An exploration of school staff support for children and young people experiencing psychological loss in one secondary pupil referral unit.

Submitted by Samuel Bougourd (620026476) to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in Educational Child and Community Psychology in May 2018.

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

Experiences of psychological loss are both hugely significant and inevitable life events. Support of psychological loss for children and young people (CYP) in schools is therefore relevant to the role of educational psychologists (EPs). The two phases of the current research explored psychological loss support for CYP from the perspective of the school staff who deliver it. Conceptual mapping techniques and semi-structured interviews with 18 participants, working across 3 school settings, helped to map support of psychological loss in the first phase of the current research. Using thematic analysis an overall system of support for CYP experiencing psychological loss was identified, with adjustments to the support system suggested to be required according to the age and development of CYP. Relationships between school staff and CYP were highlighted as pivotal to the success of support for psychological loss within this system, suggesting that EP support for psychological loss may be best placed in offering *support to those who are supporting* CYP in schools. In order to explore an approach to supporting school staff with psychological loss, a case study of an EP training programme with 9 participants from a secondary PRU school setting was outlined in the second phase of the research. It was found that adopting an approach that was specific and relevant to the setting, with a focus on the language associated with loss and celebration of existing supportive practice of participants, enabled the knowledge and confidence of school staff to support CYP experiencing psychological loss to be increased. With positive outcomes for the school setting reported. Implications for further research and EP practice are considered.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a full appreciation of the current research aims as well as the context against which the current research was conducted. Firstly the specific aims and research questions for the current research will be clearly outlined (section 1.1). Following these aims, more information about the background of the research will be discussed in section 1.2, with specific focus on the political and educational backdrop of the current study. The next section (1.3) will address the rationale for the current research, giving detail on my position as a researcher and explaining how the current study aligns with my professional goals and knowledge to date. The following section (1.4) of this chapter will address the terminology used in the research project with particular focus given to the way that loss will be conceptualised and understood within the current research. This chapter will conclude (section 1.5) with a summary of each of the subsequent chapters to follow, providing an overview of their content to give the reader a picture of the research project as a whole.

1.1 Aim

Experiences of significant psychological loss or bereavements are life events that are both hugely significant and inevitable (Neimeyer & Currier, 2009). Psychological effects of bereavement can be long lasting and severe, in particular placing children and young people (CYP) at risk of negative outcomes (Paul & Freeland, 2012). The potential for negative impact combined with the common occurrence of bereavement (an estimated 78% of UK CYPs experiencing a significant death of 2nd degree relative or close friend (Paul & Freeland,2012)) and other experiences of loss (i.e. parental divorce/separation, dementia, missing persons etc.) makes research into supporting psychological loss important. This study will therefore aim to contribute to the existing research within the field of psychological loss and is specifically focused on educational settings and the support of CYP with the experience of loss.

The first overall aim of the research project was to map the support that is provided to a range (both in terms of age and development) of CYP for psychological loss across three school settings. This aim was addressed in the first phase of the current research where participants (a range of school staff) from 3 differing educational settings drew conceptual maps and were subsequently interviewed about their experiences of working with CYP who have experienced psychological loss.

Implementing an emergent design methodology, the first phase of the research, in which rich and detailed data about the support of varied CYP experiencing loss was generated, helped to inform the second overall aim for the research in Phase 2. The aim of this phase was to use data from Phase 1 to design, implement and evaluate an Educational Psychologist (EP) training programme aimed at developing the knowledge and confidence of a group of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) secondary school staff in their support of CYP who are experiencing psychological loss.

An overview of these aims and the research questions (RQs), can be seen in Fig 1 below.

PHASE ONE

Aim: To map the support provided by school staff to CYPs experiencing psychological loss, across three school settings.

RQs:

1. How do school staff support psychological loss in their setting?

2. How does this support vary across school settings?

3. What professional support do school staff need with loss and how does this change across settings?

PHASE TWO

Aim: To explore the use of EP training for psychological loss with a group of PRU secondary school staff.

RQs:

4. What are the views of PRU secondary school staff on the EP training programme delivered in their setting?

5. How can the EP training develop PRU secondary school staff's understanding of psychological loss?

6. How can the EP training programme increase PRU secondary school staff's confidence with supporting CYP experiencing psychological loss?

Fig 1: Aims and research questions from both phases of the current research

Contextual background of where the current research fits into the extant literature in the field, as well as the current political and educational climate, will now be explored.

1.2 Background

The current research was conducted against a changing educational and political background. This transient picture is of importance to the current research in a number of ways. Concurrent governmental policies of academisation and austerity, alongside an increase in accountability for school staff (Keddie & Lingard, 2015) has led to the reduction of funds available to (and overall reduction in numbers of) local authority maintained settings. This has led to a change in the way that teachers and support staff in schools view their role and offer support to CYP in

their setting (West & Bailey, 2013). Additionally, the discourse around mental health for CYP and how this is understood, is changing. Mental health needs have now become a legislative priority with the publishing of a new green paper at the end of 2017 (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) that lays out plans of a new approach to providing CYP with support for their mental health.

The national schooling context in the UK has undergone swift and widespread reform in recent times (Keddie & Lingard, 2015). The academies programme was started in England in 2000, continued by the coalition government in 2010 and now (under the current Conservative government) includes free schools (Gorard, 2014). The academies programme has enabled the widespread conversion of schools in England, that were previously maintained by local government authorities, to academies. Over a third of all secondary schools in England were academies by 2012 (Gorard, 2014) and in control of their entire school budget, coming directly from central government via a funding agreement that forms part of a legally binding contract (West & Bailey, 2013). The rapid rate of conversion to academies has led to the weakening of the position of local authorities with a proliferation of new stakeholders such as business groups, charities, philanthropists and faith groups now involved in educational governance and provision (Keddie & Lingard, 2015). This shift has been described by West & Bailey (2013) as, in essence, a form of privatisation of the education system in England from the public sector to those outside it.

Alongside policies that promote the conversion of local authority maintained schools into academies, has run a wider political agenda of austerity measures and funding cuts. Such measures have led to reductions in social and welfare funding systems as well as those in education. This has therefore had an impact on the most vulnerable CYP and families across the country (Veck, 2014), with many unable to get appropriate access to the correct support from professionals. The reduction in funding across such services has also fuelled the move for local authority maintained schools to convert to academies due to policies that have incentivised conversion to academy status, enabling access to otherwise protected financial resources (West & Bailey, 2013).

Concurrent to the academies programme and policies of austerity, recent educational policy has promoted an increase in the level of accountability and scrutiny that school staff are held up against at a national level (Keddie & Lingard, 2015). The English education system has

become increasingly subject to the frameworks and inspections of regulatory bodies such as Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education), with their grading and outcomes also becoming ever more relevant to the continued success of educational settings (Keddie & Lingard, 2015). Whilst academic attainment and progress are central in the frameworks of such regulatory bodies, wider goals of education and pastoral care have become viewed as less important and consequently school support for CYP in these areas has become diminished. Therefore teachers' capacity to focus on broader educational goals of moral and social learning has significantly decreased (Keddie & Lingard, 2015; West & Bailey, 2013). Support and education around bereavement and loss for CYP in schools (relevant to the current research) is one of the areas of such social and moral learning, that it could be argued has been moved to the periphery of the schooling agenda and curriculum in England.

This contradictory combination (Keddie & Lingard, 2015) of increased scrutiny/pressure for school staff to deliver academic/educational results, austerity measures that have reduced educational funding and a schooling system that has become increasingly privatised, has led to a construction of education in England that has been reduced to a process that can be easily audited and measured. Pressure to meet these standards, deliver academic results and ensure the ongoing success of schools has increased, just as support and funding for education has been reduced as part of an austerity agenda.

Keddie and Lingard (2015) described the damaging effects of this current educational climate and outline major implications for school staff. In their paper published as part of a special issue on the current demands on the English schooling context, Keddie and Lingard (2015) suggest that teaching practice has been majorly degraded over recent years to fall in line with a testing agenda. This has in turn given rise to the promotion of quick fix strategies in order to achieve small gains in test performances which has "reprofessionalised teachers around an ethics of surveillance, competition and performance" (p.1121). If we consider the additional pressures that funding cuts from austerity measures are placing on professionals working in schools, it becomes apparent that teachers and professionals that work in schools feel over stretched and scrutinised within the current educational climate. Both authors of this paper wrote from a position exterior to the English schooling context (University of Queensland, Australia). This could be seen as both an advantage in the sense that they have the key perspective of being outsiders with a unique view on the system, or a disadvantage in the sense that they may be too far removed from the direct experience of the system in order to

provide the most insightful comment. I would argue in this case that the former is more likely due to the comment made within the paper to the other contributors to the special issue (the majority of whom work within the English schooling context) and also the resonation with my own (albeit limited) experience of working within schools in the English school context.

It is important to consider the current research within the described educational context as the implications of the wider political agenda are relevant to the research field of psychological loss. Support for psychological loss and bereavement could be argued to form part of the current educational curriculum that is currently maligned at the expense of the increased focus on academic achievement and attainment. In addition to this context, school staff are feeling more and more stretched and being asked to take on more responsibilities within their role. This combination could leave school staff little time and energy to be able to support CYP in other areas of development, such as their social and moral development. Within this schooling context it may be difficult for school staff to support CYP experiencing psychological loss, especially if the loss is having no noticeable effect on academic achievement.

The emergence of a new discourse around mental health for young people in schools is of similar relevance to the current research. This is most recently epitomised in a green paper published by the current government at the end of last year (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017). The paper outlines key initiatives aimed at streamlining the approach of mental health support in schools in England. This is proposing to involve the creation of new Mental Health Support Teams and the appointment of Designated Senior Leads for Mental Health in every school and college setting. I argue that school support for bereavement and psychological loss should be included under the umbrella of overall support for mental health in schools described in Department of Health & Department for Education (2017) and is therefore significant to current study. This green paper represents a growing recognition of the importance of supporting CYP with mental health issues. The current research therefore falls in line with current legislation aimed at bettering our understanding of supporting CYP mental health in schools, in this case by exploring support for psychological loss and bereavement.

By outlining the current educational context within schools in England, an awareness of the ways in which the current research aims to be both relevant and useful and contribute to the wider body of knowledge within the field of psychological loss research has been outlined. The

next section (1.3) of this chapter will provide further detail on the rationale of the current research including the preferred goals of the study.

1.3 Rationale

As described in section 1.2, part of the rationale behind the current research comes from its significance within the current educational context in England. This section will aim to outline the further contributing factors that combine to underpin the rationale of the current study and its research goals, namely my own work and research experience to date, my ongoing development as a researcher and the professional relevance of this field to practitioners of educational psychology.

To begin, I will explain how my own professional development and work experience has contributed to the rationale of the current research. Throughout my career to date I have worked with CYP and frequently experienced the difficulties they face with psychological loss and bereavement. My work experience with CYP across varied settings, both before and during the completion of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsych), places me in an advantageous position to conduct qualitative research that explores the support of CYP with psychological loss. Having worked in schools both in a support staff capacity, and as a TEP (Trainee Educational Psychologist), I have a nuanced understanding of the ways in which a variety of school settings are able to support CYP. I aim to use this experience of working in schools to further explore and understand the way school staff support CYP in this area.

My own personal experiences of psychological loss have also contributed to my psychological understanding of the research topic. I consider my own experiences of bereavement and loss to be in line with what would typically be expected for an average person (i.e. expected deaths of close relatives or family pets). However I am also aware of the detrimental effects of more significant, prolonged or complex psychological loss through my work experience with vulnerable young people and families. Such experience (both from a support staff perspective and a (T)EP perspective) is therefore likely to enhance my understanding and interpretation of data collection within the design of the current research. The focus of the current research concerns how EPs can support school staff and therefore build their capacity to support young people experiencing loss. This was a deliberate choice as it reflects the types of work I believe is some of the most useful and impactful for young people as an applied psychologist.

My experience of research to date also contributes to the rationale of the current research. Through the completion of research projects in both my previous psychology degrees, I have been able to establish my epistemological and ontological standpoints on conducting research and thus have considerable experience of undertaking qualitative research, specifically within the field of education. The current study therefore plays to my strengths as an experienced qualitative educational researcher and provides me with the opportunity to progress and develop both my research skills and my knowledge and expertise within the area of psychological loss support. One goal of this research will therefore be to further my development professionally as a practitioner and researcher.

The final strand underpinning the rationale for the current research concerns the inevitability of the subject matter. The experience of psychological loss and bereavement is unfortunately universal and significant to all (Neimeyer & Currier, 2009) and therefore staff supporting CYP in schools can expect the support of psychological loss to form part of their supporting role of CYP as the experience of psychological loss for CYP seems almost ubiquitous (Paul & Freeland, 2012). If we also consider the definition of psychological loss as broader than just bereavement and conceptualise loss in a wider sense (to include parental divorce/separation, absence of parents in the military, parental imprisonment, loss of home country/environment, missing persons, dementia etc.) we can begin to appreciate how wide ranging experiences of loss can be for CYP in schools. Therefore, knowledge and understanding of the best ways to support psychological loss becomes an important area for educational research. The significance of the current research increases further if we consider the risk of the suggested negative outcomes for CYP that can be associated with the experience of psychological loss (Paul & Freeland, 2012). A further goal of the current research is thus to develop the understanding of the experience of psychological loss for CYP.

The current educational context, my own professional/educational background and the ubiquity of the human experience associated with the research topic have all been put forward as factors underpinning the rationale of the current research. Now that the rationale behind the research has been explained, I will provide further detail on the significance of this research within the field of psychological loss, how it addresses a gap within the research field and therefore the potential contribution to knowledge that the current study could make. With specific reference given to the role that EPs can play in providing support for psychological loss in school settings.

1.4 Significance within research field

As will be explained in much further detail in the following chapter 2, research within the field of psychological loss is wide ranging and the topic has been the focus of considerable educational research. The background literature can be broadly categorised to encompass (i) models of loss, (ii) responses to loss and (iii) interventions to support loss. Models of loss put forward within the psychological loss literature (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Burke, 2015; Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999) outline stages or trajectories of loss that suggest similarities or recognised patterns in the way that psychological loss is experienced at an individual level. The models/ trajectories aim to produce accounts for universal experience of psychological loss and bereavement and therefore include CYP in schools.

Another strand of the research field explores how individuals (including CYP in schools) can differ in the way they respond to psychological loss. With research suggesting differing individual responses to loss. I argue within my literature review that the responses found within the existing research can be conceptualised as a continuum that allows for the most typical responses to loss (Bonanno, Wortman, Lehman, Tweed, Haring, Sonnega, Carr & Nesse, 2002), responses to ambiguous loss circumstances (Hall, 2014), a chronic response to loss (Rosner, 2015; Rosner, Pfoh, & Kotoucova, 2011) and also a neutral or even positive response (Hall, 2014) to the difficulties associated with psychological loss.

The final broad category identified within the psychological loss literature concerns a broad range (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Dowdney, 2000; Dyregrov & Regel, 2012; Holland, 2003; Morrison, 2007; Paul & Freeland, 2012; Posada, 2006; Vaterlaus, 2014; Wei, Szumilas, & Kutcher, 2010) of interventions suggested to be beneficial in supporting psychological loss for CYP. A general trend noted within the literature was a move towards providing individualised interventions (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Worden, 2009).

When considering the described research field as a whole (models of loss, responses to loss and interventions for loss), two notable observations were made. Firstly that a considerable amount of the literature on psychological loss was focused at an individual level – models of loss for individuals, individual responses to loss and individual interventions for loss. What had seemingly not received as much attention within the existing research were studies that explored the best ways to help those who were *supporting* individuals experiencing

psychological loss. It is therefore suggested that there is a need for research that explores the best ways to support those who are supporting individuals with loss (i.e. school staff supporting CYP in schools). The lack of research in this vein (to the best of my knowledge) was thus identified as the first 'gap' within the existing literature on psychological loss.

Moreover, the second 'gap' that was identified within the extant literature (to the best of my knowledge) was research that explored the potential differences of age and development in relation to the experience of (and support with) psychological loss. The influence of age and developmental stage seem especially noteworthy when we consider educational research. EPs in England are currently expected to work with CYP ranging from age 0-25 (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2015) and the experience of, and support for, psychological loss could be expected to look very different for CYP at either ends of that age range. The current research therefore aims to explore how CYP of differing age and development experience loss and require support.

The current study is therefore suggested to be significant in two ways. Firstly in investigating the influence of age and development on the experience and support of psychological loss in CYP and secondly in providing research that explores the best ways to support the staff that are supporting CYP with psychological loss, rather than focusing on direct interventions and support of CYP.

Having explained the significance of the current research within the context of the background literature within the field and in order to end this section, I now turn to providing an explanation of the significance of the current research to the profession of educational psychology.

As skilled professionals that regularly work in schools with CYPs and school staff, EPs have historically been involved in the response to psychological loss in schools. For EPs this has commonly been in the capacity of responding to a 'critical incident'. Critical incidents are described by Beeke (2011) as sudden or unexpected traumatic events with the potential to overwhelm a school community. It follows therefore, due to the significant psychological nature of loss, that schools would require EP support in the wake of a critical incident. However, it is my belief that the EP role in response to psychological loss can go beyond such an emergency response to critical incidents. Less traumatic (but no less important) experiences

of psychological loss are common in general life and therefore by proxy, school life. As EPs regularly work effectively with a range of school staff and CYPs, they can and I would argue should, provide meaningful psychological support to staff and CYPs experiencing loss in schools. I would further argue that EPs are ideally positioned to be able to provide support for psychological loss due to their expertise in applying psychology and experience working across agencies, therefore making both past and current research into this field very relevant to the field of educational psychology. It is hoped that the current study will provide further insight for EPs in their support of psychological loss across the school age range. In addition, the current research will be useful in exploring how EP work can contribute to the support of school staff who are working with CYP experiencing loss.

Having attempted to outline the significance of the current research within the context of both the extant literature and the field of educational psychology, the next section of this chapter will address the definition of key terminology within the current research.

1.5 Terminology

As psychological loss is a broad and wide ranging term that can be applied in many different contexts, it is difficult to conceptualise. To ensure the reader understands what is meant by the term psychological loss within the current research, this short section of the chapter will provide the reader with an understanding of what is meant by the term psychological loss in the current research.

Perhaps the most common understanding of loss is in its connection to the bereavement of a close friend or family member. However, for the purpose of this research, my conceptualisation of loss is considered in its broadest sense. This will include bereavement, but not conceptualise loss exclusively as death. Having worked for the majority of my career within school settings, my professional experience has made me all too aware of the range of significant losses that can affect CYP in schools. Without claiming to provide an exhaustive list, the range of losses have included parental divorce/separation, parental imprisonment, long term absence of family members (e.g. within service families) and loss of country of birth/upbringing (i.e. for those who have immigrated to the UK from another country). These losses can all be hugely significant for CYP (Dowling & Gorell-Barnes, 1999; Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017; Long & Fogell, 1999), require considerable support from school staff and are therefore all worthy of consideration within the current study.

It is therefore argued that for the purpose of this research I will fundamentally consider psychological loss in its broadest sense. It is hoped that a wide conceptualisation of psychological loss within the current research will lead to a development in the understanding of the range of significant psychological losses that CYP can experience in schools (across the school age range), but also explore the corresponding support offered to CYP by a range of school staff.

The way that loss is conceptualised within the current research will also influence the design that will be implemented (this is explained in detail in the method chapter) across the two phases of the research. As the study will use an emergent design where the findings from the first stage influence the way in which the second phase will be designed and implemented, it was again important for psychological loss to be considered as a wide ranging concept. An overall aim of the second phase of the research is to provide training input to staff in a secondary PRU setting that is highly relevant to the cohort of CYP at their setting. If I had adopted a narrower conceptualisation of psychological loss (for example that only included bereavement) I may have reduced the significance and relevance of the second phase of the research. By accepting loss as a broad term, it is thought that the scope of the second phase of the research may therefore be increased and the support of psychological loss (in its broadest sense) can be allowed for, within the emergent design adopted for the current research. This emergent design will be explained in considerably more detail within the method chapter of this thesis and it is to the summary of all the chapters within the current research that I will now turn, bringing this introductory chapter to a close.

1.6 Chapter summary

The final section of this chapter will delineate the structure of the remaining chapters within this thesis. The current study is divided into two phases and this is reflected in the way that it is written. Following this introductory chapter will be a review of the literature on psychological loss. As alluded to earlier within section 1.4 of this chapter, the literature review chapter (2) critically accounts the current research within the field by broadly dividing it into three categories. Firstly addressing models of or trajectories through loss, secondly exploring the spectrum of responses suggested in the literature and lastly detailing the myriad interventions suggested within the literature for psychological loss.

Succeeding the literature review chapter will be a method chapter (3) that explores methodological issues that are relevant to both phases of the research. These include the specific research aims and research questions of the research, ontological/epistemological considerations and the overall design of the study. Following this method chapter will be two larger chapters (4 and 5) that will comprise specific methodological and procedural details of each phase of the research, followed by the results of each phase and a discussion of the findings.

The next chapter (6) of the thesis will contain an overall discussion of the findings of both phases of the study. Within this chapter findings from both phases will be discussed in relation to the extant literature described within the literature review chapter. The final chapter (7) discusses limitations of the current research, outlines avenues for further research within the field and explores implications for EP practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In general terms, this literature review will provide a critical and concise overview of the research within the field of psychological loss. The aims of this chapter are to detail the key themes and arguments within this research area, consider the 'gaps' or areas for further exploration within the field, provide an account of how the current research fits within the context of the extant literature and outline the line of argument used to justify the current research.

To help achieve these aims, the literature review will be structured in the following manner. Following this introduction will be a short section (2.2) detailing the strategies by which the literature within this review was collected. The main body of the literature review will then follow and is divided into the three main areas that I believe are key within the field; (2.3) models of/trajectories through psychological loss, (2.4) responses / reactions to psychological loss and (2.5) interventions for psychological loss. Following these sections, the final part of the literature review (section 2.6) will explain how the research across these key areas relates to the current research and therefore why it is justified through an explanation of research questions (RQs) and aims.

2.2 Search strategies

There is a wealth of psychological research on loss. Fig 2 below details the range of search engines used and key terms searched to find primary sources included within this literature review. Articles were included in the review, in accordance to their relevance to both the field and the current research. There were two further routes in which primary sources from the internet were included within this literature review. Firstly, some additional sources were found (and deemed relevant) within already selected primary sources (i.e. from reference lists) and were subsequently included. In addition, some sources were included because they were recommended by the internet search engines in relation to articles, previously searched for ("you may be interested in this"). Finally, some of the primary sources cited within this review were found from varying chapters of a recently written textbook (Neimeyer, 2011).

Search engines used	Key search terms used
• EBSCO • ERIC • Web of Science • Google Scholar	• 'Psychological loss' • 'Bereavement' • 'Loss' • 'Grief' • 'Divorce' • 'Separation' • 'Attachment and loss'

Fig 2: Summary of search engines and key terms used in literature search.

The purpose of the next sections of the review are to critically review and synthesise ideas from the literature in three main areas. By following these sections through, I will attempt to argue the importance of psychological loss research through (i) understanding trajectories of loss CYPs may follow, (ii) how those CYPs experiencing loss (and indeed those staff supporting CYPs) can differ in their response to the loss and subsequently (iii) which interventions work with these differing loss responses CYPs may exhibit. It is intended that at the culmination of this critical analysis, conclusions will be drawn and relevance to the current research explained. The review will provide an account of the significance of psychological loss research, how the current research fits in to the existing loss literature and the usefulness/purpose of the current research.

2.3 Models of/trajectories through psychological loss

As is common in most psychological research, within the field of psychological loss, several researchers have outlined proposed models to account for how people process loss. Although this research is continuing to develop, historical models of the experience of psychological loss and grief took the form of staged or phased models (Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999). More modern approaches have rejected staged models, instead favouring an approach that suggests different possible trajectories (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Burke, 2015) through the experience of grief or loss (Hall, 2014).

The earlier notable papers within the field of Stroebe & Schut (1999) and Rubin (1981) both outline models of psychological loss that try to account for a single way in which all of us process loss or grief. They are also similar in their nature in that they propose models with two

main parts. Rubin's (1981) two-track model of loss suggests two separate tracks that help to scaffold an individual's response to loss. Firstly the 'biopsychosocial' track takes account of the physiological and psychological readjustment in functioning, in the wake of a significant loss. Whilst the second 'relationship to the deceased' track takes account of what happens to the individual in the wake of their affective relationship to a significant person ending. Rubin stressed that whilst these dual tracks were somewhat intertwined in the initial time period following the loss, the two tracks would separate and remain distinct from each other during the processing of loss, until each separately came to a conclusion. In this way the model suggests that psychological loss can be overcome by processing the biopsychosocial and affective elements separately. Stroebe & Schut (1999) however, contend that processing loss is a more interactional process. In their model the two distinct areas of processing are suggested to continually interact throughout the process of overcoming loss. Taking place against the backdrop of everyday life experiences, the dual processes involved with overcoming loss, proposed by Stroebe & Schut (1999) are loss- and restoration-oriented, respectively. Loss-oriented processes are suggested to involve work around grief, change and adaptation, whereas restoration-oriented processes are concerned with distraction, building of new relationships and attention to significant life changes in response to loss. Whilst the distinction is made between these two processes involved in adaptation to loss, Stroebe & Schut (1999) emphasise that interaction between these processes is key to overcoming loss and it is this described process of 'oscillation' between loss- and restoration-oriented processes, that sets this model of loss apart from others.

In both outlined models of loss, Stroebe & Schut (1999) and Rubin (1981) espouse a single and universal process by which we all process loss/grief. It could be argued that this is too reduced a view as it seems unlikely that we would all process loss in a very similar manner. Cultural and religious differences in particular may be likely to affect the way in which loss is processed individually. Perhaps most importantly for the current research, it is likely that a younger CYPs route through loss may be different to that of a 16 year old, for example. Rubin's (1981) two track model, with separately culminating processes, in particular seems like a too simplistic view and indeed more recent research into the impact of protective factors for loss such as resilience (Bonanno, Wortman, Lehman, Tweed, Haring, Sonnega, Carr & Nesse, 2002; Hall, 2014) and the impact of gender differences on loss (Corr & Corr, 2012). However the 'oscillation' described by Stroebe & Schut (1999) in their dual processing model can be viewed as a step towards adding the flexibility that accounting for protective factors and gender

differences would require. I view the notion of overlap, crossover and mutual influence between the loss- and restoration- processes in their model as making it more widely applicable to differing types of psychological loss, with Rubin's (1981) two track model perhaps more specifically applicable to the experience of bereavement. However more recent research (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Burke, 2015) has addressed the need for a model of loss that takes account for more variability and individual difference, adopting the view that in order to process and eventually overcome psychological loss, *meaning* needs to be made of it.

Neimeyer (2000), a prominent researcher in the field of psychological loss, has outlined through his research, how the *meaning* made in loss can be most important to the process of overcoming loss or grief (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Burke, 2015). His meaning making approach to loss adaptation (Neimeyer, 2000) emphasises that meaning of loss is to be constructed and integrated into the lives of those experiencing the loss as the central element to the process of overcoming loss or grief. Rather than viewing meaning making as an achievement, Neimeyer (2000) prefers to think of the process of meaning making as a dynamic, multi-faceted and *active* process. Whilst there are clear cognitive components to the meaning making process, they occur in combination with emotional components (O'Connor, 2002). Described by Neimeyer (2000) as an individual and emotive process that unfolds within complex social fields, the meaning reconstruction process is broadly defined in the following ways: (i) finding meaning in both the loss and the life following the loss, (ii) integrating meaning as well as constructing it, (iii) constructing meaning personally and interpersonally, (iv) being anchored in cultural, intimate and discursive contexts, (v) tacit as well as explicit and (vi) considerate of the process of meaning making as well as its products. In this way the process outlined by Neimeyer (2000) allows for far more individualisation and therefore it could be said that, it is more widely applicable to both different types of loss and different individuals. In his paper, Neimeyer (2000) conducted a comprehensive quantitative review of randomised control outcome studies (totalling 23) of grief counselling and therapy. This meant that the total sample size of the review as a whole was an impressive 1600 participants, all of whom had experienced a bereavement of a close family member in both expected or unexpected circumstances. Whilst this research provides important findings in relation to the experience of bereavement of a close family member, it provides little insight into the experience of more complex bereavements or other types of loss (for example divorce or separation). In addition, as the review focused on controlled studies (where participants were randomly assigned to treatment or control conditions), uncontrolled factors were left

unaccounted for. This is important as additional research within the field suggests that factors which were ruled out in Neimeyer (2000) such as resilience (Hart & Blincow, 2007) and social support networks (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012) are important to an individuals' trajectory through psychological loss.

I would argue that the more nuanced, complicated, in-depth process of overcoming psychological loss, as espoused by the meaning making approach, is more reflective of the complexities involved in the realities of overcoming the wide range of psychological loss that life can bring; personally, interpersonally, culturally and tacitly. Most recently, religious processes have been identified to impact upon meaning making and adaptation to loss (Neimeyer & Burke, 2015). In their recent paper Neimeyer & Burke (2015) showed that in many communities making meaning of the experience of psychological loss or bereavement is naturally linked to spiritual or religious beliefs, with a sense of divine purpose helping to consolidate and make sense of loss. This would suggest an added dimension to meaning making for those who hold spiritual or religious beliefs. However, it could also be argued that even those without such beliefs, may turn to religion or spirituality in the event of a significant loss or bereavement. Finally, O'Connor (2002) points to the promotion of close friends and family in the meaning making process, particularly talking through and discussing loss, as an important facilitator for meaning making.

