

Diversity-Ready Cemeteries and Crematoria in England and Wales





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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. The research project	7
2.1. Executive summary and key findings	8
2.2. UK demographics	14
2.3. Case study towns	17
2.4. Planning and policy context	19
3. Key themes	21
3.1. Cemetery provision	22
3.2. Crematorium provision	27
3.3. Unequal provision across migrant and minority groups	33
3.4. Diversity within diversity	36
3.5. Changing patterns of repatriation	46
3.6. Planning for cemeteries as spaces of encounter	50
3.7. Fostering dialogue between professionals and communities	55
4. Recommendations	60
5. The research team	64
6. Acknowledgements	67
7. References	68



Muslim graves at Cemetery, Reading

I. Introduction

The UK is an ethnically and religiously diverse country, shaped by longstanding ties with communities from the New Commonwealth, and other dynamic flows of international migration, particularly within Europe.



National and local government, and other service providers, play an important part in the well-being of established minority groups and migrant residents within this multicultural society. For instance, they play a key role in the provision of social housing, education, employment and leisure facilities. Likewise many migrants and successive generations work in public sector services such as the NHS, as well as for private companies.

This report focuses on a little discussed but important dimension of migrant and minority experiences in England and Wales: cemetery and crematoria provision. These important spaces and services, including their gardens of remembrance, are provided and managed primarily by local authorities, alongside some private providers including faith groups (e.g. Church of England/ Wales) and commercial services. Planners play an important role in forward-planning for and mediating negotiations around the location of local services.

In the UK as a whole more than 70% of the dead are cremated, the remainder being buried and a small percentage repatriated internationally (Cremation Society of Great Britain, 2018), a pattern broadly replicated in England and Wales. Whether buried or cremated, the bodily remains of family and friends are widely deemed to be ‘sacred’ and where we bury the dead and practice remembrance is of deep significance to many (Maddrell 2016). Funerary and

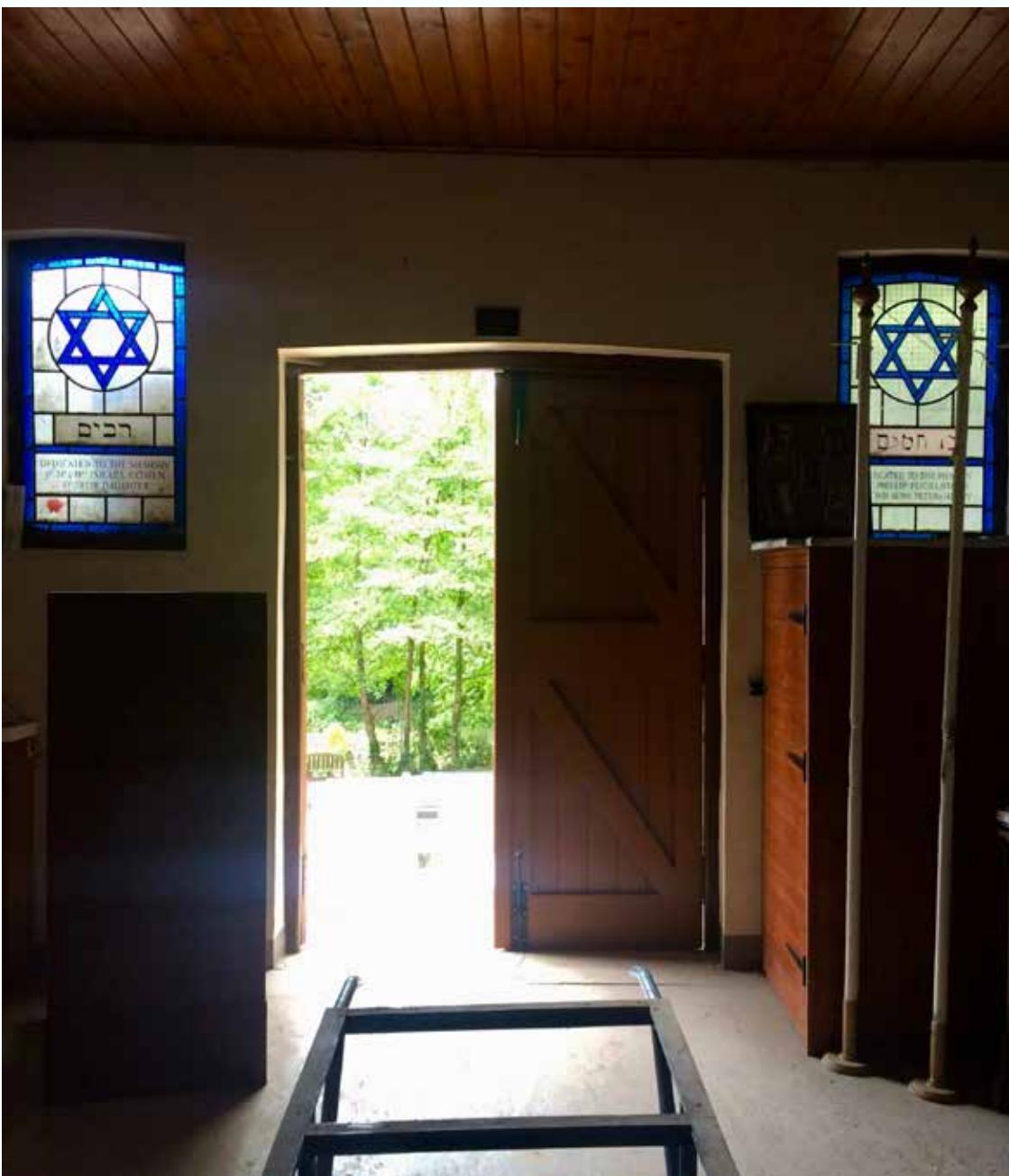
remembrance practices in general have become increasingly personalised and life-affirming in character. There is a strong emphasis on the lifestyles, voices, and preferences of the bereaved, the deceased and the wider community, resulting in tailor-made ceremonies that are supported by the funeral services industry (Mathijssen, 2017).

Having the ‘right’ sort of burial, cremation and associated rituals is important for the respectful treatment of the deceased and for those mourning them. As society becomes more culturally diverse, so too do the requirements for funerary spaces and practices. The Deathscapes and Diversity research project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council, highlights the varied cultural and religious funerary needs in England and Wales, the associated challenges and the ways in which both communities and service providers (e.g. cemetery managers, town planners and funeral directors) respond to them.

Although many service-providers work to accommodate migrant and minority needs to the best of their ability, this research highlights various challenges in practice. It is notable that cemetery and crematorium provision in England and Wales is uneven, and provision for different ethnic-religious groups can likewise be uneven and inadequate. Furthermore, there is a need for understanding not simply diverse cultural and religious practices, but of ‘diversity within diversity’ (e.g. denominational and regional differences) and how these are mediated through local and personal circumstances.

Based on extensive research with local communities and service providers in four case study towns in England and Wales, this report outlines the challenges, examples of good practice and creative opportunities for cemetery and crematoria providers and users. We argue that diversity-ready cemeteries, crematoria and remembrance sites are a necessary but currently neglected aspect of an inclusive and integrated multicultural society; addressing these issues will contribute to greater social well-being and a more inclusive civic culture.

We thank everyone who participated in the research and hope that this report is of value to local and national service providers, planners and policy makers, as well as to the communities in our case study towns and further afield.



Burial chapel at Jewish cemetery, Newport

The Research Project

2.1. Summary & Key Findings

- This research project studied cemetery and crematoria provision in the light of migrant and minority funerary needs (before, during and after funerals)
- The study was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council, and supported by the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management
- It focused on England and Wales which have devoted but similar patterns of provision and planning systems
- A case study approach was used and four towns of broadly similar size with approximately 10% minority populations were chosen: Huddersfield, Newport, Northampton and Swindon
- Mixed methods were used for data collection, including mapping and photographic surveys of each cemetery and crematoria garden, interviews and focus groups with service providers, planners, clergy, community leaders and diverse user groups.

