Approaching the topic of death in English mainstream primary schools: Teachers' responses following terror attacks in England

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers.

In the wake of recent terror attacks, it is important that schools are prepared for the eventualities of further terror attacks to support children through such traumatic periods. This study seeks to address the following research questions.

Research questions

1) How do teachers respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
2) How do senior management respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
3) Are terror attacks discussed in morning briefings with staff and are strategies put in place to support pupils?
4) How do pupils respond to terror attacks?
5) How do parents respond to terror attacks?
6) What support is available for teachers?

This study was conducted in the North-East of England. There were 16 participants involved in this study, 10 teachers and 6 senior leaders, across 9 state primary schools.

A semi-structured interview was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data within this study. Content analysis was used to evaluate the data set collected and identify themes within the context of this research. Within the research, all participants expressed a concern about the lack of support available following traumatic incidents where trauma and bereavement were involved.

This study concluded that there are clear differences in current practices in schools following terror attacks in England. Schools, on the whole, are reactive to traumatic incidents. This study indicated that the approach within schools was also dependent on previous encounters in dealing with trauma and grief. A more proactive approach is needed to support pupils and teachers alike, following horrific incidents such as terror attacks.

Contents

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Finally, I would like to take a moment to remember the loved ones who have sadly passed from this life.

Grief is not a sign of weakness – Grief is the price of love.

Jordan George Warren

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

The main aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond to terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers.

In the wake of recent terror attacks, it is imperative that schools are prepared for the eventualities of further terror attacks to support children through these traumatic periods - as the media reporting such frequent terror attacks is causing stress and anxiety to both teachers and pupils alike (Pfefferbaum et al., 2001). This study explores how teachers are responding in schools following terror attacks and what support is available for teachers.

As outlined by Berson and Baggerly (2009), children who are exposed to trauma often suffer from both short-term and long-term consequences; these can contribute to physical and mental health issues. There is, therefore, a need for schools to ensure they are fully supporting pupils following traumatic terror attacks. In these unsettling periods, following terror attacks, it is essential that schools and teachers create a classroom environment which is responsive and supportive of the needs of all pupils (Berson and Baggerly, 2009). Further, teachers are often required, with little or no training or support, to support children emotionally following the trauma of a terror attack (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004). This can be overwhelming for teachers particularly when there is a lack of guidance and support. Without clear support and guidance for teachers in this context, increased workload is likely. This can place enormous strain on teachers. It is foreseeable that such an increase in workload is likely to cause unnecessary stress and anxiety (Holman, 2003).

As outlined by Khan and Pell (2017), our current education system is in the midst of a teaching ‘crisis’; student numbers continue to grow, whilst the efforts to recruit and retain outstanding teachers fall short of what is required to maintain a world class education system. Within this ‘crisis’ it is easy to overlook the importance of the emotional welfare of children and teachers alike. Within our lives we are presented with one inevitability - death. Although unavoidable, ‘death’ is regarded as a taboo subject within our society. Leaman (1995). Puolimatka and Solasaari (2006) and Chadwick (2012) have explored the notion of ‘death education’ extensively and conclude within their research that the topic of death should not be ignored within our current education system. This is true within the context of this study – research is needed to uncover how well schools are supporting children following the traumatic event of a terror attack. Schools need to be proactive to ensure mistakes aren’t made. Further, teachers need to feel fully supported to ensure their self-efficacy is steadfast within such context. Bandura (1977, 2004) argues that self-efficacy, put

simply, is the belief an individual has in their own ability to complete a task. Further, Bandura highlights that self-efficacy is the belief that one can master a situation and produce positive outcomes.

Leaman (1995) suggests that death should be dealt with throughout the curriculum in a holistic approach. The difficulty arising from such a holistic approach is that, due to the vast differences in capabilities of teachers, the delivery of a 'death education' will vary in quality. As in problem solving in maths, we should have a greater focus on developing the emotional welfare of children explicitly through providing opportunities to build strategies to cope with difficult situations. Children who are able to identify their emotions will be much more suited to learning as they are able to identify the emotional issue and resolve it, thus able to make greater progress than that of a child who is unable to identify their emotions (Leaman, 1995).

This area of research is of particular interest for myself as in addition to teaching, I also work within the Church of England as an organist. Too often I see children mourning the loss of a close relative. Within my role as an organist, I have always questioned the understanding children have of the concept of 'death'. I have also questioned the provision schools have in place to deal with the topic of death, and if in fact schools make any provision for such a sensitive topic.

These initial research interests were further developed following the Manchester Arena bombing attack in 2017. As a teacher at the time it was clear that there was confusion and uncertainty within schools about what part they should take in discussing the terror attack. Within the school I was teaching at the time, it seemed to me that there was a missed learning opportunity surrounding the attack. Children were questioning the horrific events that had unfolded the previous evening and as teachers - we were unsure about what should be said and done. It was clear at that moment that there was a clear lack of support following such traumatic incidents. This led to the main research focus – How do schools and teachers respond to terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers?

1) How do teachers respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
2) How do senior management respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
3) Are terror attacks discussed in morning briefings with staff and are strategies put in place to support pupils?

4) How do pupils respond to terror attacks?
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Before reading further consider for a moment the following scenario: In the morning you have to teach a class of 25 children, all of which have the same question. All of which are feeling unimaginably bereaved and struggling to understand the atrocities which have occurred the previous evening. A classmate has died in a serious incident. You can pre-empt the inquisition to some extent but it is impossible to fully prepare. As the 'more knowledgeable other' you are responsible to support those children emotionally. You are responsible to ensure that those children develop the necessary skills to deal with these types of events in their future life. Now, who do you turn to? Where can you turn for support? How can you be certain that what you say will support those children suitably? And more importantly, where do you find the support if you are feeling overwhelmed by the situation?

As death is a natural part of life, at some point throughout our lives we experience losing a loved one and it is sometimes difficult to deal with the overwhelming emotions associated with death and the feelings of losing a loved one. This period within life is challenging, even for those who are developed physically, mentally and emotionally. However, children are not yet fully developed or equipped with the ability to understand death physically or mentally. Further, without proper instruction and scaffolding, children do not understand or know how to deal with the complex emotions they experience during the grieving period (Willis, 2002).

Therefore, I strongly believe that schools should make provision for children to learn about the topic of death. In addition to this I believe that children should be given the opportunity to explore the topic of death and discuss their feelings of the topic. I believe that this is essential for them to develop emotionally and obtain a greater understanding of the topic of death. I argue that by allowing children to develop these abilities through a proactive and pre-emptive approach, children will ultimately become aware of their emotions and how to deal with them - thus becoming more successful learners. These skills would allow children to apply within a magnitude of scenarios within their lives. Further, this development would provide them with the ability to cope with a period of grief in their lives should they lose a loved one.

Within my undergraduate dissertation and throughout my teaching practice I have found that there is very little support when it comes to approaching the topic of death within the classroom. Without research based support within the classroom, we must challenge the

stigma associated with ‘death education’ - as lack of support causes serious concern within the delivery of such a sensitive topic.

Within this research I will interview a number of teachers and senior leaders from state primary schools in the North-East of England. The focus of the interviews will be on how teachers respond following a terror attack in England and what support is offered to pupils. In addition to this I will aim to uncover how supported teachers feel within such contexts.

During the interview I will use a range of open and closed questions to gather a range of qualitative and quantitative data. The data set will be then analysed to formulate a discussion surrounding the research questions. To analyse the data, I shall use thematic content analysis to answer the research questions and identify and themes within the research

The presentation and analysis of results sections will be divided into three chapters: ‘Identifying key themes’, ‘Proactivity vs reactivity’ and ‘Shift in perspective’.

The nature of the chapter ‘Identifying key themes’ is to answer the key research questions. Within this section, the researcher will identify how teachers and schools respond following a terror attack in England. Additionally, this chapter will identify evidence of good and shared practice within and across schools. Finally, this chapter will discuss the responses of teachers in terms of how well they feel supported within such traumatic circumstances.

Within the ‘Proactivity vs reactivity’ I will explore how well schools are prepared to deal with traumatic events – especially those which involve terror attacks. This analysis will provide insight into current practice and if the systems that are adopted at current are fit for purpose. Additionally, within this section I will explore the notion of objectivity to subjectivity within the context of responding to terror attacks in England. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the need for further research regarding best practice when dealing with extremely traumatic topics such as dealing with terror attacks. This will provide insight into the potential needs of schools in the future.

The chapter ‘Shift in perspective’ will make reference to the findings within this piece of research and discuss the need for a shift in perspective regarding current practice within primary schools in England. As with sex education, gender and sexuality – the notion of trauma, death and terror needs to be discussed within schools. This will explore how schools can do this best to support primary aged pupils. This section will also take into consideration

the technological advancements. Currently, children have the internet at their finger tips – it is easy for children to make an ill informed judgement when they are not presented with all of the facts. It is important as educators that we ensure we use all opportunities to educate children about the world in which we live – for better or worse.

This research area is both vast and complex, it is, therefore, possible to explore this area through many critical lenses and theoretical models within education. It would be impossible, within the scope of this research, to fully explore these and discuss them with reference to the context of this research. Due to the complexity of this research I have also had to narrow down my study - I will look at the support offered to children and the support offered to teachers. This will look both the proactive approach (to ensure children develop the skills required) and the reactive approach (to ensure children are able to cope with serious incidents).

Within this piece of research, I have narrowed down the research focus to the key research questions already discussed. At current there is a clear need for this research to be conducted. Due to the rise in use of digital technology, news and other sources of information are easily accessible to children of all ages. As revealed by the Children's Commissioner (2018), children are spending more time than ever accessing the internet and using digital technology. The report also found that some primary school children had access to unrestricted use of the internet and digital devices. Further, the report found that some parents are unaware of the types of material their children are accessing whilst using digital devices. This report highlights the clear need for high-quality classroom support, to ensure teachers are able to develop pupils' awareness with regard to the safe use of digital technology.

It is crucial that children be given the opportunity to learn and talk about death within the classroom. Ryerson (1977) highlights that sometimes parents avoid the topic of death and are very awkward about discussing it with children. Many parents' hesitation to talk to children about death in a straightforward way likely stems from their own fears of death, which may have origins in the way that their own parents spoke to them about it. The implication is that this matter-of-fact manner of explaining death is likely to perpetuate a cycle of faulty communication between parents and children.

Thus, as educators, the burden falls on us to ensure we create a classroom environment which is responsive and supportive of the needs of all pupils - no matter the context or circumstance.

Literature review

Within this piece of research, there are many areas which need to be discussed to ensure the context of the research can be thoroughly understood. Within the scope of this research it would be impossible to comprehensively explore all literature relating to the research area. Within this literature review, the researcher has carefully selected literature with the aim to provide the most insight into the research to contextualise the study.

What are schools doing to approach the topic of death?