Evidence in support of this model is twofold with both negative effects found in the absence of meaning making, as well as positive effects found when meaning is made. Firstly, failure to find meaning in the wake of a loss was shown to be associated with higher levels of complicated grief symptoms in research conducted by Hall (2014). Additionally, Neimeyer & Burke (2015) showed in their research that the absence of meaning making after a loss led to both a severe psychological and spiritual impact on well-being. With those who *were* able to make meaning of their loss reporting higher levels of positive emotion and well-being as much as four years into the future. Interestingly, in their sample of participants who had lost a family member, Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson (1998) were able to identify that making sense of the loss of their family member was associated with better adjustment in the first twelve months after their loss. With the identification of beneficial effects of the loss coming in the later stages following a loss (13-18 months), suggesting that elements of the meaning making process could become more or less important over time.

Models of psychological loss or grief have developed over time from a universal conceptualisation of loss that are intended to be fit for all, towards a more individualised meaning making model that accounts for a wider range of influences. An understanding of the aforementioned models of loss and grief will be valuable in informing the effective ways in which professionals (such as EPs) can work with CYPs going through the process of coming to terms with loss. Of similar importance to professionals (and therefore the current research) is an understanding of the different reactions or responses to psychological loss or grief. Alongside models of loss, the range of reactions to loss, also feature heavily in the extant literature.

2.4 Responses/reactions to psychological loss

Perhaps unsurprisingly, research shows that individual reactions and responses to loss are varied and individualised. However, patterns in those processing loss have also been able to be identified and therefore groupings of reactions or responses to loss suggested. Contrary to the popular notion that the most common response to loss is a pattern of intense grief followed by a gradual *letting go* (Hall, 2014), seminal research in the field (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno et al., 2002) has identified that the most common response to loss or grief is actually a slow, stable and resilient response, suggesting that individual levels of resilience may be important in shaping response and/or reaction to loss. There is considerable research in the area of psychological resilience with general psychological viewpoints (i.e. developmental, ecological systems, biological) most commonly applied to resilience models, rather than specific resilience models being developed in their own right. Schoon (2006) marries developmental and ecological systems approaches in her model of resilience which recognises nested (ranging from direct family contexts to wider socio-historic contexts) contextual influences on the development of individual levels of resilience. In response to the agreed view within the research literature of a lack of a clear definition for the construct of resilience (Ager, 2013) Bonanno, Romero, & Klein's (2015) temporal model of resilience helps resilience to be understood as a psychological construct by recognising it within a broad umbrella model applied across individuals, families and communities.

In perhaps the model that is most applicable to the current research, Hart & Blincow (2007) outline five compartments that are key to developing resilience in CYP: *basic, belonging, learning, coping, and core self*. I suggest that of particular significance to the current research may be the *coping* compartment of resilience (Hart & Blincow, 2007) as it directly relates to

the ability of young people to show a resilient response when faced with experiences of psychological loss.

To address what they described as methodological and conceptual limits of the predating research within the field, Bonanno et al., (2002) conducted research with participants that had been recently bereaved of a close family member that importantly included *pre-loss* data. In order to shed more light on the impact that the loss specifically had on participants, the research used pre-loss measures and compared them with data obtained from the participants in the wake of their loss. No previous research in the field had incorporated a design that allowed for comparison of individuals characteristics pre and post loss. Bonanno et al. (2002) suggested that this design enabled the impact of the loss on participants, to be distinguished as separate from their characteristics before their bereavement. Their research yielded several key findings. Firstly, clear patterns or responses to loss were identified. Whilst a smaller group of 'chronic grievers' comprising 15.6% of the 205 strong sample were identified, the most common response to loss found in 45.9% of participants, was characterised by a steady, stable and low depressive pattern. This finding could suggest that a high level of resilience and ability to cope with psychological loss in grievers, was the most common response. Interestingly a similar common response to another form of psychological loss - divorce or separation - is also found in the extant literature (Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017), with most CYP showing a resilient response that enables them to successfully adjust to their new situation.

Whilst Bonanno et al.'s (2002) identified patterns of loss could be seen as applicable for the sample of grievers in their research and perhaps the wider population of those who have experienced loss in relation to the death of a close family member, the generalisability of this finding to the response for all age groups to all types of psychological loss is still an area for further exploration. Additional detail of the sample in Bonanno et al. (2002) is also of note. All 205 participants in the study had experienced the same type of bereavement – the death of a spouse. Furthermore, all of the participants were from one part of America (Detroit) and over 65 years of age. The sample was therefore limited by age, nationality and type of psychological loss. Importantly and with regard to the current research, no children or young people were included within the sample. It may therefore be possible that very different responses to psychological loss could be observed in CYP.

The current research may provide findings concerning the varying types of loss across the school age range. Bugge, Darbyshire, Røkholt, Haugstvedt, & Helseth (2014) have recently begun this exploration in their Norwegian research. Through interviews with parents of pre-school children discussing their own and their children's experience of loss, Bugge et al. (2014) found that pre-schoolers show a similar resilience towards loss as described by Bonanno et al. (2002), suggesting that the commonly described resilience in the face of loss, could be developed from a young age – an important point to consider in the current research which this review will return to later.

Returning to the 'chronic' response to loss identified by Bonanno et al. (2002), it important to note that the 15.6% of the sample that displayed this pattern of response to loss could be distinguished from those in the sample that had reported enduring indicators of depression in pre-loss data collection. Therefore Bonanno et al. (2002) claim that the depressive symptoms displayed are a direct consequence of the loss or grief experienced and not as a result of previous or underlying difficulties. Bonanno et al.'s (2002) research is important in highlighting different responses to psychological loss and crucially that these responses can be distinguishable and separate from participants' pre-loss psychological state or well-being. It is important to note however, that this research was reliant on self-report measures for pre-loss data collection. So it could be expected that the pre-loss data collected in Bonanno et al. (2002) may be subject to some inaccuracies due to its reliance on participants' recall of information from the past. This reliance on the recall of past information may be further compromised in this particular research due to its traumatic nature, with the death of a spouse considered to be one of the most stressful life experiences anyone can encounter in their lives (Bonanno, 2004).

In the years since this important research (Bonanno et al., 2002; Bonanno, 2004) the notion that the response to psychological loss can be categorised into separately labelled groups (such as 'chronic grief') has begun to be surpassed in favour of a conceptualisation of psychological loss response as a broad continuum (Holland, Neimeyer, Boelen, & Prigerson, 2009). If we accept this conceptualisation then 'chronic grief' and the most common, steady and resilient pattern to loss (Bonanno et al., 2002), would fit along this continuum. Holland et al. (2009) investigated grief response using a taxonomic methodology that involved 1069 participants bereaved of a first degree relative. The statistical analysis of participants responses to the ICG-R (Inventory of Complicated Grief Revised (Boelen, Van Den Bout, De

Keijser, & Hoijtink, 2003)) offered little support for a categorical distinction between chronic and normal responses to loss, rather with the amount of variance found in their taxonomic analysis, Holland et al. (2009) adds further support to the continuum conceptualisation of loss response. Whilst the large sample size of their work was impressive, the cross sectional nature (measures taken six months on from the bereavement experienced by participants) of the design may reduce the claims of relevance for this research regarding the long term nature of psychological loss, the nature of which (as with other key research within the field) was specifically concerned with bereavement of a close family member and therefore not accounting for a range of psychological losses.

Further notable current research has helped to enrichen our understanding of the now more widely accepted continuum of response to psychological loss. The identification of a more acute or 'prolonged' grief reaction has been suggested in several studies (Holland et al., 2009; Rosner, 2015; Rosner, Pfoh, & Kotoucova, 2011). As the name would suggest, this longer lasting response to loss is thought to be a result of autobiographical memory differences and a tendency for rumination (Rosner, 2015). The growing number of studies pointing to this reaction to loss, has prompted a call for a diagnostic condition of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) to be created. As of yet PGD is not included in the latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), but is due to be included (Rosner, 2015) within the soon-to-be released International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). Diagnostic classification notwithstanding, a prolonged reaction to psychological loss could easily form a part of the currently accepted conceptualisation of a continuum of loss, perhaps alongside responses to loss described as 'chronic'.

Research within the field of loss has also identified two further loss responses that could be considered to form part of the continuum. Firstly, research by Boss & Yeats (2014) identified *ambiguous* loss. The ambiguity found in this response to loss comes from a major change in life circumstances that creates absence without definitive clarity. This ambiguity brings challenge that can produce a response to loss that is characterised in a similar way to the *chronic* response described by Bonanno et al. (2002). Boss & Yeats, (2014) describe ambiguous loss as either psychological absence despite physical presence (i.e. the development of dementia) or physical absence without psychological status validation (i.e. someone who has gone missing). Boss & Yeats (2014) suggest that life situations such as these can produce grief/loss reactions that are typically longer and more complicated due to the uncertain

circumstances of loss and the subsequent lack of 'closure' involved with them. This research is important as it aids understanding of a type of loss that is more complicated and nuanced without the finality or clarity that may be associated with more typical loss. Exploring the response to loss that has both an absence of time limits and a lack of clarity associated with it, is especially important given the wealth of research within the field that specifically addresses losses that are by their nature, very clear cut (i.e. the death of a close friend or family member).

Having considered the array of responses to psychological loss suggested within the literature, I must finally consider the possibility of the psychological loss not producing a response at all. Taking into account the conceptual continuum of loss I have been discussing, at the opposite end of the continuum to perhaps chronic or ambiguous loss, may sit a non-response to loss or grief. Hall (2014) discusses this and suggests that an absence of response to loss or grief should no longer be considered pathological and in fact more attention should be paid to the growing awareness of the positive effects that psychological loss can provide. Increased personal resilience in the wake of a significant loss, is an example of a positive effect of loss suggested in the extant literature (Bonanno et al., 2002). I see Hall's (2014) recognition of both a non-response to loss, and gaining positives from loss, as a natural follow on from the earlier work of Bonanno et al. (2002) in identifying the most common, resilient pattern to loss. If we consider the most common pattern of resilience to loss as the central range to continuum we can begin to consider Hall's (2014) positive response to one side of this central range, with more chronic (Bonanno et al., 2002; Bonanno, 2004) prolonged (Rosner, 2015) or ambiguous loss (Hall, 2014) at the other side – in this way our continuum of response to loss (Holland et al., 2009) begins to take shape.

Thus far this section has considered responses to a specific type of psychological loss: bereavement. The existing literature in the field also provides insight into responses to other kinds of psychological loss. Of particular relevance to the current research are the responses of CYP to parental divorce and separation. The negative effects of divorce or separation on CYP are recognised widely in the literature (Dowling & Gorell-Barnes, 1999; Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017; Spigelman, Spigelman, & Englesson, 1991), with CYP suggested to respond by blaming themselves, showing low levels of self-esteem and internalising their feelings resulting in an overall sense of powerlessness. More specifically Dowling & Gorell-Barnes (1999) describe that CYP can often find themselves in a *loyalty bind* where they have to act as mediators between

parents and struggling to maintain positive relationships with each of them respectively and finding it difficult to get their own voices heard. As divorce or separation circumstances can often mean that CYP find themselves in a situation where they may have to move house, move school or adjust to another adult moving into their existing home (Dowling & Gorell-Barnes, 1999), the emotional impact can be wide and long lasting. It is also suggested that if parents engage in ongoing conflict throughout the separation process, CYP response can be more problematic (Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017).

In addition to the attention paid to the wide range of responses to loss within the extant literature, other research strands have helped to highlight additional contextual factors that influence psychological loss response. Perhaps the most apparent factor that has been suggested to influence loss response is gender. In their research exploring the responses of 101 CYP in Sweden (aged 10-12) to the divorce of their parents, Spigelman et al. (1991) found that girls were more likely to conceal their uncomfortable feelings in response to divorce with good behaviour, meaning their need for help often went unacknowledged. Spigelman et al., (1991) contend that boys, on the other hand, are more likely to direct attention within their environment (i.e. at school) towards their difficult experiences associated with the divorce of their parents. This research has implications for school staff support for CYP whose parents have divorced, with the difficulties that girls are experiencing in connection with the psychological loss of divorce being harder to identify, whereas boys may well be far more open in expressing their difficulties at school.

Corr & Corr (2012) provide further insight into the ways that gender can influence individuals response to psychological loss. Whilst their three styles of response (based on experience, expression and adaptation to loss) are influenced by what may be considered stereotypical gender differences, Corr & Corr (2012) moved away from a male/female distinction in their labelling of patterns of response to loss, instead favouring *intuitive, instrumental* and *dissonant*. The response patterns are summarised in Fig 3. below, with an intuitive response to loss often associated with females, and an instrumental response often associated with males. The third dissonant response has obvious parallels (uncertainty, dissonance) with the ambiguous loss response (Hall, 2014) previously discussed.

Intuitive	Instrumental	Dissonant
• More affective, less cognitive • Talk about feelings and share experiences • "Heart grievers".	• More cognitive, less affective • Discussing problems not feelings • "Head grievers".	• Expressing grief differently to experiencing it • At war with themselves • "Head Vs Heart".

Fig 3: Summary of Corr & Corr's (2012) patterns of loss response.

Whilst it can be helpful to consider gender stereotypes in relation to loss response, I think it is important to note that gender is likely to only have an influence on patterns of loss response, rather than be the determining factor and this may well be reflected in Corr & Corr's (2012) choice to neutrally name their response patterns, avoiding allegiance to any gender. This is important because as Corr & Corr (2012) suggest, there may well be either men who feel more comfortable talking about their feelings (intuitive pattern) or women who prefer to focus on problem solving (instrumental pattern), that may well be threatened with their own individual response to loss being labelled in a stereotypical way. If we take this caution on board, recognition of the influence that gender may well exert on loss response, can be useful to professional practice.

Having previously taken account of the different models of or trajectories through psychological loss, this section has made consideration of both the conceptualisation of response to psychological loss as well as the contextual factors that can influence it. A logical next step once an increased awareness and understanding of the ways in which individuals can experience and respond to loss is gained, would be to consider the most effective ways in which to help support those experiencing psychological loss or grief. Section 2.4 that follows, will now consider the myriad ways in which the research literature has suggested to be effective in intervening to help those struggling with psychological loss, specifically CYPs in schools.

2.5 Interventions for psychological loss

Services and interventions aimed at supporting loss and bereavement in the UK have been described as patchy and eclectic, resulting in a varied approach to service delivery (Paul &

Freeland, 2012). Within the research literature, much of the evidence regarding CYPs focuses on the response to critical incidents in schools. A myriad of interventions such as Critical Incident Stress Debriefing - CISD (Aucott & Soni, 2016), Critical Incident Stress Management – CISM (Morrison, 2007), Lost For Words (Holland, 2003), Psychological Debriefing – PD (Wei et al., 2010), New Normal Project (Vaterlaus, 2014) and group work approaches (Paul & Freeland, 2012) have been evaluated in the research literature.

Support for such interventions within the research literature is at best, mixed. Although Morrison (2007) reports (in her paper examining the use of CISM) that psychologists and social workers have voiced considerable consensus regarding the positive goals of interventions such as CISM and CISD, Wei et al., (2010) go as far as to suggest that interventions such as these are at best ineffective and at worst potentially harmful, suggesting there is no compelling reason to implement interventions following a critical incident in schools. Either side of the positivity and negativity shown towards interventions such as CISM and CISD, there is general consensus of both their strengths and limitations. Both Aucott & Soni (2016) and Morrison (2007) suggest that the use of such interventions is heavily dependent on the skill and expertise of the professionals delivering it, suggesting that a certain level of training and experience would be necessary to successfully deliver these interventions. This research would suggest a clear role for an outside specialist support service, such as EPs in delivering such an intervention, however the important role that familiar adults can play in supporting CYPs through the early stages of psychological loss should not be overlooked (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012). Further evidence has called for greater allowance of culture (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Morrison, 2007) within interventions for critical incidents as well as the impact that gender can have on influencing approach to interventions with CYPs (Dowdney, 2000; Dyregrov & Regel, 2012). In my view the limitations suggested in critical incident interventions reflect the growing trend in research outlined in this review on both models of, and responses to loss (Bonanno et al., 2002; Boss & Yeats, 2014; Corr & Corr, 2012; Hall, 2014; Holland et al., 2009; Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Currier, 2009; Rosner, 2015; Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999) in advocating a move towards tailoring psychological loss interventions for CYPs on an *individualised* basis.

This move towards individualised interventions is reflected in further research by Worden (2009) and more recently Aucott & Soni (2016). Worden (2009) outlined four *tasks of mourning* that he suggested are important to overcome or *complete* in the wake of the loss of a significant person. The tasks concern acknowledging reality, processing pain, adjusting to a

world without the deceased and finding an enduring connection with deceased in your new life without them. Taking these four tasks as a whole, Worden's research can be readily transformed into a four stage intervention, with the ideas espoused by Worden sharing some considerable overlap with meaning making approaches (Neimeyer, 2000) to understanding loss, previously discussed in the first of the main sections in this chapter (2.2). By outlining these four areas in which loss can be overcome and not prescribing a specific order to completing them, an intervention shaped from Worden's research can be more flexibly applied to psychological loss experienced by CYPs in schools on an individualised level.

Further support for an individualised approach to loss comes from research that returned to an intervention used for critical incidents in schools. Aucott & Soni (2016) investigated the effectiveness of the use of CISD and concluded that interventions such as CISD are becoming outdated due to their implicit assumption of a universally traumatic loss experience. Instead it was Aucott & Soni's (2016) recommendation that a different intervention approach was adopted, one that allows for a more individualised approach that takes account of adaptive and coping functioning as well as supporting psychological distress caused by loss: Psychological First Aid (PFA). Posada (2006) also advocated the use of a PFA based approach to intervening with psychological loss in her paper that explored the best ways in which local authorities can respond to emergency situations. Posada argued that EPs are ideally placed to have a role in this kind of work due to their fundamental understanding of psycho-social processes and expertise in inter-agency collaboration. This research adds further weight to the idea that EPs could play an important role in providing individualised support to CYPs experiencing loss in schools.

Once again in parallel to the loss response literature (Hall, 2014), more recent research has explored how the positive effects of psychological loss can be embedded into interventions supporting CYPs in schools. Vaterlaus (2014) described an intervention that allows both a solution focused approach and the emotional processing of psychological loss to be normalised by creating a *new normal*. CYPs involved with the *new normal project* were asked about their preferred future in the wake of their loss from a social, emotional, physical, mental and spiritual perspective. Using this preferred future as a guide, those working with CYPs experiencing loss were able to make steps towards participants' *new normal* future. Despite this positive approach to loss intervention (Vaterlaus, 2014) requiring further exploration in order to establish an evidence base, I can see definite value in this approach, in particular

when working with younger CYPs, due to its positive and child-led nature. Aligning this approach with previous research exploring resiliency (Hall, 2014; Hart & Blincow, 2007) and positive responses to loss may be an interesting avenue of further exploration for loss interventions.

As was noted in research exploring responses to psychological loss (Bonanno et al., 2002) the interventions for CYPs discussed so far in this review have been reflective of a specific type of loss, that which involves a critical incident (usually the significant death of someone from the school community). However as the spectrum of loss that is considered within this research aims to be broader it will be useful to consider interventions that could be more widely applicable to the broad spectrum of loss that CYPs may experience, with parental separation or divorce in particular, a psychological loss that is common for CYPs to experience (Dowling & Gorell-Barnes, 1999; Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017; Long & Fogell, 1999; Spigelman et al., 1991).

However, an important strand to take from the research investigating interventions based on bereavement that could be argued to be valuable for interventions for all psychological loss, is the positive effect of strong and *varied social support networks* (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012) as a part of any intervention supporting CYPs. Dyregrov & Regel (2012) suggest that there is overwhelming evidence that strong social support is a major protective factor following events of loss and the type of social support required (informational/practical/emotional) will differ according to individual needs and contexts. Dyregrov & Regel (2012) suggest that an appreciation of the social support required and individual differences in contexts of CYPs experiencing loss, is likely to lead to more professional psycho-social support rather than a mere 'debrief' in the wake of a significant loss for a CYP, describing a process of *watchful waiting* in the time that passes after a significant event. I view the work of Dyregrov & Regel (2012) to be more successful in accounting for the support of a range of psychological losses beyond bereavement alone. However, by their own admission, their work is only based on their own clinical experience (working in the U.K. and Norway) and by no means provides a comprehensive review of the literature as a whole. The current research aims to provide insight into the importance of the social support networks and individual differences of CYP (suggested to be important by Dyregrov & Regel, 2012) within their support for psychological loss in schools.

Turning to the support for psychological losses other than bereavement, Dowling & Gorell-Barnes (1999) outline clinical recommendations (based on their experience of working with 40 families) for the support of CYP and their families in the event of parental divorce or separation. They suggest that a crucial aspect of the therapeutic response is to help parents (who may well be experiencing their own individual difficulties) attend to the needs of their child/children. Furthermore helping parents to resolve any ongoing conflict and therefore enabling them to maintain positive relationships with their children, are also seen as key elements of support offered to families. A further finding from Dowling & Gorell-Barnes (1999) that may have particular relevance to the current research, is the importance placed on school during CYP's experience of divorce or separation. School was suggested play an important role in providing a constant safe space for CYP during what can be a changing and difficult time. More recently Hashemi & Homayuni (2017) have suggested that an emotion coaching approach to supporting CYP experiencing the divorce or separation of their parents may also be useful. They suggest that such an approach may help CYP to become more aware of their emotions, talk about them more openly and act on them more appropriately.

Most of the research discussed within this section has concerned outcomes of loss interventions for the clients involved with them directly. In this way, this strand of the research field is representative of the field as a whole. There is however a lack of research that explores the best ways in which to support the professionals who are supporting those going through the process of psychological loss. An emerging area of the research literature is investigating the use of a psycho-educational approach (providing information or education) to supporting loss. Recent research has seen success with such an approach within medical professions (Brunet, Des Groseilliers, Cordova, & Ruzek, 2013), using an e-Learning platform in order to reach CYP and parents who have experienced trauma (Magruder, Kassam-Adams, Thoresen, & Olff, 2016) and as an early intervention for survivors of disasters (Shultz & Forbes, 2014). However there still remains a dearth of evidence exploring the effectiveness of psycho-educational approaches more widely and the current research aims to address this by making the focus of the research helping professionals (in this case school staff) to support the CYP they work with, with psychological loss. Further discussion of the aims and research questions (RQs) involved in the current research will now follow.

2.6 The current research

A critical review of the literature on psychological loss in three main areas (models/trajectories, responses and interventions) has led to both some key conclusions about the current state of the loss literature and areas in which further research may be valuable. The aim of this final section is to link these conclusions and 'gaps in the literature' with the current research in order to make a justification for the usefulness of it. Specific reference will therefore be made to the aims and RQs of the current research, which are shown in Fig. 4 at the beginning of the next chapter (3.2).

Phase one of the current research aims to explore the validity of the models of, or trajectories through loss, that were described within this review (Neimeyer, 2000; Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999). The explorative nature of the initial phase of the current research allowed for an investigation of the theoretical models' application in practice. By researching with school staff supporting CYPs in schools rather than the CYPs themselves, the research addressed the lack of research working directly alongside professionals within the field. Furthermore, by researching across differing school settings in phase one, this research shed light on the question of whether models of loss can be applied to *different types of loss* and therefore produce differing loss responses in CYPs (Bonanno et al., 2002; Boss & Yeats, 2014; Corr & Corr, 2012; Hall, 2014; Holland et al., 2009; Rosner, 2015).

The exploration of the first stage of the current research helped to inform the second phase of the research, EP training aimed to support school staff within a specific setting. This phase of the research also allowed for an exploration of where an EPs role may or may not be, in helping school staff to deliver support to CYP for psychological loss. The second phase was also concerned with addressing the lack of research within the field that accounts for the support of different and varied types of losses beyond bereavement. This included the possibility of building a resilient response to loss (Bonanno et al., 2002; Hart & Blincow, 2007) to potentially empower positive outcomes and growth as a result of psychological loss (Hall, 2014; Vaterlaus, 2014).

This literature review has provided a critical overview of psychological research into loss whilst at the same time making a justification for the current research that reflects both questions from, and gaps within, the extant psychological loss literature

Chapter 3: Overall Methodology

3.1 Specific research aims

The current research aimed to explore the support that school staff provide to children and young people (CYP) in schools who have experienced psychological loss. Guided by the literature review in the area, the first aim was to map the support given by school staff to CYP of many ages, across a three school settings. Building on the first aim of the research, the secondary aim was to design, implement and evaluate EP (Educational Psychologist) training aimed at supporting school staff working with CYP in a secondary PRU setting.

3.2 Research questions

Within each overall aim of the research, covering both phases, six research questions were devised and Fig 4 below shows these research questions (RQs) with associated aims from each phase of the current research. Good quality RQs need to articulate what a researcher wants to know about the intentions and perspectives of those involved in social interactions and invite a process of discovery and exploration (Agee, 2009). In order to achieve such articulation, exploration and discovery, the RQs for the current research were formulated by a process of numerous revisions and in partnership with independent professionals.

PHASE ONE

Aim: To map the support provided by school staff to CYPs experiencing psychological loss, across three school settings.

RQs:

1. How do school staff support psychological loss in their setting?

2. How does this support vary across school settings?

3. What professional support do school staff need with loss and how does this change across settings?

PHASE TWO

Aim: To explore the use of EP training for psychological loss with a group of PRU secondary school staff.

RQs:

4. What are the views of PRU secondary school staff on the EP training programme delivered in their setting?

5. How can the EP training develop PRU secondary school staff's understanding of psychological loss?

6. How can the EP training programme increase PRU secondary school staff's confidence with supporting CYP experiencing psychological loss?
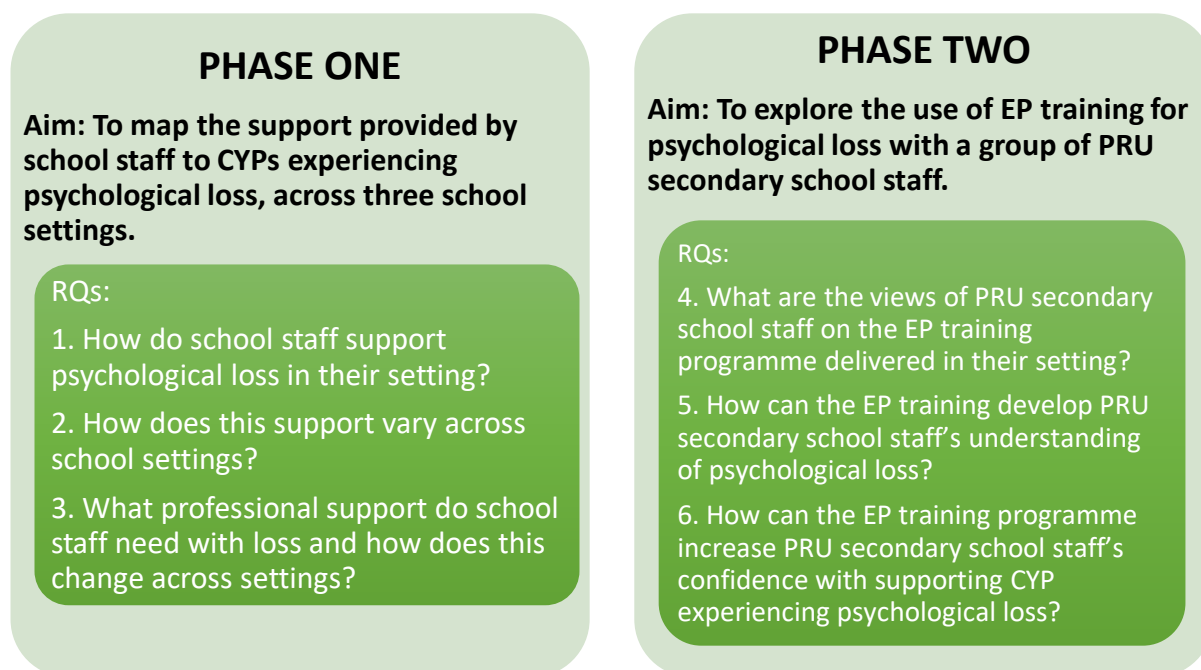
Fig 4: Aims and research questions from both phases of the current research.

3.3 Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is defined by Thomas (2009) as the study of reality and existence, considering what is real and true. Whilst epistemology is concerned with how truth and existence can be discovered through research and therefore provide much of the justification for the use of particular methodologies (Schwandt, 2015). Having previously conducted smaller scale educational research projects, I have begun to establish both my ontological and epistemological standpoints on research. I align myself to a constructivist ontological standpoint that assumes social realities are continuously being constructed by individuals. Berger & Luckmann (2011) describe such social constructions of reality as unique to the individuals creating them and therefore subjectively meaningful to them in forming a coherent world around them. With both historical and philosophical factors cited as particularly important in shaping such constructions over time. The implication of adopting this ontological standpoint is accepting the conception of knowledge as a humanistic discipline (Berger & Luckmann, 2011) concerned with exploring individuals' constructions of their social world.

Adopting this ontological view does however lend itself to an interpretivist epistemological view of conducting research. Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao (2004) describe interpretivism as a term that is used to identify approaches to social scientific research sharing particular ontological and epistemological assumptions, concerning the interpretation of the constructed meanings that individuals produce as part of their everyday lives. Interpretivism has roots in the German intellectual traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology and states that the everyday reality of individuals is paramount to social science research. Exploring these realities involves uncovering and exploring the constructed truths of individuals, by engaging in mutual social interaction with others (for example with participants of research projects such as in the current research) in order to produce verifiable knowledge of the meanings that constitute the social world (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004).