The Research Project:

In light of increasing ethnic and religious diversity, there is a need for diversity-ready cemeteries, crematoria and remembrance sites in England and Wales. This research project, working with local providers and communities in four case towns, has sought to highlight cemetery, crematoria and remembrance practice requirements and preferences in a multicultural context.

Key Findings Include:

- Growing awareness of, and attention to, diverse needs across local authorities and by individual providers. The most effective multicultural service providers were well informed about diverse needs of different faith and cultural groups, including local variations and changing trends in population and practices
- Text book knowledge of diverse practices needs to be supplemented by ongoing communication and consultation with local communities
- Monday to Friday public services (such as GPs, registrars, coroners and cemeteries) are inadequate to meet the needs of faith groups which require prompt burial regardless of the day of the week (notably Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs)
- Larger metropolitan areas were reported to be better equipped to address these issues 'out of hours' compared to the towns in this study
- Coroners are actively working to improve prompt release of bodies to meet religious requirements
- Inability to fulfil religious and cultural requirements for the dead leaves mourners feeling misunderstood, marginalised and anxious on behalf of the deceased
- Having some capacity within crematoria and cemetery scheduling and weekend staffing are key to the ability to respond flexibly to diverse needs
- Neighbouring local authorities could enhance co-operation to meet the diverse needs of residents more effectively - especially where land and

budgets are limited

- Required building work, such as remodelling of crematoria infrastructure to meet air pollution abatement requirements, can be opportunities to incorporate diversity-led facilities e.g. safe access for the viewing of and charging the cremator
- Translation of local authority and other funeral service information into key local minority languages maximises access to information for minorities and migrants (especially refugees)
- Service providers need to be aware of 'diversity within diversity', including different denominations within religions and regional interpretations of religious practice, as well as generational and gendered preferences
- Best practice includes extending cemetery and crematorium timeslots to accommodate large funeral groups or more elaborate funeral rituals – where capacity allows
- Cemetery and crematoria chapels need to have adaptable spaces for large funerals and provide removable religious icons that can be used as appropriate
- High quality audio systems allow use of pre-recorded personal and devotional music, mantras and prayers. TV screen relay into overspill areas accommodates large funerals. Webcam links facilitate virtual attendance/participation by mourners who are unable to attend, such as international mourners or those in poor health.
- Local authority budget cuts have led to reduced hours and some out-sourcing of cemetery services, which can make it more difficult to be responsive to weekend burial requests
- The removal of permanent staff from some cemeteries has made elderly and solo minority visitors uneasy about visiting on their own
- Partial staffing at well-publicised fixed hours could address this; as could the conversion of redundant buildings to other services such as a cafés, florists and information points with toilet facilities
- Cemeteries and crematoria gardens are social spaces with the potential for fostering meaningful interaction. Information on the diverse commu-

11

Diversity-ready
cemeteries,
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sary but currently
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cultural society

nities using a given cemetery or crematorium can enhance understanding

- Cemetery and crematoria open days, including tours and activities, can enhance understanding of processes and encourage dialogue with and between different user groups
- Some community groups have liaised with providers to create and fund culturally specific cemetery facilities, and to provide local community members with training in cemetery health and safety to support cemetery staff during weekend burials
- Identifying liaisons within community groups can ease communication with service providers, and can support families and service providers in making funeral arrangements
- Community initiatives can support families and service providers, e.g. Jewish and Muslim burial councils which collect funds for communal facilities, such as ritual washing rooms and hearses, and individual funerals
- Community initiatives need to be transparent about eligibility, membership and funds
- Creating opportunities for dialogue between minority and majority communities, and with service providers and Planners is vital to appropriate and effective diversity-ready cemeteries and crematoria
- Creating diversity-ready cemeteries, crematoria and associated services is a vital element of an inclusive multicultural society, where everyone feels they 'belong', where their needs catered for, and their deceased are treated respectfully
- Up-to-date government guidance should be produced to ensure local planning authorities include provision for diversity-ready cemeteries and crematoria. This should be included in the National Planning Policy Framework (England) and the National Development Framework (Wales)
- More resources should be made available to local authorities in pressing need for diversity-ready cemeteries and crematoria to provide facilities and enable appropriate consultation with stakeholders



Muslim area at cemetery, Northampton

- Local planning authorities may be best placed to carry out consultation as part of their local plan reviews but more resources are needed to support public participation
- More research is needed in cities with diverse populations and significant development pressures and in Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Improved services and facilities which ensure cemeteries and crematoria are more inclusive of and responsive to migrant and minority needs can benefit all users, for example TV relay into overspill spaces, webcam links, and longer time-slots in chapels
- Trends include:
 - Reduced repatriation of deceased bodies or cremated remains to South Asia; and increased repatriation of ashes of short term EU migrants
 - Need to increase capacity of Muslim burial grounds
 - Limited demand on funeral services by short term EU economic migrants
 - Occasional need for local authority funerals for young migrants

2.2. UK Demographics

The 2011 Census showed that 13 percent of the population in England and Wales (7.5 million people) were born overseas.

Almost half (46%, 3.4 million) of the foreign-born population identified with a White ethnic group, a third identified as Asian/ British Asian (33%, 2.4 million) and 13% (992,000) identified with Black/African/Caribbean/Black British.

Figures 2 gives an overview of the countries of origin of the foreign-born population. Figure 3 shows the changes in diverse ethnic groups in England and Wales between 2001 and 2011.

Focus group with multicultural women, Newport



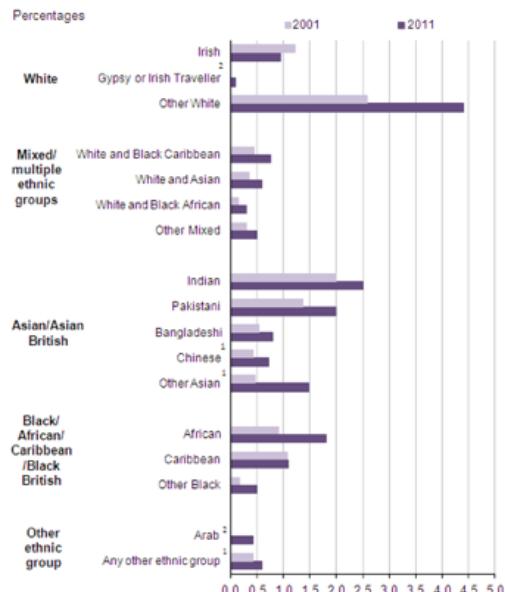
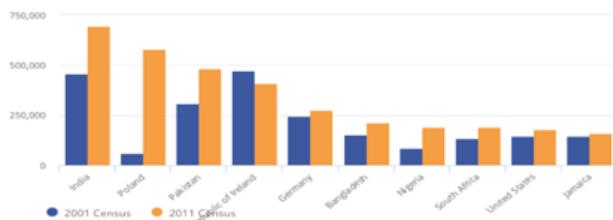
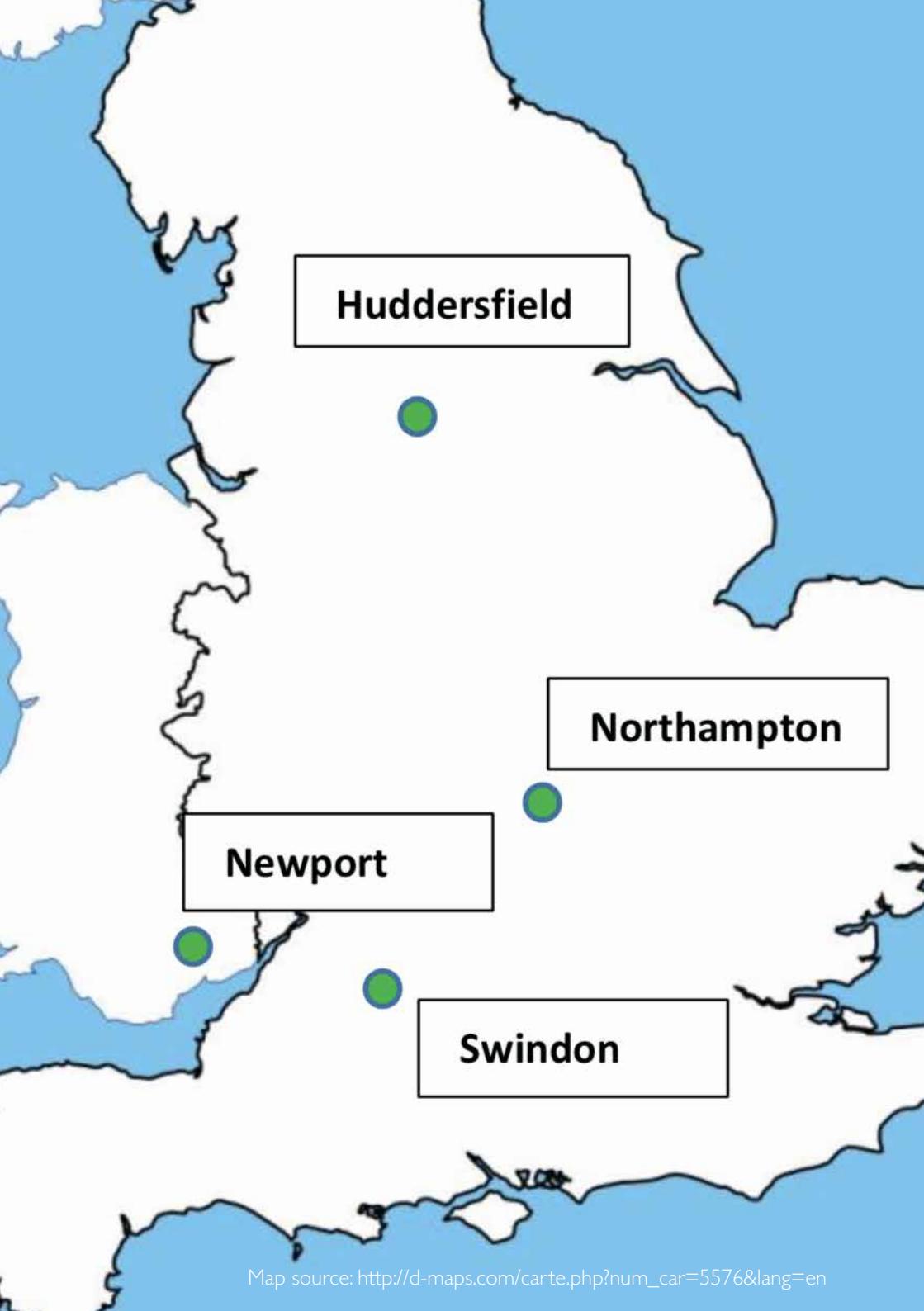


