

# Supporting children and their surviving parent following the death of a parent. A study protocol.

Alexandra Wray<sup>1</sup>, Barry Wright<sup>2</sup>, Fliss EM Murtagh<sup>1</sup> and Jason W Boland<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wolfson Palliative Care Research Centre, Hull York Medical School, University of Hull, Hull, UK, <sup>2</sup> Hull York Medical School, University of Hull, Hull, UK.

## Background:

Bereaved children require a supportive response from those around them. Little is known about how to provide a supportive response when a parent has died.

## Aim:

To explore the experiences and psychosocial needs of parentally bereaved children and their surviving parent, and how they can be best supported by each other and their existing networks following the death of a parent.



## Methods:

### Study design

Exploratory qualitative design, using a constructivist perspective and a grounded theory approach.

### Participants and setting

Approximately 30 children (aged 10 – 18 years) and their surviving parents, who have experienced the death of a parent. Families will be recruited nationally.

### Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

The study has been designed with PPI including children and bereaved families, which will inform the entirety of the study, see figure 1 for involvement. PPI initially included 17 children and young people plus 3 parents from a young person's advisory group and then a bereaved families PPI group was developed, consisting of 5 parents and 5 children who have experienced the death of a parent.

### Data collection

Face-to-face or online, in-depth, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. Interviews will explore participants support needs and their experiences of support. All participants will provide their own informed consent to participate. A distress protocol will be implemented to minimise potential risk to participants.

### Data Analysis

Data will be analysed using the constant comparison method, identifying emerging categories as interviews progress, and exploring those categories further.

## Acknowledgments:

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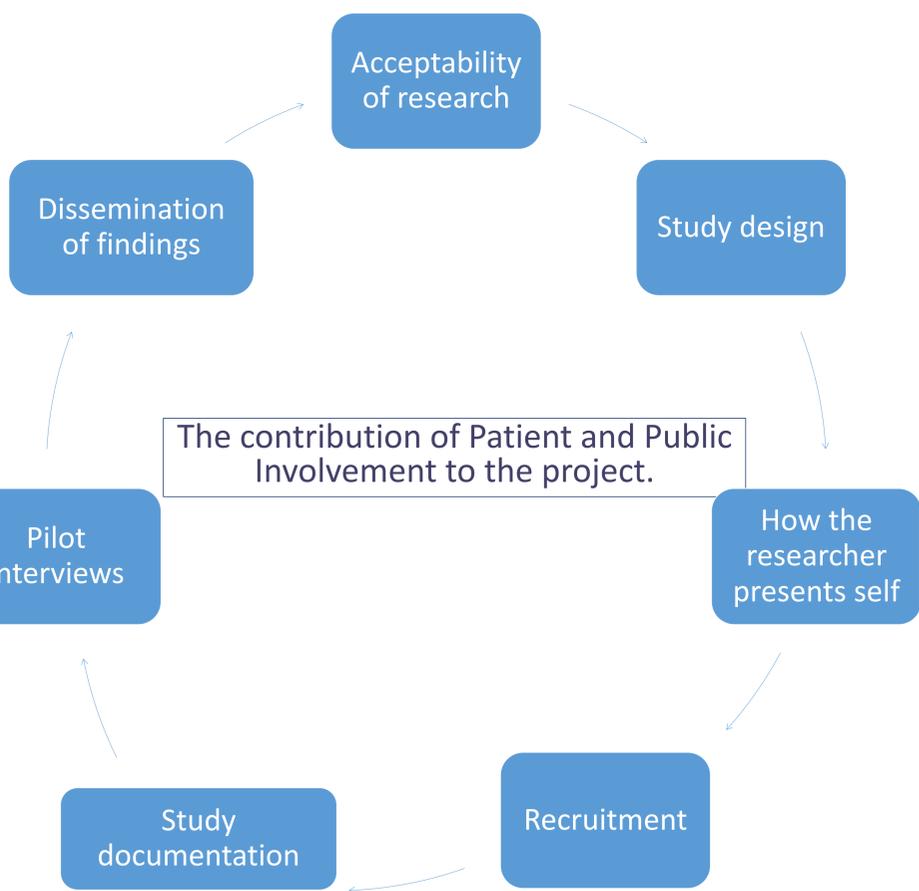


Figure 1. Patient and Public Involvement

## Results:

Findings from the interviews will be synthesised, working with experts and PPI representatives, in conjunction with systematic review findings, to develop a model proposing the supportive responses required by children and families when a parent has died.

## Dissemination

This will form PhD thesis chapters, conferences, abstracts, and peer-review publication. Study participants and PPI representatives will be invited to discuss research findings and how these can be disseminated appropriately to their needs. A workshop will be organised inviting bereaved families and professionals to disseminate findings.