Deciding upon an interpretivist approach for the current research was not simply a matter of personal preference. As the nature of the current research was exploratory, involving talking to people and gaining their insights into the constructions of their world, it aligned well with an interpretivist standpoint and therefore suited as the most appropriate approach to adopt in order achieve the aims of the current research (Thomas, 2010). Some methodological literature (Coleman & Briggs, 2002) argues that interpretivist research is less objective, subject to the bias of the researcher conducting it and therefore unreliable. Whether or not these

terms are appropriate to describe interpretivist research could be called into question (Berger & Luckmann, 2011; Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). Contrasting research (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Thomas, 2010) argues that interpretivist research follows a useful research endeavour, uncovering knowledge from participants' constructions of the world. Thomas (2010) describes one of the possible results of the endeavour of interpretivist research and the quest to uncover 'exemplar' knowledge of realities, as *phronesis* (the acquisition of practical/craft/tacit knowledge – in this case knowledge of working with CYP experiencing loss within an educational setting). He suggests that this kind of methodology (inductive as opposed to deductive) leads to greater practical understanding. The current research therefore aimed to gain an understanding of practical tacit knowledge (phronesis) with a specific focus on how school staff support CYP who are experiencing psychological loss. More detail on how that rationale was applied to the current research design is discussed in section 3.4.

3.4 Design

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

The use of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) in the current research was an appropriate choice of methodological approach for this project for several reasons. Firstly, given the complex and emotional nature of psychological loss, the ability of thematic analysis to be applied easily to real life, 'messy' situations, made it a useful choice of approach that enabled detailed exploration of what proved to be a complex and nuanced research area (psychological loss). It could be argued that given the current transient nature of the educational context and developing EP profession (Lee & Woods, 2017) thematic analysis was a particularly welcome approach due to its capacity to manage this complex and continuously changing (Hallberg, 2006) field. Secondly, the systematic nature associated with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) provided the rigour that was necessitated for credible, trustworthy and authentic research that enabled the voice of my participants to be heard.

Lastly the significant overlap in skills required for researchers using thematic analysis and EPs (Sutcliffe, 2016) made this choice of approach particularly relevant for educational research involving the practice of EPs. Key EP skills (listening, reflection, communicating, analysing, considering different approaches, consultation) help to facilitate the research process whilst simultaneously helping to overcome the issue of researcher-induced bias that is often a concern with the use of qualitative approaches. The ability to be applied to complex social situations, associated depth of rigour and relevance to/crossover with EP profession, therefore

made thematic analysis a suitable approach for the current research. A discussion of how rigour and trustworthiness were established within the current research design will now follow.

The current research design incorporated rigour and trustworthiness through the use of Creswell & Miler's (2000) validity procedures for qualitative research. Validity procedures help to ensure that validity is upheld within the current research through the lens of the researcher, the participants and those external to the research. A summary of the validity procedures used within the current research is shown in Fig 5 below.

Researcher	Participants	External
• Triangulation • Discomfirming evidence • Reflexivity	• Member checking • Collaboration	• Audit trail • Rich and detailed description • Debriefing

Fig 5: Validity procedures for qualitative research used within the current study, adapted from Creswell & Miller (2000)

During the research process I *triangulated* data with an educational professional (external to the research) to help provide a more reliable and robust analysis procedure. This professional was chosen due to their considerable experience with both educational research and qualitative methodology. Part of this process involved seeking out and discussing *disconfirming evidence* that was contradictory to the narratives that emerged from data analysis. The research design also allowed participants involved with the research to be directly involved with validity procedures. The design allowed for *member checking* with participants through both a pilot study but also as parts of the data collection and evaluation design. The pilot study allowed participants to feedback on both the mapping task and interviews that were part of phase one of the study, the design of which also allowed for the ideas of participants to be checked and verified. Both the pilot study and the procedure for phase one of the study will be discussed in more detail in section 4.1 of the following chapter. Finally, validity measures were embedded into the design to ensure validity was upheld for those external to the current research. A peer *debrief* is a process similar to that as described for member checking, with professionals external to the research discussing and offering alternatives to the narratives that were produced from the data analysis process. The *rich* data analysis for both phases was also presented in a thorough, transparent and *detailed* manner so as to be easily understood

by those interpreting it. To assist this, an *audit trail* of field notes was kept by the researcher throughout the research process. Audit trails are widely recommended within qualitative research literature (Bowen, 2009; Kress, 2011; Sutcliffe, 2016; Thornberg, 2012) as a tool for both ensuring analysis is directly derived from the raw data and establishing and increasing the trustworthiness of said data analysis. Kress (2011) recommends audit trails as a way of accounting for the difficult process of documenting the 'flow' of the qualitative research process. The inclusion of audit trails within qualitative research is also said to aid the communication of the ideas and theories that emerge from qualitative research to those who read it (Bowen, 2009). The combination of the validity procedures for researcher, participants and those external to the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000) incorporated within the current research design, helped to ensure robust and authentic data was collected and analysed.

In addition to the use of the validity procedures described above, the current research also demonstrated a commitment to trustworthiness by the adherence to Lincoln & Guba's (1985) criteria – *credibility* (confidence in the 'truth' of the findings)*, transferability* (applicability in other contexts)*, dependability* (consistent and repeatable) and *confirmability* (shaped by the participants not the researcher)*.* The current research adopted several techniques put forward by Lincoln & Guba, (1985) as crucial to achieving research in line with their criteria. These included prolonged engagement with the research process, triangulation, peer debriefing, member-checking and an inquiry audit trail.

3.4.2 Structure

The following two chapters (4 and 5) will provide the reader with more detail of the methods used in each phase, including detail of the sample, procedures, analysis and tools used. Before this a brief rationale for the structure (including how phase one informed phase two) will be outlined.

The initial phase of the current research was designed so that data from participants (school staff who have supported CYP with psychological loss in schools) was collected in two ways. Firstly participants drew conceptual maps (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) of the support offered to CYP experiencing loss in their setting. First established in the 1970s (Stewart & Van Kirk, 1979) a conceptual map is a graphical organisational technique (Subramaniam & Esprívalo Harrell, 2015) ideally suited to qualitative research (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). Concept maps allow participants to represent their experiences in visual form and because they can be

drawn in a variety of ways they permit participants to creatively and flexibly represent their perspective on the research topic (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009).

The concept maps were used as the basis of a semi-structured interview where this support was discussed within the context of the RQs for the first phase. The data from conceptual maps and interviews with staff from three school settings was then synthesised into an overall thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) that informed the design of phase two of the current research.

Phase two of the research involved using the information collected and analysed in phase one to design and evaluate EP training for school staff within a chosen school setting. With the aim of helping to inform their practical support of CYP experiencing loss in their setting. In this way an emergent design methodology was used so that grounded practical data collected in phase one usefully informed the practical nature of phase two. An overall view of the design of the current research for both phases is shown in Fig 6 below, with more detail on the method, sample and procedure involved with each phase of the research described in the following chapters (4 and 5). Within these chapters the findings and a discussion of the results will also be reported.

3.4.3 Research Overview
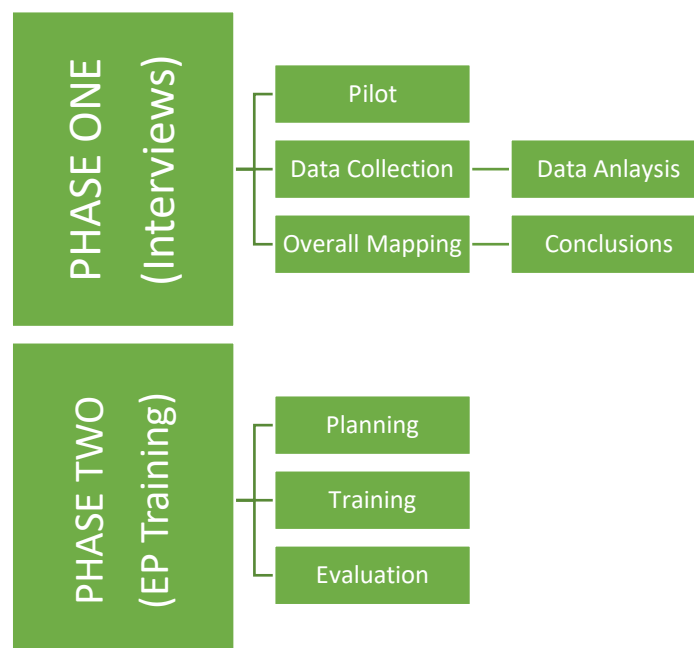
Fig 6: Visual overview of both phases of the current research.

Chapter 4: Phase One

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a full account of the first phase of the research. To begin, details of the specific information related to the methods used within this phase will be presented. This builds on the more general methodological information given in the previous chapter. Next the results from the data collected for this phase will be reported. This section will detail the research narrative that emerged from the analysis of the data. The final section will discuss the findings in more depth. The structure of the discussion of the reported findings allows for consideration of each of the research questions within this phase of the research. A reminder of those research questions and the overall aim of this phase of the research are included below so as to contextualise the remainder of this chapter.

Aim: To map the support provided by school staff to CYPs experiencing psychological loss, across three school settings.

RQ1: How do school staff support psychological loss in their setting?

RQ2: How does this support vary across school settings?

RQ3: What professional support do school staff need with loss and how does this change across settings?

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Sample

Participants for phase one were an opportunity sample of 18 school staff (17 female, 1 male) from three school settings situated within the United Kingdom. Participants involved worked in a variety of roles within their different school settings. At the time of the research all participants were working with CYP from across the school age range (Age 4-16) but also had experience of working with CYP in early years (EY) settings. Table 1 below shows the role and school of each participant.

Participants were selected on the basis of having worked with CYP who had experienced some form of psychological loss. The sample was selected through the use of my existing working relationships with contacts. Permission from the Head Teacher of each school setting was sought before participants consented to take part in the study.

Participant	Setting	Role	Concept Map?	Interview?
1	Primary School 1	Learning Mentor	Yes (Joint)	Yes (Joint)
2	Primary School 1	Learning Mentor		
3	Primary School 1	Learning Support Assistant	Yes	Yes
4	Primary School 1	Deputy Head	Yes	Yes
5	Primary School 1	SENCO	Yes	Yes
6	Primary School 1	Assistant Head	Yes	Yes
7	Primary School 1	Speech & Language Assistant	Yes	Yes
8	Primary School 1	Speech & Language Assistant	Yes	Yes
9	Primary School 1	Teacher	Yes	Yes
10	Primary School 1	Learning Support Assistant	Yes	No
11	Primary School 1	EAL Assistant	Yes	Yes
12	Primary School 1	Teacher	Yes	Yes
13	Secondary School 1	Teacher	Yes (Joint)	Yes (Joint)
14	Secondary School 1	Teacher		
15	Secondary School 1	Family Liaison Officer	No	Yes
16	Primary School 2	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant	Yes	Yes
17	Secondary School 1	Assistant SENCO	No	Yes
18	Secondary School 1	Learning Support Assistant	Yes	Yes
		TOTAL	**14**	**15**

Table 1: Participant information for the first phase of the research.

4.1.2 Pilot

To ensure the successful completion of data collection during phase one of the current research, a pilot study was conducted. This pilot study involved two participants (whose data was not included within the results) completing both parts of the data collection process of phase one; drawing a conceptual map and conducting a semi-structured interview. These participants were secondary school staff from another school setting in the UK but not involved in the main research project. As a result of the pilot study I was able to modify and improve the participant information sheet, the instructions given to participants for completion of the conceptual map and the schedule used for the semi-structured interviews. With regard to the participant instructions, the pilot revealed a need for more specific information and clarity for participants on conceptual maps and their construction. The outcomes from the pilot study also led to a development of the interview schedule used in phase one data collection. Several questions were added/developed as a result of discussions held during the pilot phase. Finally the pilot study enabled a sharper focus of the information given to participants prior to consenting to the research. Those involved in the pilot study suggested that more information was required about what they would gain from taking part in the research and this was added into the information given to the participants in phase one.

4.1.3 Procedure

Using an adapted procedure from previous research using conceptual maps (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) participants were first sent instructions by the researcher (via email) for the completion of a conceptual map of support within their school setting, for children experiencing psychological loss (Appendix 1). The instructions aimed to balance a level of comprehendible instruction for participants without overly prescribing the completion of maps to help ensure that each was unique and representational of each participant's setting. Using concept maps as the initial part of a multi-stage data collection process helped provide an initial snapshot of participants' experience of psychological loss support that was then given much deeper consideration in the subsequent interview. This procedure also allowed for the data given in the concept maps to be checked and verified during the interview, ensuring greater clarity and rigour to the findings.

The participants were then instructed to bring their completed conceptual maps along to an interview with the researcher, held within their school setting. The conceptual maps were used as the basis of questioning for 14 semi-structured interviews (lasting between 20 and 40 minutes) as four participants (two sets of two) decided they would like to jointly interview alongside their colleague. In both these cases the participants worked alongside each other as part of a small team within their school settings and therefore a joint interview was deemed beneficial to the development of the discussion of RQs. Similarly, in both these cases a joint conceptual map was provided by the participants instead of individual maps. Interviews were recorded by the researcher so that they could later be transcribed and analysed. Field notes were taken by the researcher at the end of each interview to contribute to consistency of the overall data analysis process.

4.1.4 Tools

Formulation of participant instructions (Appendix 1) for the completion of the conceptual maps was guided by the process outlined in research by Wheeldon & Faubert (2009). Mapping techniques were used in this research as they are qualitative data collection techniques that afford opportunities for the researcher to collect data that is generative not representational (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013) and enable the researcher to analyse complex phenomenon and join together individual, social, political and cultural material (Futch & Fine, 2014). The interview schedule (Appendix 2) was developed using a hierarchical focusing process adapted from Tomlinson (1989). Designing the schedule using this process ensured that the schedule

was well structured and remained tightly linked to the initial aims and RQs of the current research, whilst allowing for the flexibility associated with a semi-structured interview.

4.1.5 Analysis

The data collected from this phase of the research consisted of the interview transcripts and the concept maps. The data was therefore analysed in two ways, primarily using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) for the interview transcripts, but also using a basic visual content analysis in line with previous research (Subramaniam & Esprívalo Harrell, 2015) using conceptual maps.

The first stage of the thematic analysis took place with the transcription of the interviews. I took the decision to transcribe the interviews myself. Whilst this was time-consuming, it enabled me to begin to develop my understanding of the findings and begin to make connections between themes within the data whilst transcribing it. Following the recommendation of Thomas (2011), all transcriptions were completed as soon as possible after the interview had been completed. This allowed for the most accurate transcription of the data. The transcription process represented the first 'familiarisation' phase of Braun & Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis process. The second 'coding' phase followed, this phase included the initial coding of all of the transcripts. This process involves generating labels for important features of the data set with the codes generated capturing both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Each transcript was coded using NVivo (version 11.4.3) with 44 initial codes (Appendix 3) found within the data.

Once coding was completed for each individual transcript, the 'searching for themes' phase could be completed. This involved condensing the initial codes into a smaller range of themes, forming a narrative of research findings (Thomas, 2011). Braun & Clarke (2013) emphasise that the search is very much an active process that requires the researcher to construct themes within the data. The original 44 codes were grouped and concentrated into themes (Appendix 3). Phase four of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) requires the 'review' of these themes, during this process the nature of each theme is established, including their relationship to each other within the data set as a whole. The seven reviewed themes were then combined into a research narrative in the fifth phase of analysis, with each theme 'defined and named'. This research narrative is reported in the results section of this chapter (3.2), representing the sixth and last phase of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) –

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'writing up'. The formation of the narrative was aided by the field notes I took at the end of each interview. In order to minimise researcher bias, the analysis was critically discussed with an educational professional/researcher external to the research process as discussed previously (3.4.2).

The second form of analysis conducted was the visual content analysis of the concept maps drawn by participants prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews. Careful consideration was made when deciding how to analyse the concept maps. The choice of visual analytic tool should be governed by the research goals of the research (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004). The decision to use conceptual maps was made as a methodological device to gain better quality data from participants' interviews and whilst semiotic (study of meaning making in visual data) analytic tools can be used with great effect with visual data such as concept maps (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004), I decided that the most appropriate method of visual analysis for the concept maps was a basic content analysis in line with previous research that used concept maps (Subramaniam & Esprívalo Harrell, 2015). The main function of the concept maps within the current research was to scaffold and structure the second form of data collection (interviews). The data generated from the maps was therefore discussed in detail as part of the interview process. As the interviews were analysed in great depth and detail (as outlined above in this section) it was therefore thought the information represented on participants' concept maps was captured within this analysis and an additional more detailed analysis of the maps was therefore not required. A more basic visual analysis also had the advantage of being understood more readily by most readers (Willig & Rogers, 2017). Concept maps were therefore analysed with several key pieces of information from the maps noted. Firstly the focus of the conceptual map was recorded (i.e. whether it had a process, systemic or child focus). Secondly mention of content within the maps that was related to the codes identified from thematic analysis of interviews was analysed (i.e. external support agencies, support for families, different types of loss). The analysis of the concept maps also took into account the role of the participant (i.e. support staff, teaching staff, senior leaders, pastoral staff). All of this information supplemented the overall thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) of the interviews and subsequent research narrative that follows in the results section of this chapter.

4.1.6 Ethics

Ethical considerations should be paramount to any piece of research, starting in the planning stages and continuing throughout the data collection and analysis process. The subject area of psychological loss can for some, be very sensitive and evocative of difficult or uncomfortable feelings and emotions.

Prior to commencing the current research, I reflected on the impact that the research topic may have had on myself. Two years may well have felt a rather long period of time to spend being involved in conversations and discussions around loss and bereavement. I therefore ensured I had frequent opportunity to discuss potential difficulties that may have arisen from the research topic in order to protect myself against feeling overwhelmed during the research project. Regular tutorial meetings with my research supervisors proved useful in this regard as well as access to professional supervision through my fieldwork supervisor and visiting university tutor.

The difficult nature of the subject matter meant that careful considerations were made for participants involved in both phases of the study. The following steps were taken to minimise the risk of potential harm to participants during the initial phase of the research. Every participant recruited gave their signed consent (Appendix 5) and provided with instructions that explained the precautions taken within the current research, to ensure they avoided any discomfort (Appendix 4). Participants were reassured that it was OK for them to take time out of interviews should they need to or completely withdraw from the research at any point (without penalty) should they wish too. As a part of the debriefing information supplied to each participant, appropriate signposting to relevant support services was provided in case any of the discussions held during the research brought up any difficult feelings or emotions for participants (Appendix 4). The contact details of myself and my supervisors at the university were also provided to participants so that any comments or concerns about the research could be addressed.

Participant information also contained assurances for participants around data protection and confidentiality, with all those participating reassured that the data they provided within the research would be kept anonymous and safely stored/protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Full details of all the ethical considerations made for the current research can be found in the ethics clearance form (Appendix 6).

4.2 Results

The following section outlines the results found from the first phase of the current research. As described in the analysis section of this chapter (4.1.5) two types of analysis were used during this phase of the research. Both the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and the visual analysis of concept maps drawn by participants (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) were combined to create an overall research narrative. The results within this section will be reported using the structure of that narrative, making reference to both the visual and thematic analyses conducted. The narrative recounts how a range of school settings support psychological loss and how professional support from outside agencies (such as EPs) is required with the support of loss. In this way the results reported address the RQs set out for this phase of the research. The narrative of results is represented in Fig 7 below.
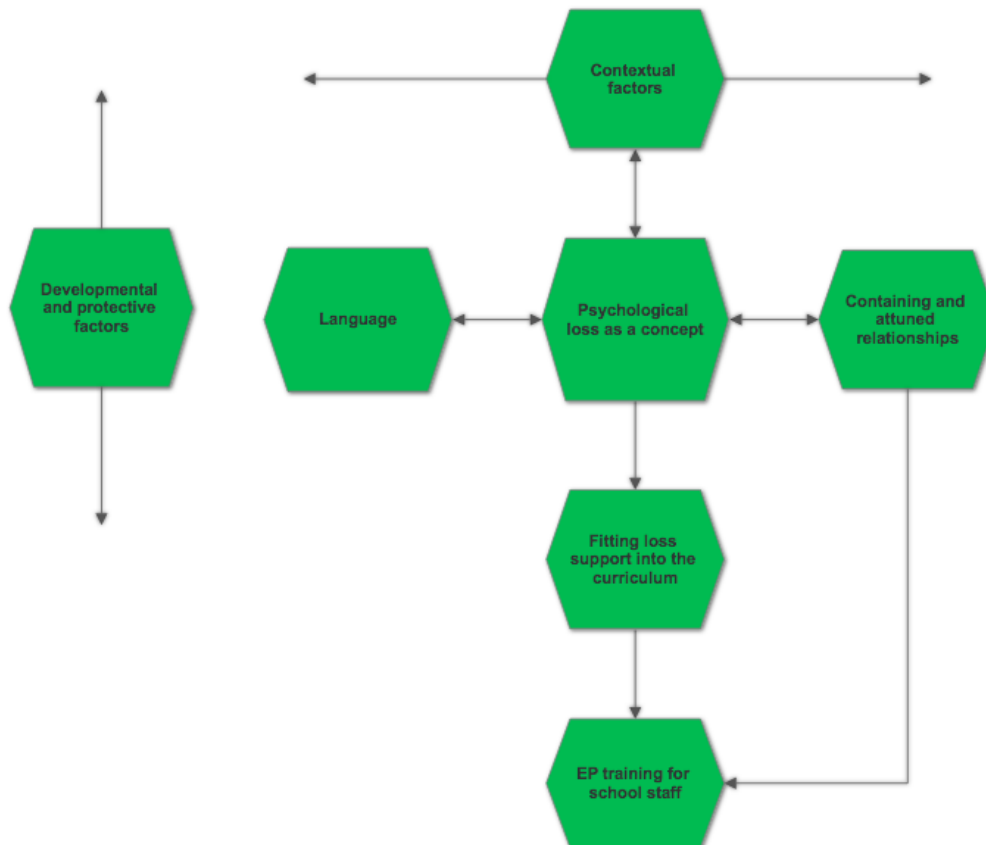
Fig 7: A visual representation of the research narrative created from the data analysis in phase one of the research.

In Fig 7 above, each hexagonal shape represents a theme formed during the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) process outlined in section 4.1.5. The results that follow are recounted via an exploration of each of these key themes, following through the narrative. Reference will

be made to both the concept maps drawn by participants and key quotations from their interviews.

4.2.1 Contextual factors

The research narrative begins with consideration of the background context of the support of psychological loss offered within school settings. The importance of the local community, cultural differences and funding cuts to educational services were all suggested by participants as factors that influenced their support of CYP with loss in both positive and negative ways.

Participants felt that a knowledge of their local community was a beneficial factor in their support of CYP with psychological loss. Having established links with families in the local community facilitated the relationships required when supporting CYP with loss in school settings. These links forged with the local community were also reported to be advantageous when staff needed to signpost CYP or families to appropriate support services.

> *"..you know we have quite good relationships with the local community. And I think knowing the community is a big help in terms of knowing what is out there to support the young people." (Teacher, Secondary School 1)*

Whilst links with the local community were viewed by participants as a positive influence on the support they could offer CYP with loss, educational funding cuts were very much viewed as a negative influence on their ability to offer support to CYP. Participants reported that funding cuts had been responsible for both the diminishment of support roles within schools (particularly counsellors) and the increased expectations on the roles in schools that did remain.

> *"We also used to have a counsellor didn't we? We used to take some children to some outside agency counsellor that unfortunately the funding stopped for that and we no longer do that." (Learning Mentor, Primary School 1)*

> *"I think unfortunately so many roles have been cut so, there has been so many issues with funding that.. schools are now expected to be everything and that is really difficult." (Family Liaison Officer, Secondary School 1)*

Participants also shared concerns for the impact of reduced funds available to support CYP preventatively (i.e. by building their resilience). With schools now having to prioritise their spending, participants were unsure whether support for loss would be a top priority for schools.

The final contextual factor deemed to be important for loss support by participants was the impact of cultural differences. They reported a need to be respectful of the different ways in which loss (particularly death) is viewed by different cultures. Reference was also made to the way in which British culture views death and how this affects the language that can be used to describe loss. Participants described needing to remind themselves to use more factual language than is typically used within British culture.

> *"Yeah I mean we still.. a lot of us would still think 'oh they've gone to sleep' and tell ourselves 'no we cant say that'. So it is that sort of information, just to remind you, 'oh yeah we need to do that yeah'." (Teacher, Primary School 1)*

4.2.2 Psychological loss as a concept

With an appreciation of the background context underpinning psychological loss support in schools, the concept of loss was understood by participants in multiple and complex ways. Loss was universally considered to mean more than just bereavement. Participants reported a myriad of other forms of loss that they had experienced CYP go through in schools. The primary code 'different types of loss' was coded in every interview and the range of losses referenced included parental divorce/separation, CYP who had been taken into care, CYP with a parent in prison, CYP exposed to refugee circumstances and CYP with life limiting conditions.

CYP experiencing loss in these circumstances were described by some participants as a more complex and prolonged form of loss than perhaps was experienced for CYP by a bereavement. With CYP experiencing such circumstances, therefore requiring more long-term support from school staff. The most common example of this kind of experience given by participants was CYP whose parents were divorced or separated (mentioned in 12 of the 15 interviews conducted). Changes in circumstances around parental separations were described as common (i.e. parent moving back in/out of family home) and this was described as psychologically challenging for CYP.

"When it is a separation of a parent, the parent is not there directly, but they are there somewhere. So you know.. although it might be in, they're not there in their home setting but they are somewhere else so.. that child has to almost get over how.. the loss of their parent being here with them all the time and have to adjust to maybe never seeing them again or seeing them a lot less than they have been seeing them so I actually think that can be very psychologically challenging for a child" (Learning Support Assistant, Primary School 1).

The nature of the loss was also reported to be a significant factor defining its support within schools. In the event of a very sudden and unexpected loss a more severe reaction was experienced, with more support needed for the CYP involved over a longer period of time. Especially because the loss effected the family support networks already in place for the CYP.

"It was such a big event and quite an unusual event. Whereas bereavement is something that we could deal with more, because it is a sudden and violent death it was a very big thing to deal with." (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, Primary School 2).

There was also a recognition by participants that every CYP experience of loss can be very individually different. There was a suggestion that this may be due to the importance of the *attachment* to the thing that has been lost, not necessarily the thing itself. An example of this given by participants was the significance of the loss of a favourite toy for a younger CYP.

"You know that for a child of 2 to lose their dummy or cuddly toy.. it is a massive thing because that is one of the things they have a massive attachment to in life. Mummy, daddy, cuddly toy.. it is probably in that order." (Speech and Language Assistant, Primary School 1).

Whilst loss was conceptualised by school staff as complex and understood in multiple ways, the support system described for CYP experiencing loss, was conversely very similar with an almost universal support system described by participants. Whilst there were some subtle differences in the various support networks that were described by participants in their concept maps, key components of effective support for CYP experiencing loss were identifiable within the maps of most participants. These included support for families as well as CYP,

positive established relationships between school staff and CYP, maintaining a child centred focus, being open and honest in communication, adopting a flexible approach and referral to external support agencies (if appropriate). Out of the 14 maps drawn by participants, 12 were child-focused, 11 contained reference to external support agencies and 9 referenced the importance of including the family of the CYP with loss. Examples of concept maps drawn by participants can be found in Appendix 7.

It was suggested that a system containing these key components could be applied to the support of the wide range of losses described within the results. With such a system not only applicable to supporting loss in schools but representative of an effective support system offered by school staff to CYP for all their needs.

> *"I think that for most children that is the network around them on a day-to-day basis, regardless of whether they have had any loss or any other experiences. All of these people are people they can turn to for support or you know who might recognise that that child may need support for whatever reason." (Teacher, Primary School 1).*

Perhaps the most pivotal factor in the success of the support systems described by participants was the existence of established positive relationships between school staff and CYP. Relationships were compared to the building blocks of the support system, without which support for loss would not be possible.

> *"That is sort of the building blocks.. what it is all built on. You cant really do any of this successfully if those relationships aren't in place." (Deputy Head, Primary School 1).*

4.2.3 Language
The importance of the language used within the support of psychological loss for CYP was another significant strand of the data. There was general agreement that school staff needed to be aware of both the individual and cultural differences with regard to the language used to describe loss (particularly bereavement).

> *"I went to that house for a home visit for something different and you know she thought they'd just gone fishing. And you can as a family support team encourage them to say the right thing but it is their choice in the long run isn't it? If they decide*

that he has 'gone fishing' then you cant make them change their mind on that can you?" (Learning Mentor, Primary School 1).

At the same time there was also an awareness that sometimes such language was not particularly helpful for CYP, with commonly used phrases such as 'gone to sleep' and 'passed away' causing confusion and ambiguity for CYP. Participants felt this was particularly true for those CYP who were younger and had perhaps not developed such an understanding of metaphors and language.

"They had no idea what to say to the children about it at all. And they were giving lots of mixed messages about mummy being in the sky and.. people tend to don't they? Someone is dead." (Emotional Literacy Assistant, Primary School 2).

Staff therefore described being honest and accurate in the use of their language as important when supporting CYP with loss. Training in psychological loss and resources (such as books) were also said to be beneficial when clarifying the use of language with CYP.

4.2.4 Containing and attuned relationships

Another central point of discussion in the data surrounded the role of external agency support within the support of psychological loss for CYP in school settings. Support from outside agencies was mentioned in each of the 15 interviews and coded a total of 104 times. Support from outside agencies was also a feature of 11 of the 14 concept maps drawn by participants. There was some division between participants as to the role that external agencies (such as EPs) are best placed to play with supporting psychological loss. Most participants expressed the view that outside agencies, especially EPs, are best using their skills and expertise to support the staff in schools who are supporting the CYP.