Figure 2: Top ten countries for non-UK born residents in England and Wales, 2001 and 2011





Huddersfield

Northampton

Newport

Swindon

2.3. Case Study Towns

Swindon, Northampton, Huddersfield & Newport

Following a pilot study in Reading, the project team conducted extensive fieldwork in four large towns in England and Wales: Huddersfield, Newport, Swindon and Northampton (2017-18).

Each town has a broadly similar population (approximately 100,000 -150,000) including ethnically diverse populations as identified in Census data (see Table I below) with varying countries of origin or heritage, religious groups, longstanding established ethnic minority communities and clusters of recent migrants, including those from within the European Union and beyond (known

as Third Country Nationals (TCNs)).

In each town, cemetery and crematoria provision was mapped and each site studied, including those facilities outside the boundaries of the town which had significant use by residents. Extensive interviews and focus groups were conducted with cemetery, crematoria and funeral service providers and local migrant and minority community interest groups.

Figure I shows the location of the case study towns, and Table I gives an overview of the migrant and minority populations within them.

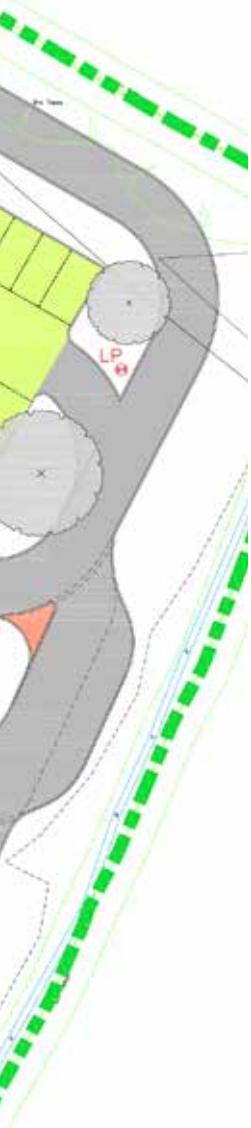
	Newport	Northampton	Swindon	Huddersfield
White other (including Eastern European migrants)	1.7%	6.5%	4.2%	2.9%
Pakistani (often Muslim)	2.1%	4.2%	0.6%	9.9%
Indian (often Hindu or Sikh)	0.8%	2.5%	3.3%	4.9%
Other significant groups	1.2% Bangladeshi 1.0% Black/ African	3.1% Black/ African 1.5% Mixed	1.6% Other Asian White/ Caribbean	1.1% Black/ Caribbean

Table 1. Overview migrant and minority populations in case study towns (ONS, 2016)



Plans for a new crematorium in South Wales

2.4. Planning and Policy Context



In the UK, there is a lack of (planning) policy for cemeteries and crematoria. Partly, this is the result of the limited legal responsibility for local authorities to provide funerary services. Spaces for new cemeteries and crematoria, or expansion of existing ones, can be identified by the town planning system but, unlike other European countries, there is no specific requirement to provide spaces. Therefore, local authorities may not have designed and/or prioritised a specific policy to deal with changing cemetery and crematoria needs.

Previous research shows that less than 25% of English planning authorities mention planning for cemeteries in their Local Plan; those that do, typically group them together with green space, heritage spaces, or sites of biodiversity (McClymont, 2016). This perhaps reflects the Victorian and landscape heritage of many cemeteries. However, these groupings may no longer be appropriate in the light of different religious and cultural needs.

The draft English National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Welsh Planning Policy Wales note that burial grounds are appropriate green belt development but class them as open space or green infrastructure rather than acknowledging their specific sacred dimensions.

In the post-2008 era of austerity, local government budgets have been under severe pressure, resulting in some cases in bereavement services (including cemeteries and crematoria) being sub-contracted or reduced, and



Cemetery map, Huddersfield

service users facing increased costs. Private providers are also becoming more diverse, including crematoria and natural burial grounds.

Mainstream services typically base their offer on the historic traditions of the Christian/secular 'majority' population. Where cemetery and crematoria managers and funeral directors aim to meet faith-based requirements, such as burial within 24 hours, these may still be deemed as outside of 'normal' practice. For example, while private funeral directors usually provide a 24/7 service, public sector workers such as GP doctors, coroners and cemetery workers typically have a Monday-Friday working week. As a result, for those migrants and established minorities unable to ensure a timely and appropriate burial or cremation of kith and kin, cemeteries and crematoria can be experienced as spaces of difference and exclusion, generating a sense of marginalisation and less than full citizenship (Maddrell, 2011; Stevenson et al, 2016).

There is, therefore, a need 'to include the excluded' (Beebejaun, 2012) in bereavement services, and to be attentive to further differences within and between ethnic and religious groups.

Key Themes

3.1. Cemetery Provision

Increasing costs for burials and/or ‘out of hours’ services places a particularly heavy burden on some faith groups in the UK, such as Muslim and Jewish communities.



Muslim grave, Northampton

Cemetery provision, in general and for migrant and minority groups in particular, varies considerably between different towns in England and Wales. In some towns, for example, it is possible to conduct same-day burials, as well as burials during weekend hours. This is important for the Muslim and Jewish commu-

nity, who need to bury their kin as soon as possible after death, but this challenges a cemetery system set up around a Monday to Friday working week. While seven-day services are available in some larger cities, towns are lagging behind to the frustration of those living in smaller towns.