Haynes and Murris (2012) raise an interesting discussion, claiming that we underestimate children and their ability to handle complex emotions. They outline that the topic death should be discussed within philosophical inquiry, also known as P4C (philosophy for children), provoked by picture books dealing with the topic of death. Within practice, as a teacher, I have first-hand experience of delivering P4C sessions. As discussed by Haynes and Murris (2012), the use of picture books have their use for exploring the topic of death in the classroom – however, picture books alone do not provide high quality resources to discuss the topic of death. This is left to the teacher to create a session in which pupils are able to explore and discuss their understanding and feelings. Further, it is recognised that many practitioners are uncertain about discussing death with children in the classroom outlined by Haynes and Murris (2012, P. 11) and Wollman-Bonilla (1998). We must, therefore, question the suitability of such practice if there is any uncertainty. Pei-Mia Tsai (2010 p. 3) supports this further, discussing the uncertainty she faced as a teacher during the events of 9/11 when the World Trade Centre was attacked, it is outlined that many of the practitioners at the time within the school suggested they ignore the trauma of the events and continue with the everyday curriculum. As educators, if we choose to ignore an issue, how can we expect children to deal with their emotions and grief in the future?

Wolf (1996, pp. 85-86) and Chadwick (2012) examine this idea of discussing death in the classroom and concur that it is part of the natural cycle of life and should not be hidden from children as, just like adults, children naturally wonder about death. The example Wolf (1996, pp. 85-86) puts forward is the idea of the death of a classroom pet. Here it is pointed out that it is helpful for children to talk about death to voice their questions and ideas in a safe environment to freely express their grief. Wolf (1996, pp. 85-86) then gives a specific example within a classroom showing how the teacher used children's literature to invite a

philosophical discussion with the children about death, the book 'Badger's Parting Gifts' was used successfully and invited the children to discuss the difficult topic and helped the children share special memories they had of the classroom pet. In addition to the philosophical discussion the children were also allowed to see the dead animal to give the children an understanding of the finality of death and a chance to talk about how they were feeling.

Haynes and Murris (2012, pp. 10-11) correspond with the idea of introducing picture books to approach the topic of death and examine 'Frog and the Bird song' and its merits within the context. It is highlighted that the book does not focus exclusively on emotions, but merely encourages the children to think about what happens after death, this is in line with the discussions formed by Willis (2002), Chadwick (2012) and Puolimatka and Solasaari (2006). The light-heartedness and humour of the book gives the book particular credibility for practitioners exploring the topic of death within the classroom, as it does not focus on the raw emotions.

Supporting this method is Willis (2002) who outlines that just like adults, children of all ages need time and understanding in order to process the concept of death and dying. Willis (2002) puts forward the idea that there are 4 components relative to children's understanding of death, which include; the irreversibility factor of death; the finality of death; the inevitability of death and the causality of death. Willis (2002) discusses the historical context of the topic of death, and outlines that 100 years ago death was a natural part of family life and was accepted and understood by all family members, however, currently children grow up in a culture that avoids grief and denies the inevitability of death. Puolimatka and Solasaari (2006) and Chadwick (2012) support this, outlining that death is a taboo subject within society and is unavoidable, therefore should not be ignored within education.

As outlined by Hand and Levinson (2012), 'discussion' is considered the best approach amongst educational researchers when exploring traumatic topics with children within an educational context. It is unsurprising therefore that many practitioners choose guided discussions to approach the topic of death within the classroom.

Although 'discussion' is highly commended by educational researchers for being one of the best approaches when exploring traumatic topics with children within the classroom, some consider films, such as Disney, as an encouraging way to approach the topic of death within the classroom. Cox et al. (2005) explore this idea of using Disney films to assist teachers in

approaching the topic of ‘death’ within the classroom and contend that for many children, their concepts of death are based on the portrayal of death within such Disney films. Although, Cox et al (2005) go on to outline that children do not have a working understanding of death until around the age of 10. From the discussion formulated thus far there are emerging themes with regard to practice in schools – it is clear that an initial stimulus is used to formulate discussions surrounding the topic of death. Despite commonalities in practice, the outcomes will ultimately rest on the skillset of the teacher.

Why should schools respond to trauma?

Trauma, as defined by the American Psychological Association (2018), is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, terror attack, rape or natural disaster. It is important to highlight at this point that the response is emotional – not physical. When dealing with pupils who have been involved in a serious incident, schools need to be mindful that each incident needs to be assessed individually. There is no objective approach when dealing with trauma as each case will be different. Thus, schools need to ensure that their staff are fully prepared to act following a traumatic period; it is important that this response is well thought-out.

As outlined by Berson and Baggerly (2009), children who are exposed to trauma often suffer from both short-term and long-term consequences; these can contribute to physical and mental health issues. There is, therefore, a need for schools to ensure they are fully supporting pupils following traumatic terror attacks. In these unsettling periods, following terror attacks, it is essential that schools and teachers create a classroom environment which is responsive and supportive of the needs of all pupils (Berson and Baggerly, 2009). Further, teachers are often required, with little or no training or support, to support children emotionally following the trauma of a terror attack (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004).

It is important that schools respond to trauma to support pupils as immediately after a traumatic event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways of managing their emotions (American Psychological Association, 2018)

This notion of ‘trauma’ is critical within this research as a terror attack is a traumatic event. A school’s response should be in dealing with the trauma. As defined by the American

Psychological Association (2018) acts of terror are purposefully designed to scare people and make them fearful for the safety of their community and their loved ones. The incidents are random, unpredictable, intentional and often target defenceless individuals. When these events occur, it is common to feel anxious and concerned about the future. Within the context of this research, schools, teachers, parents and pupils are all likely to be affected by the occurrence of a terror attack. To ensure that anxiety and trauma is dealt with schools must ensure their response is prompt and steadfast.

The American Psychological Association (2018) highlight that schools should take steps to build resilience — the ability to adapt well to unexpected changes and events — this can help people manage distress and uncertainty. The American Psychological Association (2018) then go on to outline that building resilience is essential for a healthy lifestyle, and adopting resilience can improve your overall emotional and physical well-being. After traumatic events, it is helpful to reach out to others and develop empathy. It can also be an opportunity to learn more — find out what scares you and then get information about these types of situations — and to act more — use the information to prepare for the future, make plans for responding and participate actively in the community (American Psychological Association, 2018). With this discussion in mind, it is clear that there is the need for schools to be proactive both before and after the unlikely occurrence of a terror attack.

Schools are often required deal with traumatic incidents - this may include family problems, past experiences or a serious incident involving a friend. As a whole, schools are very likely to have dealt with these types of scenarios from one time to another. It is at this point it is worth noting that a terror attack can be a traumatic event. Obviously the level of trauma will depend on the child's perceived level of involvement. This is not something that is easily quantifiable.

It could be possible that a child with very little involvement in a terror attack could watch something on TV or social media and perceive a higher involvement. Equally, a child could have been at the centre of a terror attack and perceive that they have very little involvement in the incident. Each individual case needs to be delicately assessed by the school in order to ascertain what support the child/children need. Most importantly schools need to ensure that pupils are aware that support is available for pupils following any type of trauma.

Wolmer et al. (2011) focuses their research on pupils who have suffered trauma following the second Lebanon War, July 2006. Contextually, Hezbollah delivered about 4,000 rockets

to the populated areas in the north of Israel, killing 44 civilians and wounding hundreds, causing fires and severe damage to civilian property. During the war, which occurred during the summer vacation, entire families spent a great part of their days in bomb shelters. Experiencing traumatic events associated with war and its aftermath affects the mental health of individuals and communities (Wolmer et al., 2011). Similarly, following a terror attack in England, many pupils will witness both casualties and death. As outlined by Laor et al., 1997; Laor, Wolmer, Spirman, & Wiener, 2003; Lonigan, Phillips, & Richey, 2003, mental health issues such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression have been identified among pupils exposed terrorism worldwide.

Examining 80 disaster events, Norris, Byrne, Diaz & Kaniasty (2001) found that pupils showed more severe impairment than adults. Following disaster exposure, many children also display negative effects in the area of cognition including deficits in memory and learning ability, deterioration in school performance (Pynoos & Nader, 1988), and their risk for subsequent development of psychopathology is higher (Schwartz & Perry, 1994; Van der Kolk, 1989).

Dealing with trauma

The American Psychological Association (2018) provide advice for individuals following trauma. Contextually, schools must adopt these practices to ensure they are positively responding to the traumatic event. The American Psychological Association (2018) outline that it is important to take a break from the news as watching endless news coverage of the attack can make stress even greater. Within the context of schools, this would be ensuring that pupils were aware of the facts of the attack and ensuring that the pupils knew that they were safe in school. The American Psychological Association (2018) then explain that the news coverage can be distressing to children; it is important to be particularly sensitive to children's exposure to the news, and be prepared to answer questions they may have about how or why this traumatic event occurred. As a school, a response needs to be in place as soon as an educational professional is aware that an attack has taken place. This is essential to ensure no mistakes are made in school and the response in unified and consistent.

Further, it is important to ensure that pupils know that the risk of a terror attack is relatively low. The American Psychological Association (2018) develop this notion, while tragic events do occur, they are relatively rare. Remember that government agencies and affiliated organisations have plans in place to prevent attacks and maintain national safety and

security. Recognise that trained officials throughout the country are mobilised to prevent, prepare for and respond to acts of terror. Bad things can happen, but it is important to appreciate the many things that are a positive source of well-being and strength. This point is particularly important as children can often fail to see the wider picture of what is going on – as educational professionals we must ensure they feel safe within their day to day lives.

When dealing with a traumatic event it is important to have a plan in place. Within the context of schools this, as discussed by the American Psychological Association (2018), means that children are aware of plans during an emergency. Having an emergency plan in place will make pupils feel in control and prepared for the unexpected. When discussing with pupils, it is essential that they understand who they can trust and who they should contact in the event of a traumatic event. This discussion should also include the importance of the emergency services in the event of a traumatic event such as a terror attack.

Schools responding to terror attacks

How schools respond following terror attacks is important in defusing the aim of the terror attack. How a child perceives a terror attack could potentially very frightening and stressful to a pupil who does not fully understand the aim of a terror attack. Almeida & Moroz (2017) produced a document surrounding how to deal with terror attacks on the whole. Using this document, it is possible to identify some key themes on how public services respond following terror attacks. Almeida & Moroz (2017) highlight that statutory services including the police, ambulance service, hospitals and local authorities provide a myriad of services to ensure those affected receive emergency treatment and feel safe. Extending this to schools it is again essential to ensure that pupils know that the emergency services are there to help and support those in need. However, this key document does not provide an insight into how schools should, or have, responded following a terror attack. Almeida & Moroz (2017) fall short on outlining key practices within schools.