"..their skill set as an educational psychologist is going to be in a much greater depth than someone who has done an ELSA course for 6-8 weeks. So it was being able to then feedback form what they would say, you know 'don't expect this' and it is because as professionals they are up to date with all the latest research and thinking." (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, Primary School 2).

External agencies *supporting those supporting* was suggested to be particularly useful given the previously stated importance of trusted relationships between school staff and CYPs within the school support systems for loss. Participants therefore felt that external agency support helped staff to be better placed to offer their support to CYP utilising their already strong and mutually trusting relationship.

> *"I think our young people think 'If someone is going to ask me questions and I have only just met them, it is not where I want to be. If I already know them or have that relationship with them, then that.. I'll be more inclined to open up to someone like that'." (Teaching Assistant, Secondary School 1)*

> *"Even though we are helping the young children, sometimes we need to know that we are doing the right thing. So I would say in that way for us to talk to you to say 'right I did this, this, this and this but I don't know if it is working'. You know and from your profession you can say 'OK well try this, this and this.' If you give us support to support!" (EAL Assistant, Primary School 1).*

It was felt that of particular use to the school staff, was the reassurance that support from outside professionals could bring. With psychological loss viewed as a delicate and sensitive subject for many CYP, school staff shared their anxiety and were concerned that they might do or say the wrong thing when supporting CYP with loss, resulting in increased difficulty for CYP. It was felt that the expert knowledge possessed by outside professionals was reassuring for staff when they were faced with concerns around potentially making things worse for CYP.

> *"It is massive whatever you do I think. For someone to tell you, that has a greater knowledge, that actually you are doing the right thing is a massive thing because you are like 'yeah I am, fair enough, I will carry on doing it the way I am doing it'." (Teaching Assistant, Secondary School 1).*

Contrastingly, there were some participants who felt that CYP experiencing loss tend to respond well to professionals who are external to the school setting coming in and supporting them. With their separation from the situation (that is causing them difficulty), cited as a beneficial factor for outside professionals being able to quickly connect with CYP and offer support. This was suggested to be particularly relevant for adolescents.

"It is good to talk to someone that is not involved in anything you know? A complete stranger sometimes is much easier to talk to them you know?" (Speech and Language Assistant, Primary School 1).

4.2.5 Developmental and protective factors

There were a number of factors put forward by participants within the study that were suggested to be influential in the support of psychological loss in schools (represented in the positioning of this code within Fig 7). In addition to the importance of relationships to the functioning of support systems for loss (already discussed in section 4.2.2), building *resilience* in CYP was also seen as important in relation to loss support offered to CYP across the school settings. This code also included discussions of how support for loss was influenced by age and developmental stage of CYP, with school staff sharing experience of working with CYP in EY settings through to the older CYP in secondary schools.

Resilience of CYP was seen by participants as a very important factor that influenced the support they required for loss. It was mentioned in nine of the 15 total interviews, most commonly staff referred to building resilience as a preventative measure for CYP. Resilience in CYP was very much deemed as a strong protective factor for psychological loss. Participants suggested that those CYP who were resilient were able to cope well with psychological loss, however other CYP (who were perhaps less resilient) experienced more difficulty in their response to loss. Other participants suggested that some CYP whose school and home lives were more chaotic, seemed to require less long term support with loss and speculated that this may be because their resilience had been built by their changeable circumstances.

"I mean it is something that I do find fascinating. You do look at some children that seem to take things in their stride and others the smallest thing can just completely unbalance them". (Speech and Language Assistant, Primary School 1).

"Some children have just got that inner bounce and they can, I mean they are sad and they get upset but they, they bounce back and if they're secure. You know some children who lose a grandparent and they are very secure in their own relationships with their parents and the other extended members of their family and they just get over it. Then we've had others who have lost grandparents and that grandparent has

been the stability for that child because they've got parents who maybe are very flaky, use drugs, drink, come and go.. and then that is a huge loss for them." (Deputy Head, Primary School 1).

Age and development of CYP were the other factors that emerged from the data in relation to school support for loss. Whilst no EY settings were involved in the research, several school staff interviewed had experience of working with CYP in EY settings and were therefore able to share their experiences of supporting this age group (0-5 years old) with loss. Participants suggested that because CYP of this age have less understanding of the concepts of loss, death and time, their experience of psychological loss was different to that of older CYP. This meant that staff were less reliant on words to support CYP of this age.

"I think it might be because they're understanding hasn't developed enough to.. I mean it is all very well throwing a whole lot of words to a child.. they don't get it do they?" (Learning Support Assistant, Primary School 1).

Whilst some participants reported that CYP of this age can be very open and matter of fact in the way they communicate significant loss, others cited play as both an important way in which EY CYP communicate loss and a way in which school staff can support that loss.

"Sometimes they are bursting, they need to get it out and they don't know how to get it out so if you play with them and you role play and act things out, then they kind of talk about things as you do it through play, rather than sat down having a conversation." (Learning Mentor, Primary School 1).

Staff working with primary aged CYP reported that as pupils started to get older, their understandings of loss developed and therefore the way in which they are supported with loss also changed. Some participants were able to offer a rough time frame for when this change occurs, with the common consensus being that changes concerned with the understandings of the permanence of loss, happen at some point between Year 3 and Year 5 (ages 7 to 9).

"I would say probably when you get to about Year 4.. 3 or 4 I think it depends on the child because some of them.. as with any kind of concept.. some of them develop it

sooner than others. But I would probably think about 3 or 4." (Deputy Head, Primary
School 1).

This development in awareness was said to bring complications for staff supporting CYP of this age with psychological loss. Pupils of this age were reported to be more likely to shut down and not engage in conversation with staff. Staff's use of personal experience of loss was said to be a useful approach in overcoming these barriers.

"And I think it does help, you know because I have recently lost my brother. And that has knocked me for six. And to be able to tell the kids like when he was dying and things you know 'I am in a very vulnerable place at the moment, so you need to be gentle with me' and you know crying in front of them. You know they are sort of sat there absolutely gobsmacked. And I'll cry at a film and they are like 'oh my god you're human!' and stuff like that." (Teacher, Secondary School 1).

Those staff with experience in supporting secondary aged (11-16) CYP with psychological loss reported a greater emotional aspect to the support of CYP of this age. Speculating that experiences of loss can be heightened during adolescence – a time where teenage CYP are already experiencing significant change. Staff therefore felt that CYP experiencing loss at this age may be more likely to respond violently or completely withdraw into themselves, which made supporting them difficult.

"you've got your hormones flying around and you've got your emotions all over the place. I don't think.. a lot of people shut down at that age they just go inside themselves and it can manifest in anger." (Learning Support Assistant, Primary School 1).

In order to overcome this, staff found success in utilising an open and honest approach in communication with CYP of this age, allowing more 'adult' conversations to be possible. Some participants also speculated on the benefit of familiarising themselves with the things that interest adolescents (i.e. social media) in order to facilitate support of psychological loss.

> *"..you just need to be aware of what is suiting teenagers and try and.. nobody wants to be 'down with the kids' because that is just a complete and utter cringe.. but you know?" (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, Primary School 2).*

4.2.6 Fitting loss support into the curriculum

This theme concerns where support for psychological loss fits into the curriculum of UK schools. There was a recognition of the importance of a curriculum that supports the social and emotional development of CYP (including support with psychological loss) as well as with academic development.

> *"I think it is vital that you build human beings rather than just very clever people." (Speech and Language Assistant, Primary School 1).*

However, participants also reported that there was not sufficient time for staff to be able to address such social and emotional support for CYP in schools, due to the demands of the academic curriculum and pressures of exams.

> *"we still are so limited on time because we have a curriculum to deliver and we are teachers and we don't get any pastoral time. I mean when I say I give pastoral time, that means I go without my admin time and get a child out of a lesson to come and see me." (Teacher, Secondary School 1).*

4.2.7 EP training for school staff in psychological loss

The last of the themes discussed within the research narrative for this phase of the research was the participants' consideration of how EPs can best support school staff with supporting CYP. The most common form of EP support described as useful by participants was training. Data showed that training for psychological loss was the most common way EPs could support school staff and was referenced by participants in all 15 interviews. Participants were seeking training that: gave them reassurance that they were doing the right thing (in regard to their support of CYP), had a balance of theoretical information and practical application (including useful resources) and was specific/ relevant to their setting.

> *"Good training looks like something I actually use. I find lots of training really interesting, no I don't actually, I find a lot of training is lost after the day. I don't*

actually find that I have been given any skills to then take back into the work place."
(Assistant SENCO, Secondary School 1).

The other way in which EPs were said to be helpful in their support school staff (coded in 12 of the 15 interviews) was through supervision sessions. Participants commented on the value of such supervisory sessions in providing a safe space/platform to voice their complicated and emotional thoughts and concerns around supporting CYP with loss.

> *"to be with other people who had experienced children or adults who had experienced sudden death and stuff like that. That was really valuable to do that. Because it gave me head space and then I felt better equipped to come back and support people here."*
> *(Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, Primary School 2).*

4.3 Discussion

The reported findings within the previous section (4.2) of this chapter will now be discussed in this section, with results for each RQ of the initial phase of the research considered. RQ1 and RQ2 will be considered simultaneously before RQ3, with key findings presented and a critical discussion of those findings outlined in each case. Methodological considerations for this phase of the research will then be made. A discussion of future directions will close this chapter, with links made to the rationale underpinning the second phase of this research.

4.3.1 How do school staff support psychological loss in their setting (RQ1) and how does this support vary across school settings? (RQ2)

Key findings:
- *Psychological loss was conceptualised in multiple and varied ways by school staff in the settings involved in the research.*
- *There was general agreement amongst school staff within the current research as to the components that comprise a successful support system for psychological loss.*
- *An established and trusting relationship with CYP was seen as one of the most important components of school support for CYP experiencing psychological loss for the schools involved in the current research.*
- *Whilst the generally recognised support system for loss in schools did not fundamentally change across the settings involved in the research, the approach of*

school staff was adapted according to the age and development of CYP they were
working with.

Multiple understandings of psychological loss were outlined by the school staff from all the settings involved within this phase of the research. This suggests that loss is conceptualised in very different ways by school staff. The variance in the way psychological loss was understood by participants in the current study was reflective of the research field (discussed in chapter 2) as a whole that suggested individual differences in loss trajectories (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Burke, 2015; Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Variation in responses to loss as seen in my results is also coherent with earlier research (G. A. Bonanno, 2004; G. Bonanno et al., 2002; Boss & Yeats, 2014; Corr & Corr, 2012; Hall, 2014). Similarly support for loss was seen variably by participants and this is consistent with previous research (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Dyregrov & Regel, 2012; Morrison, 2007; Paul & Freeland, 2012; Vaterlaus, 2014). There was general agreement that psychological loss can be understood as a wider concept than bereavement alone, however the range of other losses put forward by school staff during data collection was indicative of the varied ways in which it was understood by participants. It could be considered quite unhelpful from an organisational point of view for school staff to show such fundamental variance in the way they understand psychological loss and this could have implications for the practical support of school staff by EPs.

However, despite the variance in participants' conceptualisations of psychological loss, there was clear agreement within the data of the components that constitute a successful system of support for CYP across the schools involved in the research. This was reflected in the concept maps drawn by participants and through discussions in interviews. The system described included support for families alongside CYP themselves, links with the local community, positive established relationships between school staff and CYP, the adoption of a child centred focus, being open and honest in communication, adopting a flexible approach and referral to external support agencies (if appropriate). These findings are tentatively suggestive of a universal system of support for psychological loss across school settings, despite age of CYP. In this way the findings are similar in nature to the universal (across all school settings) interventions for psychological loss, often implemented in the wake of a critical incident, such as CISD and CISM (Morrison, 2007).

The importance of relationships stood out in the data as the most important component of support within this system, described as the building blocks without which the system would not be able to operate. The significance placed on relationships within the current research is reflective of previous work in the field (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012) highlighting the importance of close social networks of support within the overall support available to an individual for psychological loss. It could be suggested that in the case of the current research one strong social network of support for an CYP experiencing psychological loss can come from familiar staff in their school setting. The importance of relationships also has practical implications for the role of outside professionals in supporting school staff with psychological loss. Given that by their very nature, professionals who are external to school settings, do not have established relationships with CYP in schools. Are they then better placed to support school staff to support those CYP experiencing loss, via their already established and positive relationships?

Although there was agreement in the data around what a successful school support system for loss looks like, participants described the need to vary their approach according to the age and development of the CYP with whom they work. Support through play was deemed to be very important when working with EY CYP. Findings from the current research also suggested that EY CYP were more likely to be resilient to psychological loss, adding further weight to similar previous research in the field (Bugge et al., 2014). For primary aged CYP, a period of change that yielded differences in the way loss was both experienced and supported, was described by participants. With school staff finding success in sharing their own personal experiences of loss with CYP. It could be argued that the use of sharing personal psychological loss experience as part of a more widely open and honest approach with CYP, could go some way to fostering the more beneficial psycho-social support previously suggested to be advantageous in the support of psychological losses (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012).

Finally, support for secondary aged CYP with loss was reported to be complicated by growing self-awareness and a heightened emotional reaction to loss from CYP of this age. Participants described responding to these changes and adapting their support for loss by utilising an open and honest approach to conversations. Given the tailoring in approach that is required of staff to support CYP of different ages with psychological loss, it should follow that professional support for school staff with loss should also change to suit the setting in which staff work. This suggests that it would be advantageous for professional support for loss from EPs to be specific and relevant to the setting staff are working in. The adaptation of support for

psychological loss to accommodate for CYP of different ages and in different settings would be reflective of the shift in the research literature (Bonanno et al., 2002; Boss & Yeats, 2014; Corr & Corr, 2012; Hall, 2014; Holland et al., 2009; Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Currier, 2009; Rosner, 2015;) towards providing loss support on an *individualised* basis. Advocating support on an individualised basis for CYP in schools contradicts earlier research literature proposing a universal staged model of psychological loss applicable to all (Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

4.3.2 What professional support do school staff need with loss and does this vary across settings? (RQ3)

Key findings:

- *Concerns were raised by school staff as to whether professional support for psychological loss would be prioritised within school systems suffering continued funding cuts.*

- *Professional support for psychological loss was hoped to bring school staff in the current research reassurance that they were offering the right support to CYP experiencing loss.*

- *Participants reported a need for training in psychological loss that had a balance of theory and practical elements and was specific to their setting and the CYP they work with.*

- *Participants also felt that professional support with loss could take the form of supervision.*

Whilst participants felt strongly that professional support for psychological loss was very important for the CYP they work with, they shared concerns about whether it would be prioritised in the school settings they worked in, given widespread educational funding cuts. The practical implications described by participants were related to increased demands and pressure on the roles of school staff, especially in light of the diminishment of those with pastoral/support roles in schools (such as counsellors). This may suggest that opportunities for external professionals to support school staff with psychological loss could become increasingly difficult, with opportunities for external professional support arguably being reduced to just the occasions of a critical incident, as reflected in previous research (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Morrison, 2007; Paul & Freeland, 2012). This may come at the cost of professionals being able to work in schools in order to work preventatively and potentially build the capacity

to raise the resilience in young people to cope with psychological loss, before the actual loss itself has occurred. This kind of support offered by professionals is more reflective of the PFA (Psychological First Aid) approach espoused by Posada (2006)

A consistent theme within the data reported by participants with regard to professional support, was the need to feel reassured that they were doing the right things in their support of CYP with psychological loss. In particular school staff felt they needed reassurances about the language they were using when supporting CYP with loss. Outside professionals were thought to be able to provide reassurance to avoid school staff feeling that they might say or do things (in their support of CYP with loss) that might have the potential to worsen the experience of loss for the CYP. This finding could have implications for professionals providing support to schools with loss (such as EPs), suggesting it may be beneficial for professionals to adopt a positive and reassuring approach with staff and focus specifically on helpful language to use when supporting staff with psychological loss. Considering the lack of research within the field that considers the best ways that EPs (and other external professionals) can support *school staff* with supporting CYP in schools, these findings are argued to be important.

Training was suggested by participants as an effective way in which outside professionals could support them with psychological loss. This finding contrasts research within the field suggesting that specialist external professionals (such as EPs) are best placed to work directly with CYP who have experienced psychological loss (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Morrison, 2007). It could also be argued that other more individualised approaches outlined in the extant literature (Vaterlaus, 2014; Worden, 2009) are more suited to training programmes delivered by external professionals such as EPs, due to their adaptability to a wide range of CYP and school settings. Moreover, such approaches may be more easily applied to the wide range of psychological losses that were described by participants within the current research. Both the current research and previous studies within the field (Dowling & Gorell-Barnes, 1999; Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017; Long & Fogell, 1999) suggest that further exploration that assesses the merit of the use of such approaches in supporting CYP whose parents have divorced or separated is especially important.

When describing effective training participants felt that it should find a balance between providing theoretical knowledge and practical applications. Participants also reflected that all too often they attend training they do not feel is relevant to the CYP they work with. I suggest

that the implications for practice from this finding could be that a training aimed at and conducted with, a specific cohort of staff, may be more beneficial than general training aimed at school staff working across multiple school settings. Providing such specific and relevant training could again be suggested to contribute to the psycho-social support offered to CYP. This is reflective of previous research Dyregrov & Regel (2012) that sighted it as beneficial to psychological loss support.

Reference was also made to another form of professional support within the data. Participants reported that supervisory support from external professionals could be beneficial in providing support for psychological loss. The benefit described of such an approach, was the head-space it can afford school staff to process their support of psychological loss and the 'safe space' that such an approach provided, enabling the processing of sometimes quite complicated and emotional situations related to psychological loss.

4.3.3 Methodological considerations

Methodological considerations for this phase of the research chiefly explore the nature of the sample. Of consideration in this section will be the balance of participants from each setting, the age group with which participants worked and finally the gender imbalance of the sample.

Whilst 18 participants from three different school settings were recruited for this phase, a disproportionate number of participants (12) came from just one of those settings. It is therefore accepted that the findings from data analysis could be biased towards the views of one particular setting. Opportunity sampling was chosen as an appropriate sampling technique to ensure enough participants were recruited within the timeframe available for the research. Despite the disproportionality within the sample, participants were recruited from a range of school staff roles and this should be a considered a strength of the research. By gaining the views of a range of school staff a detailed view of the successes and challenges of school staff support for loss within the chosen settings, was achieved. This was reflected in the rich data that was collected.

Recruiting a majority of participants from one setting also meant that the balance of school staff involved in the research as a whole, was shifted more towards those working with primary aged CYP. Although the total sample of 18 contained 13 participants from primary settings, a significant number of these had experience of working with CYP who were either

older or younger. This meant that the work experience of the sample as a whole, spanned from EY settings through to work with secondary aged CYP and was not necessarily bound by the current setting within which participants worked.

The gender balance of the sample was also a consideration of this phase of the research. There was an overwhelming majority of female participants recruited (17F, 1M) in this phase of the research. Whilst it could be argued that the sample is somewhat reflective of the gender imbalance of those employed to supporting roles in schools (especially primary settings) in the UK (Department for Education, 2016), further consideration of how gender effects may influence the support of loss in schools would be a valuable avenue for further research. Especially if we consider previous research (Corr & Corr, 2012) suggesting that gender can influence response to loss.

4.3.4 Future directions

Through the discussion of the findings of this phase of the research I have argued that school staff may understand psychological loss in multiple and varied ways, but are able to provide a universal support system for psychological loss that is successful in the support of CYP across the school age range. With the universal support system suggested by the current research managing to support a range of CYP via the use of appropriate age related adaptations. Established trusting relationships are suggested to form the essential building blocks of this system. Using the data collected in this phase I have also outlined components of successful professional support for school staff with loss. I suggested that professional support may be advantageous if it is specifically relevant to school settings (instead of universally applicable to all school staff), adopts a reassuring and confidence promoting approach and strikes a balance between theory and practice.

The second phase of this research will therefore aim to provide a specific cohort of school staff with a version of the proposed version of successful professional support for loss outlined above. Taking further direction from the findings of the first phase of the research, the support also took the form of training whilst utilising supervisory approaches (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). It was hoped that using such an approach may help to enable school staff to develop their knowledge of psychological loss and therefore become more confident in their support of CYP experiencing loss. With this in mind the overall aim and RQs for the second phase are:

Aim: To explore the use of EP training for psychological loss with a group of PRU secondary school staff.

RQ1: What are the views of PRU secondary school staff on the EP training programme delivered in their setting?

RQ2: How can the EP training develop PRU secondary school staff's understanding of psychological loss?

RQ3: How can the EP training programme increase PRU secondary school staff's confidence with supporting CYP experiencing psychological loss?

The next chapter will begin by exploring the methods used to address these stated aims and research questions.

Chapter 5: Phase Two

As outlined at the end of the previous chapter, this chapter will begin with a rationale accounting for the specific methods used within this phase of the research. Following this the remaining content of the chapter will follow the structure of its predecessor by giving more explanation of specific methods, reporting the results from this phase of the research and discussing the findings with consideration made to the research questions of this phase of the research.

5.1 Rationale

The choice of specific methods used for this phase of the research was underpinned by the findings from the first phase of the research in accordance with the emergent design of the project as a whole.

Rather than try to account for the effectiveness of EP training for school staff working with CYP across the school age range, it was decided that to choose a specific group of school staff to explore the psychological loss EP training with would be preferential. It was hoped that this would enable an in-depth exploration rather than a more thinly spread, arguably weaker, investigation with multiple groups of school staff. Moreover, discussion of the findings within this research allowed for ideas of development of EP training for psychological loss to other cohorts of staff, working with CYP of different ages and abilities. The design incorporated within the second phase of the current research was consistent with the *knowledge exchange* approach found within research methodology literature. This approach describes a process involving the interchange of knowledge between the research users and the research producers (Mitton, Adair, Mckenzie, Patten, & Perry, 2007). This approach has been used within medical professions (see Mitton et al., 2007 for a review) and more recently within social science research where a knowledge exchange approach has thought to be successful in enabling research findings to have a social impact, be relevant to a real-life project and provoke new learning and ideas (King, 2014).

It was decided that it would be most appropriate to adopt a case study methodology in order to explore the delivery of the EP training. Consideration of existing case study methods (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014) was made but Thomas' (2011) case study typology was chosen as a suitable

model due to its close alignment with the research design methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Sample

Case selection

As the second phase of the research adopted a case study methodology and was restricted by time, only one case (school setting) could be involved. The selection of school setting was therefore an important decision within the context of the research project as a whole. I therefore consider it important to outline the factors and influences that contributed to the decision making process and selection of school in more detail within this section. Once an account of this process is given, additional details about the participants involved from the chosen setting will then be given.

The first overall factor that influenced the selection of school setting for the second phase of research, was involvement in the first phase. From the outset of the research I wanted to be able to conduct the training within a school that was involved in the initial phase of the research. This made sense to me on a number of levels. Firstly, because I could use the relevant data collected from the first phase of the research in the training, meaning it would be better informed and more useful to the chosen setting. Secondly because I felt it would enable the research as a whole to be mutually beneficial, with one of the schools who gave up their considerable time and effort to participate in phase one of the research, having the opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills in return, during the second phase. Lastly, from a logistical viewpoint, selecting one of the schools already involved in the research avoided the need to recruit new schools to the project.

The second considerable factor influencing the decision was the existing level of experience the school staff had with supporting psychological loss. Out of the three settings involved within the initial phase of the research, one setting had already received considerable support with developing their support of CYP experiencing psychological loss. This had included support from the local authority EP service. In addition to it seeming more appropriate, equitable and ethical to offer support to one of the school settings who had not received such support with psychological loss, it was also thought that the support would be more beneficial and useful to one of the settings who were less experienced and skilled in loss support.

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This left two remaining settings as options for the second phase of the research. The final influence on making the choice between these settings came with the level of need for support of the two settings remaining. Whilst both settings had not received support from external agencies for psychological loss, a participant from one of the settings had received training within the area as part of a wider training programme ran by the EP service within their local authority. It was therefore decided, in the interest of equity, that the other setting (whose staff had not received any support with or for psychological loss) would be the one invited to participate within the second phase of the research. As it happened the chosen setting was situated in closer proximity to me and therefore enabled greater flexibility of timing and availability for the training sessions involved with this phase of the research.

Background of chosen case (school setting)

The chosen setting was a pupil referral unit (PRU) for secondary aged CYP in the UK. PRUs are school settings in which those students who have been excluded from mainstream educational settings have been placed. The Department for Education in the UK describes PRUs as:

"Pupil referral units (PRUs) teach children who aren't able to attend school and may not otherwise receive suitable education. This could be because they have a short- or long-term illness, have been excluded or are a new starter waiting for a mainstream school place." *(Department for Education, 2014).*

It is therefore common for CYP attending these kinds of setting to have complex educational needs. For this reason, class sizes within such settings are smaller than the usual size found within mainstream educational settings. The chosen PRU setting was situated in an inner-city area which has relatively high levels of social deprivation. The students who attend have a wide-range of special educational needs, with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties described as a key area of need within the setting as a whole. During discussion with the link participant at the school prior to phase two data collection, it became clear that psychological loss was a particularly relevant area for the setting, with several staff and students having recently experienced bereavements of close friends or family. Divorce and separation of parents of the students in the setting was also commonplace, with several students described as experiencing ongoing difficulty with their family/home-life situation.

Classes within the chosen setting typically contain 6-8 CYP and are supported by two members of staff, one teacher and one teaching assistant. CYP who attend the chosen setting are spread over multiple sites. The specific site on which the second phase of the research was conducted was the site for pupils within the KS3 age group (aged 11-14). All of the participants who took part in the study were therefore responsible for supporting CYP within this age range.

Participants

Once the offer of training had been accepted, participants from the setting were recruited for the training. This was organised in conjunction with my contact at the setting from the first phase of the research who also volunteered to participate in the training. All staff within the setting were offered the opportunity to be involved in the training. Including my contact participant at the setting, a total of nine participants were recruited to the second phase of the research (two males, seven females). Of the nine participants, four were teachers, four were teaching assistants and one (contact participant) was an assistant SENCO. Four of the nine participants had taken part in the first phase of the research. All nine participants attended each of the three sessions with the exception of one participant who did not attend the final session (due to illness). This participant did however provide an evaluation form which was received by email after the final training session.

5.2.2 Pilot

I was unable to pilot all of the elements of the training for the second phase of the research as a considerable amount of the content was generated by the participants and specific to the school setting in which it took place. However, I was able to pilot the elements of the procedure that involved delivering theoretical information about psychological loss, predominantly found in the first session.

As part of my current role as a trainee educational psychologist, I was afforded the opportunity to deliver an hour long session on psychological loss to a large group of ELSAs (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant), forming part of their training. This gave me the opportunity to pilot psychological training input that formed the basis of the first session of training in the current research (more information about each of the 3 sessions that formed the training will be given in the following section (5.2.3)).

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I delivered the training to a group of 31 ELSAs in December 2017 within another local authority in the UK. After completing the session, I gained general feedback through discussion and asked attendees to write down the section(s) of the training they felt was most useful. The general feedback from the discussion at the end of the session was overwhelmingly positive. The group reported that they found the session interesting, thought provoking and relevant to their practice. Sections of the training that were viewed as most useful by the group included; consideration of a wide range of psychological losses (beyond bereavement), exploration of the concept of ambiguous loss (Hall, 2014) and practical tools (Oliviere, Monroe, & Payne, 2011) to help support the CYP they work with overcome difficult feelings associated with psychological loss. Being able to take away practical tools and relevance of the training to the cohort of CYP they were working with, were consistent themes of the overall feedback received from the session.

This pilot was useful in the following ways. To begin with it was helpful in shaping the content of the first of the 3 sessions that formed the training for the data collection itself. Not only was I was able to structure the first session in a similar way to the pilot session, by practising delivering the content during the pilot, my confidence with the material and fluidity with its delivery, increased when I subsequently delivered the session during the first session of data collection. It is therefore likely that the initial session of the training ran more successfully than it would had I not completed the piloting activity.

By receiving feedback from the group that completed the pilot session, I was also able to gain an insight into the areas of psychological loss training that participants involved in the second phase of the current study were likely to find useful. Whilst the professionals involved in the pilot were not working within the same local authority or school setting as those involved with the second phase of the current research, they all had relevant experience of working in support of CYPs who had experienced psychological loss in schools. So the feedback they provided was therefore deemed relevant. Furthermore, as one of the goals of the second phase of the research was to provide EP training that was specifically relevant to the setting in which it was taking place, it would be challenging to effectively pilot training that could then be replicated during the data collection itself. It was encouraging however that the feedback gained from the pilot activity aligned well with the findings from the initial phase of the research, with those involved in the pilot emphasising their appreciation (also found within the

first phase of the research) for EP training that was relevant to their own practice and their own setting.

5.2.3 Procedure

The aim of the second phase of the research (resulting from the findings of data collection in the first phase of the research) was to provide participants with psychological loss training that; (i) was specific/relevant to their setting/cohort, (ii) had a balance of theoretical knowledge and practical application and (iii) afforded opportunity for problem solving and reflection facilitated by an EP. By describing the content of each of the 3 training sessions that were devised to form the second phase of the research within this section, it is hoped that an account for how they relate to the aims and research questions will be given.

Structure

The content of the 3 sessions was structured as follows. The first session involved giving participants contextual background of the research project as a whole, including an overview of the findings from the first phase of the research and how they influenced the aims of the second phase. Next the participants were asked to complete a group conceptual map (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) that represented their current understanding of psychological loss (and corresponding support) and set goals for how their understanding of the area could be developed within the scope of the 3 training sessions. The final part of the first session featured the presentation of a number of slides designed to inform participants of the theoretical and research background of psychological loss. This section mirrored the structure of the literature review chapter (2), featuring psychological models/trajectories of loss, responses to loss and related interventions for CYP. Each of these strands of the research were discussed against the context of school support, with specific suggestions made for how they relate to the cohort of CYP that the participants currently work with.