The facilities are not here yet, unlike in bigger cities such as Leicester and Birmingham. They can bury the dead at any time, because they can do the burial first and the paperwork later. So that's the kind of provision that we want. In Islam, when someone passes away, we have to hasten the burial because there is no good in keeping the body. (Imam, Muslim community Northampton)

Where same-day burials or burials during weekends are difficult to arrange, this is often due to austerity measures restricting the availability of cemetery staff at weekends.

We get a phone call on Monday morning saying, we need a Muslim funeral, dug and ready by the afternoon. And often we can say, okay, no problem. But there are

times we got to refuse them. There is no choice but to refuse them. With the staff we got it is just impossible. Years ago, we could do it because we had plenty of men. Now we haven't. (Cemetery manager, Newport)

However, even in the context of austerity, the case studies evidenced how service providers and communities have worked together to meet the practical and religious cemetery and burial needs for migrant and minority groups. Examples included moving the deadline for same day burials back from 10 am until 11.30



Meeting to discuss funerary needs,
South Wales

am, allowing families more time to complete required paperwork and make arrangements (South Wales); and public meetings being organised to challenge the Council's unprecedented price increases for burials (Huddersfield).

Lack of burial space also impacts on local cemetery services. While burial space is in short supply in some cemeteries, overall, demand is falling, but demand for particular faith groups, especially Muslims, is increasing.

When we were drafting [the Local Plan] there was [discussion about cemetery provision]. We didn't get very far but there was a brief discussion about should we have an allocation for cemetery expansion. For whatever reason, that wasn't taken forward at that time. I think we identified the need within the planning period could be accommodated within the present cemetery provision. But we are aware that moving forward there will be a need for an extension and I think there is land ear-marked for that. (Town Planner, Swindon)

Creative solutions to specific community needs include booking the cemetery for a half day for a single lengthy funeral with large numbers of attendees e.g. a Caribbean funeral. The desire of the Italian Roman

Catholic minority community in Northampton to have an Italian-style mausoleum led to a creative approach between the community and cemetery.

We did a crowd funding project to build a mausoleum to facilitate above ground burials for our Italian community. The community had come forward to us, and we appointed a community team who worked closely with the cemetery team here. We did an in-house design of the mausoleum, so it met with their specifications. Everything down to the bricks we used, what tiles we used, sizes of the mausoleum to accommodate different types of caskets and

coffins. And then, because it was hard to get the money out of capital product, we agreed with the community that they paid a deposit, out of the final cost of what the burial would be. And then we could build the mausoleum. (Cemetery manager, Kettering)

At the cemetery, there is a lot of singing and there are lots of people. And it takes time. Celebrating the person's life. You know that could be 45 minutes. And I have seen that they don't put anything else on the agenda then. There is no-one to be seen. (Christian minister, African, Northampton)



Staffed office at cemetery, Newport



Italian mausoleum, Northampton

Lastly, access and transport are fundamental to people visiting the cemetery (or crematoria), either to attend a burial or cremation, or to remember the deceased. Participants in our project stressed the importance of having enough parking space at the cemetery, especially when large groups attend. Easy access to the cemetery by public transport is a necessity for those without cars. In addition, when visiting the cemetery, visitors would feel more secure if staff were present:

When I go to the cemetery on my own, I don't stay long, because there is nobody there sometimes. It is frightening. Because there are people walking around, someone may attack you, because there is no-one in the office anymore.
(Christian woman, Mauritian origin, Newport)

The other thing is the security around the cemetery. The reason being the vandalism. That can be pure vandalism, just outright destroying something, or it comes in different forms: racism, economic reasons. Getting the metal sheeting or something and sell it. I've seen it happen with one grave. So some kind of security measure, some railing I don't know. That would be a good idea. (British-Pakistani man, Huddersfield)

We conclude that it is important to proactively plan for future cemetery space needs, and to include provisions for the needs of diverse local groups in those plans, based on population predictions and dialogue with local community groups. There are opportunities for local authorities to work across boundaries to collectively provide diversity-ready cemeteries. Such collective provision could enable more efficient pooling of resources and serve a wider range of minority communities.

3.2. Crematorium Provision



Anteroom in crematorium with audio and video facilities, Kettering

UK crematoria are used for the overwhelming majority of funerals in England and Wales, creating high demand for their services and consequent pressure on time and space. Hindu and Sikh beliefs require cremation (with the notable exception of children), including a responsibility placed on family members to initiate and witness the process. Crematorium managers and users mentioned both challenges and examples of good practice when catering for contemporary diverse needs.

A key challenge is the issue of time. Typical time allocations of approximately 30 minutes for cremation services do not always meet the

needs of large groups or complex rituals. Fixed-time slots can create the feeling of an impersonal service which does not accommodate all religious-cultural ceremonies. A number of both professionals and users mentioned feeling being rushed through the ceremony, and finding the proximity of mourners attending the previous or following funerals 'unsettling' and 'disconcerting'.

The slots at the crematorium are either 20 or 40 minutes. So that can do... it's a bit of a horrible conveyor belt. (Christian man, Swindon)

Furthermore, these timeslots often do not suit funeral services with a



Shiva statue at crematorium, Cardiff

large number of mourners attending. In this case, the practicalities of parking, entering and leaving the crematorium and completing an appropriate service within the tight timeslot can be difficult. Solutions included offering Saturday slots, or by being proactive in offering extended weekday slots where/ when capacity allowed:

This year, due to feedback from families and funeral directors and actually increased competition, we ended up with enough capacity to extend our service time to one hour. People feel less rushed, groups of mourners can go in and out of the chapel and we can get in to clean it. We have seen decreases in all the things we were looking for. It avoids that mixing of mourners and generally it makes people feel that they have more time. (Crematorium manager, Kettering)

Contemporary funeral ceremonies are often characterised by personalised practices, such as the display of personal photos, PowerPoint presentations, music and videos. Most crematoria are well-equipped to meet these requests.

For migrant and minority groups, however, audio and video tools can also be used to enable their wider kith and kin including international family networks to view, participate in, and even contribute to, the service. The installation of webcams,

screens and programmes such as Skype and video recording have facilitated this virtual participation.

She didn't get a visa to attend her father's funeral, but [at the service] she actually said a poem on the telephone and she was watching on Skype. She was actually live! And somebody made a speech as well from Pakistan I think, so it was very interactive. (Christian British-Bangladeshi woman, Focus group Newport)

Online memorials can also offer an opportunity for national and international networks of family, friends and colleagues to share condolences and memories (Maddrell, 2016).

In addition to personalised practices, religious music and symbols play a significant role in many funeral services. The availability of appropriate portable religious symbols was much appreciated by diverse groups compared to conducting religious ceremonies under the fixed symbols of another religion (typically Christian crosses).

A number of years ago, they installed a curtain, 'cos there's a cross in the chapel. So if you don't want the cross they cover it. So that's quite good. 'Cos people with no religion at all don't want that. Some people will. (Baha'i man, Swindon)



Portable Ek Onkar and Aum symbols at crematorium, Cardiff

When we arrived at the crematorium that day, I hadn't even thought about anything. But they had a CD playing with the Aum Nama Shiva, and this was done by an orchestra. It was a really nice arrangement. They had like the Hindu Aum at the front. And one of the big things, they have got a Shiva murti, the god statue, which is all in place there. (Hindu woman, Northampton)

Few crematoria can accommodate maximum funeral demand, making it necessary to accommodate over-spill. Larger anterooms and televised relays on big screens can allow all funeral attendees to be able to witness the ceremony, even if they cannot fit into the main chapel.

In 2013 we rebuilt the smaller chapel. That now seats 135, plus the room for standing for 50 [in the anteroom], plus we have speakers on the outside, should our capacity be exceeded, so people can still hear the service taking place. And what we find with the Hindu services that we do on the weekend is that it reduces the stress for the family. They know there is going to be plenty of car parking for everyone, and there is no crossing over with anyone as well. (Crematorium manager, Kettering)

In this case, the generous lobby or anteroom with some seating, a toy box and TV screen relay of the service also accommodates parents attending with small children, those who may need to be close to toilet facilities, or those arriving late.

