uea.ac.uk

The Research Ethics page of the EDU website provides links to the University Research Ethics Committee, the UEA ethics policy guidelines, ethics guidelines from BERA and the ESRC, and resources from the academic literature, as well as relevant policy updates: www.uea.ac.uk/edu/research/researchethics. If you are involved in counselling research you should consult the BACP Guidelines for Research Ethics:
www.bacp.co.uk/research/ethical_guidelines.php.

Applications must be approved by the Research Ethics Committee before beginning data generation or approaching potential research participants.

1. APPLICANT DETAILS	
Name:	Bianca Finger-Berry
School:	Education
Current Status (delete as applicable):	**PGR Student**
If Student, name of primary supervisor and programme of study:	
	Esther Priyardharshini, EDD – Doctorate Education
Contact telephone number:	01692 538367
Email address:	b.finger-berry@uea.ac.uk

2. PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT DETAILS:	
Title:	Death of a fellow pupil – how do children cope and what helps?

Start/End Dates:	October 2008/September 2012

3. FUNDER DETAILS (IF APPLICABLE):	
Funder:	Norfolk County Council
	Has funding been applied for? YES Application Date: 2008
	Has funding been awarded? YES
Will ethical approval also be sought for this project from another source? NO	
	If "yes" what is this source?

3. DECLARATION:

I am satisfied that all ethical issues have been identified and that satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with those issues in this research project. I will abide by the procedures described in this form.

Name of Applicant:	**Bianca Finger-Berry**
Date:	**24.01.2012**

Supervisor declaration (for student research only)

I have discussed the ethics of the proposed research with the student and am satisfied that all ethical issues have been identified and that satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with those issues in this research project.

Name of Supervisor:	**Esther Priyardharshini**
Date:	**31.01.2012**

4. ATTACHMENTS:

The following should be attached to your application as necessary – please indicate if attached and list any additional materials:

☐ **Research Proposal**   ☐✓ **Project Information Sheet (for participants)**

☐✓ **Participant Consent Form(s)**   ☐ **Other Supporting Documents**

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

Considered by Chair: **(Date)**
Considered at Committee Meeting: **(Date)**
            Minute reference:

Recommendation:

Accept		Amend and Resubmit	
Amend		Reject	

Comments:

Dear Ethics Committee,

I have previously applied to you for approval for my original and revised project, in 2010 and 2011.

Following my last submission I have tried to recruit adults who have experienced the death of a school friend when they were younger, I advertised in various ways, including at the UEA, but I have had no response.

However, I am still very keen to undertake this research, in particular as there is very little research that has been undertaken with young people, who have experienced the death of as school friend. The difficulties I have experienced in recruiting a sample, both in relation to ethical issues and gatekeepers, I am sure, is one of the reasons for the lack of research.

I am today writing to you with a further proposal, and I would be grateful if you could consider this carefully, because I do think that there is great value in talking to young people and enabling them to have their views heard. I believe that we need to find creative ways of engaging with young people, and find them where they engage with others, which may need to include social media. As a result, I now propose a new group that I feel I shall be able to recruit from.

Three years ago the Critical Incident Support Service, for which I work, supported a school when one of their Y10 students died. He had a brain tumour, and was very open about his death, he gave radio interviews, had a blog, and a dedicated website. When he died, his friends also set up a R.I.P. website on Facebook and Bebo for him. The Facebook group currently has 160 members, and it is possible for anyone to post something on the group, as well as to contact members individually. There is also another website called lemon jelly, where comments can be posted in memory of him.

His mother is a headteacher at a primary school in Norfolk, and I wrote to her recently asking her, whether, in principle, she would help with my research proposal and put me in touch with her son's friends, subject to ethics approval from the UEA. She responded saying that she did not feel that she would be able to help me at this moment. However, following another email exchange, she said that she would be happy for me to get in touch with his friends independently of her, e.g. via Facebook. (I quote: "I have no objections to indirect contact to his friends- just not via me! Glad you understand. Appreciate the fact that you have spoken to me.")