The second session aimed to build on the theoretical background of psychological loss that was communicated to the participants during the first session and apply it to practical support within the chosen school setting. In order to do this I gave participants the time and opportunity to engage in a joint problem solving discussion which I facilitated. During this discussion, participants were encouraged to apply aspects of the theory of psychological loss (presented during the first session) to practical applications in support of CYP they work with, with allowances made for the specific constraints at play within their setting. In order to

successfully facilitate this discussion, I drew on consultation/joint problem solving framework (Wagner, 2000), a common model of practice for EPs in the UK. The outcome of this discussion was an action plan with suggested pieces of work (aimed at supporting CYP within their setting with psychological loss) to be completed before the third and final session.

The final session began with a review of the suggested pieces of work on the action plan devised in the second session. Participants discussed the successes and challenges of putting the pieces of work into practice, as well as discussing ways in which the support of psychological loss could be further developed within the setting. The second part of the session involved revisiting the group conceptual map drawn in the first session, in order to evaluate the impact of the training as a whole. Each participant also completed an individual evaluation form in order to give their own views of the training. Further discussion of both of these evaluative items used within this phase of the research can be found in the subsequent section of (5.1.4) this chapter.

Timing

The first 2 sessions were delivered over consecutive weeks, with the final session being delivered after a period of 3 weeks to ensure participants had sufficient time to be able to put the action plan they devised within the second session, into place. This also enabled the action plan to be reviewed in the final session. Successes, challenges and avenues for further exploration were considered by the group during the session. All sessions took place after the end of the school day (3-4pm).

5.1.4 Tools

A range of tools were used within the second phase of the research. As with the first phase of the research, participants were given an information sheet (Appendix 8) explaining the purpose of the research and their role within it. The information sheet also contained contact information for both myself and my research supervisors to ensure an appropriate channel of communication for any comments or queries that resulted from the research. Once participants were happy to give their permission to participate in the research they each signed a consent form (Appendix 9).

In preparation for each session I devised a presentation of slides (Appendix 10) using Microsoft PowerPoint (v.15.27). A paper handout of each presentation was given to participants with an electronic copy sent via email to participants after the session had taken place.

In a continuation of the methodological device used within the first phase of the research, a group concept map (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) was used within this phase of the research in order to set goals and outcomes of the training and then subsequently evaluate these goals and assess the impact of the training. As nearly half of the group of participants had already drawn a concept map due to their involvement in the initial phase of the research, they were able to explain the purpose of the maps during the group process of constructing it.

A feedback form (Appendix 11) was also given to the participants on completion of the training. The feedback form contained seven items in total. The first two items were scales that asked participants to rate their knowledge of psychological loss (where 1 is 'none' and 10 is 'very good') and confidence of working with young people experiencing psychological loss (where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'very confident'). Participants rated both their knowledge and confidence on these scales, before and after the training, enabling a representation of the impact that the training specifically had on participants. The next item was a rating scale with a 1-4 scale (where 1 is 'poor' and 4 is 'excellent') which asked participants how they would rate the training in the following areas; explanation of topics, relevance to their work and helpfulness in developing their skills. The subsequent three items were open ended questions that gave participants the opportunity to provide qualitative comment on the elements of the training that were most/least useful and suggest how their practice may change as a result of the training. The final item gave participants an opportunity to provide any necessary further comments or feedback.

5.2.5 Analysis

In order to analyse the effectiveness of the training sessions, two methods of analysis were used. In a continuation of the methodological device used in the initial stage of the research, the first method of analysis used was a group concept map (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) that was collectively drawn by participants during the first session of the training. This map was then revisited within the final session of the training in order for the group to assess the progress they had made during the training and also the effectiveness of the training in developing their knowledge of psychological loss and confidence in supporting CYP

experiencing psychological loss within their setting. To supplement the information gained from the concept map, the second form of analysis came from the feedback forms completed by each participant involved in the training. Data from these forms was analysed in order to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of the training in relation to the research questions and overall aims of the second phase of the research.

In addition to both the concept maps and feedback forms, feedback was also sought from the link participant at the school. Written feedback on the process was sent to me via email after the training was completed. Information gained included the successes and challenges of the training, elements that were most and least useful, the relevance it has for CYP within the setting and suggestions for ways in which it could be improved in the future.

As part of the methodology adopted within this phase of the research (Thomas, 2011), field notes were taken throughout the data collection process. These field notes also contributed to the overall analysis of findings from this phase of the research. As explained in Chapter 3 (3.4.2), field notes formed part of the validity procedures (Creswell & Miller, 2000) of the research as a whole that considered the perspective of participants and those external to the research as well as myself as a researcher.

5.2.6 Ethics

As the second phase of the research was so similar in nature to the first phase, very similar ethical considerations were made. Participants were given an information sheet (Appendix 8), within which information about the ethical precautions taken before the research was shared in order to minimise the potential discomfort participants may have experienced during the research. The information also contained signposting to relevant support services should participants feel they needed them. Participants were also informed in the information sheet of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. These reassurances were also repeated to the participants at the beginning and end of each session comprising the training.

Assurances for participants around data protection and confidentiality were also made, will all those participating informed that the data they provided within the research would be kept anonymous and safely stored/protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

5.3 Results

The following section will detail the results from the second phase of the research by incorporating findings from the group concept map, evaluation forms completed by participants, the feedback email from the link participant and field notes taken by myself during data collection and analysis. It will begin be giving an overview of the three sessions that comprised the training before the key successes of the training are presented. Outcomes of the evaluative measures used (concept map and feedback forms) are then discussed in more detail before the section is closed with an exploration of the challenges faced during this phase of the research.

5.3.1 Overview of training

Session 1

After an introduction contextualising the research, the first training session began by providing participants with a theoretical background of psychological loss, with practical applications of the theory suggested for the CYP that participants worked with. Once the theoretical information had been delivered, participants were asked to agree upon which aspects of the research they felt were most relevant to their cohort. These would then be problem solved and formulated into an action plan during session two. It was decided that this would be finalised at a team meeting later in the week and then emailed to me so that I could prepare appropriate and relevant resources for session two.

The second main element of the session involved participants constructing a group conceptual map of their knowledge and understanding of psychological loss, including the ways in which they would like to develop their understanding during the training. The map (seen below in Fig 8) became helpful for participants' contributions of the action plan for session two and was also used in the final session by way of evaluating the training as a whole.

Verbal feedback received during and after the session was positive. Participants particularly commented on the pace of the session which they felt was appropriate. The application of the theory of psychological loss to CYP in their cohort was also well received.
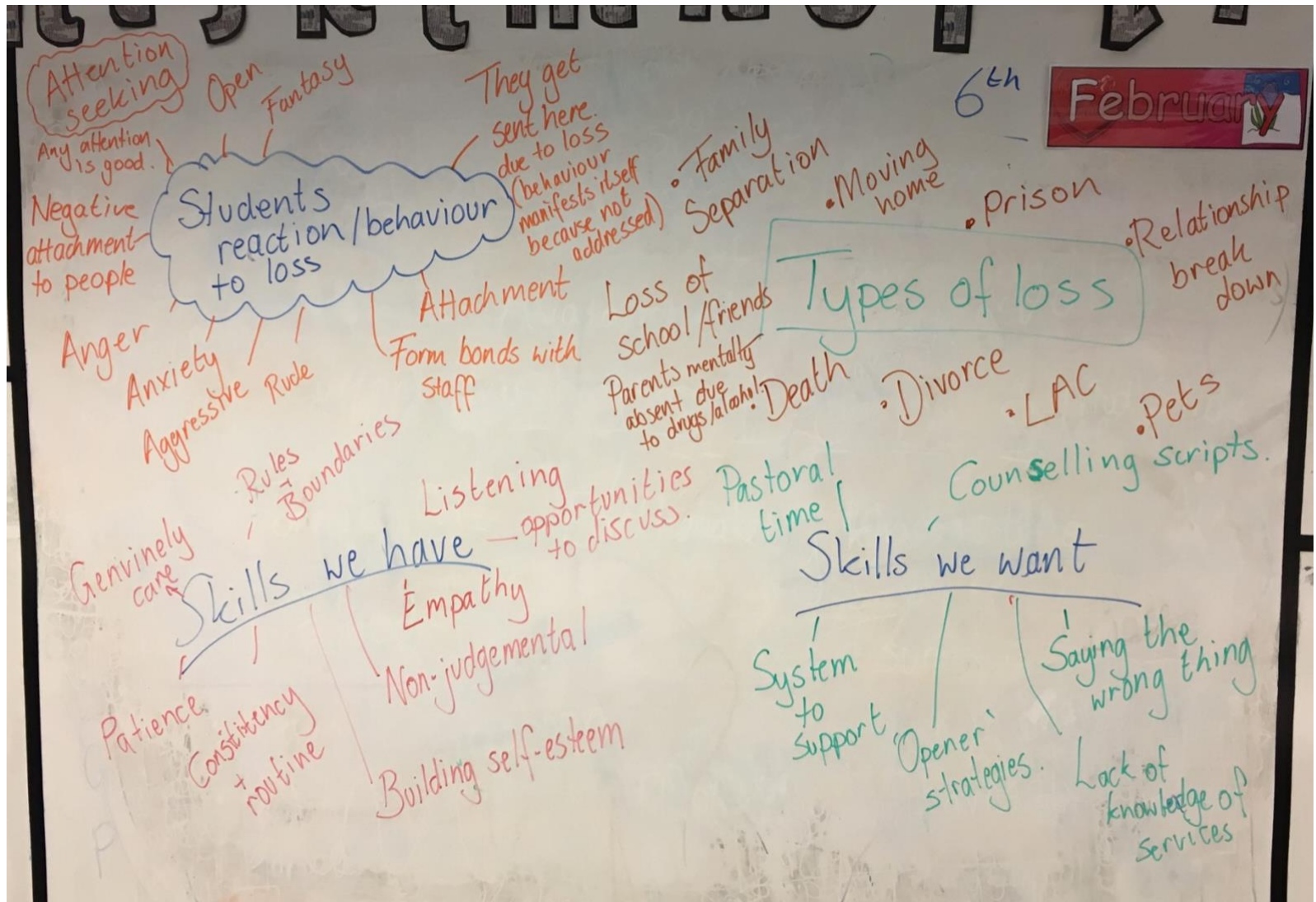
Fig 8: Group concept map drawn by participants in the second phase of the research.

Session 2

The second session took place exactly a week later. In the intervening period I had been informed of the areas in which staff were interested in exploring loss support within their setting. The first of which concerned appropriate language to use with CYP experiencing loss and linked to this, strategies to 'open up' conversations with those CYP experiencing loss. The second area involved building resilience in CYP so they were better prepared for psychological loss. Knowing this before the session had enabled me to prepare and bring along relevant resources (Winston's Wish, 2017) for participants to read and discuss as part of the session.

The session therefore began (after a recap of the previous session) with participants reading the relevant resources and taking part in a problem solving discussion aimed at producing an action plan containing targets for pieces of work (to be completed before the final session) designed to improve the support of psychological loss for CYP in their setting. After a successful discussion the following action plan was devised:

1. *Develop scripts for staff to use during difficult conversations about loss with students.*
2. *Plan and deliver a loss themed assembly for students.*
3. *Trial timetabled sessions covering loss (that give students a chance to talk through issues) as part of regular timetable.*

The resources (Winston's Wish, 2017) that I brought to the session were left with participants to aid the planning and delivery of the action plan. Several participants expressed their gratitude for the resources which they felt were relevant and useful.

Session 3

After 3 weeks had elapsed (to give participants enough time to address the action plan) the final session took place and began with a recap of the second session, covering the action plan that had been devised. Participants were then given the opportunity to feedback the successes and challenges of putting the action plan into place during a reflective group discussion.

Scripts had been developed by the staff and this process had been aided by the resources (Winston's Wish, 2017) they received in the second session. Whilst participants felt that these scripts would be very useful in their future support of CYP experiencing loss, they had not had

appropriate opportunities to be able to use them with CYP in the time since the last session. Participants had however, had rather more success in the planning and delivery of their assembly. All participants had played a part in either the planning or delivery of the session which had led to positive outcomes for the setting. These are discussed in more detail in the following section (5.3.2).

Lastly the participants discussed the trial sessions they had piloted. Participants had found the appropriate time within the timetable to carry out the sessions, however the feedback from the sessions from participants was that they felt forced and unnatural and therefore not very productive. Participants had instead felt that informal opportunities were more favourable for this kind of support and found they were able to offer CYP this support in their dedicated pastoral time.

The session continued with a reflective discussion that revisited the concept map (Fig 8) drawn by participants in the first session. Utilisation of a reflective group conversation again proved useful in gaining feedback from the group successfully. Before the session ended participants were asked to fill out feedback forms (Appendix 11) for the training. All of the feedback gained from participants is discussed in detail in section 5.3.3 of this chapter.

5.3.2 Key successes

The training as a whole enabled key successes for the participants and these were closely related to the findings from the first phase of the research. The training:

- was specifically relevant to both the setting and the CYP with whom the participants work,
- was able to provide reassurance to participants and increase their confidence to work with CYP experiencing loss,
- led to positive outcomes for the CYP in the setting,
- provoked discussion between senior leaders in the school with regard to support for psychological loss.

The training was successful in providing psychological loss support for staff that was specific and relevant to their setting and the CYP with whom they work. The training allowed for this specificity and relevance in numerous ways. The structure of the sessions, with time given in-between them, allowed space for both myself and the participants to reflect on the training

process. Having appropriate time and space between sessions enabled participants to consider the elements of loss support that were most beneficial to develop and myself the opportunity to provide content and resources that were the most relevant for participants. Furthermore the time allocated to group problem solving (session two) and reflection (session three) afforded participants the opportunity to consider how the training could be most relevant for them and the CYP they work with. The overall sense of the training as a whole was therefore one of ongoing dialogue between myself and participants (as opposed to the traditional teacher/student relationship I have commonly felt when delivering training in the past) and this was suggested to be successful for both parties. For example, through these discussions, allowances were able to be made for the constraints of the setting which enabled participants to consider how their support for loss could be practically achievable within their day-to-day practice.

Another key finding from the first phase of the research was the need that participants felt to be reassured that they were doing the right things when supporting CYP with loss. Again the training was suggested to be successful in providing the participants involved with this reassurance, resulting in increased reported confidence (Table 2) supporting CYP with loss in their setting. Important to this success was the celebration of existing practices already utilised by participants in their support of psychological loss. In addition to this, the central theme of language within the training (which was led by the participants) enabled participants to develop scripts/conversation starters for difficult conversations about psychological loss. Both were reported to be successful (Table 2) in reassuring participants faced with difficult conversations involving psychological loss with CYP.

The training programme was also thought to lead to positive outcomes for the CYP at the school setting. The loss-themed assembly that was delivered to CYP was well received. It resulted in immediate discussion between CYP (in the assembly) and also a continuation of such conversation into subsequent lessons and social time since the assembly. Participants described this having a positive effect, with CYP feeling more open about loss and supportive of those CYP currently experiencing bereavement within the setting. Participants reported in the third session that plans for more loss-themed assemblies were already in place, providing the possibility for positive effects to continue into the long term within the setting.

The assembly that was planned and delivered by the participants during the time that the training was taking place also provoked discussion between senior leaders within the setting, about the support of psychological loss. When plans were made for the assembly, approval was required from senior leaders in order for the assembly to take place. Whilst it was agreed that the assembly could take place, the link participant in the research (who was responsible for taking it to senior leaders for approval) reported that they were sceptical about what the assembly would achieve within the setting. The success of the assembly was therefore a surprise to senior leaders and led to reconsideration about effective ways to support CYP in their setting.

5.3.3 Evaluative measures

Participants were able to give their feedback on the training in three ways, via contributing to and evaluating a *group* concept map (Fig 9), via an email from the link participant and by completing *individual* feedback forms. Findings from these measures are now presented.

Concept map (group)

As described in a previous section of this chapter (5.3.1) participants were given the opportunity to evaluate the training by revisiting a group concept map they had drawn during the initial session of the training and participating in a group reflective discussion. The concept map was used as a methodological device to enable participants to reflect on and evaluate the outcomes for the training they had set for themselves. During the discussion I annotated a print out of the original concept map in order to record the discussion that took place between participants with the annotations arising from the evaluative conversation that took place during the final session. Fig 9 shows a picture of the annotated map with the annotations made in green around the edge of the map. In order to gain evaluative views from participants we discussed each area of the original concept map and talked through how the group felt things had changed in the intervening time between sessions one and three. A specific focus of this conversation was the 'skills we want' section (bottom right hand side of Fig 9) as this was an area where the most change had taken place (i.e. in building their skills, knowledge and resources of psychological loss). Before adding each annotation, I checked in with the group that what I was writing was an accurate reflection of our discussion and all the annotations were reiterated to the group at the end of the discussion to add further reliability of their authenticity.

Key points from the discussion were:

- The training enabled participants to realise they had skills in an area (psychological loss support) they did not know they had. The training helped participants to reflect on the skills they already possess and regularly use with the CYP in their cohort (Fig 9 bottom left section) and conclude that these skills were relevant to psychological loss support and thus reducing the need to learn extra relevant skills.

- Staff felt that they knew the right things to say during difficult conversations with CYP about psychological loss (Fig 9 bottom right section). As the training afforded participants (i) opportunities to develop scripts for difficult conversations and (ii) resources that suggest helpful language whilst supporting CYP's psychological loss, participants felt more comfortable having difficult conversations with CYP.

- The resources provided in the training extended participants' knowledge of services to support CYP with psychological loss (Fig 9 bottom right section).

- The training was suggested to lead to an increased awareness of psychological loss within the setting which had the effect of normalising it for both staff and CYP (Fig 9 top right section). Participants felt that because the training enabled them to discuss psychological loss with their cohort of CYP, in turn the CYP were more likely to openly discuss it with them and with each other in school. Participants described this as having a positive and reassuring effect.

- Staff felt they still needed more knowledge of psychological loss (Fig 9 bottom right section). For example, further theoretical information on the stages of grief.
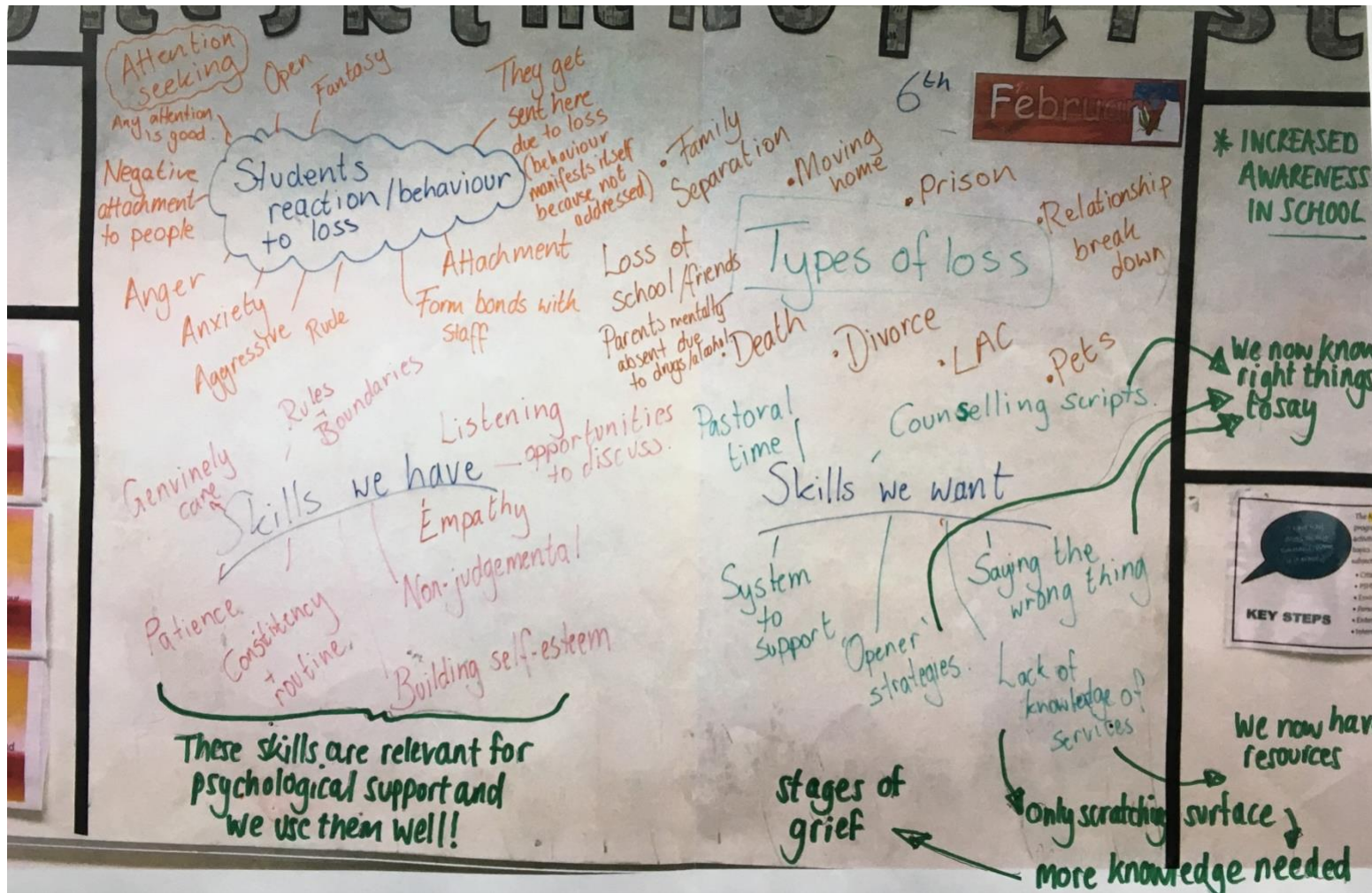
Fig 9: Annotated concept map recording the participants' reflective discussion of the training in the second phase of the research.

A few weeks after the training was completed I sent an email to the link participant in the setting asking for some additional feedback on behalf of the group. The purpose of this was gain feedback from participants once they had had some time to reflect on the training. The email contained positive feedback about the training as well as suggestions to develop similar training in the future, which will now be briefly discussed with a copy of the email in full, found in Appendix 12.

The feedback from the email described the training as a whole, as specifically relevant to the setting. The training was also described as an 'amazing trigger' that has empowered staff to realise their skills individually and then collectively brought together as a team in support of the CYP in the setting. Finally the training was suggested to have provided a solid foundation for further work in support of psychological loss within the setting. With further assemblies (similar to the one ran during the training) planned.

The email also contained suggestions for how the training could be further developed in the future. It was suggested that the training could be extended to include more theoretical information of how psychological loss can affect the development of CYP. It was also thought that more time could have been given to participants between session two and three in order for them to put into place the action plan that was devised. It was felt that in particular more time was needed in order to achieve the third item of the action plan (section 5.3.1). Considerably more time would have been needed in order to weave timetabled sessions covering loss into the regular timetable within the setting. The final suggestion was for the training to include scenarios enabling participants to practice their scripts for difficult conversations about loss with CYP.

Feedback forms (individual)

Feedback forms (Appendix 11) completed by each participant enabled them to give their own individual and confidential feedback on the training. Participants were asked to rate the training (on a scale of 1-10 where 1 = none and 10 = very good) for effectiveness in increasing their knowledge of psychological loss and confidence in supporting young people experiencing psychological loss in their setting, giving their ratings for before the training and after it. Tables showing the numerical gain scores of participants from phase two can be found in (Appendix 13). Importantly, whilst there was expected variance in where participants' rated their

knowledge of and confidence with supporting psychological loss *before* the training, all participants showed an increase of knowledge and confidence in their rating *after* the training. All participants reported a gain in their confidence and knowledge rating score (from before the training compared to after the training) indicating that the training had a positive effect on all of the participants that took part. In this way the training was thought to be indicative of a small amount of positive change within the setting.

Participants also rated the quality of the training offered in the following areas: explanation of the topics, the relevance to their work and how helpful the training was in developing their skills in relation to psychological loss. On a scale of 1-4 (with 1 = poor and 4 = excellent) all participants rated the training as 3 or 4 in all of these aspects.

The form also allowed for qualitative comments to made by participants. Collated responses to these items are shown in Table 2 below. This qualitative data was collected to provide a further insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the training approach adopted within this phase. If further research adopted this approach were to be conducted (especially within a similar setting), these evaluative comments may help provide some development to the training approach to increase the effectiveness of it. The qualitative comments were also helpful in shaping the evaluative discussion of this phase of the research, that follows in a subsequent section (5.4.5) of this chapter.

QUESTION	RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS
What did you find most useful?	• Starting conversations about loss with students (x2) • More confidence in what I am saying about loss • Highlighting loss and encouraging us as a team to address it to ensure it isn't overlooked. • Scripts for difficult conversations (x4) • The assembly – something practical!
What did you find least useful?	• Nothing – all relevant (x3)
What will you do differently after the course?	• Use scripts/openers • Encourage SLT to allow more assemblies • Openly address loss, try to make it less taboo • Speak to students in a more direct way about loss • Feel reassured I am not doing damage/saying wrong thing • Approach loss in different ways – letting students know with assemblies • Arrange more time for students to talk (x2)
Comments:	• More information given on the stages of grief would have been useful • Sessions had a really positive effect in school – talking, sharing, organising • Thanks for providing resources.

Table 2: Collated feedback from participants' feedback forms in phase two.

To conclude this section of the chapter, challenges experienced within this phase of the current research will next be discussed.

5.3.4 Challenges

Several challenges were faced and documented in field notes during this phase of the research which led to complications for both data collection and analysis. These were centred around the use of the group concept map, the time boundaries associated with the training and the nature of the setting chosen as the case.

As already alluded to in the previous section of this chapter (5.3.3), the use of a group concept map during this phase of this research proved problematic. When it was introduced to the group during the first session I noticed confusion amongst participants, sensing they were not completely clear as to its purpose within the training. This confusion may have been translated into the final session when it came to evaluating the concept map in order to evaluate how effective the training had been. This discussion of the concept map felt stilted and slightly forced. Despite this (and whether or not participants fully understood the purpose of the concept map) I am confident that it was an effective methodological device in eliciting participants' views of the training, leading to a fuller analysis including more genuine reflections of the training than if just the feedback forms had been used.

Further consideration of the use of concept map within this phase of the research can be found in a subsequent section of this chapter (5.4.4) focused on methodological considerations.

A further challenge that was faced during this phase of the research concerned the nature of the setting chosen. School staff from the chosen setting work with students who have complex social and emotional needs. This meant that their working days preceding the training sessions had the potential to be frantic and chaotic with some school staff frequently reported to be involved with significant and emotional incidents. Whilst every effort was taken to both acknowledge this and allow for it during the sessions, the emotional load experienced by staff is likely to have had a negative impact for some of the participants in some of the sessions. The challenging nature of the setting also caused delays to the start time of one of the sessions and meant that participants had to come in and out of another session.

The final challenge faced concerned the time available to deliver the training. The initial two sessions ran according to the planned timings. However, the experience of the final session was that there was not enough time to complete all that was planned. This led to an experience (recorded in my field notes and in observations of participants) of the final session feeling rushed. Had more time been available it may have been prudent to extend the training by one session to allow for more time to be spent on the content of the final session. This may have also allowed for more time to be allocated to covering the theoretical background of psychological loss that was suggested as an improvement to the training by one participant (Table 2).

5.4 Discussion

The final section of this chapter will provide a discussion of the findings from the second phase of the research. The structure will mirror that of the discussion in the previous chapter (4) and report key findings and discussions for each RQ. Methodological considerations of this phase of the research will then be made, before future directions from this research are suggested.

5.4.1 What are the views of secondary school staff on the EP training programme delivered in their setting? (RQ4)

Key findings:

- *Participants felt that the training produced positive effects within their setting and it is possible these could continue into the long term.*
- *The training was described by participants as specifically relevant to their setting and the CYP they work with.*
- *Participants felt that the training gave them reassurance about the things they say to CYP during difficult conversations about psychological loss.*

The feedback from the multiple evaluative measures used within this phase of the research yielded positive responses from participants (Table 2, Fig 9). In particular participants felt that the training was relevant to their setting and gave them reassurance when approaching difficult conversations with CYP about psychological loss. These findings would suggest that the adoption of the approach to training found in this phase of the research by EPs, may help to produce positive effects for school staff. Providing training that is specifically relevant to the setting in which it is taking place and an approach that helps to reassure participants, could be considered particularly important components when adopting this approach. These findings

link to those found in the initial phase of the research, where both relevance to setting and reassurance for staff were elements of training suggested to be useful within external support for loss.

I would argue that the consultative (Wagner, 2000), problem solving and reflective approaches adopted within the training facilitated the reassurance and relevance experienced by the participants. By providing participants with discursive spaces to consider the background theory of loss, formulate an action plan and then reflect on it, the training allowed participants to take an active role in the training and make it relevant and useful for themselves. This complements similar previous research suggesting that setting-specific support allowing for individual differences can yield more effective psycho-social support rather than a more discrete debrief in the wake of a sad event (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012). The findings from this phase of the research also provide an example of EPs using their psychological knowledge and skills in collaboration to help the support of psychological loss. This approach could also be considered useful for EPs when approaching training in other areas for school staff (Posada, 2006).