Within the context of this research it has been incredibly difficult to gain an insight into current practice with regard to how schools respond to terror attacks. The literature available does not allow for in-depth analysis of how schools deal with this topic as there is no readily available data on this topic. As previously discussed, a terror attack can be categorised as a form of trauma. Trauma, as a topic, has been much more widely researched. As there are links between trauma and terror attacks there is also a link with regard to literature.

Wolmer et al. (2011) highlights that following a terror attack, which causes trauma to a number of pupils, it is important that there is a response as it becomes a critical public health problem requiring the implementation of cost-effective innovative approaches to mitigate suffering and to swiftly rehabilitate functioning. Wolmer et al. (2011) discuss how schools have several advantages as sites for implementation of post-terror interventions. First, school-based programmes cope with terror survivors' reluctance to seek help. Children's routine attendance at school produces higher compliance rates (Lindy, Grace, & Green, 1981; Schwartz & Kowalski, 1992). In addition, symptoms such as attention difficulties and behavioural problems, tend to appear specifically in a learning environment (Pfefferbaum, 1997; Wolmer, Laor, Dedeoglu, Siev, & Yazgan, 2005; Wolmer, Laor, & Yazgan, 2003; Yule & Williams, 1990). The familiar and intensive teacher–student relationship allows for immediate feedback and follow-up, avoiding undesirable stigma of being singled out for special treatment from other education professionals such as an educational psychologist (Klingman, 1993; Wolmer et al., 2003).

It is important for schools to respond to terror attacks as school is a very familiar and natural environment for pupils; this is a critical post terror coping tool (Vernberg, La Greca, Silverman, & Prinstein, 1996). Traumatised children appreciate talking to others with similar experiences and discovering that they respond appropriately to the event (Vernberg & Vogel, 1993; Yule & Williams, 1990). Whilst supporting children in school, teacher led, it is important to note that pupils need the time to discuss events with their fellow pupils. In addition, engaging the children within the classroom environment with a familiar set of rules and routines conveys a message of normalcy following a traumatic event such as a terror attack (Klingman, 1993; Wolmer et al., 2003).

In one school, Galante and Foa (1986) found that monthly sessions discussing the traumatic event were effective in reducing post-traumatic symptoms of children exposed to an earthquake. A similar approach, following a major earthquake in Armenia, resulted in a significant decrease in PTSD symptoms (Goenjian, 1993). We must at this point question the reliability of these approaches within the schools. How was the reduction in post-traumatic symptoms quantified and monitored? Further, the educational professionals involved will have had a slight bias as they were working towards an agenda of reducing post-traumatic symptoms. Whilst this example isn't specifically terror related, the trauma aspect of a terror attack is present within both contexts.

Wolmer et al. (2011) further present a case, following an earthquake, where a whole-school revitalisation took place. This revitalisation involved the training of teachers by mental health

professionals to provide efficient clinical intervention to support pupils (Wolmer et al., 2003). It was highlighted in Wolmer et al. (2011) that, although teachers and children may be traumatised by the same disaster, most teachers were willing to enrol in the training process and accept a leadership position once they understand their role as educators and were assured that they would be properly supported. Wolmer et al. (2011) outline that teachers are trusted figures in a child's life, who provide a sense of physical security and offer factual information about disasters and their consequences (Vernberg et al., 1996).

Another case presented by Wolmer et al. (2011), describes how teachers were trained to employ a supervised structured protocol of eight 2-hour classroom sessions, reaching the whole school population within one month (Wolmer et al., 2003). Through the vehicle of an imaginary character who writes letters to the children and invites them to share, discuss, and process their experiences, the original intervention provided psycho-education (e.g., explanation of symptoms and their course, coping strategies), narrative techniques, play activities, and ongoing documentation in personal diaries for reprocessing traumatic experiences in eight school sessions delivered by homeroom teachers. Contents included restructuring traumatic experiences, dealing with intrusive thoughts, establishing a safe place, learning about the earthquake, mourning the ruined city, controlling body sensations, confronting posttraumatic dreams, understanding reactions in the family, coping with loss, anger, guilt, and death, extracting life lessons, and planning for the future.

In a follow-up study of this school based practice, Wolmer et al. (2011) found a significant immediate symptomatic decrease in children exposed to the disaster. This improvement continued over the course of 3 years in the assessed domains: post-trauma, grief, and dissociation (Wolmer et al., 2005). Most importantly, compared to a matched control group, the participants displayed better academic, social, and behavioural adaptation 3 years after the disaster.

How do pupils and parents respond following terror attacks?

Stemming from a concern that children frequently are overlooked in the aftermath of terrorism and disaster (Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006) conducted a study surrounding the responses following terror attacks. This study by Noppe, Noppe & Bartell (2006), highlight that following terror attacks suggestions about how to explain the attacks to children and help them regain their sense of safety and security were initiated and welcomed by many mental health professionals.

Following the terror attack on the World Trade Centre, 2001, Goldman (2003) reported responses of stress and trauma in children who witnessed or lost loved ones in the attack on the Pentagon. Furthermore, she noted that past experiences with death and loss may be a factor that magnifies the child's reaction to the September 11th attacks. Noppe, Noppe & Bartell (2006) argue that another factor to be taken into consideration with respect to children's responses to September 11th is their age. More so than ever, there was a realisation that even infants and very young children could be deeply stressed by this national public tragedy.

Another case, presented by Gurwitch, Sitterle, Young & Pfefferbaum (2002), found signs of post-traumatic stress disorder in middle and high school students from Oklahoma City six months after the bombing of the Murrah federal office building. Perhaps because of their heightened emotional sensitivity, adolescents may deeply feel the impact of disasters, even when they are remote. Terr et al. (1999) found that children and adolescents showed evidence of stress subsequent to the space shuttle Challenger explosion in 1986, that this was particularly true for children living on the East Coast, and that fears and diminished expectations for the future persisted past the first anniversary of the tragedy.

Recent research on adolescents' responses to the attacks on September 11th suggest that high school students living in Northern California (3,000 miles away from the World Trade Centre) reported symptoms consistent with PTSD, such as having unwanted thoughts about the attacks, thinking that it might happen again, and not enjoying things as much as before (Whalen, Henker, King, Jamner, & Levine, 2004). Such fears in young adolescents may even spill over to concerns about dying from other disasters. Halpern-Felsher and Millstein (2002) found that California 9th graders were more likely to believe that they could die in a tornado or earthquake after September 11th than before the disaster. Although proximity is an important factor in terms of the severity of the reactions to a public tragedy, it is becoming clear from research findings such as those by Halpern-Felsher and Millstein that the psychological impact of September 11th extended far beyond the sites of the attacks. However, even in the face of disaster, people can behave and think in positive ways. For example, in addition to survey responses suggesting heightened fear and anxiety since the attacks of September 11th, Whalen et al. (2004) also found that many adolescents reported positive changes in their attitudes toward themselves and others as a result of the tragedy. Such behaviours suggest that a number of adolescents manifested characteristics of resilience, or ‘‘good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development’’ (Masten, 2001, p. 228). In an effort to understand how resilience might be operative in coping with September 11th, Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin (2003) presented pre-

and post-September 11 data collected from a group of University of Michigan students, and found that students scoring high on a measure of trait resilience were able to use a variety of positive emotions to moderate the effects of depressive symptoms experienced by so many in the aftermath of the tragedy. Indeed, Bonanno (2004) offered evidence that in the face of adversity resilience may be fairly common.

Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006 found that in terms of the consequences of September 11th, both students and their teachers were acutely aware of the instant change in their world order. Many understood that things would never be as they were prior to that date, and many adolescents were concerned about what was to happen next. Linley, Joseph, Cooper, Harris, & Meyer (2003) suggested that both positive and negative growth coexist following exposure to adversity.

Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006 highlight that a number of comments made by the adolescents reflected anger and the desire for revenge. It is important, therefore, that schools are very quick to ensure any misconceptions are dealt within a safe environment. As described by Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006, their statements indicated that a retaliation by the United States would render the terrorists (and the Middle East) helpless to inflict further harm. Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006 further add that many adolescents sought out the comfort of their peers and family. However, they also isolated themselves in solitary activities, such as listening to music alone. Participants in the study claimed that they wanted adult guidance to help them negotiate the confusing events of September 11th, but they also expressed a need to be left alone as the responses of adults were ‘‘making it worse for them.’’

Research on the effects of tragic events, such as those that occurred on September 11th, indicates that in the midst of symptoms of stress-related disorders that many active attempts at coping and adapting to difficulty may be seen (Schuster et al., 2001; Terr et al., 1999). The magnitude of death and destruction from the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon had the potential to seriously compromise adolescents’ sense of fairness and justice, particularly for American youth unaccustomed to direct attacks in the United States. However, their increased capacity to think in abstractions and ability to problem solve leaves the potential for adolescents to cope by constructing a sense of order and justice even in the face of senseless acts (Noppe & Noppe, 2004). Such positive approaches to negative circumstances may enhance resilience by promoting greater flexibility in thinking, openness to new information, and attentional processes.

Fredrickson et al. (2003) saw this ‘‘cognitive broadening’’ as related to the positive emotions of the resilient people they studied in the aftermath of September 11th. Thus, being reflective and recognising what would help oneself cope in chaotic times, and leaning upon others for support as additional sources of resilience were very much in evidence in the group of adolescents who were surveyed in the present study. Those adolescents who were especially anxious and worried about terrorism seemed to be particularly drawn to finding ways to cope with the tragedy. For example, Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006 found that adolescents were engaged in many activities that were patriotic, spiritual, and/or helpful to others. Many adolescents sought solace and reassurance from family and friends. Seeking social support and talking seemed a common response by the females in our study. Responses to our questions also indicated that adolescents attempted to construct a meaningful narrative out of what had happened. They provided explanations and presented carefully thought out ideas about what social and political changes would follow in the aftermath of September 11th. The adolescents also acknowledged that the horrific events of the day seeded the desire to learn more about the Islamic religion, Afghanistan, New York City, the Middle East, the Pentagon, war, and the people in the government.

Bouton (2003) considered the school environment as an important support system for children’s coping with tragedy. In accord with Bouton’s recommendations about how schools can help children cope with posttraumatic stress after a public tragedy, our surveys of teachers found that they helped their students by providing information about the attacks, reassuring the adolescents that they were safe, providing interpretations of the events as they unfolded during the day, and normalizing the school routine as much as possible. Bouton and the teachers who participated in our survey agreed that it is important for children to have accurate information about what happens in a public tragedy in order to regain a sense of control. The results of our survey indicated that adolescents’ need for honesty in such situations transcends school communication contexts. However, repeated media exposure is not considered to be helpful, and in the present study, some teachers reported that school administrators required that they turn off the TVs. Some teachers were supportive of this, but others appeared resentful and angry that they were limited in how much they could show or talk about the events.