Crematoria managers also reported a small but growing number of public service funerals for young East European migrants who moved recently for short-term work, often without supporting family net-

works. These were predominantly young Poles whose death was unanticipated and for whom no funeral finances were available (funeral costs are covered by taxes in Poland making private funding unnecessary). Poles are predominantly Roman Catholic and favour burial, but either public service funeral budget constraints and/or families in Poland

being unable to afford the repatriation of bodies has resulted in their cremation, allowing ashes to be sent back to their families in their country of origin. Negotiating these provisions and arrangements sometimes requires the services of a translator in order to liaise with the next of kin in other countries.



Above left: fixed cross in crematorium, Gwent
Above right and below: cremation viewing room, Kettering

Hindu temple, Swindon



3.3. Unequal provision across groups



Cemetery space needs to be planned in light of population trends for the diverse communities in a given area, as well as the particular religious and cultural requirements of local communities. Cemetery and crematorium provision not only involves managing space and time, but also facilitating emotional and spiritual needs and people's sense of those needs being understood, accepted and met. It also includes considering the impact of provision on the social and financial situation of mourners.

Research from the case-study towns suggested that different groups are not equally provided for. Some people felt that their needs to have religious symbols or washing facilities for the deceased are not fully understood. For example, Hindus in Swindon felt under-represented in the religious landscape as a whole, including funerary provision.

We had to highlight there is a 12,000 Hindu population across the town, and these are the needs. So it was not very easy to convince and highlight. I think maybe because we are the minority, nobody understood the requirements. (Interview, Hindu man, Swindon)

Also, groups had different degrees of provision in local cemeteries:

We wanted to make provision for the Bahá'ís of Northampton to be buried at the cemetery. It was easily arranged, because of the lady that was there then. She was very sympathetic. I think we have been very fortunate actually. Because cemetery space is in quite short supply. Not far from ours, there is the Chinese space, and a Jewish one, and an Islamic one. But some of them are struggling [with insufficient burial space]. For the size of the town, we have been very fortunate. (Focus group Bahá'i, Northampton)

Likewise, provisions for diverse cremated ash scattering rituals are infrequently addressed. Hindus and Sikhs, for example, seek to fulfil the religious prescription that cremated ashes should be dispersed in the Ganges or over moving water. Yet, their needs tend to be overlooked.

We said: "Look, you provide all these graveyards and everything, for the Christians, the Muslims and anybody else. What have you done for the Sikhs or the Hindus?" We have been dealing with this for the last four years now. I've been attending meetings with the Welsh government and everything, and we are trying to get a location where we can build a

place to scatter. Because at the moment, you have to hire a boat. And obviously, that is an extra expense. (Focus group Sikhs, South Wales)

Burial is becoming less common in England and Wales but costs for burials are increasing. This imposes a particular financial burden on those whose faith requires the burial of the dead, such as Jews, Muslims and Orthodox Christians, and those who are strongly directed to use burial, such as Roman Catholics. Further religious requirements can incur additional costs, for example where Muslim graves are organised so they occupy double grave plots to allow for body positioning within the grave, which doubles the costs of the plot for all Muslims. These additional costs can exacerbate funeral poverty.

As you might need a different coffin to lay the deceased on his/her side, and need double burial space the price goes up extensively. (Muslim Shia men, Newport)

With the cube burial, because we have thirteen inches of grave, and the cubes are 4 to 6 inches, we have got to charge them two grave spaces. Because we are using two grave spaces. (Cemetery manager Newport)*

* Muslim graves are constructed in specific ways. A chamber is typically built within the grave to prevent the earth from touching the face of the deceased. Reflecting regional traditions, this is usually done by placing a wooden shelf over the deceased's body. Sometimes other materials are used as well, such as fibreglass cubes. Some Muslims only require the head of the deceased to face Mecca, others favour the whole body to be oriented in this way.



Above: Bahá'í area at cemetery, Northampton
Below: Chinese-Orthodox area at cemetery, Northampton

3.4. Diversity within Diversity

To accommodate the diverse cemetery, crematorium, and remembrance needs of people living in a multicultural UK, service providers need a nuanced understanding of diversity. There is not only variation between different religious or ethnic groups, but also significant diversities within them. This ‘diversity within diversity’ is the result of differences in characteristics such as age, generation, gender, ethnicity and country of birth or heritage.

I understand that for them, we are all the same. He is black African, I am black African. But I don't necessarily follow the Zimbabwean culture, as my Dad is Malawian. (Christian woman, Black African, Northampton)

To cater for diverse funeral needs, it is helpful to have an overview of specific wishes and needs of particular groups. At the same time, it is important to not make assumptions based on previous engagements with those from a particular country or religion, and

to be attentive to the wide variety of funeral needs that exists within communities. Women might have different preferences to men, and younger generations could have different preferences or knowledge of rituals compared to older/ first generation migrants. Likewise, traditions change and adapt, and are responsive to cultural influences beyond their own community, including challenging traditional gendered roles or assumptions, as this British Hindu woman explained.

We actually asked the priest whether we could [give speeches and witness the cremation] as women. And he said, you know, [the deceased] hasn't got a son, he can't go out to find a son, so there is no reason why a daughter wouldn't be able to do it. But our religion is very male orientated, and some people said it shouldn't be woman. (Hindu woman, British Asian, Northampton)

Regarding faith groups, it is important to be attentive to differences between 'prescribed religion' - the rules established by religious texts or leaders - and 'lived religion', the way religion is practiced by people themselves. Not everyone follows the same teachers and prescriptions. For example, Hindu participants reported different views about ash disposal practices, with older generations favouring repatriation of ashes to the Ganges, whereas women and younger generations more typically favoured dispersal near their home and children, for example at a river at a stately home which the family frequently visited for outings, or a local river:

We used to have the river Ganges, flowing water. But I said to my children, you know what, just do it down the stream at the back of the house or in the garden. That will be fine for me. (Hindu woman, Northampton)

Some participants were aware of the consecration of the River Soar in Leicestershire with water from the Ganges allowing ash scattering, or the possibility of making similar local facilities in agreement with the Environment Agency (Maddrell 2011).

For Hindus and Sikhs, our big problem is scattering of the ashes. We're supposed to put the ashes in running water, like a river or a canal, but in the UK, I don't think there is any designated site you can go to. (Sikh man, Swindon)

The environmental agency's meeting was very, very productive. The environmental agency outlined the place where the river met, and it was flowing into the main, and they said, if you go to that point and do the rituals, and off they went. And now what the environmental agency has done is, they put it all together, for the rest of the local Sikh community to know. (Sikh woman, South Wales)