5.4.2 How can the EP training develop secondary school staff's understanding of psychological loss? (RQ5)

Key findings:

- *Participants reported an increase in their knowledge of psychological loss as a result of the training.*
- *The training was thought to allow participants to raise the profile of psychological loss within their setting.*
- *Knowledge of support services and resources for psychological loss was increased for participants as a result of the training.*
- *Participants felt that their knowledge of psychological loss could have formed a larger part of the training.*

The school staff involved in the training reported an increase in their understanding of psychological loss. Of particular relevance to participants within the training was the knowledge of relevant support services and resources for psychological loss. It may therefore be important for EPs to consider knowledge of local services and appropriate resources as important parts of further loss training. If we consider the finding from the first phase of the

research that highlighted the importance of the local community in the support of loss for CYP, it could be argued that the extension of participants' knowledge of local support services within the training may help to provide longer term changes to the support of CYP within the setting in addition to their own development in understanding of psychological loss.

Another key finding within this phase of the research was the effect that the training had on staff and CYP across the school. The assembly that participants delivered to CYP as part of the action plan devised in the training, led to increased awareness of loss within the setting and enabled conversations about loss to take place between CYP. Participants felt this was beneficial for the setting and hoped that by normalising loss, they would go some way to building CYPs resilience and capacity to deal with sad events. The successes achieved by the training within the setting therefore suggest an example of how preventative EP support may be used as a cost-effective option of EP support for school settings, that increases their capacity to support CYP in social/moral development preventatively, in areas such as their resilience to psychological loss. The resilience framework outlined by Hart & Blincow (2007) could help to structure this kind of support further. Firstly it could be used to identify which compartments of resilience (basics, belonging, learning, coping or core-self) in young people that might require further development. Secondly by considering the *noble truths* outlined by Hart & Blincow (2007), strategies for developing the identified compartments of resilience in young people may also be identified. The support of such resilience development could be argued to help maintain strong resilient responses to psychological loss (Bonanno et al., 2002) and help to develop positive responses to loss that may allow for opportunities for personal growth (Hall, 2014).

It was however reported by participants that more attention could have been given within the training to the theoretical background of psychological loss (Table 2). One particular suggestion made was for the inclusion of the stages of grief. Given that as a result of the training participants felt more confident in initiating conversations with CYP about psychological loss in their setting (Table 2), it may be the case that conversations about loss between staff and CYP in the setting are more likely. Therefore having a more in-depth theoretical background knowledge of psychological loss may well be beneficial for school staff during such conversations, particularly those involving the bereavement of a close family member or friend.

5.4.3 How can the EP training programme increase secondary school staff's confidence with supporting CYP experiencing psychological loss? (RQ6)

Key findings:

- *Participants reported an increase in their confidence of working with CYP experiencing psychological loss in their setting.*
- *Participants felt that developing scripts for difficult conversations was particularly important in raising their confidence in supporting CYP with psychological loss.*
- *The training enabled participants to recognise and celebrate aspects of their already established practice that help to support CYP with psychological loss in their setting.*

The increase in confidence reported by participants in this phase of the research was attributed in part to the development of their thinking in relation to the language they use with CYP which forms part of their support for loss. As part of the training, school staff were able to develop scripts to enable difficult conversation with CYP about loss. This led participants to feel more confident in talking to CYP about loss (Table 2). This finding (highlighting the importance of language within the support of psychological loss for CYP) adds further credence to results from the first phase of the research in which participants put forward language as a key factor in the support system of loss across school settings. EPs should therefore consider language as an important part of training for psychological loss, with the development of scripts for difficult conversation put forward as a possible successful tool to increase the confidence of school staff supporting CYP with loss.

The success of the training in raising confidence levels of participants in their support of psychological loss might also be attributed to the celebration of already established practices within the setting, that was a recurring theme running through the training sessions. It could be argued that recognising and celebrating the successful everyday practice within the setting, participants' confidence with supporting CYP with psychological loss was increased (Table 2). Ensuring that recognition of already successful practices of school staff could therefore be a consideration for EPs conducting training in psychological loss. This may be of particular relevance within settings where staff support CYP with challenging and complex learning needs such as the one chosen within the second phase of the current research.

5.4.4 Methodological considerations

Considerations regarding the methods utilised in this phase will now be made. They will include discussion of methodological tools used within this phase of the research, exploring the self-report measures and concept maps utilised.

Mirroring the first phase of the research, a concept map was used in order to evaluate the training delivered within this phase of the research. The use of a concept map in this phase was challenging, with participants finding difficulty in understanding its purpose. I as the researcher, at least in part, take responsibility for this. I felt as if I was not able to give participants a successful enough explanation of concept maps to enable them to be used in exactly the way that was intended within this phase of the research. In addition to a more robust explanation of their use, another suggestion to improve the use of concept maps within this phase of the research may have been to instruct participants to construct their own maps so as to allow for individual understandings and evaluations of the training to be made.

Additional measures used by way of evaluation in this phase of the research were reliant on participants' self-report. It is therefore likely that biases (such as expectancy bias) may have affected the findings of the results. Whilst attempts were made within this phase of the research to triangulate data using field notes and observations, it could be suggested that the results may be more reliable had they been triangulated with a third party, who took no active part in the research. A further way in which to increase the reliability of the findings may have been for participants to record their confidence and knowledge ratings before the training began and then revisit them when the training ended to complete their second rating. Adopting this strategy may have yielded more genuine evaluative ratings from participants.

5.4.5 Future directions

To close this chapter I will discuss potential future research directions based on the findings from the current phase of the research. Possibilities of similar research with greater allowances for time and scope will be explored alongside considerations of the recommendations for further work made by the participants involved in this phase of the research.

As part of the evaluative measures of the training used during data collection, several suggestions were made by participants as to how the psychological loss training could have

been extended/improved. Most of the suggestions would be reasonable for a project that was afforded more time and resources (i.e. research staffing). With added time and resources, the training programme could have been extended to include additional sessions. This may have increased the possibility for additional positive outcomes to be achieved by the training for both the participants and CYP within the setting. I would argue that the training could be run over the course of a term in school (6-8 weeks) to allow participants appropriate time to construct an appropriate action plan and have ample time to carry it out and evaluate it. Allowing more time for the training may also help to address the feedback from some participants that more knowledge (such as stages of grief) of psychological loss could have been given to participants during training.

A further suggestion to improve the training that may again be possible with additional time and resources available, was made in the feedback email from the link participant a few weeks after the training was completed. It was suggested that to increase the practical nature of the training, vignettes or scenarios may have been used in which the scripts developed by the participants could have been practised/trialled. I endorse this suggestion because increasing the practical element of training was highlighted in the first phase of the research as a beneficial element of loss training. If the vignettes chosen were based on CYP from their setting the addition of this component to the training could also increase the relevance of the training for participants.

I believe these suggestions for future avenues of development for the training would be worthwhile considering the successful outcomes reported in the current research, despite the small scale and limited time/resources available within it. Particularly given the suggested cost-effectiveness and potential preventative benefits suggested earlier in this chapter (5.4.2). In order to further investigate the usefulness of the training approach adopted in this phase of the research, further research would be required to assess its impact in other school settings. As only one specific setting was used in the second phase of the current research, the findings suggested within this chapter could only be considered transferable to other similar settings (secondary PRUs).

Now that the findings from both phases of the current research have been outlined, overall critical discussions of the results (building on those already briefly reported) will be explored in chapters 6 and 7, with reference to the extant literature discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 6: Overall Discussion

This chapter will outline key findings from both phases of the research and discuss them within the context of the extant literature.

6.1 Professional support for psychological loss

In this section, findings related to RQ1 and RQ2 will be discussed and concern the support of psychological loss by the school staff in the current research. The main findings were that participants viewed psychological loss in varied ways although there was general agreement as to the components of a successful support system for psychological loss.

The participants (school staff from across the school age range) within the current study understood and conceptualised psychological loss in many different ways. The agreement that was found in the data came from the shared view that psychological loss is a multi-faceted concept, broad in scope, with the ability to affect the CYP they work with in many different ways. This is reflective of the research literature as a whole, where there are many suggested differences in the way that individuals experience (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Currier, 2009; Rubin, 1999; Stroebe & Schut, 1999), respond to (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno et al., 2002; Hall, 2014) and need to be supported with (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Boss & Yeats, 2014; Corr & Corr, 2012; Hall, 2014; Vaterlaus, 2014; Worden, 2009) psychological loss. As the current research suggests that psychological loss can be understood by individuals in broad and varied ways, perhaps it could be argued that the findings are mostly supportive of previous research that advocates an individualised approach to theoretical conceptualisations (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Currier, 2009) and support (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Worden, 2009) for psychological loss. The meaning making approach to conceptualising psychological loss (Neimeyer, 2000; Neimeyer & Burke, 2015) seems particularly useful to the application of school support for loss if we consider that both the school staff and the CYP they are supporting are likely to conceptualise loss is different ways. By discussing and making open the individual meaning ascribed to a particular loss, successful support for CYP experiencing multiple, varied and often complex types of psychological loss found in school settings, could be achieved. In this way the close social networks, suggested to be important in uncovering the meaning in psychological loss (O'Connor, 2002), can be provided for CYP by school staff within their school setting.

The findings from the current research suggesting that psychological loss is a concept considered in much broader terms than bereavement alone is important. A considerable portion of the extant literature centres on bereavement rather than other forms of psychological loss (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Holland et al., 2009; Morrison, 2007; Neimeyer, 2000; Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999; Wei et al., 2010). In support of previous research (Dowling & Gorell-Barnes, 1999; Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017; Long & Fogell, 1999) the current research particularly highlighted the difficulties associated with parental divorce or separation as especially prudent for CYP within the three school settings involved within the research. This could make previous research (Boss & Yeats, 2014) on the concept of ambiguous loss (consistent in the experience of parental divorce or separation) relevant when considering the support of CYP within the school age range.

The broad conceptualisation of psychological loss by school staff could be considered problematic from an organisational viewpoint. If school staff whom all share differing views of loss are supporting a range of CYP who also all share a different view of loss, it could be argued that an effective, coherent support psychological loss support system could be hard to achieve. Given the significant, detrimental effects of psychological loss for CYP (Paul & Freeland, 2012) in schools, the consequences of an incoherent support system for loss could be significant. The need to ensure an effective system of support for CYP experiencing loss could be regarded even more important if we further consider the current political climate in education, where professionals are becoming increasingly accountable (Keddie & Lingard, 2015) and changing the way they view their roles in schools (West & Bailey, 2013). If school staff are being increasingly asked to focus their time with CYP on academic progress and attainment, there is a danger that this may come at the cost of supporting them with social and moral development, such as understanding and supporting them through psychological loss.

Given the variance in conceptualisations of loss shown by school staff in the current research, the findings suggestive of an agreed system of support for CYP across the school settings involved in the current research could be argued to be surprising. This finding is interesting given the lack of previous research (to my knowledge) that explores the differences of age and development in the support of CYP across the school age range. The findings from the small range of settings involved in the current research suggest that the way the generally agreed effective school support system for psychological loss can be delivered to CYP across the

school age range is through adaptations in the approach of school staff. Confirming similar previous research (Bugge et al., 2014) those staff working with EY CYP found that a resilient reaction to psychological loss (Bonanno et al., 2002) can be common in CYP of this age. The current research also suggested that the use of an open and honest approach and sharing personal experience can help when working with teenage CYP who may become reluctant to communicate or shut down when experiencing a significant loss. Whilst the current research has shed light on the differences in the way that CYP of different ages experience loss and therefore require support with it, as there is seemingly a paucity of research (to my knowledge) exploring these differences, further research of this manner would be beneficial.

Of central importance to the generally agreed system of support for CYP of all ages experiencing loss within the settings involved in the current research was well-developed and trusting relationships with school staff. The importance of these relationships within the overall support system for loss was considered pivotal, irrespective of the age of CYP that participants were working with. This finding adds further support to previous research in the field that highlighted the significance of psychological loss support provided by familiar adults (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012). The growing recognition of the role that trusted and familiar adults can play in supporting CYP experiencing loss, opens up discussion about how external professionals (without established and trusting relationships with CYP) such as EPs, can most effectively support school staff with loss. These discussions will begin in the following section of the chapter (6.2).

6.2 Professional support for school staff

In addition to the exploration of psychological loss support across age ranges, the current research also sought to balance the lack of research within the field that specifically explored the views of school staff towards offering loss support to CYP. Unlike considerable previous research focusing on CYP directly (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Bonanno et al., 2002; Hall, 2014; Holland et al., 2009; Morrison, 2007; Neimeyer, 2000; Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999; Wei et al., 2010), the current research sought the views of a range of school staff about their support for psychological loss in schools, including their views on the contributions that external professionals (such as EPs) can make to such support. This section addresses those findings and is therefore concerned with RQ3.

The first key finding in this area came from participants reporting concerns as to whether professional support for psychological loss would be prioritised within school systems suffering

continued funding cuts. These contextual circumstances were revealed to be of considerable importance to the support offered by school staff in the current research. Participants in all three settings involved in the current research described recent funding cuts to education as having a potential impact for their support of psychological loss. There were shared concerns that both the funding cuts and increased focus on academic achievement, support for psychological loss may be diminished and thus mean there are fewer opportunities for external professional support in this area. Given the reduced opportunities that professionals such as EPs may therefore have in supporting psychological loss in school settings, I argue that the focus of such work could therefore be on preventative work in schools with the aim of building the capacity of CYP to be able to cope with the experience of psychological loss. This kind of work would align with previous research in the field, advocating psycho-social support, that is able to account for the specific individual differences within a setting such as a school (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012). Psychoeducational support may also be a useful approach for EPs to utilise in this area. Success was found within the current research when participants openly discussed and normalised conversations about psychological loss with CYP, providing appropriate signposting to local support services. Offering this kind of support would therefore signal a move away from professional support previously offered by external professionals that was associated with critical incidents, as part of the debriefing process, usually taking the form of discrete pieces of work (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Posada, 2006; Wei et al., 2010). Taking this a step further, by considering the previous discussion of adults with containing and attuned relationships with CYP being best placed to provide loss support (section 6.1), I further argue that the support offered by external professionals (such as EPs) could be focused on working alongside those trusted and familiar adults in school settings.

Another key finding from the current research was participants suggesting that external professionals could help them to feel more assured they are doing the right thing when supporting CYP experiencing psychological loss. This may be perhaps linked to the recent increases in accountability for (and scrutiny of) professionals in schools (Keddie & Lingard, 2015). As staff are being expected to do more in their roles in schools and at the same time are under increased scrutiny, it is easy to see how they may feel unsure about the way they are supporting CYP with such a potentially sensitive and personal issue such as psychological loss. In order to provide them with reassurance a balance of theoretical and practical knowledge for school staff was also suggested by participants to be favourable in the approach of the support offered to them. Within the approach adopted in the second phase of the current research

success was found in contextualising theoretical information about loss and the support of loss (Bonanno et al., 2002; Boss & Yeats, 2014; Hall, 2014; Neimeyer, 2000; Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999), within the setting using practical suggestions. Not only did this contribute to the balancing of theoretical and practical aspects of the support offered to participants, it also added to sense of the training being specifically relevant to their setting and CYP they work with. This will be discussed in more depth in section 6.3.

Previous research (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Morrison, 2007; Wagner, 2000) has argued that EPs are well placed to offer a balance of theoretical and practical support due to their psychological knowledge and experience with collaborative, multi-agency working. I further argue that additional psychological skills used by EPs (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012) can also contribute to providing support to school staff with a supervisory element, this was also a suggestion of participants in the current research. Incorporating such an approach would allow school staff the appropriate space to process and discuss the sometime quite challenging work associated with supporting CYP in this area. To my knowledge there is no previous research assessing the use of such an approach with school staff in this area, further work (such as that found in the second phase of the current research) would therefore be recommended to explore whether such an approach is useful in other school settings beyond secondary PRU settings (such as the one chosen in the second phase of the current research). Hawkins & Shohet (2012) outline a model of supervision containing three key elements (managerial, educative and supportive) that could be particularly relevant to supervisory support of school staff in this area. The use of this model would be suggested to fit well with the approach that proved successful within the training delivered in the current research, adopting a supportive and encouraging approach that informs and educates school staff of relevant resources and support services for psychological loss.

It is therefore suggested that by offering *support to those supporting* (school staff) EPs may be able to provide support to schools to the benefit of CYP experiencing psychological loss. An example of this kind of EP support (training that was specific to the setting, included a balance of theory and practical content, aimed at reassuring school staff and incorporated a supervisory approach) was explored in the second phase of the current research, a discussion of the results will next be explored.

6.3 Views on training for psychological loss

The remaining sections of this chapter concern the findings from the second phase of the research in which a case study of psychological loss training was outlined. This section will address findings regarding participants' views of the training as a whole and are therefore related to RQ4.

The case study in the second phase of the current research yielded positive outcomes from the approach used to support school staff with psychological loss. Evaluative measures suggest that these positive effects have the potential to continue into the long term for the setting. The findings illustrated by the case study should be considered important due to the lack of previous research in the field focused on external support for psychological loss that utilises a preventative approach, working with school staff as opposed to directly with CYP. It is my view that providing such support could be a valuable endeavour for EPs. I view working in a preventative way with school staff in order to build their capacity (and in turn that of the CYP they work with) in supporting psychological loss as a logical and effective way to work. If we accept the view that opportunities for external professionals such as EPs to support schools with psychological loss may diminish within the current political climate (Keddie & Lingard, 2015; West & Bailey, 2013), this kind of work may well prove to be the most efficient. Further research assessing the impact of such work, in particular focusing on longer term successes of such approaches across a wide range of settings, would therefore be advocated.

Participants reported that the key elements contributing to the success of the training used in the case study, came from its relevance to the school setting. The success found in providing training that was specifically relevant to the setting within which participants were working adds further support to the recognition of local circumstances within effective psycho-social support (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012) for psychological loss. The participants within the case study in the current research specifically cited age-appropriate resources and knowledge of local support services and the community as contributors into the overall feeling of relevance that the training offered. I would argue that the approach adopted for the training also allowed for greater relevance to the setting to be achieved and in this way facilitated the adjustments to the support system for loss required for CYP differing in age and development (outlined in section 6.1). This kind of support is reflective of the *individualised* approach that is advocated in the extant literature (Hall, 2014; Holland et al., 2009; Neimeyer, 2000).

By allowing participants space and time to consider the theoretical and practical information within the context of the CYP they work with, participants were able to devise and carry out an action plan for the development of psychological loss support within their setting that led to successful outcomes. I would argue that this should be considered a strength of this kind of approach in comparison to more short term approaches adopted by EPs in response to a critical incident (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Morrison, 2007). Key psychological knowledge and skills in collaborative working previously suggested to be important (Posada, 2006) in contributing to effective psychological loss support involving direct work with CYP, were suggested to be equally important in the approach adopted in the current research, working with school staff.

I view the key knowledge and skills possessed by EPs (Posada, 2006) to be further important in another success of the training delivered in the current research. Participants felt that the training gave them reassurance that they were doing the right things in their support of CYP experiencing loss. Most important to participants in the current research, was reassurance around the language they were using about psychological loss and with CYP who they were supporting with psychological loss. The current research showed that by providing appropriate resources (Winston's Wish, 2017) detailing specific language to use with the cohort of CYP school staff are working with, as well as providing them with an opportunity to develop their own scripts to help manage difficult conversations with CYP about psychological loss, school staff may be able to feel more confident and reassured of their support for CYP. It is therefore argued that by providing school staff with increased reassurance, EPs may enable them to provide effective further support for CYP experiencing loss, especially those adopting a meaning making approach (Neimeyer, 2000; Worden, 2009) that is positive and normalising (Hall, 2014; Vaterlaus, 2014).

It is important to consider previous research within the field highlighting potential differences in the way psychological loss is talked about (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006) in different cultures. The current research showed that when participants were more open and honest in the way they discussed psychological loss with CYP, they were able to offer more effective support. This is discussed in more detail in section 6.5. The emergence of the importance of language within the context of psychological support offered by school staff in schools within the current research is notable and could therefore be further explored in further research.

6.4 Developing understanding of psychological loss

Findings from RQ5 are addressed in this section and are thus related to how the training approach used in current research affected participants' understanding of psychological loss. As might be expected of effective psychological training, participants reported that their knowledge of psychological loss increased as a result of the training. This was facilitated by adding to their knowledge of local support services and resources for loss and allowed participants to raise the profile of psychological loss within their school setting. However participants felt that the training could have contained further input to extend their theoretical knowledge of psychological loss even further. It was suggested in the feedback for the training that input on models of loss that include indications of the general stages of psychological loss would have been particularly useful. This suggests that models of loss aimed at providing a universal account of the experience of loss (Rubin, 1981; Stroebe & Schut, 1999) could form a part of the training approach used in the current research. Perhaps the function of their use may be to generally inform and guide the expectations of those supporting CYP with loss, rather than provide a definite model of their experience and how to support it.

The raising of the profile of psychological loss within the school setting was a particularly key finding in the current research. Participants found that through the assembly they presented to CYP and by talking with them in a more open and honest way about loss in their general conversations, they were able to begin to normalise psychological loss within the school setting. Participants reported that this led to CYP feeling as though they had permission to talk more openly about their experiences of loss and thus the training also helped to foster an ethos of mutual support between CYP and school staff. The positive and normalising effects found from the training within the setting involved in the second phase of the current research, echo findings from previous work in the field suggesting that positive effects (Hall, 2014) can be found from the experience of loss when a *new normal* (Vaterlaus, 2014) is formulated by those who have experienced a significant loss. As the approach utilised in the current research helped to establish a school environment where both school staff and CYP felt safe to openly discuss their loss, I argue that it helped the positive and normalising effects of psychological loss to be recognised by CYP.

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6.5 Confidence in supporting psychological loss

The final section of this chapter discusses the findings of the current research related to RQ6. These findings explore how the training in the second phase of the research affected the confidence of participants in supporting CYP with psychological loss in their setting.

The important finding in this area was the reported increase in confidence that participants gained from the training. This success came from a focus on both the language they use about loss with CYP, but also from the celebration of already established and successful practice with the CYP in their setting. In this way, it is possible that the training may have also increased the self-efficacy of school staff, facilitating a greater belief in their capability to support CYP in their setting with loss.

Participants felt that a key contributor to the increased confidence they experienced as a result of the training delivered in the current research, was the focus on the language they use with CYP experiencing loss. During the training participants were afforded the opportunity to develop scripts, to help manage potentially difficult conversations about psychological loss with CYP. Participants were encouraged to use relevant resources (Winston's Wish, 2017) to create the scripts but were also given the opportunity within the training to develop scripts that were specifically relevant to the CYP in their setting. Whilst this may seem like a straightforward element of the training, participants viewed it as specifically important in raising their confidence. The development of the scripts may have also contributed to the overall raising of the profile of loss within the setting previously discussed (6.4) and could therefore also be suggested to be important in developing normalised, positive responses to psychological loss in the setting (Hall, 2014; Vaterlaus, 2014).

Whilst participants associated the increase in their confidence with a focus on language, I as the researcher felt that the training helped to raise their confidence by focusing on already established practices evident within the group of participants as a whole. As the training allowed for discussion and reflection, participants were able to recognise that the honest and open approach that they adopt with the CYP in their setting could be a vehicle by which to promote positive, normalising (Hall, 2014; Vaterlaus, 2014) messages about psychological loss. In addition, the participants reported that another successful element of their established practice was to share their own personal experiences with the CYP they work with. Sharing their own experiences of loss also formed an important part of their subsequent support of

psychological loss as a result of the training. The sharing of personal experiences as part of psychological loss support for CYP, could be argued to strengthen the relationship between school staff and CYP that was sighted to be important to the overall support system of support for CYP in schools, both in the current research and the extant literature (Dyregrov & Regel, 2012).

Without the time and space that the training allowed, the recognition of these practices may not have been able to form part of the successful loss support evidenced in the current research. The potential to build the supportive capacity of school staff should therefore be considered a strength of the use of this approach.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the strengths and limitations of the current research. This analysis will lead onto a discussion of both the implications of the research for EP practice and possible further directions for research within the field of psychological loss. Final thoughts and conclusions from the current research will then be summarised to finalise this chapter and thesis.

7.1 Strengths

The methodological approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Thomas, 2011) adopted within the current research enabled the overall aims for each phase of the research (Fig 10) to be achieved, with the emergent design also allowing for the results obtained in the first phase to successfully inform the second phase of the research.

Aims	
Phase 1: To map the support provided by school staff and to CYPs experiencing psychological loss, across three school settings.	**Phase 2: To explore the use of EP training for psychological loss with a group of PRU secondary school staff.**

Fig 10: Overall aims for both phases of the current research.

In the first phase of the research the methods chosen contributed to the effective mapping of school staff support to take place across the 3 settings involved in the research. The findings from this phase not only helped to inform the second phase of the current research but were considered important in their own right. The methods chosen helped to explore loss support from the perspective of many different school staff working with children from across a wide age range, and in this way explored areas identified to be lacking within the established body of research (chapter 2). In this way the first phase of the research provided a useful contribution to the existing filed of psychological loss literature.

Building on the success of the first phase, the second phase also produced important results which again can be attributed, at least in part, to the methods used. By taking the decision to

focus on one setting (case) the EP training produced positive outcomes for participants and CYP in the school. These positive outcomes achieved for the school setting showcase the potential success of the approach used in the second phase of the research.

The participant led nature of both phases of the research could be considered another strength of the current research. Sutcliffe (2016) suggests that participant-led research enables a rich and detailed picture of the research topic to emerge. I argue that such a rich picture was achieved in this research. By letting the participants in both stages of the research *speak for themselves* (Sutcliffe, 2016), I was able to provide a window into the support of psychological loss in school settings. A participant-led focus was instilled into all aspects of this research project, but perhaps the most useful aspect of this approach was found in the training devised in the second phase of the research. In this phase the content, action plan and evaluative measures were all participant-led and enabled the research to achieve noteworthy results for the setting involved.

Finally the current research was successful in exploring areas of the extant literature that were previously under investigated. The current research gathered data from school staff themselves, rather than considerable previous research in the field that focused directly on CYP (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Boss & Yeats, 2014; Vaterlaus, 2014; Worden, 2009). In this way it helped shed light on school staff perspectives of their own support for psychological loss which (to my knowledge) remains an under investigated area of the research field. In addition, exploring school support for psychological loss across a range of school settings (and therefore with CYP of different age and development) was notable and helped to build on previous research exploring how school support for psychological loss could be adapted for CYP across the school age range (Bugge et al., 2014).

7.2 Limitations

Alongside the strengths of the current research outlined in the previous section, it is also important to consider its limitations. Within this section I will debate the lack of opportunity within the current research to address the influences of gender (Corr & Corr, 2012) and faith (Neimeyer & Burke, 2015) on psychological loss as well as accounting for the absence of child-voice.

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The gender balance of the sample has been previously discussed (4.3.3) with a reported disproportionate representation of male participants recruited within the first phase of the study. Although this was slightly increased within the second phase, the lack of male participants can certainly be considered a limitation of the current research. Corr & Corr (2012) suggest that there are typical patterns in the way that both males and females respond to loss and whilst either pattern should not be considered as exclusive to each gender, it seems likely that having predominantly female participants in the current research will have influenced the results in both phases. A more typically female pattern of response to loss is described as intuitive and more concerned with feelings emotions and experiences rather than a more cognitive problem solving approach common with males. The high number of female participants within the research may well have led to a simultaneous bias in both sets of data towards an emotionally-led view of support for loss and away from a cognitively based view, with a focus on problem solving. The vital importance of relationships within the support system of loss, described within the initial phase of the research could be argued to be an example of this. Further research of this type within the field could seek to include a more even gender balance to explore if any cognitive/problem solving elements of loss support were absent from the data collected in the current research.

Another potential influence on loss that was absent from exploration within the current research, was faith. This was not through choice, but merely a result of the emergent design used within the research. As participants led the way in which the design of the research was shaped (and no participants involved in the first stage of the research explicitly mentioned the importance of faith to their support of loss), it was not explored in the second phase either. The opportunity sampling technique did not allow for the inclusion of faith schools within the current research, but the influence of religious belief on loss support is likely to hold vastly more significance within support for loss in such school settings (Neimeyer & Burke, 2015).

The current research maintained a strong focus on participant voice, as discussed in the previous section (6.2), it could therefore be argued that there was a reduced focus on child voice across both phases. This is important to consider, not least because inevitably the CYP themselves will be the ones who are receiving the support for loss discussed at such length throughout this research. It would have therefore seemed inappropriate to not have made mention to child voice in this research at all, so without wishing to seem cursory and detract from the importance of the issue, reference to child voice was made within this section. The

focus on participant voice within this research was justified in order to achieve the successful outcomes for the school setting in phase two of the research, but unfortunately this came at the cost of embedding child voice into the research. This could have been avoided with the addition of an evaluative measure that involved CYP in the second phase of the research. Adding such a measure may have gone some way to detailing the success of the outcomes for CYP in the setting. This could therefore be a consideration for further developments of the training programme used in the second phase of the current research. Similar further directions for future research will next be discussed.

7.3 Future directions

Before a discussion of the implications for EP practice is outlined (7.4), the implications from the findings of the current research for future directions within the field of psychological loss will be considered. One of the most important findings to come out of the current research, suggested that by providing school staff with relevant and specific training in psychological loss, professionals such as EPs are able to support schools with psychological loss in a preventative and capacity building way. Further research exploring the use of this approach could therefore be valuable. Considering the case study within the current research involved secondary PRU school staff, exploring the approach with school staff from other settings (such as mainstream and primary settings) may be especially useful. Following the feedback from participants within the current study, (Table 2) research that investigates the use of a similar training approach that affords more time and greater scope, may be beneficial.