The findings presented by Noppe, Noppe & Bartell (2006) demonstrate that terror attacks prompt significant responses from pupils. Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006 highlight in their summary that due to developments in technology, there is a greater sense of psychological involvement in traumatic events. Developing this further, the research conducted by Noppe, Noppe & Bartell, 2006 is 12-year-old; there have since been vast digital developments and

improvements with regard to the relay of news online. It would be fair to say, in this light, that a pupils' psychological involvement in a traumatic event is much greater than in 2006 due to the easily accessible information on a multitude of social-media platforms.

What support is available for teachers?

In the previous discussions there are two examples of support available for teachers, however this support is reactive to a traumatic event. This revitalisation involved the training of teachers by mental health professionals to provide efficient clinical intervention to support pupils (Wolmer et al., 2003). Another case presented by Wolmer et al. (2011), describes how teachers were trained to employ a supervised structured protocol of eight 2-hour classroom sessions, reaching the whole school population within one month (Wolmer et al., 2003). There seems to be very little support available for teachers following a terror attack to support pupils. It is extremely important that teachers do not feel vulnerable within such contexts. As the person who spends the most time with pupils a teachers' self-efficacy needs to allow them to support the pupils emotionally through such a highly traumatic and emotional time.

As outlined by Swafford (1998) the greatest support network for teachers comes from 'peer to peer' support. 'Peer to peer' support allows teachers to discuss with fellow colleagues their concerns and share ideas. Within the context of this research, the main support for teachers comes from other teachers; if a school has a young set of teaching staff, support within the context of dealing with a terror attack may be lacking. This is due to the teaching staff not having dealt with a similar traumatic even previously. OECD (2013) found that 1 in 3 teachers are under the age of 30.

While there may be different levels of support required, all teachers and schools should feel that they are supported, or know who they can turn to if at any point they feel overwhelmed by the situation or unable to provide 'answers' to curious/traumatised pupils.

While there are many schools who may not be provided with support from outside organisations. There are a number of organisations that solely exist to support schools, pupils and families during periods of trauma and grief – especially following horrific incidents such as terror attacks. CAMHS is one of the organisations that aims to support pupils through times of grief and trauma. Whilst there is information available on the work CAMHS, on the NHS website, the researcher was unable to locate literature which gave insight into the work of CAHMS with regard to this piece of research.

Methodology

Rationale for the study

As discussed, the main aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond to terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers. This study is required as teachers are always facing new challenges within their practice. In recent times terror attacks are an ever-growing challenge for teachers – In terms of how they deal with them in school and what support there is for teachers who are faced with the extremely sensitive subject. It is imperative that, as teachers, we are prepared to deal with any topic which can be emotionally traumatic for the pupils we teach. Thus this study will uncover current practice and what support is available for teachers.

In the wake of recent terror attacks it is imperative that schools are prepared for the eventualities of further terror attacks to support children through these traumatic periods - as the media reporting such frequent terror attacks is causing stress and anxiety to both teachers and pupils alike (Pfefferbaum et al., 2001). This study is essential to uncover how teachers are responding following terror attacks.

Research questions

Within this study there are six research questions which are designed to inform the researcher with regard to current practice in schools following terror attacks, the response from all parties within schools and identify what support there is for schools and teachers, if any.

The questions are as follows:

1) How do teachers respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
2) How do senior management respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
3) Are terror attacks discussed in morning briefings with staff and are strategies put in place to support pupils?
4) How do pupils respond to terror attacks?
5) How do parents respond to terror attacks?
6) What support is available for teachers?

Question ‘1’ focuses on current practice in schools following a terror attack – This question is designed to uncover what is happening in schools currently in terms of teachers’ responses following a terror attacks in England. This question will provide an insight to current practice and will highlight commonalities amongst schools.

Question ‘2’ focuses on current practice in schools following a terror attack - This question is designed to uncover what is happening in schools currently in terms of senior managements’ responses following a terror attacks in England. This question will provide an insight to current practice and will highlight commonalities amongst schools.

Question ‘3’ focuses on current practice in schools following a terror attack – This questions is designed to uncover is terror attacks are discussed in schools and if strategies are put in place to support children and teachers following terror attacks. This is a highly important question as this is the period where senior leaders should be guiding teachers in what their response should be so that a coherent approach is given throughout the school.

Question ‘4’ focuses on the response of pupils following a terror attack – This question is designed to gain an understanding of the responses of pupils following a terror attack to see if there is a need for teachers and schools to respond. This question is very ‘subjective’ as each school will vary their responses based on the maturity of a particular year group of key-stage.

Question ‘5’ focuses on the response of parents following a terror attack – This question is designed to gain an understanding of the responses of parents following a terror attack to see if there is a need for teachers and schools to respond. Following a terror attack in England parents will, for obvious reasons, be very distressed, it is at this point that parents need to be reassured of their children’s’ safety.

Question ‘6’ focuses on the support available for teachers following a terror attack – This period for teachers, following a terror attack, may be very unsettling for teachers as there may be a lack of guidance, uncertainty in what to say or a general fear of facing such a sensitive topic with little training. This question will uncover what support is actually available for teachers.

Research design

The researcher collected data from 9 state primary schools in the North-East of England. The researcher collected data from a total of 10 teachers and 6 senior leaders. This sample

included a cross-section of teachers and senior leaders. The schools and teachers involved in the research were chosen at random. Within this study the researcher collected data from teachers and headteachers using semi-structured interviews. Within the interview, the participants answered approximately 15 questions on the theme of their responses following terror attacks. As the interviews were semi-structured, it was possible to ask participants to develop their responses through additional questioning and give the participants the opportunity to identify key areas of practice to support their answers. The interviews were conducted face-to-face. The data set was collected between September and December 2017.

Prior to the main data collection, the researched conducted a small pilot study to ensure the suitability of the research methods used. Once the data set was collected the researcher analysed all responses to gain an understanding of the actions of teachers following terror attacks in England.

Due to the sensitivity of this research, all data were collected in written note form to ensure participants are not exposed to the unnecessary stress and anxiety of having their every word recorded. Further, due to the sensitivity of the research, participants were given the opportunity to rephrase their responses where appropriate. The researcher then used the data set to compare the responses to identify any commonalities and differences in responses and practice. All data collected within this study directly addresses the research questions and will provides data to analyse the teachers' responses, in the schools, to terror attacks. The data set is analysed through a content analysis method.

The interviews within this research included both open and closed questions. This mixed method, also known as a triangulated approach, provides strengths that both quantitative and qualitative research cannot provide singularly (Forrester, 2014). Mertens (2010) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that within quantitative research, the participants' voices are unheard, which makes the context of the research difficult to translate. Qualitative research on the other hand, as outlined by Forrester (2014), makes up for those weaknesses, as its focus is upon meaning. Thus, a triangulated approach is most suitable to ensure meaning is constructed when analysing the participants' responses. Through content analysis it will be possible to analyse the participants' responses and identify patterns, themes and biases within the context of this research (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001).

Ethical considerations

Due to the sensitivity of this study, the researcher only involved adults. All participants were fully informed with regard to the study and its purpose. Before conducting the interviews, it was explained explicitly that participants were free to withdraw their consent at any time. Within the study there were no personal questions as the focus was on the responses of teachers in the classroom following a traumatic event such as the Manchester Arena bombing attack.

Anonymity was, and will be, respected throughout this study and all research complies with the University of York's rules and regulations regarding research ethics. Both the questionnaire and interview were designed with careful time constraints to ensure no unnecessary time is wasted. As a teacher, the researcher was conscious of the ever-growing pressures placed on educational professions; thus the interview was designed in such a way to minimise the onus on teachers. All data collected will continue to remain secure and anonymity was, and will be, ensured throughout the research.

All research studies need to consider a range of ethical issues regarding the design and conduct of the study. This study received ethical approval from the University of York's education department prior to data collection.

Hammersley and Traianou (2012) highlight that within educational research there are a number of commonly recognised principles that researchers should consider within their research design, these include:

Minimising harm – is a research strategy likely to cause harm, how serious is this, and is there any way in which it could be justified or excused? Within the context of my research, there were many stages of ethical approval which considered this notion of 'minimising harm'. Great thought was put into the types of questions in the study and the amount of time needed to participate in the study. Further, due to the sensitivity of the research area, the researcher focused on key areas of practice within an educational context. Hammersley and Traianou (2012) note that harm could include not just consequences for the people being studied (financial, reputational, etc) but for others too, and even for any researchers investigating the same setting or people in the future.

Respecting autonomy - does the research process show respect for people in the sense of allowing them to make decisions for themselves, notably about whether or not to participate?

Within the context of my research, all participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary. Further, it was made explicitly clear within the consent form that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point following their participation. This principle is often seen as ruling out any kind of deception, though deception is also sometimes rejected on the grounds that it causes harm Hammersley and Traianou (2012).

Protecting privacy - a central feature of research is to make matters public, to provide descriptions and explanations that are publicly available. But what should and should not be made public? What does it mean to keep data confidential, and is this always possible or desirable? Can and should settings and informants be anonymised in research reports? Hammersley and Traianou (2012). Within the context of my research, it was made clear to participants that their responses would be used solely for the purpose of this piece of research.

Offering reciprocity - researchers depend upon being allowed access to data, and this may involve people cooperating in various ways; for example, giving up time in order to be interviewed or to fill in a questionnaire. The research process can also disrupt people's lives in various ways and to varying degrees. Given this, what, if anything, can participants reasonably expect in return from researchers; and what should researchers offer them? Should experimental subjects or informants in qualitative research be paid? Hammersley and Traianou (2012). Within the context of my research, all efforts were made to reduce the amount of time it took to participate in the study. Due to the nature of this research, within an educational context, participants were aware that their participation, whilst valued immensely, would be voluntary.

Treating people equitably - it may be argued that the various individuals and groups that a researcher comes into contact within the course of research should be treated equally, in the sense that no-one is unjustly favoured or discriminated against. Hammersley and Traianou (2012). Throughout the completion of this research, all participants were treated equitably and with the utmost respect. All participants were made aware, within the consent form, of who they could contact within the university if they were to have any issues during the research period.

Throughout the study it was important to, as the researcher, remain impartial during all stages of the research. The researcher avoided all opinions and values which may have influenced the collection and interpretation of the data.

Pilot study

Prior to collecting the data, the researcher completed a pilot study to reveal the suitability and viability of the study. During the pilot study the researcher discussed, in depth, each question and how the questions would be reflected in the research. It was also during this point where the researcher, alongside the participant, identified a small number of changes needed to be made to ensure any future participants would feel fully confident in their responses during the interview.

One change which was identified in the pilot study was changing the signature on the consent form from 'teacher/headteacher' to 'participant' to avoid any ambiguity as to who would see the participant's responses. This allowed participants to answer the questions within the study without confusion regarding anonymity.

An additional change identified during the pilot study involved changing the phrasing of the amount of time to a 'maximum of 30 minutes' to ensure participants did not feel that their participation was too onerous.

Following the pilot study, it was clear that the research questions would be answered and the interview questions were suitable to obtain a data set which would provide an in-depth insight into current practice in schools following a terror attack in England.

