Pilot studies guide the development of research plans to ensure that the methods and ideas which are being proposed will work in practice (Kim, 2010). This pilot study was undertaken to explore the feasibility of a proposed Doctorate study designed to answer the research question: ‘What is the family experience of bereavement when a family member has dementia and what might this mean for the provision of support?’ using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014).

The pilot explored the family bereavement experience from the perspective of one family member and focused on the use of unstructured interviews and research diaries as tools for quality data collection, and a process of data analysis involving process coding and memo writing (Saldaña, 2016).

Tentative theoretical understanding of the data emerged including:

- Experiencing a spiritual dimension
- Being a bereaved carer
- Family functioning
- Relationship between bereavement and dementia.

These early findings will be integrated into the main study through the constant comparison process consistent with grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014; Urquhart, 2013).

Carrying out and reflecting on the pilot highlighted several issues including the researchers’ role within the interview and data analysis process, the design and use of a diary for data collection and the ethical dilemma of involving or excluding people with dementia within the study. Learning from this pilot will help shape future study plans.

Communication, voices and stories

**P-14** EXPLORATION OF SUPPORT WORKERS’ AND VOLUNTEERS’ INITIATION OF QUALITY OF LIFE CONVERSATIONS

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**Background** Through being a pilot site for NHS England exploring Personal Health Budgets (PHBs) in end of life care, Treetops Hospice Care became aware that there needed to be more focus on conversations around what was important to patients. There appeared to be barriers around developing these conversations, possible reasons were lack of healthcare professionals’ time and clarity as to whose role it was. Resulting from this highlighted need, Treetops Hospice Care and the University of Derby are undertaking a research project to explore the outcomes of developing support workers and volunteers in initiating conversations around quality of life. Policy drivers have acknowledged that there is a much greater need and demand for person-centred care than professionals in health and social care can meet (Health Education England, Skills for Health & Skills for Care, 2017). This follows the principles of a ‘public health’ approach to end of life care, and that a ‘de-professionalisation’ of supportive care, involving volunteers and support staff engaging in these conversations, could result in being able to include more individuals (Abel & Kellehear, 2016).

**Aims** Exploring participants’ involvement and perceptions of patient-centred conversations to improve end of life care experiences.

**Methods/conclusion** Qualitative interviewing will be undertaken before and after a new educational training approach is delivered, along with a pre and post Likert evaluation tool capturing self-perceived confidence and competence. The new approach will focus around the mnemonic L.I.S.T.E.N (developed by Treetops Hospice Care) supporting these conversations around preferences and wishes, within a person-centred approach.

We anticipate that with the appropriate support and training, unregistered healthcare professionals/volunteers feel more enabled in having these conversations, empowering them to offer more timely conversation opportunities with palliative care patients. Resulting outcomes will inform future training.