I am therefore asking the ethics committee for permission to contact his friends via the R.I.P. sites, and with permission from individuals to interview them about their experience, focusing on positive aspects, and the support they received from school. I am intending to do this by posting a message on the R.I.P. Facebook page, as well as contacting his friends individually via email. I would suggest a message as follows:

Dear friends of M.F.,

I am posting this message in the hope that you might be able to help me find out more about what helps young people following the death of a school friend.

I work for Norfolk Children's Services as the Critical Incident Co-ordinator, and for the last few years I have been a part-time student at the UEA Norwich. I think that it is extremely important that we listen to young people and their experience, if we want to offer the right support to them. I was wondering whether any of you might be prepared to talk to me about what helped you cope with the death of your friend, and what school and others did to support you. I have spoken to M.'s mum and she is aware that I am contacting you in this way. If you will help me, I would be grateful if you can email me at b.finger-berry@uea.ac.uk, and I will then give you more information about what would be involved. Thank you for reading my message, Bianca.

I would then email young people the participant information sheet (please see below), and arrange a date/time/venue for interview. If a personal interview is not possible, I will send a questionnaire, based on my questions in the interview. I will also send/give out information about local counselling services available to the young person.

Bianca Finger-Berry

Appendix 2: **Participation information sheet and consent form**

Dear xxx,

Thank you for getting in touch with me following my request for friends of M.F. to talk to me about their experience. I am undertaking this research project to find out more about children's/young people's experiences following the death of their school friend. Before you decide whether you will take part in this study, you need to know what this will mean for you.

You may ask why I am doing this research?

I organise the support for schools in a Critical Incident, like the death of a pupil or member of staff, and to be able to give children and young people the best support possible, I feel that I need to know more about children's/young people's experiences, what helps them, and what is good about the support they get from their school. I am doing this research project as part of a doctorate course at the University of East Anglia in Norwich.

What will happen if I take part?

I would like to speak to you in detail about what it was like for you when you found out that your friend had a terminal illness, and when he died. I would like to know how you felt, and who supported you. I would like to know what kind of things helped you deal with this. I also wonder what you think now about what happened. I would like to talk to you at a mutually convenient venue. The interview will be recorded on a digital recording device, and I will later write down what you have said. You can withdraw your permission at any point during the next twelve months before the research is complete.

What happens if I get upset during the interview?

I think that it would be good to talk about this beforehand, and agree with you what you would like to do. You may want to stop the interview and continue another time, you may not want to be interviewed any further, or you may feel that although you might get upset, it is good to talk about it and you will feel better afterwards. If you need any extra support after the interview, or

later on, I will discuss this with you. You can contact the Off Centre counselling services on 0800 917 5917 for support.

What will happen with the information you gather?
I will be considering what everyone has said, and your views will remain confidential. If I am concerned about your well-being, I will agree with you how you can access appropriate support. If you like, you can choose a research name, which I will use if I quote anything that you have said. I will write a report about what I found out, which you can read afterwards if you want to.

What if I have more questions?
If you would like to find out more, you can either call me, Bianca Finger-Berry, on 01692 409540, and leave a message so I can get back to you, or you can email me at b.finger-berry@uea.ac.uk . You can also write to me at Bianca Finger-Berry, Education Services Centre, Market Street, North Walsham, NR28 9BZ.

How do I make a complaint?
If you have any concerns about the research, please speak to the researcher first. If you are not happy with the response, you can make a complaint by contacting the Head of the School of Education at the University of East Anglia, Dr Nalini Boodhoo, n.boodhoo@uea.ac.uk, tel: 01603 592630.

Participant consent form

Please circle all you agree with:

I have been given full information regarding the aims of this research and have been given information with the Researcher's name and contact details if I require further information.

Yes   No

I have asked all the questions I wanted to ask and are happy with the response?

Yes   No   Not applicable

I, _____, hereby fully and freely agree to take part in this research project which has been explained to me. Having given consent, I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time without any problems in the next twelve months.