As highlighted by Teijlingen & Hundley (2002) the term ***pilot study*** is used in two different ways in social science research. It can refer to so-called feasibility studies which are "small scale version[s], or trial run[s], done in preparation for the major study" (Polit ***et al.,*** 2001: 467). However, a pilot study can also be the pre-testing or 'trying out' of a particular research instrument (Baker 1994: 182-3).

One of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated. In the words of De Vaus (1993: 54) "Do not take the risk. Pilot test first." These are important reasons for undertaking a pilot study, but there are additional reasons, for example convincing funding bodies that your research proposal for the main study is worth funding. Thus pilot studies are conducted for a range of different reasons.

Pilot studies can be based on quantitative and/or qualitative methods and large-scale studies might employ a number of pilot studies before the main survey is conducted. Thus researchers may start with “qualitative data collection and analysis on a relatively unexplored topic, using the results to design a subsequent quantitative phase of the study” (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998: 47). The first phase of a pilot might involve using in-depth interviews or focus groups to establish the issues to be addressed in a large-scale questionnaire survey. Next the questionnaire, e.g. the wording and the order of the questions, or the range of answers on multiple-choice questions, might be piloted. A final pilot could be conducted to test the research process, e.g. the different ways of distributing and collecting the questionnaires.

Teijlingen & Hundley (2002) highlight that it should be recognised that pilot studies may also have a number of limitations. These include the possibility of making inaccurate predictions or assumptions on the basis of pilot data; problems arising from contamination; and problems related to funding. It may be difficult to foresee the wealth of information that would be received during the interview. This can be a problem if researchers are too focused on whether the interview questions are fit for purpose, and overlook that questions and discussions would develop during the interview beyond what was required to answer the research questions.

Thematic analysis

As explored by Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes a data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). The range of different possible thematic analyses will further be highlighted in relation to a number of decisions regarding it as a method.

Thematic analysis is widely used, but there is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is and how you go about doing it (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). It can be seen as a very poorly ‘branded’ method, in that it does not appear to exist as a ‘named’ analysis in the same way that other methods do (eg, narrative analysis, grounded theory). In this sense, it is often not explicitly claimed as the method of analysis, when, in actuality, we argue that a lot of analysis is essentially thematic / but is either claimed as something else (such as DA, or even content analysis (Meehan et al., 2000)) or not identified as any particular method at all / for example, data were ‘subjected to qualitative

analysis for commonly recurring themes' (Braun and Wilkinson, 2003: 30). If we do not know how people went about analysing their data, or what assumptions informed their analysis, it is difficult to evaluate their research, and to compare and/or synthesise it with other studies on that topic, and it can impede other researchers carrying out related projects in the future (Attride-Stirling, 2001). For these reasons alone, clarity on process and practice of method is vital.

Relatedly, insufficient detail is often given to reporting the process and detail of analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). It is not uncommon to read of themes 'emerging' from the data (although this issue is not limited to thematic analysis). For example, Singer and Hunter's (1999: 67) thematic discourse analysis of women's experiences of early menopause identified that 'several themes emerged' during the analysis. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 226) claim that analysis is exciting because 'you discover themes and concepts embedded throughout your interviews'. An account of themes 'emerging' or being 'discovered' is a passive account of the process of analysis, and it denies the active role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers (Taylor and Ussher, 2001).

Finding participants

During the initial data collection period, it was difficult to find willing participants to take part in this research. September is a very busy period for schools, thus teachers, although keen to take part in the study, found themselves unable to initially commit to participating in the study. Following the October half-term, the researcher was able to identify a number of participants to take part in the research. The participating schools and teachers were selected at random and included a cross-section of teachers and senior leaders from the North-East of England.

Identifying key themes

The main aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers.

To be able to gain an insight into how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers, a number of research questions were formulated.

Research questions

1) How do teachers respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
2) How do senior management respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
3) Are terror attacks discussed in morning briefings with staff and are strategies put in place to support pupils?
4) How do pupils respond to terror attacks?
5) How do parents respond to terror attacks?
6) What support is available for teachers?

Following the collection of data, it was possible to identify key themes and commonalities in practice through content analysis.

Teachers' responses

As discussed previously, the main aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England. Within this first section we will focus on the responses of teachers. Teachers within this context play an important role following a terror attack as they spend the most time with children in the classroom. It is within this time that teachers will have to deal with and questions, anxieties or misconceptions surrounding the notion of a terror attack. This period is crucial to ensure that pupils feel safe and have an understanding of the world in which they live.

Within the responses from the participants there was a range of responses following terror attacks in England. Although there were some similarities, current practice in schools ranged enormously. There were examples of shared practice across schools and some examples where incidents were avoided entirely.

It was evident when interviewing the participants that practice had been reactive following incidents rather than being proactive. All participants expressed a concern that they had not been prepared to deal with the events following a terror attack. It was noted by one participant that they 'didn't feel confident talking about the matter as there was no guidance from senior leaders'.

With this in mind, there were commonalities in practice by teachers. All of the participants within the research outlined that following a terror attack they would provide the facts of what had happened to the pupils. It was noted that this would be through an unbiased, child-friendly platform such as BBC's Newsround. Most participants agreed that this was the best way to offer the facts of the incident without influencing any of the pupil's ideas. This was an important discussion as all teachers within the research highlighted that they were scared to discuss the events of a terror attack as they feared they would 'say the wrong thing' or get into trouble from senior leaders. One participant highlighted that she was 'anxious of the views of senior leaders of their practice'. This is an interesting point as the self-efficacy of a teacher plays a big role in how the events of terror are perceived by the pupils. If a teacher is cautious or reserved in their exploration of a terror attack it can be expected that a child will pick up on these negative.

Following providing the facts of the terror attack most participants highlighted that they would offer the pupils an opportunity to discuss the events or ask any questions they may have. This is an example of practice which was outlined by Haynes and Murris (2012). It was noted at this point that the teacher had a very important role in exploring any misconceptions, anxieties or questions. Interestingly, very few participants expressed that they would explain that their schools were safe and that the chance of something happening near them was very little.

Most participants highlighted that their school held a minute silence following the Manchester Arena Attack. It was discussed that the teachers explained why they would be holding a minute silence. However, some participants highlighted that 'there was no context given to the children before the minute silence'. Alongside the minute silence, participants explained that they offered the children some time to process the facts they had been given any time to discuss any feelings they had – if they wished to do so. Alongside the minute silence, some participants highlighted that they held prayers for those affected by the terror

attacks. Interestingly, the schools which participated in prayers weren't faith schools.

All participants, worryingly, highlighted that there were no school policies to give guidance on how to respond following a terror attack. One participant highlighted that she 'didn't know what to say [to the pupils]'. There were, however, individual schools that spend a lot of time exploring the notion of a terror attack. This was within a year 5 and 6 setting. One of the schools, in a multi-cultural inner city environment, dedicated a whole unit to the topic of radicalisation. Within this unit of work, the teacher and pupils reflected on terror attacks both historically and ideologically. It was noted by the participant from this school that he felt it was important to complete the unit of work so that individuals did not feel that they were singled out following terror attacks. Within this school the participant highlighted that 'the Muslim children wanted to explain in assembly that not all Muslims are terrorists'. In another school, the year 5 and 6 teacher dedicated a topic of 'hate crimes' to explore the notion of terror attacks. This school did not have a high percentage of multi-cultural pupils, but felt it appropriate to do so.

It is at this point that I will introduce the words 'subjective' and 'objective' – these words play an important role when discussing the responses of schools and teachers following a terror attack. All participants agreed that there was an objective aim to ensure all pupils felt safe in school without any misconceptions of what had happened. The difficulty comes with the word 'subjective' – all participants agreed that how teachers and schools responded was dependent on the level of developmental maturity of the pupils. Typically, pupils in KS2 were included in a whole school assembly to discuss the facts of terror attacks. However, within KS1, there was no such assembly and very much left to the discretion of the class teacher. This again highlights how teachers may be worried about how much information/discussion should be given to the children in KS1. One teacher highlighted that 'it wasn't appropriate to share the facts [of the terror attack] with the KS1 pupils'

This difference in response across key stages is very subjective.

As discussed previously by (Holman, 2003), it is clear that without proper guidance and support from senior leaders, teachers are facing an increase in workload, which is likely to cause unnecessary stress and anxiety.

Senior leaders' responses

Within the responses from the participants in this research – it was clear there was a big

difference in how the senior leadership team responded following a terror attack. Unlike the commonalities found within the teachers' responses, there were few commonalities found in the approach from the senior leadership team. From the data collected there was no objective approach in response to terror. It was clear that each schools' response was subjective and dependent of previous experience. As identified by one senior leader - 'the school was reactive rather than proactive'.

One common theme across participant responses what that the senior management team communicated what should and should not be shared with pupils. However, the way in which this information was delivered ranges dramatically. It was evident within discussions that schools which tackled the topic head on communicated their wishes directly with their staff in the morning briefing – allowing teachers to discuss any issues or worries they may have. However, it was clear through discussion that there were instances where this information was passed on via E-Mail or word of mouth. This caused stress to some teachers, as again they were concerned they were not following the guidance as they had not had the time to discuss their concerns with the senior leadership team (Holman, 2003).

One participant outlined that the senior management team expressed that the topic of the terror attack should not be discussed as they had to be sensitive to political and religious views. This participant then went on to discuss that this guidance was impossible to follow as the pupils naturally had questions about the events that had unfolded.

In another school, the participant explained that the senior management team had discussed in morning briefing that teachers should be sensitive to the needs of pupils. Again, bringing the notion of a subjective approach into the control of teachers.

Within the schools which held a minute silence following the Manchester Arena Bombing Attack, all participants highlighted that it was the decision of the senior management team.

It is also worth noting that where schools held a whole school assembly, it was led by a member of the senior management team. Within these schools, the participants highlighted that they 'focused on the facts of the terror attack'.

The participants who were members of the senior management team highlighted that it was their role to ensure that there was a risk assessment in place for a potential terror attack on the school and to ensure that all pupils were safeguarded. It was noted at this point that due to the area of the research, many of the children held right-wing views on the terror attacks. It was noted during the interview that, within some schools, pupils had the misconception that all Muslims were terrorists. It was important for these schools to address that misconception promptly.

What was most evident when interviewing participants, particularly the senior management team, that they were perceived to be being proactive – whilst it was evident that the schools were reactive in their responses following terror attacks. It was clear that the way in which senior management team discussed their view impacted how the teachers responded also.

Two headteachers openly admitted that they were not prepared to respond to a terror attack and their response was rushed and reactive. It was highlighted by one senior leader that they, the school, 'weren't prepared'. It is clear to see that within this highly pressured and time–sensitive period, that mistakes were made, communication was lost and unnecessary stress was placed on teachers due to the ill-prepared response from the senior management team.