Welsh-Polish grave, Cardiff

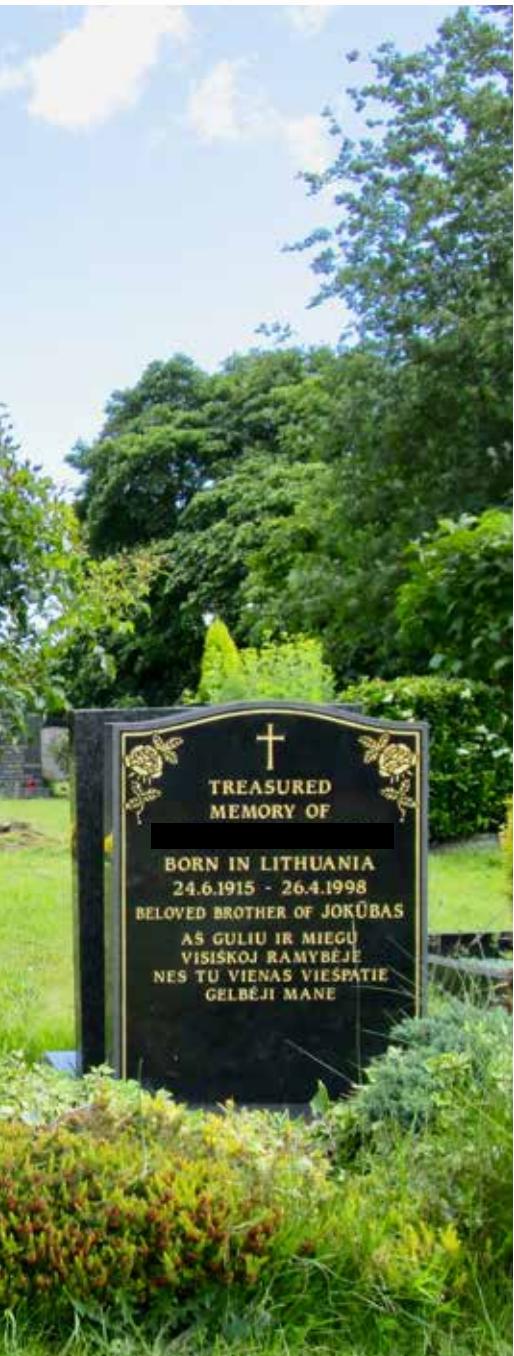


Diverse Muslim graves in Northampton and Newport





Lithuanian graves in Northampton

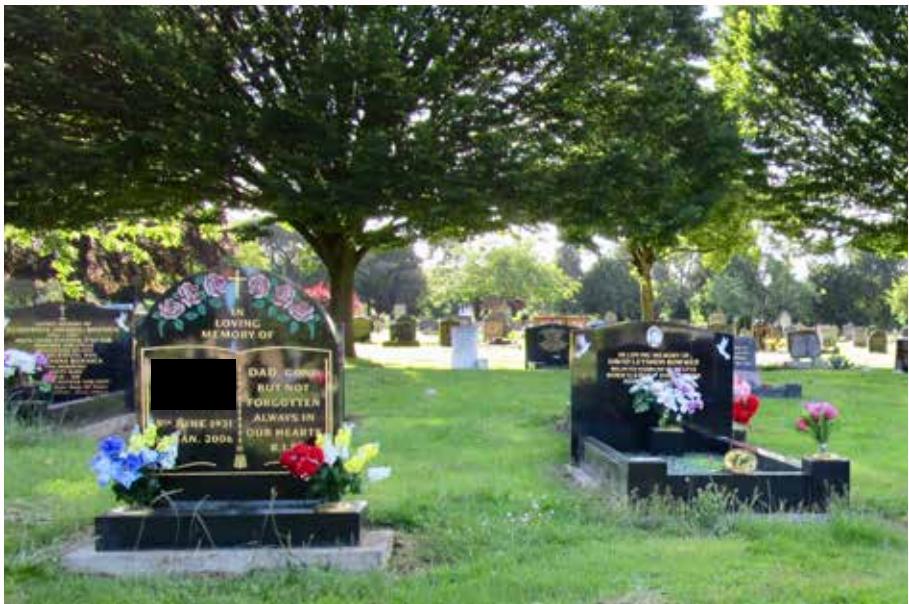


Flags at graves, Northampton



Above: Italian grave in Newport
Below: Jewish graves in Newport





Above: Afro-Caribbean graves in Northampton
Below: Coptic Orthodox area at cemetery in Newport



Non-ecclesial or ‘secular’ funerals, usually attributed to the majority population, are often seen as personalised, whereas the funerals of minority and/or religious groups, such as Christian or Muslim ceremonies, are often portrayed as traditional.

Within religious groups, however, death practices are tailored beyond religious prescriptions, influenced by personal, social and cultural wishes. Hindu and Sikh cremation ceremonies, for example, could include popular music songs and personal photographs, and Muslim graves may be decorated with elaborate floral tributes to ‘Dad’ or ‘Sister’.

Because of my brother, we actually have a family plot where he is buried. And despite the Baha'i rules around burial in a specific direction I've expressed a preference to be buried with my brother, in our family plot, over and above that rule, because that's my personal... Technically I'm probably damned for that decision, [ha-ha]. But it's more important to me, personally, and I know that my sister who is not a Baha'i or religious at all, has chosen the same, to be buried with my brother. (Baha'i man, Swindon)

In addition to those who only have loose ties to their inherited faith tradition, those without any religious affiliation have desires and needs that have to be met. Secularisation not only occurs

Both photographs: Muslim graves in Newport





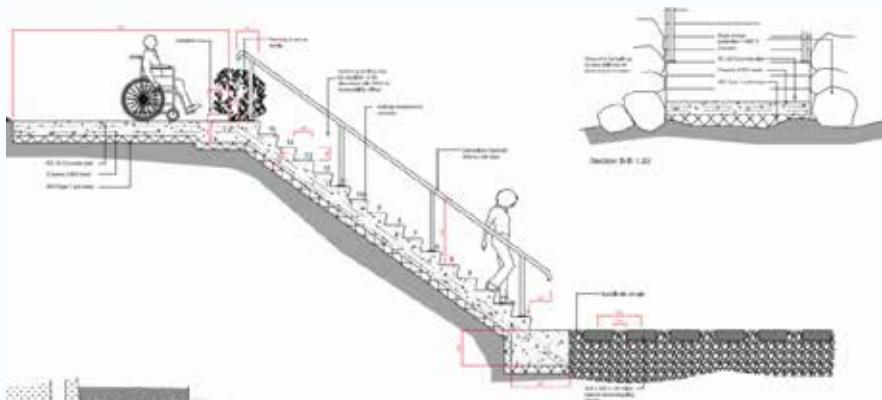
within Christian communities, but also within other faith groups. This not only results in more personalised ceremonies, but also in less knowledge about religious needs and funerary rituals. By acquiring knowledge of diverse funerary customs, service providers can assist bereaved families in conducting funerary rites according to religious and personal needs. What was identified as an 'Irish' firm of undertakers was praised by several respondents for their knowledge of, and sensitive guidance on, diverse religious practices:

The funeral directors were really good. With our funerals, there is ceremonies that take place. You are meant to put things in the mouth of the deceased and they knew. So they were like: "Do you

want us to leave the mouth slightly open, so you can do that?" Whereas, when you are in that state, you don't think about those things. But they knew, so they could prompt that. So that was very, very helpful. Stressing, but needed. Little things like that really helped. (Interview Hindu woman, Northampton)

Some migrants and minorities are changing and re-inventing their funerary and remembrance practices in response to the legal and cultural context in England and Wales. This includes constraints such as public health regulations, and liberties such as the freedom to collect ashes from the crematoria and disperse at chosen sites. This evokes creativity among individuals, families, communities and service providers.

3.5. Changing patterns of repatriation



With long-standing established minority communities such as British Chinese and the children of migrants and their successive generations being born in the UK, and international migration characterising contemporary globalisation, migrant and minority communities are complex.

Certain longstanding groups have established a sense of home and belonging in England and Wales, for instance those with Caribbean and South-Asian origins who have settled in the post-war era, and whose children and grandchildren have been born and raised here. Due to family ties within the UK and suc-

cessive generations living here, those belonging to established minorities increasingly choose to bury, inter or scatter ashes locally, rather than burying the body or taking the ashes to the country of origin or heritage.

Theological debates about international repatriation and the costs and practicalities of transporting the deceased back to the country of origin or heritage also influence local disposition. However, there is evidence of regional repatriation within England and Wales e.g. a Muslim burial council collecting the deceased from London to be buried near family in Northampton.

I think there is a cultural change where people are [...] no longer sending bodies to Pakistan. They're saying: "No, we want to have our loved ones buried here". And this has made a big difference [to our burial service] (British Muslim, man, Huddersfield)

There are Hindu people in this country for three generations. So people settled and brought up here obviously they will not be repatriated to India. But first or second generation definitely would want to do that. So his roots are in India, he's lived here for about 10 years. (Hindu man, Swindon)

Whereas local burial and disposal is increasing relative to repatriation, variety exists within and between groups. Those with ties abroad, including land and close family, might

choose to repatriate; more recent migrants, especially and those who saw themselves as temporary migrants may prefer to bury the body or dispose of the ashes in the country of origin.

This, for instance, comes to the fore among more recent European migrants. Roman Catholic migrants from East and Southern Europe traditionally bury the deceased, but in the UK this study highlighted the adoption of cremation, enabling transporting the cremated remains back to the country of origin.