Participant's name (BLOCK CAPITALS) _____

Participant's address _____

_____

Participant's signature _____

Researcher's name _____

Researcher's signature _____

Date ____

Appendix 11.9 Interview schedule for young people

Questions for adults who have experienced the death of a school friend

I am doing this research, because a lot is written about what should be done to help children and young people, most researchers have just asked teachers or parents. Because of ethical issues, I am not asking children, but you as adults who have been through this. I think that it is really important to ask you about your experience, because you are the only ones who can really tell us what helped you, and I hope that I can learn from you. I am hoping that my research will help me and other colleagues to improve what we and the schools do to help children and young people following the death of a school friend.

It may be that talking about your experience that you get upset. If that happens, what do you think you would like me to do? Do you think you will want to stop, or would you like to continue? We could also continue another time?

I will ask you again later, but sometimes people do get upset, but are still okay about talking about what happened. I will do whatever you would like me to do.

I – The day of the event

How old were you, when your friend died?
How did you find out that your friend had died?
How did you feel?
What did you do, when you first found out about the death?

II – The aftermath

In the days that followed, did you find it difficult to make sense of what happened? Did this change as time went on?

III – Support received from school

What sort of support did you receive from your school then? Apart from the teachers, did you also get any support from support staff, like Teaching Assistants? What about midday supervisors? What about the school office staff?

What was helpful? Was the support you received from support staff different to what you received from teachers, or was it quite similar?

III – General support

May I ask, how did you generally get on with your parents?

Thinking back, did your parents do anything that helped? What did your parents do that helped?

Thinking about support as a whole during the first few weeks, who do you think was most important for you as support, e.g. friends, parents, brothers or sisters, teachers, support staff, others?

Now that you can look back and think about this time, is there anything else they could have done to help you? Or anything they could have done differently? In an ideal world, what support would you have wanted the most and by whom?

III – Social Networking

Was this in existence when your friend died?

Did you access any social networking sites, either your friend's own site, I don't know if she had one, or one of the ones that were set up in her memory, either?

Which ones did you access?

Did you just read them, or did you post any comments as well? Do you remember what sort of comments you posted? Was that immediately after the death, or some time later? When did you last look on her site and/or post something?

Do you think it's a good thing to have a site like that? Did you find it helpful? How did it help? Are there also negative aspects of it? What sort?

What did you think about what other people posted? Was it used just by young people or by adults as well? What did you think about that?

III –school

Do you think that your performance at school was affected? Did that last for a long time?

Did you receive any support later on at school? Did you feel you needed anything? Did the teachers all know what happened? Do you think they knew how you were affected and what you might need?

Do you think that now, you are doing as well as you would have expected, or do you think you could do better? What is stopping you from doing better?

III – One year on (long term and positive outcomes?)

What do you think helped you with dealing with what happened? Parents? Friends? Something about your personality that helped?

Some people talk about something called post traumatic growth, they say that they value life more, after the death of someone close to them, more than they did before. Or that they value friendships more. Or they think about some things differently. What do you think?

Did it make you think about your own life? If so, in what way? Has it changed your beliefs in any way?

Did it have an impact on your relationships with your parents, brothers/sisters, friends?

Why do you think that you dealt with what happened so well/not so well?

Do you still think about your friend who died? How often is that daily, weekly, once a month, special occasions?

VI Anything else

How did you used to think about death? Is that different now? Have you experienced the death of a family member previously?

Do you remember whether you learned about death in the curriculum? Did that help in dealing with the death of your friend? Or do you think that you didn't know enough, and that you it would have been good to have learned more about it in school beforehand?

Have you ever written down anything about your friend and/or how you felt about it? How did you find that, was that helpful?

What are your aspirations for your future?

Is there anything else that you think I should really know, anything that you wanted to tell me?

VII – Next steps

How did you find talking about your friend's death and the impact it had on you?

Why did you decide to agree to this interview? Did you have a discussion with anyone else about it?

We have arranged for a counsellor to be on hand if you think that you need further support? Do you think you need any support this afternoon? Can I give you a leaflet about Counselling, if at any point you do feel you need to talk about it with someone trained in supporting young people.

Thank you for talking to me, you've been very helpful…

Appendix 11.10 Capewell: Critical Incident Stress Management Systems in Education

FIGURE 1 CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN EDUCATION
– Internal School System

SUPPORTED AND RESOURCED BY EXTERNAL AGENCIES

FIGURE 2 CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN EDUCATION
– External Resources & Roles