Although on the whole schools were perceived to be reactive there was one school which was evidently proactive. This was due to circumstance – the school had recently dealt with the loss of a pupil. It was clear that the school was very open in their response to terror attacks. This was put down to the culture of the school being surrounded by openness and pupil discussion. The school had spent a great deal of time developing communication across the school. This allowed the senior management team to coherently share their directive across school and allow teachers to respond accordingly with the full support of the senior management team. It was clear that within this school, teachers were comforted by having the support of the senior management team.

Strategies

As discussed in the previous sections, there are a range of strategies schools use to support pupils following terror attacks. However, from the discussions it is clear that these responses are not due to the strategic development of the senior management team but on the onus of the teachers. It is clear that responses range depending on the schools and their experience.

Further, from the participant responses it is clear that there is no coherent approach in discussing response to terror in morning briefing and comes down to the experience of the senior management team.

It is clear from these responses that guidance needs to be given to ensure that senior management teams a given guidance on how to respond following terror attacks.

The main response that came from this was that there was such a variation of strategies

across schools as some participants did not feel that there was a need to have strategies in place.

Teachers' perspective of pupil responses

Pupil response, when discussing with participants, ranged depending on the developmental maturity of the pupils. Within the responses from participants who worked with KS1 children it was highlighted that there was little to no awareness of the events of a terror attack from the pupils. Subjectively, within this school it was evident that, due to a lack of awareness of the terror attack, there was no need to respond objectively. There were however exceptions where individual children had an awareness of the terror attack. Thus, there was no need for a whole class objective approach.

Within KS2, however, the pupil response ranged somewhat. It is within this Key Stage that the pupils had a much greater awareness of the terror attack. One participant highlighted that 'the children seemed excited as they wanted to share news'. It was noted within the participants' responses that the pupils had an 'awareness of danger' – this awareness led to the pupils asking their teachers many question. These questions, as described by the participants, often turned into difficult discussions. Due to the nature of these discussions some pupils were anxious due to a lack of understanding. It was noted at this point by one of the participants that one of the pupils asked 'will we be bombed' – Naturally the teacher replied 'of course not'. Exploring this further, the participant then went on to say they felt like they were lying to the pupils: or at least not providing the full truth. This awareness of trauma is similar to the findings as presented by Whalen, Henker, King, Jamner, & Levine, 2004 previously.

We must at this point question, how far should we go to protect the innocence of children? Or are we setting them up for failure in later life? If we do not prepare pupils for the harsh reality of the world, is it possible for them to survive?

One participant raised the interesting point that there were pupils in her class that were due to go to a concert. These particular pupils showed a concern that they were worried about going to the concert in case they were bombed. This is a misconception that needed to be addressed, left undiscussed this could be a problem that could cause stress and anxiety to many of the pupils in that class. The participant in this case highlighted that the discussion that followed surrounded the work of the police to ensure the safety of all of the people attending the concert. One teacher highlighted that 'It was clear that some children were anxious due to a lack of understanding'.

In another instance, the participant shared how the pupils held a different perspective of their understanding of the terror attack. It was noted that the children did not show concern for what had happened but an excitement that there had been a terror attack and the pupils wanted to share the news they had heard. This presents difficulties for the teacher as because there is no understanding of the detrimental impact of the terror attack the pupils were not aware that it could cause stress and anxiety to the other pupils in the school. The other difficulty presented in this situation was that the pupils did not fully understand that concept of loss of life. This meant that the teacher was responsible to educate the pupils in regard to the notion of loss of life and the impact that would have on the families of the victims involved in the terror attack.

Of all the pupil responses, interestingly the most positive response came from the Muslim community within one of the participating schools. The teacher explained that following the Manchester Arena Bombing Attack, the pupils had come up to the teacher and asked if they could explain to the rest of the school what their religious views actually were as they felt an injustice that the terror attacker had been branded a Muslim. The school saw this as a powerful learning opportunity and allowed to the pupils to deliver their presentation to tackle any misconceptions. In line with the schools' 'British Values' learning charter of having mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith, this presented an opportunistic learning journey.

Teachers' perspective of parent responses

Within this research, participants outlined a range of responses from parents. As no parents were interviewed within this research, parental responses are based on those observed by teachers.

It was noted by KS1 teachers that a number of parents had made specific contact with them to let them know that they had not discussed the terror attack with their child. This, again, links in with the subjective approach we have previously discussed.

Amongst the senior management participants, it was highlighted within the interviews that many parents called the school to discuss school trips and the safety of pupils whilst in the care of the school. During these discussions it was noted that a number of parents removed their children from trips to London. Due to the number of pupils being removed from the

trips, the schools made the decision to cancel the school trips. This was also mirrored by a number of schools which were involved within this study – it was felt that a trip to a major city so close to a terror attack may cause unnecessary stress and anxiety for pupils, staff and parents alike. It was noted by one participant that 'the parents told me that they weren't telling their children about the attack'. From this response, it is clear that some parents felt that the did not want to discuss the terror attacks with their children.

Support for teachers

All of the participants involved in this study highlighted that there was no support for teachers when dealing with the difficult topic of responding to a terror attack. One teacher highlighted that he 'would've liked more guidance [from senior leaders]' When discussing this issue with the teachers and senior management team it was worrying to hear the concerns presented.

The only support that was identified by the participants was from other teachers. This presented the notion of a peer-to-peer support network – blind leading the blind. This notion of 'peer to peer' support is substantiated by the work of Swafford (1998).

It is essential that a support network be put in place – research based methods to explore difficult topics such and terror attacks. There are, of course, other adverse issues that need to be dealt with within the classroom. Within this piece of research, I will focus solely on the events of terror attacks.

It is important that all staff feel that they are supported within their practice – if teachers do not feel that they are working within the guidance of the senior leadership team, then these concerns need to be discussed within schools. Not left to hoping there isn't another terror attack. All of the senior leaders who participated in this study identified that there was no support for teachers apart from that of their peers. This poses the question, why aren't senior leaders being proactive and ensuring that there is a support network in place for when the next inevitable terror attack occurs. As highlighted by one teacher, 'there was no support whatsoever, I felt lost'.

Without such a support network, newly qualified teachers are exposed to making the same mistakes more experienced teachers made within their early career. It is important, therefore, that a support network be put in place to support current and future teachers.

Proactivity vs reactivity

Having discussed the current practices in schools following terror attacks in England, there are a number of emerging themes that have been identified throughout the process. One theme that is prominent throughout the data set is the notion of proactivity and reactivity.

Proactivity, as defined by Crant (2000), is to challenge current practices in order to improve current circumstances. If we develop this further, one could argue that schools must challenge their current practices to ensure that their practice following a terror attack is suitable to ensure a positive impact on the emotional welfare of children. Crant (2000) does not present a new argument, however, the need for proactivity in schools, contextually, is paramount. Holman (2003) develops the argument of proactivity within the workplace and likens proactivity to 'self-starting' and 'change-orientated' - it is highlighted that such proactivity is essential in problem solving. Within the context of this research, there is a plethora of problems which are faced by educational professionals. The difficulties such educators face is that there are an infinite number of unknowns when responding to terror attacks in England.

As highlighted by Crant (2000), proactive thinkers anticipate what will happen and plan adequately with self-initiation towards change. This way of thinking can encompass an all-inclusive lifestyle type of living or be perhaps mostly used in the workplace. This is a positive type of person not afraid of change and willing to take responsibility for their life decisions and choices rather than blaming circumstances. This type of behaviour has been identified by researchers as being positive and geared towards a successful lifestyle. They are in fact, excellent problem solvers.

Conversely, as discussed by Crant (2000), Reactive thinkers on the other hand behave in almost the opposite manner. They wait for life or things to happen to them before taking any steps. The main problem with this type of behaviour and way of thinking is that these people never really face up to their responsibility as they are in a constant battle to resolve the previous issue. They are never really in a position to resolve their problems as they are always being bombarded with new ones because they still haven't resolved the previous

issue. This situation often makes the reactive person feel as though they are stuck in a rut. This person does not prepare well and may well blame external factors as the root of their problems.

Whilst we can discuss both proactivity and reactivity in their entirety generically we must also discuss their importance at different levels. Institution, schools and individuals as it is of the utmost importance that proactivity isn't left to the individual. As highlighted by Holman (2003), it is imperative that work-load is not at such a high level that it is likely to cause anxiety.

These notions of proactivity and reactivity are strategically developed within a multitude of settings, not solely education. It is important therefore that we as educators refine our practice and adopt proven methods of proactivity.

It is worth nothing that there has not been a terror attack in the North-East. So it is not possible to discuss how schools would cope if there were. In recent weeks there has been the threat of terror - this has put schools on the spotlight with regard to the media. Following a discussion with a head teacher it was said that there was 'a lack of communication between the authorities and schools'. This breakdown of communication instilled 'terror' in the patents of the pupils. This is another example of schools reacting to an incident. And again, presents an opportunity for leadership to make the wrong choices. A lack of proactivity and following of strategic procedure leaves room for incompetency.

Throughout this study there have been a number of instances where collected a data set which has identified that the schools within this research were reactive to terror attacks with regard to their response. The main aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers. Thinking about this further – how schools are responding is having an impact on both teachers and pupils. By only 'reacting' to terror attacks, schools are left in an extremely vulnerable position. Schools are in a position where poor leadership can result in a problematic and catastrophic outcome. Teachers are in a position where, due to a lack of guidance and communication, they are scared to respond to terror attacks. Further, those that chose to respond to ensure the positive development of the emotional welfare of their pupils, are again scared of senior leaderships' views.

It was found, within this study, that schools have varying levels of reactivity. It was clear that these inconsistencies meant that pupils across schools were receiving a varying amount of support following traumatic events. Without any guidance and such unregulated practice, on such an important response, we must question and scrutinise practice with regards to their outcomes.

As a teacher, researching in schools, is was clear to see when interviewing participants that there was a positive correlation between schools with good SMSC practice and high levels of proactivity. SMSC stands for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is within SMSC that pupils are given the opportunity to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. However, it was evident that schools that were in the category of 'requires improvement', schools were struggling to fully adapt to the difficult situation and provide full support for children. At this point we must question whether the pressures of Ofsted are having a damaging impact on the levels of emotional support we, as teachers, are able to provide for children. From the data it is clear that this certainly something that requires further research.

On the whole teachers admitted that schools in which they work were very reactive following terror attacks such as Manchester and London. The exception to the rule was a school where there has been a communal bereavement. This schools had invested a lot of time to discuss bereavement, emotions, trauma.

This notion of communal bereavement is something that requires further thought and research. I pose the question – could schools be proactive in the sense that they support someone in the community and follow them from life to death. This could be in many contexts, however the most likely could be in a care home. This would allow pupils to experience loss in a safe environment scaffold by thoroughly throughout curriculum to develop the resilience and emotional welfare of pupils.