Findings from the current research also highlighted the potential importance of language in relation to support for psychological loss. During the first phase of the current research, participants described language as an important component of the general psychological loss support system for CYP within the schools involved in the current research. Following this, language was again chosen in the second phase of the research by participants as a central theme of the training delivered in their setting. By providing participants in this phase of the research with support with language (developing scripts for use with CYP when having difficult conversations about psychological loss) they became more confident to support CYP with loss and more reassured that they were saying the right things in support of CYP experiencing loss. The importance of language as a thread throughout both phases of the current research, suggests that further work exploring the way that school staff use language in their support of CYP experiencing psychological loss is merited. Further studies, using a similar approach to

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that used in the current research, with other cohorts of school staff may help to further explore the importance of language in this kind of support. Given the differences observed in the extant literature in the way that EY CYP respond to psychological loss (Bugge et al., 2014), it may be that a continued research focus on language may be most important for those school staff working with CYP of secondary school age.

The final recommendation for future research that arose from the current research concerns the wide conceptualisation of psychological loss described by participants. The findings from the current research suggest that a varied range of psychological losses can impact CYP in schools and cause them significant difficulty. Death and bereavement is a very clear and obvious form of psychological loss, however the current research suggests that CYPs can experience similar levels of psychological loss from differing circumstances and this is influenced by age and development. The data that emerged from the current research suggests that further exploration of the effect of parental divorce/separation on CYP in school settings may be especially valuable. The current research therefore adds weight to previous research in the field (Dowling & Gorell-Barnes, 1999; Hashemi & Homayuni, 2017; Long & Fogell, 1999) highlighting the significance of divorce and separation of parents on CYP in schools. Research in this area may be particularly important as the circumstances surrounding parental divorce/separation could be suggested to be consistent with ambiguous loss and therefore produce a complicated response (Boss & Yeats, 2014).

7.4 Implications for EP practice

The research project considered as a whole has highlighted some noteworthy implications for EP practice. Within this section, EP implications will be considered using the overarching themes from the first phase of the current research. Although reference will also be made to the second phase of the research in which EP training for psychological loss was run in a secondary PRU setting.

7.4.1 Psychological loss as a concept and developmental/protective factors

The first phase of this research importantly highlighted that the staff in the schools involved in the current research had multiple and varied understandings of the concept of psychological loss. However their understanding of the way in which loss should be supported showed similarity across the settings involved with the research. The difference in support came

through a change in the approach adopted by staff working with primary aged CYP and those staff working with older, adolescent CYP.

It may therefore be important for EPs to show an acute awareness of the central elements of successful support for psychological loss that are suggested by the findings from the current research. These include support for families (as well as CYP), maintaining a child-focus, being open and honest in communication and adopting a flexible and individualised approach to loss support. In addition to these central elements it may also be important for EPs to be aware of the changes and adaptations in the practical approach of staff that are required across different school settings (i.e. primary vs secondary school).

7.4.2 Language

The current research also highlighted that the language associated with psychological loss support may be a particularly important aspect for EPs to consider. A focus on language in the second phase of the current research opened up opportunities for participants to develop their confidence in providing support to CYP with psychological loss and feel reassured that they weren't making anything worse for CYP experiencing significant psychological loss by saying the wrong things to them. Highlighting the correct language to use when supporting CYP with psychological loss could therefore be considered an important part of EP support for school staff, with the development of scripts for difficult conversations suggested to be particularly important for staff working with secondary aged CYP.

7.4.3 Containing and attuned relationships, fitting loss support into the curriculum and EP training for school staff

The initial phase of the current study also suggested that a vital component of support for psychological loss was established and trusting relationships between CYP and staff. The implications of this finding discussed within the current research therefore centred around the debate of how EPs can best support schools with psychological loss. If we accept that the most successful support for loss is carried out via a containing and attuned relationship with CYP and given the theoretical knowledge and collaborative skills that EPs possess (Aucott & Soni, 2016), are EPs best placed to *support those supporting* and work to support school staff, rather than with CYP directly?

In order to try to answer that question the second phase of the research explored an example of EP support, by delivering psychological loss training in a secondary PRU school. The setting-specific and consultative approach adopted in the training was suggested to both increase school staff's theoretical understanding of psychological loss and increase their confidence of supporting CYP experiencing loss. This suggests that there could be merit in EPs adopting such an approach when training school staff from similar settings in psychological loss. As the training was suggested to be an example of a more preventative model of EP work, designed to facilitate capacity building support, the further implications discussed in light of the second phase of the research surrounded the potential merit in adopting a similar approach to that found in the second phase of the research (relevant to setting, adopting a reassuring approach, allowing time for problem solving and reflection) in further EP work with psychological loss support.

This kind of work may be particularly beneficial in light of educational funding cuts and the perceived lower priority of socially/morally based education within the curriculum of UK schooling. Within the case study outlined in phase two, senior leaders within the setting were surprised by the positive effects of such an approach. It is therefore possible that if more EP work is carried out in a similar vein it may well lead to similar positive effects in preventative support of psychological loss for CYP in schools. It is my view that EPs are equipped well to work in this way to promote preventative, capacity-building support of CYP, in this case through supporting the staff that work with them the most and know them best.

In addition to the more traditional aspects of training (i.e. in the first session of the three outlined in 5.2.3) used within the second phase of the research, the key EP approach of consultation was also adopted into the training (Wagner, 2000). This allowed participants to engage in problem solving conversations about how best to support their CYP with psychological loss and ensured that the training remained relevant to their setting and cohort of CYP. It is my view that further exploration of the use of this approach by EPs in other school settings would be valuable and could well prove successful, especially if the training were afforded more time and scope than in the current research.

7.4.4 Contextual factors

The findings from the current research also suggested further possibilities for the way that EPs work with schools around their support of psychological loss. Given the findings within the current research suggested that psychological loss is understood in many different ways by school staff, levels of knowledge and understanding shown by school staff about psychological loss is variable and support for psychological loss is more beneficial when it is relevant and specific to the local community, EPs may be able to engage with local schools and local communities in order to build a collection of community specific resources for loss. Links with other EP services in local authorities could also be made in order to share information about psychological loss support from many demographics and cultures (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006). In this way EPs may be able to help schools with psychological loss in a way that enables them to be *wise before the event* of a range of psychological losses rather than supporting them in response to a critical incident (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Posada, 2006). Providing staff with training that that helps to promote resilience in CYP (for example using Hart & Blincow, 2007) may also be a valuable contribution to preventative support for psychological loss in schools.

7.5 Concluding thoughts

The current research was successful in exploring areas of the psychological loss literature that were previously under-researched. By gaining the perspective of school staff (from three school settings) themselves on their support of psychological loss in schools, the current research suggested that, despite loss being conceptualised in many different ways by school staff, a generally recognised support system for psychological loss can help CYP. The key to making this support system work for CYP experiencing loss across the school age range came via the use of adjustments in approach related to the age and development of CYP. Of particular importance to the system of psychological loss support was established trusting relationships between school staff and CYP. This raised questions and discussions within the current research about the role of external professionals, such as EPs, in the support of school staff in the area of psychological loss.

The second phase of the research therefore aimed to explore whether EPs could help support psychological loss in schools by *supporting the supporters* (school staff) via their already containing and attuned relationships with CYP in schools. The case study outlined in the second phase of the current research suggested that by providing school staff with training in

psychological loss that is relevant and specific to their setting, EPs may be able to increase staff confidence in supporting CYP with psychological loss in their setting. A specific focus on the language associated with psychological loss was found to be beneficial to this approach, as was the encouragement of already established supportive practices within the setting.

The completion of the current research has both informed my practice as an EP and also provided a contribution to the applied field. The preventative nature of the training approach adopted in the current research was suggested to be a preferable approach for EPs to adopt in their support of psychological loss in school settings, especially those similar to the PRU setting where the training was used in the second phase of the current research. A training programme such as this could form part of any EP services' offer in support of psychological loss. This kind of EP support could help schools to consider and develop their overall support of psychological loss for all CYP in their setting, rather than work in response to an individual sad event.

With regard to my own professional practice, the current research has helped to inform the ways in which I like to practice as an T/EP. The current research adopted preventative, capacity-building and supervisory approaches to EP practice with regard to support for psychological loss. Not only has this research informed my own future practice with supporting psychological loss in schools, the approaches adopted are also approaches that I will endeavour to use in my wider applied practice. Working to build the capacity of school staff to support the CYP in their setting using psychology is something I am passionate about and will aim to continue doing throughout my career. I firmly believe that by offering *support to those who are supporting* an EP can be effective in applying psychology to the benefit of a wide range of CYP.

As an applied psychologist, supporting others through psychologically significant events has always interested and motivated me and psychological losses are perhaps some of the most significant psychological experiences that we as human beings will experience. I have therefore greatly enjoyed and appreciated the valuable opportunity to provide psychological research insight into the way that such losses can be supported by school staff. The completion of the current research has enabled me to not only engage with and work alongside highly skilled and reflective educational professionals, but also reflect on and rethink the way in which I will

continue to offer my support of psychological loss in schools and my practice as an applied psychologist more widely.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Instructions (Phase One)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research. The following instructions and information will inform you on what your participation within this phase of the research will involve and what you can expect to happen after you have completed your participation.

As described in the information sheet, the initial phase of the research requires participants to complete two-activities.

Activity One

Participants to draw a conceptual map that represents their perspective on the support network in place within their setting to support young people experiencing psychological loss.

- *Conceptual maps help to visualise relationships between people within systems (such as schools).*
- *Conceptual maps do not necessarily require complete comprehensiveness but should reflect key experiences and perceptions related to your role within your setting*
- *It would be interesting (where you felt appropriate) to include within your conceptual map, both the successes and challenges of your setting – remembering that all information you provide within the research will be reported anonymously.*

As a rough guide, you should aim to spend 10-15 minutes drawing your conceptual map, but please feel free to spend longer doing so if you feel it is appropriate. There are no rules as to how you represent your map but please limit the size of your map to one side of A4 paper.

Once you have completed your map, please send it back (photo or scan) to me via email to sb733@exeter.ac.uk . I will then have a chance to view it before we complete the second activity.

Activity Two

Your completed conceptual map will then be used as the basis of an interview. During the interview you will have the opportunity to discuss, clarify and expand on the ideas represented within your conceptual map. The interview will follow a semi-structure allowing for both consistency and flexibility. It should take no longer than 30 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed by myself. The data collected from both activities will be kept confidential.

Following the completion of both activities, all the data I collect will be analysed. Feedback from the data collection as a whole can then be provided to participants if desired. Again this will be reported in a confidential way.

My thanks again for taking part, if you have any questions or want any more information at any stage of the process please feel free to contact me: sb733@exeter.ac.uk or my Supervisor: S.Larkin@exeter.ac.uk

Sam Bougourd.

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule (Phase One)

THEME		POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	FOLLOW UPS	PROMPTS
Conceptual Map	Participants given the opportunity to explain their ideas as represented on their concept maps.	(Participants given every opportunity to describe and discuss their conceptual maps with interviewer. It is anticipated/hoped that this discussion will constitute a considerable portion of the interview (to last 30 mins), including the questions below which are associated with the research questions for phase one of the research project. Should this not be the case, questions below will be asked accordingly).	(Follow up questions to focus on exploring differences between the age of CYP and changes over time)	…and then? …tell me more about that.
RQ1	How do school staff support psychological loss in their setting?	Can you tell me about a time when you have supported a CYP with loss in your setting? How do you think this support would differ for different types of losses (e.g. divorce/bereavement)?	What effect do you think the support had on the CYP? What makes you think that?	…go on. …that sounds interesting…
RQ2	How does this support vary across school settings?	What do you know about how support is provided in other schools? What about other settings? For example..	How? Why?	…returning to something you said just then.
RQ3	What professional support do school staff need with loss in their setting and how does this change across settings?	Can you tell me about any specialist support or advice you have received about around supporting CYP with loss? Would you like any specialist support?	Was it helpful? How? What effect did it have? What kind of support?	…can you expand on that? …can you tell me more about..

Appendix 3: Phase One Data Analysis Information

Table of primary codes

Primary Codes	Number of coding references
Adolescence	20
Bereavement policy	11
Bereavement and loss training	58
Challenges	18
Cultural differences	7
Different types of loss	74
Direct work with CYP	45
Early years support	41
Expert knowledge	16
Family bereavement	49
Funding cuts	10
Gender differences	1
Impact on teaching and learning	11
Individual differences of CYP or family	41
Informal opportunities to support CYP	11
Information sharing	41
Language	15
Local community	1
Mainstream vs specialist settings	20
Multi-agency working	5
Ongoing evaluation of support for CYP	8
Openness and honesty	27
Parental divorce or separation	35
Pastoral staff	35
Personal experience	39
Preventative work	22
Primary aged support	48
Reassurance that you are doing the right thing	14
Relationships	65
Resilience	31
Resources for loss	18
Routines	8
School as a neutral environment	6
School system	38
Secondary aged support	38
SEND Children	3
Small groups or teams	11
Supervision for staff supporting CYP	40
Support for CYP over time	37
Support for families	48
Support from outside agencies	104

Support staff	28
Teaching staff	8
Team around the child	14
Traumatic event	6

Examples of secondary themes

Direct Quote	Primary Code	Secondary Theme
"I think unfortunately so many roles have been cut so, there has been so many issues with funding that.. schools are now expected to be everything and that is really difficult. Um.. you know.. we've probably got double the amount of people we could refer to the educational psychologist but we cant, we've got to prioritise. Especially in this setting – all of our students have got needs um.. and then you feel that you are prioritising some over others because of the funding issues. I think.. on the whole we just do the best with what we have got really which isn't a great deal and we do need.. I think we need more holistic help."	Funding cuts	Contextual Factors
"I think the more and more they are tightening their belts, the more strain it puts on, the knock on, the domino effect on us, who are trying to work with these young people on a daily basis. Because actually we spend the biggest amount of time with them. More, probably, than their families."	Challenges	
"But also no matter how much training they give us, we still are so limited on time because we have a curriculum to deliver and we are teachers and we don't get any pastoral time. I mean when I say I give pastoral time, that means I go without my admin time and get a child out of a lesson to come and see me."	Impact on teaching and learning	
And I think knowing our local community does help. And that also helps with the signposting element because.. Um K is brilliant but she knows all the PCSOs, you know we have quite good relationships with the local community. And I think knowing the community is a.. big help in terms of knowing what is out there to support the young people	Local community	
"Yeah. I think they are because loss is loss. And it is that attachment isn't it? People form attachments to so many different things. And you have to give them those strong attachments in the first place and then it is	Different types of loss	Psychological loss as a concept

building up to it, it is their understanding isn't it? You know that for a child of 2 to lose their dummy or cuddly toy.. it is a massive thing because that is one of the things they have a massive attachment to in life. Mummy, daddy, cuddly toy.. it is probably in that order. Or maybe not even in that order!"		
"Maybe slightly different I think in actual fact when that happens it is worse (laughs) in one respect. Because when you've lost something it is gone forever and you.. in time you can.. it puts a full stop to it. When it is a separation of a parent, the parent is not there directly, but they are there somewhere. So you know.. although it might be in, they're not there in their home setting but they are somewhere else so.. that child has to almost get over how.. the loss of their parent being here with them all the time and have to adjust to maybe never seeing them again or seeing them a lot less than they have been seeing them so I actually think that can be very psychologically challenging for a child."	Parental divorce or separation	
"I worked with a child whose father died. They were twin boys in my class and just completely out of the blue, completely sudden death. And um.. the mum came in to see me and told me which was.. looking back extremely brave. The next day she brought them to school the next day, he died one night and the next day and they.. the only thing they talked about all day was the fact that their older brother was coming back from university and they were really looking forward to seeing him and were really excited about him coming down."	Primary aged support	
Well because we're not specialists in these areas, certainly not in psychology, you know we do a little bit in our own little way. But it would be fab. We do get people to come in and look at the child, but then what would be nice would be	Expert knowledge	Familiar staff vs outside professionals

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to have a sort of face-to-face 'OK so tell me what I can do to help that child'.		
"Once they have kind of got that trust with you it is easier for them to then open up in different avenues and it might just be general conversation, you might not be trying to get that information but just having a general chit chat and they might open up about something completely you know.. sensitive to them but it is just because they are chatting away and they feel.."	Informal opportunities to support CYP	
I'd be there for them to talk to. If they go running out the class I'd be there to follow them, not to be on top of them because I know that can be too much sometimes, sometimes you need to just, they need to just be by themselves, so I'd be there to support them. That's what my role would be.. and just to make sure that they were OK. If they wanted someone there to speak to they could speak to me about it, then if I needed to pass on anything, I'd go through the relevant channels and paperwork to do that. So yeah that's what I would be there to do.	Support staff	

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet (Phase One)

AN EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL STAFF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSS.

Who am I?

Hello, my name is Sam Bougourd and I am a student at Exeter University at the Graduate School of Education currently studying on the Doctorate of Educational Psychology (DEdPsych) course.

What am I doing?

As part of my course I am undertaking a two-phase thesis. The research project explores school staff support for children and young people experiencing loss. The research has two overall aims:

- *To map the support provided by school staff to CYPs experiencing psychological loss, across a wide range of school settings.*
- *To design, implement and evaluate a research informed EP intervention to upskill school staff in supporting CYPs with psychological loss.*

Why am I doing this?

Experiences of significant psychological loss or bereavements are life events that are both hugely significant and inevitable. Psychological effects of bereavement can be long lasting and severe, in particular placing children and young people at risk of negative outcomes. Loss therefore, is a very important research area in educational psychology. Most of that research is conducted directly with young people, however there is a need for direct research with school staff who may well provide a great deal of support for children and young people experiencing loss in schools. This research aims to address this need.

How will it work?

The first phase of my research will involve those who participate producing a conceptual map of their school's support for loss and then discussing and developing their map with the researcher during a semi-structured interview. Once all participants have completed their maps and interviews, I will be able to produce an overall conceptual map of school support for loss across a range of settings.

The second phase of the research will aim to use this conceptual map to inform an EP (educational psychology) led intervention that aims to upskill school staff in their support of children and young people experiencing loss. The outcomes of the intervention and impact for school staff will be evaluated as part of the research.

What will you gain from taking part?

It is hoped that by taking part in the first phase of my research you will develop your understanding of how to support children and young people experiencing difficulty with

psychological loss in schools. It is hoped that this development could also bring a benefit to your practice of helping all children and young people experiencing difficulty.

How do you give your permission to take part?

Everyone who takes part in this research will give their full written consent to participate. Please only give this consent if you want to take part and you feel you have been provided with enough information about the research. Once you have given permission to participate you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

Participants that go onto to take part in the second phase of the research will be given an additional consent form to sign once they have completed the initial stage of the research.

How will the data you provide be used?

The information that you provide during the research will remain anonymous in the writing up of the research. No one reading the research project will be able to identify you or any other participant from the final written product (thesis). All data collected from both phases of the research will be treated with the strictest confidence and not disclosed to any third parties. Your data will be kept safely and securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act and may be kept for up to five years and then safely destroyed.

What happens when the project finishes?

When I have finished collecting all the data for my research, I will go on to write up the findings from both phases of the research in the form of a thesis. Once you have finished your part of the research, you will be debriefed and given the opportunity to ask any questions you have about the research process. If desired, participants that took part in the research can be sent an anonymised summary of the findings of the research.

As the subject of this research is psychological loss it is possible that by participating in it, you may be reminded of uncomfortable feelings or emotions. The following services are available for help and support should you need them:

- *Cruse Bereavement (specialist helpline for advice on loss/bereavement) – 0808 808 1677 or 0117 926 4045*
- *Samaritans (for any help and support) – 116 123*
- *Winston's Wish (charity specialising in supporting young people who have experienced psychological loss – www.winstonswish.org*

If you have any further questions for my supervisors or I at any time during the research process, please don't hesitate to contact us using the information below.

Samuel Bougourd.   E: sb733@exeter.ac.uk

Shirley Larkin.   E: S.Larkin@exeter.ac.uk

Tim Maxwell.   E: T.Maxwell@exeter.ac.uk

Graduate School of Education,
Exeter University,

St Lukes Campus,
Heavitree Road,
EX1 2LU

Appendix 5: Consent Form (Phase One)

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

Graduate School of Education

Dear Participant,

RE: AN EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL STAFF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSS.

Having read the attached information sheet, if you are happy to participate in the research project, I now ask you to provide written consent for your participation.

Please sign below if you:

- are aware of the aims and objectives of the research project
- are aware of what you would be expected to do as part of the research project
- are aware you have the right to withdraw your information from the project at anytime during the research process
- are aware your data will be used to write a thesis
- are aware that your identity will remain anonymous in any information written from this research
- are aware your data may be safely and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act for up to five years from collection until it is destroyed
- are aware of who to contact in the event of any questions regarding the project (at any time during the research process)

Many thanks,

Sam Bougourd.   e: sb733@exeter.ac.uk

Name:

Role:

Signed: Date:

Appendix 6: Ethics Form & Approval Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

When completing this form please remember that the purpose of the document is to clearly explain the ethical considerations of the research being undertaken. As a generic form it has been constructed to cover a wide-range of different projects so some sections may not seem relevant to you. Please include the information which addresses any ethical considerations for your particular project which will be needed by the SSIS Ethics Committee to approve your proposal.

Guidance on all aspects of the SSIS Ethics application process can be found on the SSIS intranet:
Staff:
https://intranet.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences/staff/research/researchenvironmentandpolicies/ethics/
Students:http://intranet.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences/student/postgraduateresearch/ethicsapprovalforyourresearch/

All staff and students within SSIS should use this form to apply for ethical approval and then send it to one of the following email addresses:

ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk   This email should be used by staff and students in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy & Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology.

ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk   This email should be used by staff and students in the Graduate School of Education.

Applicant details	
Name	**Samuel Bougourd**
Department	**Graduate School of Education – DEdPsych Programme**
UoE email address	**sb733@exeter.ac.uk**

Duration for which permission is required		
You should request approval for the entire period of your research activity. The start date should be at least one month from the date that you submit this form. Students should use the anticipated date of completion of their course as the end date of their work. Please note that <u>retrospective ethical approval will never be given.</u>		
Start date:01/02/2017	**End date:01/09/2018**	**Date submitted:03/03/2017**

Students only	
All students must discuss their research intentions with their supervisor/tutor prior to submitting an application for ethical approval. The discussion may be face to face or via email. Prior to submitting your application in its final form to the SSIS Ethics Committee it should be approved by your first and second supervisor / dissertation supervisor/tutor. You should submit evidence of their approval with your application, e.g. a copy of their email approval.	
Student number	**620026476**
Programme of study	**Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsych)**

Name of Supervisor(s)/tutors or Dissertation Tutor	**Shirley Larkin & Tim Maxwell**
Have you attended any ethics training that is available to students?	Yes, I have taken part in ethics training at the University of Exeter If yes, please specify and give the date of the training: **2 university sessions as part of DEdPsych course.** 16/11/2016

Certification for all submissions

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given in this application and that I undertake in my research to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research. I confirm that if my research should change radically I will complete a further ethics proposal form.

Samuel Bougourd

Double click this box to confirm certification ☒

Submission of this ethics proposal form confirms your acceptance of the above.

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT

An exploration of school staff support for children and young people experiencing psychological loss.

ETHICAL REVIEW BY AN EXTERNAL COMMITTEE

No, my research is not funded by, or doesn't use data from, either the NHS or Ministry of Defence.

MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005

No, my project does not involve participants aged 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. people with learning disabilities

SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Maximum of 750 words.

The proposed research takes the form of two phases and therefore has two overall aims. The first phase of the research aims to map the support provided by school staff to children and young people (CYPs) experiencing psychological loss, across a wide range of school settings. The research questions (RQ) for the first phase of the research are therefore:

RQ1. How do school staff support psychological loss in their setting and how does this support vary across school settings?

RQ2. What professional support do school staff need with loss and how does this change over time?

This phase will involve participants using conceptual mapping techniques, with the overall aim of producing a synthesized conceptual map of school staff support for loss that accounts for different school settings and changes over time. This can then be compared to existing literature in the area concerned with models of loss experience and psychological response to loss.

Once this phase has been completed, the conceptual map produced from the first phase of the research will help to inform the second phase – an EP (Educational Psychologist)

intervention. The aim of this phase will be to design, implement and evaluate a research informed EP training intervention to upskill school staff in supporting CYPs with psychological loss. The specific RQs for this phase are therefore:

RQ1. How can EPs upskill school staff for their work with CYPs experiencing psychological loss?
RQ2. How does the upskilling of school staff for supporting psychological loss vary across school settings?

The research will be conducted in a range of schools in South West England, taking advantage of the researcher's unique position between contacts at University (Devon), at home (Bristol and Somerset) and on placement (Dorset).

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

N/A

The following sections require an assessment of possible ethical consideration in your research project. If particular sections do not seem relevant to your project please indicate this and clarify why.

RESEARCH METHODS

Phase One:

Data collection in this phase will consist of two stages. In the first instance participants will be asked to produce their own conceptual maps of school support for psychological loss specific to their own setting. After receiving this map, the researcher will then conduct a semi-structured interview with each participant, using the conceptual map as the basis for discussion. This will give participants the opportunity to corroborate/dispute/adapt the details of their conceptual map with the researcher to ensure the data gained is robust. So each participant will produce their own conceptual map of support that has been fully developed through semi-structured interviews. Data analysis in the first phase will consist of synthesising the individual maps from the participants into one overall conceptual map. Thematic analysis will be used to achieve this.

Phase Two:

Phase two of the proposed research is a more focused and direct phase, aimed at designing and evaluating an intervention of EP support to upskill school staff (who respond) in their support of psychological loss, using the conceptual mapping data from the initial phase of the research. The specific details of the content of this intervention cannot be outlined, as they will be generated from the initial stage of the research. This being said, the EP intervention in phase two of the research will take the form of a training style input from the EP. The training will involve sections of teaching style input, provide opportunities for small group workshops and be informed by the conceptual mapping data from the initial phase of the research (synthesised with existing literature). Data collection for the second phase will consist of pre and post evaluative measures of knowledge and capability of staff to work with CYPs experiencing loss. Participants will be asked to scale their knowledge and capability on a scale before the training and after the training to provide an evaluative measure of effectiveness of the training. A training/evaluation form (for feedback on the EP delivering the training) at the end of the training programme will also provide data on the

effectiveness of the EP and feedback on what worked well in the training and ways in which it could be improved.

PARTICIPANTS

For the initial phase of the research, 12-18 participants will be recruited to the proposed research. These participants will be selected by the researcher and chosen because of their recent experience of working with CYPs who have experienced loss. Participants will be selected from settings that both support CYPs from a broad range of ages and developmental stages, but also with differing ethos's and cultures. Participants will therefore be selected from differing local authorities, playing to the strengths of the researcher's split locations – at home, on EP placement and at University. It is anticipated that school staff in a variety of roles will be recruited to the research – Teachers, Learning Support Assistants, Pastoral Staff, Senior Leaders and Governors. In this way data and ideas can be triangulated across different sources both between settings but also within settings.

The second phase of the research will involve the design, implementation and evaluation of an EP training intervention for loss. This phase of the research will aim to utilise this conceptual map, to design, implement and evaluate an EP training intervention for loss in at least three settings, with (in theory) every participant from the initial phase of the research being able to attend at least one of these programmes of training The consent for the second phase of the research will be separately sought for these participants in addition to the consent gained for phase one of the research.

All participants in the study will be recruited through contacts of the researcher. This research doesn't involve any work with children or young people.

THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

All participants for this study will be professional adults (over the age of 18), none are potentially vulnerable and none are knowingly engaged in potentially illegal activities. All participants will enter the research willingly and will have been fully informed of the project and research process and will understand what they are agreeing to in taking part. All participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at any time and their right to withdraw or amend their transcripts. All will be informed that their details will be kept confidentially and data will be anonymised. Participants will be recruited through contacts.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

N/A

THE INFORMED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

All participants will be informed of the nature of the project at the first point of contact and will be given an information sheet along with the consent form prior to participation. Informed consent will be obtained in line with the HCPC standards of proficiency. All participants will be fully informed of the aims, purposes, procedures and RQs of the research prior to participating. All participants will sign two consent forms prior to participation, one for them to keep and one for me as the researcher. Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Participants will be informed that they can review, amend or withdraw their conceptual maps should they wish to and will be made aware that they can change the information they submit or discussions they had with the

researcher during interviews. Participants involved in the second phase of the research will be further informed of their right to withdraw from the research process. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout and all data collected across both phases of the research will be anonymized with all data and information kept securely and password protected.

ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE HARM

The risk of unintentional harm within this research is low, however assurances would need to be made to participants involved in the research that if any questions or discussions about psychological loss within the research process, brought up memories that were uncomfortable, upsetting or difficult, they felt comfortable to stop the discussion but more importantly were able to access appropriate support if they needed it. Information like this is made clear on participant information sheets and consent forms and especially important for the second phase of the research – where the potential for more in-depth discussion of loss is higher. However, by making the focus of any source material in the second phase of the research, fictional vignettes instead of real life incidents, I aim to reduce the risk of ethical sensitives (around loss and bereavement) being raised in participants. To take further steps to assure the risk of this harm is low, I will reiterate to participants involved in the second phase of the research, their right to withdraw from parts or all of the sessions should they face any difficulty. It could be expected that even if participants don't verbalise any difficult thoughts or feelings the research could unintentionally produce uncomfortable thoughts or feelings that are unwanted. Whilst this is difficult to legislate against, participants will be given the opportunity to discuss any thoughts or feelings the research has brought up for them in a debriefing section at the end of both the interviews in phase one and the training in phase two. More detail of which now follows.

To ensure the research has a successful 'ending' for participants – a debrief information sheet will be used which explains the next steps of the research and how the data they have provided will be used, reported, stored and eventually destroyed. This sheet will also contain contact details for the researcher in case the participants have any further questions about the research.

DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE

Anonymity and confidentiality of the data (conceptual maps, audio recorded interview, feedback forms) will be maintained at all times, all names and personal details of participants will be kept separate from the raw data and will be password protected. All participants will be made aware of their right to withdraw their data or review or amend it. Data will be kept for a maximum of 5 years and will be password protected until deleted/ destroyed. All research will be published in anonymised form.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

This research has no commercial interests and all the information within the research will be solely used for the purpose of my thesis.

USER ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

As stated above, during the first phase of the research, participants will be given opportunity to corroborate/agree/change/develop the ideas espoused by their conceptual maps. Participants involved in the second phase of the research, will be given the opportunity for feedback and engagement both before, during and after the intervention

process– with their feedback on strengths and areas for improvement forming a large part of the analysis of the research.

INFORMATION SHEET

AN EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL STAFF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSS.

Who am I?

Hello, my name is Sam Bougourd and I am a student at Exeter University at the Graduate School of Education currently studying on the Doctorate of Educational Psychology (DEdPsych) course.

What am I doing?

As part of my course I am undertaking a two-phase thesis. The research project explores school staff support for children and young people experiencing loss. The research has two overall aims:

- *To map the support provided by school staff to CYPs experiencing psychological loss, across a wide range of school settings.*
- *To design, implement and evaluate a research informed EP training intervention to upskill school staff in supporting CYPs with psychological loss.*

Why am I doing this?

Experiences of significant psychological loss or bereavements are life events that are both hugely significant and inevitable. Psychological effects of bereavement can be long lasting and severe, in particular placing children and young people at risk of negative outcomes. Loss therefore, is a very important research area in educational psychology. Most of that research is conducted directly with young people, however there is a need for direct research with school staff who may well provide a great deal of support for children and young people experiencing loss in schools. This research aims to address this need.

How will it work?

The first phase of my research will involve those who participate producing a conceptual map of their school's support for loss and then discussing and developing their map with the researcher during a semi-structured interview. Once all participants have completed their maps and interviews, I will be able to produce an overall conceptual map of school support for loss across a wide range of settings.

The second phase of the research will aim to use this conceptual map to inform an EP (educational psychology) led intervention that aims to upskill school staff in their support if children and young people experiencing loss. The intervention (implemented with some of the participants from the initial phase of the research) will take the form of EP planned and led training programme, which will be evaluated as part of the research.

How do you give your permission to take part?

Everyone who takes part in this research will give their full written consent to participate. Please only give this consent if you want to take part and you feel you have been provided with enough information about the research. Once you have given permission to participate you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

Participants that go onto to take part in the second phase of the research will be given an additional consent form to sign once they have completed the initial stage of the research.

How will the data you provide be used?

The information that you provide during the research will remain anonymous in the writing up of the research. No one reading the research project will be able to identify you or any other participant from the final written product (thesis). All data collected from both phases of the research will be treated with the strictest confidence and not disclosed to any third parties. Your data will be kept safely and securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act and may be kept for up to five years and then safely destroyed.

What happens when the project finishes?

When I have finished collecting all the data for my research, I will go on to write up the findings from both phases of the research in the form of a thesis. Once you have finished your part of the research, you will be debriefed and given the opportunity to ask any questions you have about the research process.

As the subject of this research is psychological loss it is possible that by participating in it, you may be reminded of uncomfortable feelings or emotions. The following services are available for help and support should you need them:

- *Cruse Bereavement (specialist helpline for advice on loss/bereavement) – 0808 808 1677 or 0117 926 4045*
- *Samaritans (for any help and support) – 116 123*
- *Winston's Wish (charity specialising in supporting young people who have experienced psychological loss – www.winstonswish.org*

If you have any further questions for my supervisors or I at any time during the research process, please don't hesitate to contact us using the information below.

Samuel Bougourd.   E: sb733@exeter.ac.uk

Shirley Larkin.   E: S.Larkin@exeter.ac.uk

Tim Maxwell.   E: T.Maxwell@exeter.ac.uk

Graduate School of Education,
Exeter University,
St Lukes Campus,
Heavitree Road,
EX1 2LU

CONSENT FORM

Graduate School of Education
Exeter University,
St Lukes Campus,
Heavitree Road,
EX1 2LU

Dear Participant,

RE: AN EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL STAFF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSS.

Having read the attached information sheet, if you are happy to participate in the research project, I now ask you to provide written consent for your participation.

Please sign below if you:

- are aware of the aims and objectives of the research project
- are aware of what you would be expected to do as part of the research project
- are aware you have the right to withdraw your information from the project at anytime during the research process
- are aware your data will be used to write a thesis
- are aware that your identity will remain anonymous in any information written from this research
- are aware your data may be safely and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act for up to five years from collection until it is destroyed
- are aware of who to contact in the event of any questions regarding the project (at any time during the research process)

Many thanks,

Sam Bougourd.   e: sb733@exeter.ac.uk

Name: Signed: Date:

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Staff and students should follow the procedure below.

Post Graduate Taught Students (Graduate School of Education): Please submit your completed application to your first supervisor. Please see the submission flowchart for further information on the process.

All other students should discuss their application with their supervisor(s) / dissertation tutor / tutor and gain their approval prior to submission. Students should submit evidence of approval with their application, e.g. a copy of the supervisors email approval.

All staff should submit their application to the appropriate email address below.

This application form and examples of your consent form, information sheet and translations of any documents which are not written in English should be submitted by email to the SSIS Ethics Secretary via one of the following email addresses:

ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk   This email should be used by staff and students in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy & Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology.

ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk   This email should be used by staff and students in the Graduate School of Education.

Please note that applicants will be required to submit a new application if ethics approval has not been granted within 1 year of first submission.

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: An exploration of school staff support for children and young people experiencing psychological loss.

Researcher(s) name: Samuel Bougourd

Supervisor(s):   Shirley Larkin
                  Tim Maxwell

This project has been approved for the period

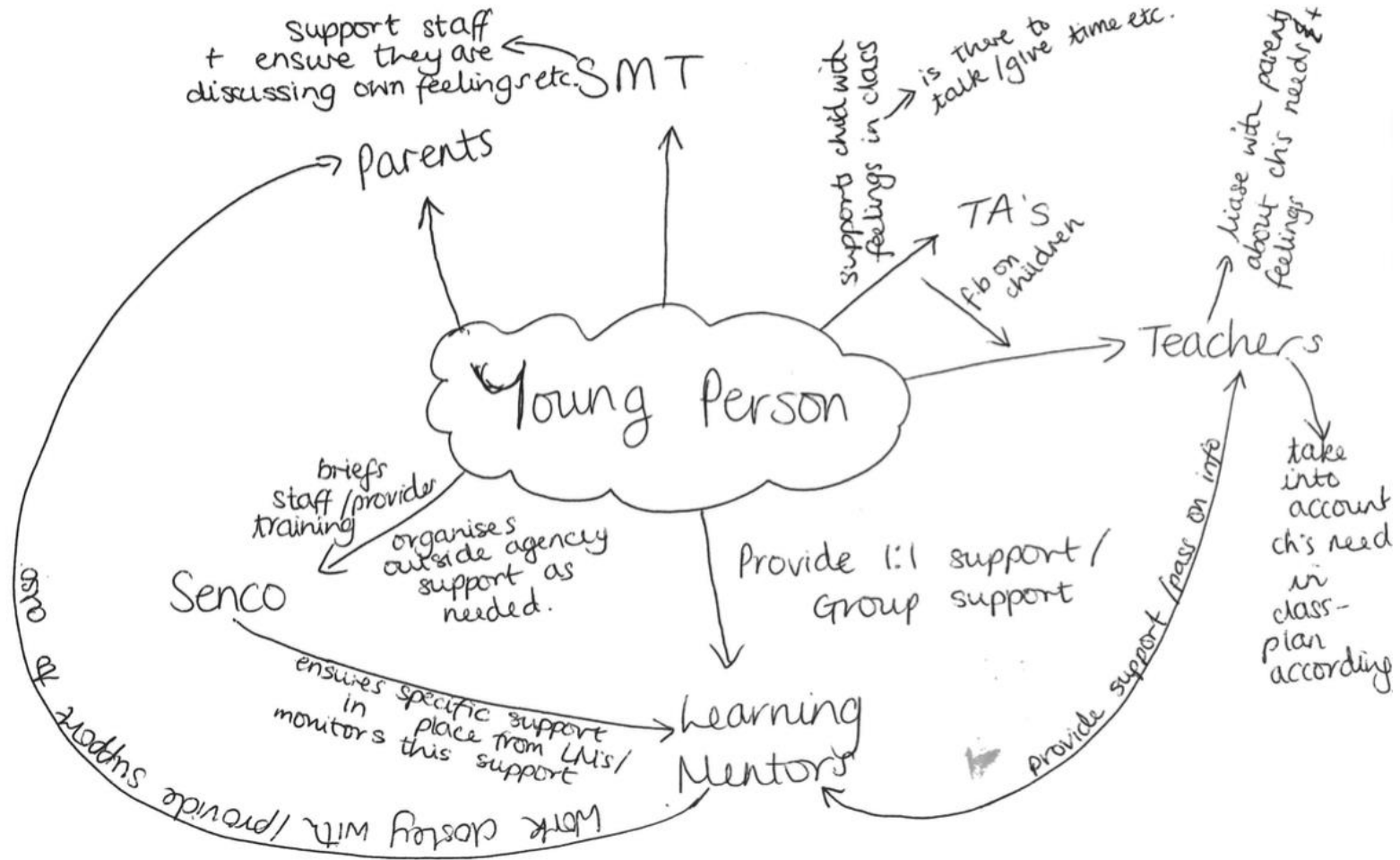   From: 14/03/2017
                  To: 07/09/2018
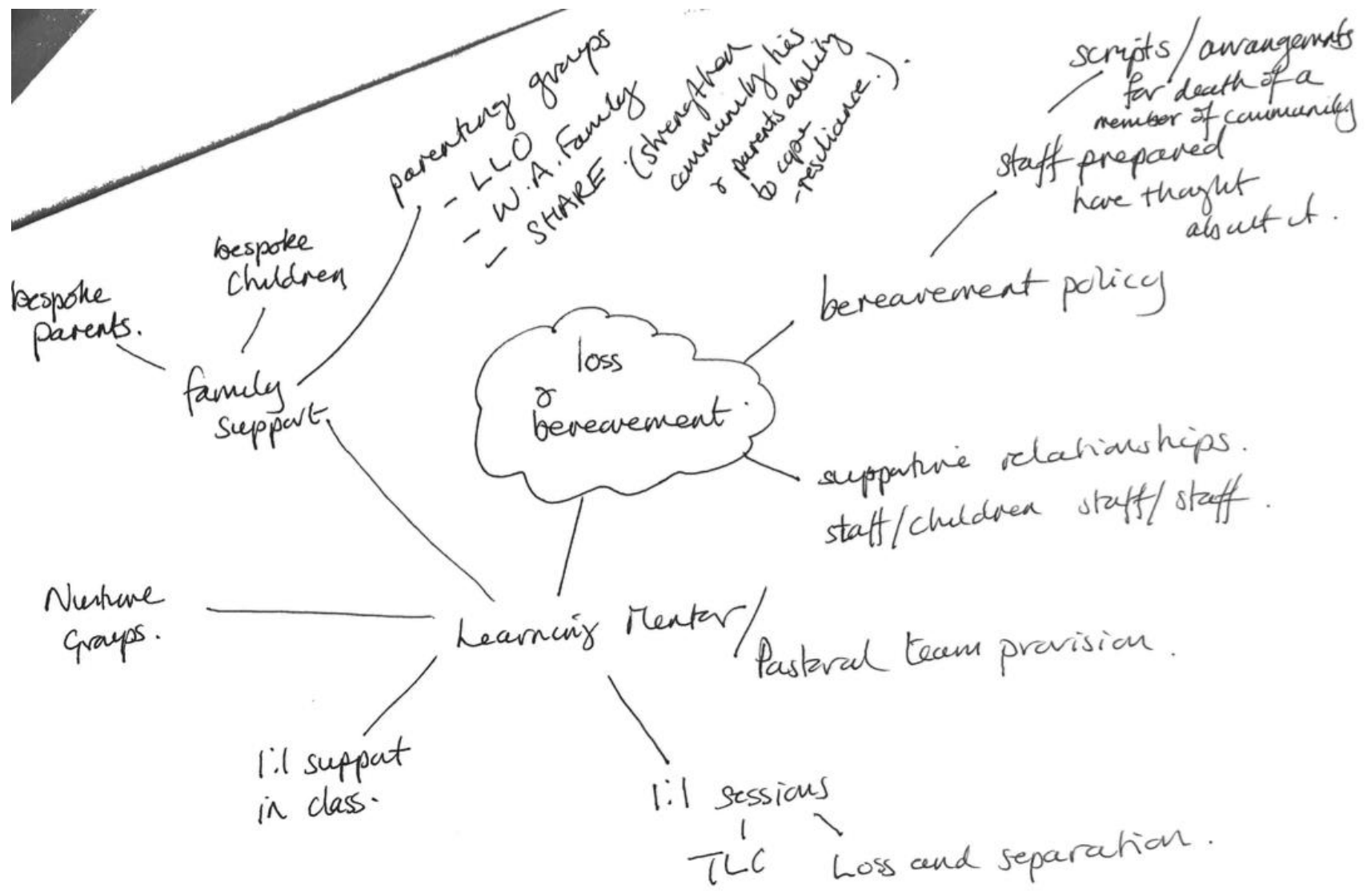
Ethics Committee approval reference:

                  D/16/17/31

Signature: Date: 14/03/2017
(Dr Christopher Boyle, Graduate School of Education Ethics Officer)

parenting groups
— L.L.O
— W.A. Family
— SHARE (strengthen community ties & parents ability to cope - resilience.)

scripts/arrangements for death of a member of community

staff prepared have thought about it.

bespoke Children

bespoke Parents.

family Support.

loss & bereavement.

bereavement policy

supportive relationships. staff/children staff/staff.

Nurture Groups.

Learning Mentor/ Pastoral team provision.

1:1 support in class.

1:1 sessions

TLC   Loss and separation.

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Appendix 8: Information Sheet (Phase Two)

AN EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL STAFF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSS.

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

Who am I?

Hello, my name is Sam Bougourd and I am a student at Exeter University at the Graduate School of Education currently studying on the Doctorate of Educational Psychology (DEdPsych) course.

What am I doing?

As part of my course I am undertaking a two-phase thesis. The research project explores school staff support for children and young people experiencing loss. The research has two overall aims:

- *To map the support provided by school staff to CYPs experiencing psychological loss, across a wide range of school settings.*
- *To design, implement and evaluate a research informed EP intervention to upskill school staff in supporting CYPs with psychological loss.*

Why am I doing this?

Experiences of significant psychological loss or bereavements are life events that are both hugely significant and inevitable. Psychological effects of bereavement can be long lasting and severe, in particular placing children and young people at risk of negative outcomes. Loss therefore, is a very important research area in educational psychology. Most of that research is conducted directly with young people, however there is a need for direct research with school staff who may well provide a great deal of support for children and young people experiencing loss in schools. This research aims to address this need.

How will it work?

The first phase of my research will involve those who participate producing a conceptual map of their school's support for loss and then discussing and developing their map with the researcher during a semi-structured interview. Once all participants have completed their maps and interviews, I will be able to produce an overall conceptual map of school support for loss across a wide range of settings.

The second phase of the research will aim to use the data collected from the first phase inform EP (educational psychology) led training that aims to upskill school staff in their support of

children and young people experiencing loss specifically within their setting. The effectiveness and outcomes of the training will be evaluated as part of the research.

What will you gain from taking part?

It is hoped that by taking part in the first phase of my research you will develop your understanding of how to support children and young people experiencing difficulty with psychological loss within your setting. It is hoped that this development could also bring a benefit to your practice of helping all children and young people experiencing difficulty of some kind.

How do you give your permission to take part?

Everyone who takes part in this research will give their full written consent to participate. Please only give this consent if you want to take part and you feel you have been provided with enough information about the research. Once you have given permission to participate you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

How will the data you provide be used?

The information that you provide during the research will remain anonymous in the writing up of the research. No one reading the research project will be able to identify you or any other participant from the final written product (thesis). All data collected from both phases of the research will be treated with the strictest confidence and not disclosed to any third parties. Your data will be kept safely and securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act and may be kept for up to five years and then safely destroyed.

What happens when the project finishes?

When I have finished collecting all the data for my research, I will go on to write up the findings from both phases of the research in the form of a thesis. Once you have finished your part of the research, you will be debriefed and given the opportunity to ask any questions you have about the research process. If desired, participants that took part in the research can be sent an anonymised summary of the findings of the research.

As the subject of this research is psychological loss it is possible that by participating in it, you may be reminded of uncomfortable feelings or emotions. The following services are available for help and support should you need them:

- *Cruse Bereavement (specialist helpline for advice on loss/bereavement) – 0808 808 1677 or 0117 926 4045*
- *Samaritans (for any help and support) – 116 123*
- *Winston's Wish (charity specialising in supporting young people who have experienced psychological loss – www.winstonswish.org*

If you have questions for my supervisors or I at any time during the research process, please don't hesitate to contact us using the information below.

Samuel Bougourd.   E: sb733@exeter.ac.uk

Shirley Larkin.   E: S.Larkin@exeter.ac.uk

Will Shield.   E: w.shield@exeter.ac.uk

Graduate School of Education,
Exeter University,
St Lukes Campus,
Heavitree Road,
EX1 2LU

Appendix 9: Consent Form (Phase Two)

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

Graduate School of Education
Exeter University,
St Lukes Campus,
Heavitree Road,
EX1 2LU

Dear Participant,

RE: AN EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL STAFF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSS.

Having read the attached information sheet, if you are happy to participate in the research project, I now ask you to provide written consent for your participation.

Please sign below if you:

- are aware of the aims and objectives of the research project
- are aware of what you would be expected to do as part of the research project
- are aware you have the right to withdraw your information from the project at anytime during the research process
- are aware your data will be used to write a thesis
- are aware that your identity will remain anonymous in any information written from this research
- are aware your data may be safely and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act for up to five years from collection until it is destroyed
- are aware of who to contact in the event of any questions regarding the project (at any time during the research process)

Many thanks,

Sam Bougourd.   e: sb733@exeter.ac.uk

Name:

Role:

Signed: Date:

Appendix 10: Training Presentation Slides (Phase Two)

Week 1

Slide 1

Supporting Psychological Loss

SAM BOUGOURD
TRAINEE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
EXETER UNIVERSITY

Slide 2

Week 1

'Theory'

(Today)

- Overview of the initial phase of my research and explanation of how it has informed the current training
- Participants to complete a conceptual map that represents their current understanding of psychological loss – this will be revisited to evaluate the training in session three
- Theoretical research of psychological loss discussed against the context of school staff support

Slide 3

Week 2

'Theory into practice'

(After half term)

- Findings from research and theoretical understandings of loss applied to work within XXX
- Ideas for supporting young people with loss in setting discussed and problem solved
- Actions devised to be put in place within the setting over the next few weeks

Slide 4

Week 3

'Review ad evaluation'

(After two week gap)

- Review of the successes and challenges found with action plans devised in session two
- Consideration of how to further develop support for young people with loss in XXX
- Conceptual maps revisited and discussed in order to evaluate the impact of the training

Slide 5

The story so far...

RESEARCH PHASE ONE

- Conducted 15 semi-structured interviews (informed by concept maps) with school staff across 3 settings
- Comparing how school staff support CYP with loss
- Insights into how this support varied across settings – ages, development, type of setting
- Also explored how external professionals (EPs!) can support staff supporting those CYP experiencing loss – support to support!

OUTCOMES

- Training very important
- Balancing theory with opportunity to plan how theory relates to work in practice
- Provide something that is specific and relevant to setting and cohort of children working with
- 'Reassurance you are doing the right thing'
- Opportunities for group discussion – that is both supportive and problem solving

Slide 6

Concept maps

- Conceptual maps help to visualise information within systems (such as schools)
- Conceptual maps do not necessarily require complete comprehensiveness but should reflect key experiences and perceptions related to your role within your setting
- In order to evaluate this training – draw a conceptual map that represents your current understanding of supporting young people with loss in your setting
- We will revisit this map in the third session

Slide 7

Models of loss

RESEARCH

- Stage models of grief / loss
- Two-track models / dual process models (loss processes and restoration processes)
- Meaning making models – construction and integration

PRACTICE

- Support over time
- Support with dealing with the loss and restorative support around life after the loss
- Support with constructing meaning and integrating into life – practical applications
- Other types of losses?

Slide 8

Responses to loss

RESEARCH

- Most common response to loss is slow, stable, resilient response
- A continuum of response to loss not distinct categories
- Ambiguous loss
- Non-response and post traumatic growth (PTG)

PRACTICE

- Individual differences will mean that CYP will need individualised support?
- Important to consider building resilience?
- Ambiguous circumstances may lead to more complicated response and subsequent support
- Some CYP may not need support?
- Solution focused support?

Support for loss

RESEARCH

- Individualised approach for individual response
- Tasks of mourning
- 'New normal'
- Importance of support networks – school, family, friends

PRACTICE

- Solution focused?
- Awareness of support networks that may or may not be in place for CYP in cohort
- Importance of support network provided by school

9

Next week..
Week 2

'Theory into practice'

(After half term)

- *Findings from research and theoretical understandings of loss applied to work within XXX*
- *Ideas for supporting young people with loss in setting discussed and problem solved*
- *Actions devised to be put in place within the setting over the next few weeks*

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Further Reading

Aucott, C., & Soni, A. (2016). Reflections on the use of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing in schools. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 32*(1), 85–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2015.1112257

Bonanno, G., Wortman, C. B., Lehman, D. R., Tweed, R. G., Haring, M., Sonnega, J., … Nesse, R. M. (2002). Resilience to loss and chronic grief: A prospective study from preloss to 18-months postloss. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(5), 1150–1164. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.83.5.1150

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Hall, C. (2014). Bereavement theory: recent developments in our understanding of grief and bereavement. *Bereavement Care, 33*(1), 7–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/02682621.2014.902610

Holland, J. M., Neimeyer, R. A., Boelen, P. A., & Prigerson, H. G. (2009). The Underlying Structure of Grief: A Taxometric Investigation of Prolonged and Normal Reactions to Loss. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment, 31*(3), 190–201. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10862-008-9113-1

Neimeyer, R. A. (2000). Searching for the meaning of meaning: grief therapy and the process of reconstruction. *Death Studies, 24*(6), 541–558. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481180050121480

Rubin, S. (1981). A two-track model of bereavement: theory and application in research. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 51*(1), 101–109.

Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: rationale and description. *Death Studies, 23*(3), 197–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/074811899201046

Vaterlaus, J. M. (2014). New Normal Project: An Intervention for Grief and Loss. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy, 25*(1), 78–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/08975353.2014.881699

Worden, J. W. (2009). *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.

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Week 2

Supporting
Psychological Loss

SAM BOUGOURD
TRAINEE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
EXETER UNIVERSITY

1

Recap..
Week 1

'Theory'

- *Overview of the initial phase of my research and explanation of how it has informed the current training*
- *Participants to complete a conceptual map that represents their current understanding of psychological loss – this will be revisited to evaluate the training in session three*
- *Theoretical research of psychological loss discussed against the context of school staff support*

2

Recap..
Week 1

Things that were important to staff at XXX:

Language

- Strategies to open difficult conversations with young people around loss/bereavement
- Avoiding saying the wrong thing and potentially making things worse
- Scripts for staff to use in order to facilitate difficult conversations about psychological loss.
- Preventative work around building **resilience** in young people at XXX
- Pastoral systems at XXX and how it allows for the support of CYP here.

3

Week 2

'Theory into practice'

(Today)

- *Findings from previous session applied to work within XXX around psychological loss*
- *Ideas for supporting young people with loss in setting discussed and problem solved with help of loss materials*
- *Actions devised to be put in place within the setting over the next few weeks*

4

150

Outcomes
From today..

- Time to consider/discuss/problem-solve the areas we defined as important.
- Use information/guidance to help formulate an **action plan** that can be put in place over next few weeks.
- Really important we get the action plan in place by the end of the session.

5

Next week..
Week 3
'Review ad evaluation'
(After two week gap)

- *Review of the successes and challenges found with action plans devised in session two*
- *Consideration of how to further develop support for young people with loss in XXX – possibly include solution focused discussion of pastoral system.*
- *Conceptual maps revisited and discussed in order to evaluate the impact of the training*

6

Week 3

Supporting Psychological Loss

SAM BOUGOURD
TRAINEE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
EXETER UNIVERSITY

1

Recap..
Week 2
'Theory into practice'
(2 weeks ago)

- *Findings from previous session applied to work within XXX around psychological loss*
- *Ideas for supporting young people with loss in setting discussed and problem solved with help of loss materials*
- *Actions devised to be put in place within the setting over the next few weeks*

2

This week
Week 3
'Review ad evaluation'
(Today)

- *Review of the successes and challenges found with action plans devised in session two*
- *Conceptual maps revisited and discussed in order to evaluate the impact of the training*
- *Evaluation forms!**
- *Consideration of how to further develop support for young people with loss in XXX – including solution focused discussion of pastoral system.*

3

Review
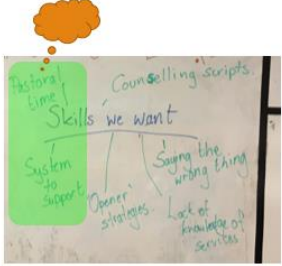Successes and challenges...

Action plan from last week..

4

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Slide 5

EVALUATION: Conceptual Map (Week One)
Review

1. Evaluation forms..
2. Conceptual map from week one..

Slide 6

Developing skills further?
Wider systems at XXX?

Slide 7

THANK YOU!
Any questions / information:
sb733@exeter.ac.uk

Thanks

Psychological loss
Training feedback

Name:

Role:

Please rate your **knowledge** about psychological loss

None									Very Good	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Before										
After										

Please rate your **confidence** of working with young people experiencing psychological loss in your setting

Not at all									Very Confident	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Before										
After										

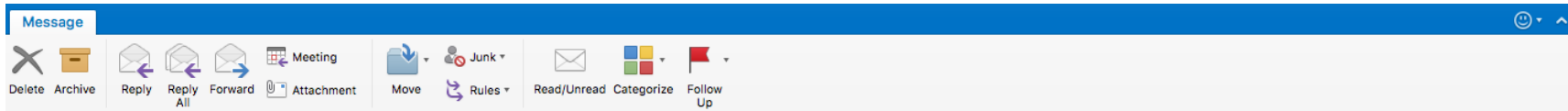| How would you rate	Poor 1	2	3	Excellent 4
Explanation of the topics				
Relevance to your work				
Helpful in developing your skills				

What did you find most useful?

What did you find least useful?

What will you do differently after this course?

Comments:

Thanks for all your time over the last few weeks!

Appendix 12: Feedback Email (Phase Two)

HI Sam - I hope this is ok - apologies for any typos - if you need more, let me know.

The balance of theory vs practical elements of the training
Well, i think in the time you had - you did as much as you could! It would have been interesting to find out more about how loss affects development.

Did the training feel relevant and specific to your cohort at VLC and if so did this help?
Yes - as our conversation led us in teh first session - if you scratch under the surface at a PRU you realise pretty much 100% of the students are there due to the impact of loss in their lives.

What elements of the training were most useful?
I think it has been an amazing trigger - staff are talking about this at school - both identifying with it on a personal level and also how we can support students. I think it has helped with our approach with some of our students - although we are aware of student backgrounds etc, its always good to put your feet in their shoes so to speak. I think the course has been quite refreshing. We often talk about what it is not there but we were becoming a bit stagnant consistently looking at it from the approach of what support/services etc should be in place but are sadly not. Its empowered staff - they are discussing ideas etc during our meet up times, they are realising what skills they have themselves and what we as a group can bring to the table.
With the changes to education/what prus are expected to achieve academically, a lot of the emotional literacy is being lost - nearly all time is focused on academic subjects. DUe to our small ratios we still offer extremely high pastoral care but the training sparked a big conversation between staff and SLT about how there really needs to be more ways of supporting them and that chats with students in break times isnt really covering it! The assembly worked really well and staff would like to run more sessions like that looking at different types of loss eg not being close to family. and that chats with students in break times will cover it. I think staff are looking at what coping skills we can best endow our students with and how just being open and talking about loss is a really solid foundation to start from.

What elements were least useful? Were there any that you felt needed expanding on?

We needed more time really to put things in to action - probably a term or even 2 terms before reviewing it - especially with blending or developing some of our literacy session times into emotional literacy. It takes time to weave something like that into school.

What did you feel might be missing from the training / what might you like to add to it for next time?
Possibly would have been good to have scenarios - so people could practise scripts/language/approaches - possibly use case study either made up or from school and how we could support them.

Appendix 13: Feedback Data (Phase Two)

Table 1. Number of participants rating their knowledge of psychological loss before and after the training.

	None 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Very Good 9	10	Total
Before			1	1	3	1	3				**9**
After					2			3	4		**9**

Table 2. Number of participants rating their confidence of working with young people experiencing psychological loss before and after the training.

	Not at all 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Very confident 9	10	Total
Before				2	2		4		1		**9**
After					1			5	1	2	**9**

Table 3. Number of participants rating the training for: (i) explanation of topics, (ii) relevance to work and (iii) help in developing skills.

	Poor 1	2	3	Excellent 4	Total
Explanation of the topics			5	4	**9**
Relevance to your work			5	4	**9**
Helpful in developing your skills			4	5	**9**