I know a handful whose ashes have been taken back, the most recent being another friend in London. He had no relations in the UK and his next of kin, his niece, still lives in Lithuania. (Interview Lithuanian woman, Newport)



Above: Plans for ash scattering facility, Sikh community, South Wales
 Below: Children's graves, Muslim community, Newport

**“For Hindus
and Sikhs, our
big problem is
scattering of
the ashes”**

In one case the funeral director themselves carried the deceased's ashes back to the family in Poland:

I went to Gdansk in Poland. Because I went to a repatriation company, and they wanted me to pay £900 for the repatriation of the cremated remains. I worked out it would cost me £340 to go from here to Gdansk and back again, and save the family £600. (Interview funeral director Newport)

Recent European migrants are a young group, characterised by low mortality rates. For them death often is untimely and unprepared for, resulting in financial and practical challenges. Being confronted with funerary costs in the UK can result in a financial burden to the families of migrants.



Benches at cemetery in Newport

3.6. Planning for Cemeteries as Spaces of Encounter

Cemeteries and crematoria gardens are public spaces with various functions that offer a variety of uses in urban spaces. Their primary use is for the remains of the dead and the conduct of personal or religious rituals, including the placing of material ritual items or mementoes such as prayer beads, candles and flowers.

As such, cemeteries are of ultimate importance to individuals, families and communities. They include the precious remains of loved ones, are 'sacred to the memory of' the deceased, and are sites of religious significance for many. They are also where many continue to talk to and express their ongoing attachment to, and care for, the deceased (Maddrell 2016). In this regard, cemeteries can be understood as important spaces of comfort (Price et al, 2018).

At the same time, cemeteries are also seen as part of the green infrastructure of towns and cities, and used as spaces for leisure and recreation, as well as impacting on civic identity and local place attachment (McClymont, 2016).

Therefore, cemeteries can be understood as having potentially competing functions. Moreover, they can be seen as social worlds which have their own shifting communities (Francis et al 2005), being sites of encounter and interaction where different types of people meet, either in person or through encountering the graves and material artefacts of remembrance.

.... I've found people when I've gone there. I've always bumped into somebody that's just come there to visit their dad or somebody. Quite often someone I know. (Muslim man, British-Pakistani, Huddersfield)

In other words, cemeteries and crematoria are places that matter beyond their practical and symbolic functions, but different meanings and uses can cause friction. Despite this complexity, they are typically overlooked in local authority planning.

Future planning needs to consider the functional, symbolic, social and leisure aspects of cemetery spaces within a diverse multicultural society, including the comfort and safety of visitors and the mediation of different user needs and inter-



Garden of remembrance, Newport



Benches at cemetery in Newport

ests. For example, the social potential of a cemetery could be enhanced with services such a café, information point or a flower shop, which also increases personnel on site.

People often come from a long way. In London they have a flower shop and a café. I think

it is good, because sometimes you get there, you have arrived there 45 minutes early and it is nice, rather than sitting in Tesco's, to go there and have a coffee. (Focus group Hindu and Muslim women, Northampton)

**“I think maybe
because we are
the minority,
nobody
understood the
requirements”**

Washing facilities and private ambulance, Muslim community, Northampton



3.7. Fostering dialogue between professionals and communities

Creating a context of mutual understanding and respect within communities and between communities and service providers improves the experiences and provisions around death for both. While many professionals effectively supported bereaved individuals, families and communities and their diverse needs, understanding and provision was uneven, varying by cemetery/crematoria provider and funeral directors.

There was a widespread awareness of the core needs of key minority groups: cemetery managers, for instance, were well educated on Muslim burial needs and funeral directors were often praised for their tailor-made services. However, in some cases a lack of understanding or an unwillingness to meet the needs of specific migrant and minority traditions was reported. The motives behind certain wishes were unclear to some professionals, or not deemed 'necessary'.

Consequently, bereaved families felt that their cultural needs were misunderstood or marginalised:

I understand that there is a lot of cultures and traditions, and that sometimes you have to settle for this. But we also have the responsibility of introducing our cultures [and] our ways of living to people for people to understand. And some funeral services are not tailor-made for the Black African. When we cry, for example, we can be really 'hysterical'. They probably won't understand. Or if I was to bring my drum they will get the shock of their life. So that's things that they wouldn't understand. (Zimbabwean Christian woman, Northampton)

It is also important for communities to be informed about and understand funerary systems in the UK. Increasing practical knowledge, such as knowing when to call a doctor and undertaker, when an autopsy and coroner's report might be required, where and how to register a death, and public health regulations relating to having the deceased at home, will reduce stress for mourners at what is already a difficult time.

There needs to be something, like a step to step plan, just so you know the steps. Not even for Hindus necessarily. Just something accessible, so a person would know where to go when someone passes away. I kind of Googled, but there was not one place where you could just see: you take the death certificate from the doctor, you take it to register, then you contact the funeral director. I was lost, getting this piece of paper from the doctors, not knowing what to do with it. (Hindu woman, Northampton)

Migrants may be unaware of the expectation that families pay for funerals, burial or cremation. Likewise, they may be unaware that local authorities have a legal requirement to provide basic funerals for those who have no provision under their 'environmental health' remit.

We have seen increasing cases of 'environmental health' [council provided] funerals from the Polish community. So we did some research, and realised that in Poland the funeral is part of your pension. It is paid for by the government. So we contacted a Polish priest in one of the Roman Catholic Churches, just to try to get it out there. It seems to have

dropped off a little bit, but I still think it is an issue with getting that information to people. And they need to, hopefully not to worry, but they need to think about some provision for services. (Cemetery manager, Kettering)

Literal and cultural translation can help with these processes. Where local authorities and services provide information on legal procedures and religious practices these often benefit from translation into key migrant/minority languages; likewise, focus groups highlighted how communities can play a pivotal role in giving service providers insight to the meaning and significance of religious and cultural practices.

So the first burial that was going to be there, I rang up the Council and said "there is going to be a Baha'i funeral". And they were very pleased to know. I had been away for the weekend, and when I came back I rang up. "Oh, thank goodness for that". It is a relief that somebody knew what was going to happen. (Focus group Baha'i, Northampton)

Trusted members of a community, who are familiar with the systems and confident in dealing with officials in English can play an important role as mediators for families.

“There needs to
be something,
like a step to
step plan, just so
you know the
steps of arrang-
ing a funeral”



Example of incorrect grave inscription,
Muslim funeral director, South Wales



Muslim woman's suitcase with
cloths, soap and instructions
for ritual washing

One of our community members died in an accident and I was actively involved in repatriating the body to India. So I formed a task force liaising with police, hospitals, cemetery services, Indian high commission, the airlines, everything. The police department also has a community liaison officer. And I would say that only 1-5% of those liaison officers across the country have knowledge about all the faiths, so the police force was very happy for us to make a task force and be the source of contact. (Hindu man, Swindon)

Fostering collaboration between professionals and communities enhances mutual understanding between service providers and communities regarding specific needs; identifies the key stakeholders

from both parties; informs planning processes; and helps to co-design cemetery and crematoria spaces to cater for diversity. A number of local initiatives to meet the needs of migrants and minorities have been welcomed by members of the wider community, for example the possibility of witnessing the body going into the cremator, the use of moveable religious symbols, TV screen relay into overspill areas for large funerals, and webcam links facilitating virtual attendance/participation.

Faith groups are also supporting their own funeral needs through various cooperative initiatives, such as burial schemes organised by Muslim and Jewish communities. These schemes often require a nominal annual fee and cover all members of the household. At the time of a death, the

burial cooperatives liaise with the family and coordinate all the funeral needs and requirements. However, it is also important to be aware of power relations within local government and local communities. Who makes the decisions? Who speaks for whom? Who has the authoritative voice? Are individual wishes the same as the wishes of

community figureheads or those who have longstanding relationships with service providers? To create diversity-ready cemetery and crematorium provisions, service providers should actively engage with and listen to the diverse needs of individuals and families as well as community groups and figureheads.

Manner of burial

"Under the Bahá'í teachings it seems clear that the body is not to be embalmed ... The preparation for the body for burial is a careful washing, and placing in a shroud of white cloth, silk, preferably."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 2, 1955)

"The Lord hath decreed, moreover, that the deceased should be enfolded in five sheets of silk or cotton. For those whose means are limited a single sheet of either fabric will suffice. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed."