Why is this important? In order for schools to provide a curriculum that is suitable to support each child – especially during a traumatic time following a terror attack is imperative that schools are proactive in having something in place and ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to discuss such atrocities in a safe environment such as school.

An interesting development worth discussing, is the level at which schools perceived their proactivity. Within the participants who were members of the senior leadership team, it was clear that when challenged they felt the need to be perceived as being proactive within their

practice. Understandably, their accountability with regard to our current educational system, mean that nothing should be overlooked. However, the harsh reality is that schools are not prepared to cope with the emotional needs of children who have an understanding of the terror attacks unfolding. No matter how much schools explain their policies for how they would deal with a terror attack – run, hide and tell or how they follow the prevent agenda. This still does not give pupils the opportunity to develop their emotional understanding events. Or how to deal with such events.

With regard to proactivity and reactivity, one school within this piece of research was an inner city multi-faith school. Whilst interviewing the participant, it was clear that the school invested a lot of time into the development of tolerance of others and their beliefs. It was within this school where, following the Manchester Arena attack, pupils from the Muslim community wanted to share their beliefs and values in assembly. It was highlighted within the interview that the pupils wanted to do this as they had heard the term ‘Muslim’ used in a negative context. The levels of proactivity within the school meant that those pupils felt comfortable to speak about their beliefs and values.

A final point that is to be made with regard to proactivity and reactivity, is that, as educators, we a very proactive when it comes to bullying. Schools spend great amounts of time developing pupils’ awareness of what bullying is and how to identify it. Although, as educational professional, we have limited time with pupils in the classroom, it is important that we are proactive in discussing important issues such as emotional welfare following traumatic events, such as terror attacks. O'Moore & Minton, (2006) highlight that schools are proactive in dealing with bulling in schools.

Shift in perspective

Throughout the presentation of results and discussion surrounding the findings within this research an issue I have uncovered is that within the entire schooling system there needs to be a shift in perspective. This shift in perspective needs to allow teachers and schools to focus on the subjective and individualistic needs of their pupils rather than an objective based national curriculum which does not allow children to develop emotionally.

One could argue that, through the 'hidden curriculum', children are given the opportunity to develop emotionally, however this is left to the competence of the individual teacher. Cubukcu (2012) highlights that there are a number elements of hidden curriculum possessed in schools are values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms and values which are important parts of school function, ceremonies and the quality of interpersonal communication. Supportive activities of hidden curriculum such as social and cultural activities, free time activities and sportive activities, celebration of special days and weeks, social club works can be considered as strong value gaining tools for primary school students to comprehend, internalise and perform values.

As with sex education, sexuality and gender. It is essential that we have a shift in perspective surrounding the importance of 'death' education. We must allow educators the opportunity to explore this notion of 'death' education. As discussed previously, due to the rise of digital media, children are no longer ignorant to such matters. Postman (2011) highlights that print enabled adults to age-categorise books and magazines, keeping children ignorant of many things, but TV and now social media are accessible by all ages. Today, therefore, children can no longer be protected by ignorance; it is imperative that parents and teachers ensure they get helpful and accurate info to counter any info that is unhelpful or inaccurate. This is further supported by Commissioners Report (2018), which concluded that children now have more unfiltered access to the internet than ever. This is a growing concern, our shift in perspective should not be on stopping children from accessing such digital media, but on ensuring they are able to emotionally deal with the potentially upsetting content they will see.

A similar argument could be made about death even if pupils do not directly experience bereavement, children today learn through social media about the death of their friends' friends, friends' grandparents, etc. (Of course many learn about bereavement through the death of pets; and a few are bereaved of a close family member.)

Further, at current the government's agenda is highlighting the importance mental illness. As educators it is imperative that we support pupils to ensure they have the best emotional start in life. This requires the building of resilience and strategies for coping with emotional issues in a magnitude of scenarios. In society, we place such importance on Maths, English and Science, that SMSC and emotional welfare is often forgotten. It is likely that through the 'hidden curriculum' we instil these values – however, if we do not explicitly discuss trauma and these emotional issues – we risk creating a generation that is exposed to a plethora of traumatic events through social media and news outlets, without and strategies for coping.

The link between these two articles is that the struggle for children is carried into adulthood. This needs to change. We need to change the stigma around mental illness and shift the focus on to providing pupils with a tool kit. As reported by the Sellgren (2018) a recent survey of UK head teachers has found that nearly half are struggling to get mental health support for their pupils. A total of 45% of 655 of school leaders quizzed by children's mental health charity Place2Be said it was a problem. With these figures in mint it is so important that there is a pupils shift in perspective regarding mental illness.

One mother, who did receive support from her local school after a friend suggested she should ask for help, told the BBC how a violent incident with her son at home was a tipping point. "The final straw came when he tried to push me down the stairs," says Melanie. "And he hit me in the back as well." Melanie's nine-year-old son was finding it hard to control his anger and was lashing out physically and verbally at her and his father and sister. But while Melanie's family did manage to get help through the school for her son's issues, the Place2Be poll suggests many other families may be being let down (Sellgren, 2018).

The survey - carried out to mark this week's Children's Mental Health Week - found 44% of head teachers said knowing what type of support was needed was a barrier to them providing mental health support for pupils. And 37% said they did not feel confident in commissioning a counsellor or therapist. The charity also surveyed 1,198 counsellors and psychotherapists currently working in schools and found 34% said providing services in schools was difficult (Sellgren, 2018).

In December, the Department of Health and Department for Education published a joint plan to improve children and young people's access to mental health support at schools and colleges in England. The pledge came as NHS figures showed around one in 10 girls aged 16 or 17 was referred to specialist mental health services in England in 2016. For Melanie, accessing specialist therapy for her son from a Place2Be therapist based at their primary

school has turned the whole family around (Sellgren, 2018).

As reported by Sellgren (2018) her son, who is now 11, is a lot calmer and has learnt how to process his emotions better. "I've now got a job - without that support I don't think I'd have had the get up and go in the morning because it was such a fight to get my son to school. "The help the school has given us has changed our whole family unit - without Place2Be I don't know where I'd be and I don't know where my son would be. "To admit that we needed help was hard, but then to find the help was only round the corner at the school was brilliant. "I think this support is extremely important. It was a relief to know the help was there." Place2Be chief executive Catherine Roche said school leaders were under enough pressure and should not be expected to become mental health experts as well. "Our evidence and experience shows that embedding skilled mental health professionals in schools, as part of a whole school approach, can have an enormously positive impact for pupils, families and staff. "It's encouraging that the government's Green Paper proposals have recognised this, but to really transform children's mental health provision, we need all schools to have access to dedicated funding, support and training to be able to source, commission and evaluate services effectively." Earlier this week, the Local Government Association said every secondary school in England should be given funding to offer independent mental health counselling to all pupils.

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education said the government had pledged £1.7bn to help "promote, protect and improve" children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. "We recognise the value that school-based counselling can provide. Our proposals outlined in the ‘children and young people's mental health Green Paper’ will provide significant additional resources for early mental health intervention for all schools. "This includes improving the links between the NHS and schools, speeding up access to more intensive support, as well as boosting capacity to ensure early intervention and help schools to decide what other support to provide." (Sellgren, 2018).

Additionally, Campbell & Duncan (2018) highlight within their discussion, it was found that poor communication between staff or agencies were noted in 112 of the analysed deaths. We as educators must see this as a warning sign that something must be done to ensure our current pupils do not become a statistic due to missed learning opportunities.

With this in mind it is essential that we, as teachers and educational professionals are proactive in supporting the emotional welfare of pupils to ensure prevention of mental break downs and potential loss of life.

In addition to this we must also challenge the Ofsted agenda when considering a shift in perspective. Ofsted, when inspecting schools, look of pupil progress over time. However, the progress they look for, and refer to, is with regard to the National Curriculum, this mean the importance of emotional issues is put on the back burner as there is no SAT in emotional intelligence and coping with trauma.

Leaman (1995) discusses how the curriculum was, in 1995, crowded. Since the introduction of the 2014 National Curriculum, there is, still, very little time to support the emotional welfare of pupils. With this in mind, I ask, what place is there to support children within such emotional needs and development? And at what point is it going to be realised that content based curriculum does not help support the emotional development of children? Leaman (1995) highlights that teachers often see the home to be the place where these issues should be dealt with. In response to that, how can we, as educators, be satisfied with this, to ensure the positive progress of the emotional needs of children, as home lives are so diverse.

In a recent report by the Children's Commissioner (2018) it was highlighted that most social media platforms have a minimum age limit of 13, but research shows a growing number of children aged under 13 are using social media, with 3 in 4 children aged 10-12 having their own accounts. As educators we simply cannot plead ignorance to this fact and must, again, have a shift in perspective. This shift in perspective must be surrounding how we teach pupils under 13 about staying safe on social media. While much is known about how teenagers use social media, this research provides the missing piece to the story, exploring the social media lives of children before they reach the teenage years. In October and November 2017, we conducted 8 focus groups with 32 children aged 8-12 to understand the impact of social media on the wellbeing of this age group. The findings of this research are summarised below.

According to the Children's Commissioner (2018), one third of current internet users are under the age of 18 – and whilst most social media sites have an official age limit of 13 years, research is increasingly reporting the accessing and use of these sites by children under 13·

The Children's' Commissioner (2017) report, Growing Up Digital, published last year, made considered recommendations towards fostering a more supportive digital environment for

children and young people to grow up in.

It is outlined within the Children's Commissioner (2018) report that recent progress has also been made by the Government to address young people's safety online (e.g. the Internet Safety Strategy launched in summer 2017, and the 2017 Digital Economy Act) which have made important changes concerning social media regulation for children. The Education Act 2011 has also given teachers stronger power to tackle cyber-bullying by searching for and deleting inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.

Children's Commissioner (2018) outline that T=there has also been much debate surrounding the relationship between social media and mental health and wellbeing – with the overarching message being that while social media can be a very positive tool for young people, there can also be negative impacts on mental wellbeing· However, there is yet to be any considered Government research on the impact of social media on mental health and wellbeing for children at the younger end of the spectrum of users. With half of 11 and 12 year olds having their own social media profiles, this represents a significant gap in our understanding (Children's Commissioner, 2018)

The report completed by Children's Commissioner (2018) concluded that there were both benefits and drawbacks of use of social media. It was concluded that on the one hand, social media was perceived as having a positive effect on children's wellbeing, and enabled them to do the things they wanted to do, like staying in touch with friends and keeping entertained. On the other, it had a negative influence when it made them worry about things they had little control over. For younger children this was more related to their families' use of social media, whereas for older children this was more strongly linked to peers and friendships. The transition from primary to secondary school saw a significant change in the way children used social media and brought with it new concerns. At this age, children were introduced to wider networks of friends and started to follow more celebrities and people they did not know in their offline lives. This meant they were more aware of their own identity, started comparing themselves to a broader group of people and worried about whether they fitted in. This introduced an additional layer of worries, relating to what people would think of them, what they looked like, and who they should be (Children's Commissioner, 2018).

"It's 50:50. Sometimes it can make you really sad and then sometimes it can make you super happy and super excited." Beth, 9, Year 5, (Children's Commissioner, 2018).

The Commissioner's Growing Up Digital (2017) report highlights that despite good progress made by government and industry together through the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) on issues such as parental control filters and age verification, much more needs to be done to create a supportive digital environment for children and young people. At the moment, children are not being equipped with adequate skills to negotiate their lives online. Offline, adults aim not just to 'educate' children as they grow up, but to help them develop resilience and the ability to interact critically with the world; recognising that without these 'softer' skills, they cannot grow up as agents of their own lives.

Within the coming years, within education, we must see a shift in perspective with regard to current educational practice to ensure the emotional well-being of pupils. As outlined by Walter (2017) many western societies experienced a post-war baby boom, which will lead to a dying boom from 2020 to 2050. Much of the global South will see an even bigger dying boom as an unprecedented number of babies survived the latter half of the twentieth century to grow up, age and eventually – in the twenty- first century – die. It is our job, as educators, to ensure that the pupils we teach are emotionally prepared for the eventualities of greater loss.

Conclusion

In light of recent terror attacks, it is important that schools are prepared for the eventualities of further terror attacks to support children through such traumatic periods.

The main aim of this study was to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers.

This study was conducted in the North-East of England. There were 16 participants involved in this study, 10 teachers and 6 senior leaders, across 9 state primary schools.

A semi-structured interview was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data within this study. Content analysis was used to evaluate the data set collected and identify themes within the context of this research.

Six research questions were used to answer the initial research aim.

Research questions

1) How do teachers respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
2) How do senior management respond to terror attacks in England in their dealing with pupils (e.g. in assembly, in the classroom, outside the classroom)?
3) Are terror attacks discussed in morning briefings with staff and are strategies put in place to support pupils?
4) How do pupils respond to terror attacks?
5) How do parents respond to terror attacks?
6) What support is available for teachers?

Within the findings, it was found that teachers were scared of doing something ‘wrong’ when responding to a terror attack and getting into trouble from senior staff. It was highlighted by teachers that they ‘did not know what to say [to pupils]’ and ‘weren’t prepared [following a terror attack]’. It was evident within the discussion that there were issues with teacher self-efficacy’, some teachers expressed that they were ‘anxious’ when discussing topics relating to terror and trauma.

Within this research it was found that found that how teachers responded, following terror attacks and trauma, was subjective. This study found that there was a vast difference in practice between schools. This difference in practice was down to the past experiences schools had dealt with. Further, there was also a difference in response depending on the experience and skillset of individual teachers. It was found within this research that the main tool for dealing with terror attacks and trauma was discussion, supported by the work of Hand and Levinson (2012).

Within this study there was a range of responses from senior management. Within some schools, staff were told that they should not discuss the events of terror attacks. Whilst some schools' senior leaders led whole school assemblies and gave staff ideas of how to respond. As discussed, within one school, senior leaders allowed a group of Muslim pupils to present facts about their religion following the Manchester Arena attack to correct any misconceptions pupils may have had surrounding their religion.

Within the research it was found that on the whole terror attacks were discussed within morning briefings – but nothing was put in place to support the children. Practice was based around giving facts to the children, correcting any misconceptions and ensuring that pupils knew that they were safe whilst in school.

As discussed, there were a range of responses from pupils – responses included excitement, anxiety, confusion, hatred and misconceptions. As outlined by one teacher 'it was clear that some of the children were anxious due to a lack of understanding'. Throughout the research it was clear that, no matter the response of the pupil, the teachers had to ensure that pupils were okay following trauma. Even if this went against instructions from senior leaders.

As this study did not interview parents, it was difficult to discuss the response from parents. However, in some cases, parents stopped their children from going on schools trips to London. It was reported by some teachers, during interview, that some parents had expressed that they did not tell their children about the terror attack and did not want their children to know anything about it.

With use of literature and data collected throughout the research period it is overwhelmingly clear that teachers felt that there was little support for them. The only perceived support was

from fellow teachers. But this alone did not fully support the teachers. As highlighted by a number of teachers, they felt ‘anxious and worried’ about discussing death, trauma and terror attacks with children.

This study was relatively small scale, including only 9 schools from the North-East of England. It may be that other local authorities have a greater support network for schools and teachers when dealing with sensitive issues such as death, trauma and terror attacks. Future research needs to be completed to identify current practice and support across England, not just one region.

My initial thought before this research was to educate children about death, trauma and terror attack – having considered all of the literature and data, I believe that it is down to the experience of the teacher and the approaches taken in schools. How a school responds is completely subjective to the pupils in the schools. There are a number of factors which need to be considered before schools and teachers inadvertently cause pupils unnecessary emotional stress. It is difficult for fully developed adults to rationalise trauma and terror so for the undeveloped mind of children to would be overwhelming and perhaps damaging in the emotional development.

The main aim of this study was to gain an understanding of how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers. Within the scope of this research, it was not possible, with authority, to conclusively claim what current practice looks like with regard to how schools and teachers respond following terror attacks in England and what support is available for teachers. This research has merely scratched the surface of what was happening in a small number of schools in the North-East of England. What is possible to conclude is that further study is required. National research, involving schools from all regions is needed to – firstly, gain an understanding of current practice. Secondly, to identify examples of good practice and compile guidance on how these methods could be implemented, proactively, to ensure that pupils a suitably emotionally supported following trauma or terror attacks. Finally, these methods need to be researched to uncover their effectiveness in terms of developing the emotional welfare of pupils.

It is clear from this research that, due to a lack of guidance from senior leaders, teachers

were unsure how to respond following terror attacks. In future, it is recommended that outside guidance is given to senior leaders to recommend how to deliver an effective response to future inevitable terror attacks. It is the responsibility and duty of care of the senior leaders to ensure that the emotional integrity of their staff is not compromised due to stress and anxiety.

This study concluded that there are clear differences in current practices in schools following terror attacks in England. Schools on the whole are reactive to traumatic incidents. This study indicated that the approach within schools was also dependent on previous encounters in dealing with trauma and grief. It would appear a more proactive approach is needed to support pupils and teachers alike, following horrific incidents such as terror attacks.

As outlined by Walter (2017) many western societies experienced a post-war baby boom, which will lead to a dying boom from 2020 to 2050. Much of the global South will see an even bigger dying boom as an unprecedented number of babies survived the latter half of the twentieth century to grow up, age and eventually, in the twenty- first century, die.

As highlighted by Brubaker, Hayes & Dourish, (2013) the past decade has seen an explosion of research papers about social media mourning. It has been clear within this research that pupils as young as 7 have unrestricted access to the internet through use of digital devices. It is of the utmost importance, as educators, to ensure we are preparing pupils for the future inevitabilities of grief, trauma and loss.

With regard to implications for practice, moving forward, it is essential that schools and local authorities provide a support network for teachers following traumatic incidents such as terror attacks. This support must offer suggestions on how to respond following traumatic incidents. This support must ensure that teachers are comfortable and confident in supporting pupils in their practice. Teachers must also have the support of senior leaders and local authorities following traumatic incidents.

Further, based on the data collected, and analysis, the researcher recommends that examples of ‘good practice’ should be researched, within the context of this study, so clear guidance can be provided to educational professionals and teachers in a coherent document to promote the emotional welfare of both pupils and teachers.

Appendix

Appendix A – Covering letter

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY OF HOW PRIMARY SCHOOLS RESPOND TO TERROR ATTACKS IN ENGLAND

Interview

I am a primary school teacher and an MA student at the University of York, Department of Education. My supervisor is Professor Chris Kyriacou.

I am conducting a study looking at how primary schools respond following terror attacks in England.

As part of this study I will be interviewing primary school teachers and headteachers regarding current practice.

The interview with you will last a maximum of 30 minutes. You will be asked at the beginning of the interview whether you are happy for the researcher to take notes. Following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to review the notes recorded during the interview.

Your participation in this study will be confidential and limited to the interview.

You are free not to participate in the study, and if you start the interview and then decide to terminate your involvement in the interview, that's fine.

The interview notes will be kept in a safe and secure place. Extracts from the interview could form part of a research paper or conference presentation. The interview data will be stored for two years and then destroyed compliant with the university's rules and regulations. The interview will only be analysed for use in this study.

You are free to contact me at a later date, if you wish the interview to be removed from the data set, but you are asked to do this within one month.

If you have any queries, concerns or complaints, please contact me, or email: education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk

You will be asked at the start of the interview to sign this sheet, which will be taken as your informed consent to participate in this study. Thank you.

Signed …… (Participant)
Print Name……

Signed …… (Researcher)
Print name……

Date……

Jordan Warren
Email: jgw521@york.ac.uk

Appendix B - Interview questions

School ……..

Participant ……

General Questions - A

1. How are terror attacks addressed in the school?

2. Are there any policies or protocols you follow after a terrorist attack? If so what are they?

3. What directive would you/is provide/provided to teachers? (e.g. at a morning staff briefing session).

4. What information would you provide to pupils? (e.g. in a whole school assembly or at classroom level).

5. How do senior management, teachers, pupils and parents respond following a terrorist attack?

   Senior management –

   Teachers -

   Parents –

   Pupils -

6. What support is available in school when dealing with such sensitive topics such as terror attacks?

After the Manchester Arena Bombing - B

1. What did you/the school do following the Manchester Arena Bombing?

2. How did you reach the decision about what action to take?

3. How did the senior management, teachers, pupils and parents respond?

   Senior management – Did you feel there was a need to respond? Etc.

   Teachers - Did you feel comfortable discussing the topic? Etc.

   Parents – Did this have any implications for school trips? Etc

   Pupils - Did this have any implications for school trips? Etc.

4. Did the school receive any guidance or support from agencies outside the school?

5. What information did you provide to the children?

6. Were you confident is talking to the children about what had happened?

7. In hindsight, would you have done anything different?

Quantitative questions – C

1. As a whole are terror attacks discussed in school? Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. As a whole is the topic of death discussed in school? Yes [ ] No [ ]
3. Have you ever talked about terror attacks in school? Yes [ ] No [ ]
4. Have you ever discussed the topic of death in school? Yes [ ] No [ ]
5. Do/would you feel supported if you had to respond to terror attacks? Yes [ ] No [ ]
6. Has response to terror ever been discussed in staff/morning briefings? Yes [ ] No [ ]
7. Is there a current protocol that you are aware of following a terror attack? Yes [ ] No [ ]
8. Do you feel that responding to terror attacks is important? Yes [ ] No [ ]
9. Are terror attacks discussed in morning briefings/ staff meetings? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Any further comments

In Conclusion – D

1. How well-prepared is the school for such eventualities in the future?

2. Do you have any additional comments you wish to make?

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