"When asked whether the 'five sheets' mentioned in the law referred to 'five full-length shrouds' or 'five cloths which were hitherto customarily used', Bahá'u'lláh responded that the intention is the 'use of five cloths'."

"The Lord hath decreed that the dead should be interred in cofins made of crystal, of hard, resistant stone, or of wood that is both fine and durable ..."

"This law precludes cremation of the dead."

Part of folder explaining Bahá'i
burial practices, Bahá'i community
Northampton

Funeral Support and Bereavement Scheme

The Hurayrah (Radiya Allahu 'anha) narrated: I heard the Prophet of Allah (Swalla'Allahu 'Alayhi wa Salatu'ayhi wa Salawatuhu) saying: "The rights of the Muslim on the Muslims are, to follow the funeral procession, to accept invitation and/or reply the inquest." (Sahih Al-Bukhari).

Al-Imam Funeral Support and Bereavement Scheme is a contributory scheme initiated by Al-Imam Society of Northamptonshire. The scheme, was established in 2004 by resident Muslims of Northamptonshire facing difficulties in paying off funeral costs.

The average cost of a funeral in the UK is estimated to be around £2,800.00 which may come as quite a shock to some people at the time when it is required to bury our loved ones. Death is a subject that most people do not like to think about but is something that we, as Muslims, should be aware of and ensure we are prepared for. A lot of the time when there is a need for a funeral it can leave families suffering from severe unexpected financial hardship and a lack of information as to the correct procedures that need to be followed to ensure the burial is carried out in a suitable manner at a time when those involved are already suffering from emotional distress.

The main objective of the scheme is to provide all the necessary help required in arranging and supporting remaining family members and relatives also making sure that the deceased body will be taken care of according to the correct Islamic principles and procedures.

Our Funeral Support and Bereavement Scheme aims to provide:

Full support and help for the deceased family from the time of death up to the point of burial and beyond.

Ensuring the body is washed/cleansed, shrouded, the funeral prayer is performed and finally buried according to Islamic procedures.

Support towards or full cover of funeral costs in order to not cause any burden to the deceased's family in cases of financial difficulties.

Counselling services before, during and after burial to the family or relatives of the deceased.

Funerals for our Muslim brothers and sisters who have left next of kin and have made no funeral preparations.

Funeral support and burial scheme leaflet, Muslim community, Northampton

4. Recommendations

This study shows that whilst there has been increasing understanding of the cemetery, crematoria and associated funerary needs of our diverse communities in England and Wales, more remains to be done. Both service providers and migrant and minority communities have evidenced examples of good practice, but ongoing dialogue and understanding of local needs and constraints are central to improving current services for mourners and for planning better diversity-ready facilities and services in the future.

Key recommendations

- There needs to be ongoing engagement between funerary service providers and minority and migrant groups to understand their varied religious needs and cultural preferences
- Service providers should consult with community leaders, but also with families and individuals: be aware of diversity within and between communities
- It is important to avoid assuming that everyone in a particular community shares the same beliefs or views. Knowledge of traditional practices and current funerary practices may fluctuate according to gender, age, ethnicity and country of origin.
- Planning for diversity-ready cemetery and crematoria provision and services needs to be included in local authority Local Plans and stronger guidance should be incorporated into the NPPF.
- Planning for future cemetery and crematoria provision needs to be based on detailed local population trends and funerary preferences (e.g. a growing Muslim population will require more dedicated burial space; types of burial space will reflect region of origin/ heritage)
- The planning and design of extended, refurbished or new cemeteries and crematoria will benefit from consultation with diverse local user groups including majority and minority cultural and religious groups
- Adaptive and flexible funeral chapels, (in function and capacity), are advantageous for all cemetery and crematoria users, e.g. movable rather fixed religious symbols, and anterooms with TV-relay systems for over-spill and/or those with young children

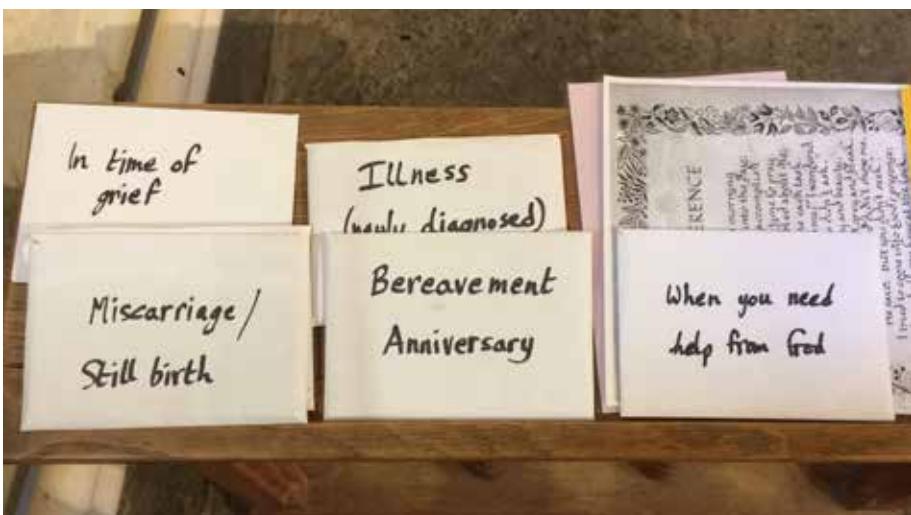
- High quality audio systems allow use of pre-recorded devotional music or prayers. TV screen relay into overspill areas for large funerals and webcam links would facilitate virtual attendance/participation by international mourners or those in poorer health
- Required refurbishment, such as for air pollution abatement at crematoria or rewiring, offers an opportunity to incorporate facilities for diverse communities
- Cemetery and crematoria open days, including tours and activities, can enhance understanding of processes and encourage dialogue with and between different user groups and service providers
- Neighbouring local authorities could enhance co-operation to meet the diverse needs of residents more effectively – especially where land and budgets are limited
- Best practice based on understanding diverse local religious and cultural practices includes giving more time and space for large funeral groups or elaborate rituals – where capacity allows
- Cemeteries and crematoria gardens are more than functional spaces, they are social spaces with the potential for fostering meaningful interaction; information on the diverse communities using a given cemetery or crematorium can help others understand their needs and practices
- Review where budget cuts have led to unstaffed cemeteries as this has made minority visitors uneasy, particularly the elderly and solo visitors.



Enquiries office at cemetery and crematorium, Cardiff

Consider at least partial staffing at publicised fixed hours and/or the conversion of redundant buildings to other services such as a café, florist or information point with toilet facilities

- Some established minorities have been effective in organising community 'self-help' initiatives such as communal burial councils, crowdsourcing funding for specialist facilities and identifying funerary liaison leaders who can offer translation and deal with officials, paperwork and formal processes when required
- Community initiatives need to be transparent about eligibility, membership and funds
- Easily accessible public information on cemeteries, crematoria, funeral services and associated legal requirements is vital for migrant and minority communities; translation of these documents and online material into key local minority languages will significantly enhance knowledge and understanding of processes for the bereaved
- Local authorities and other providers would benefit from: i) greater cooperation regarding provision for diverse groups (e.g. across local authority boundaries) and ii) sharing examples of good practice and creative strategies
- Local authorities and planners could be proactive in liaising with local Hindu and Sikh groups and wider communities and the Environment Agency, in order to identify suitable river sites for consecration and designation as sites for cremated ash scattering



Advice in times of bereavement, church in Newport

5. The Research Team



Dr Avril Maddrell (PI)

*Associate Professor in Human Geography
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Avril is a social and cultural geographer interested in historical and contemporary issues. Research interests include gender; emotional-affective geographies; deathscapes; sacred mobilities; place, landscape and heritage; historiography; and charity shops as socio-cultural spaces.



Dr Yasminah Beebejaun (Co-I)

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The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL*

Yasminah's background is in Urban Planning. She examines how representations of race, including national debates about identity, lead to the territorialisation of certain spaces as ethnic, and the impact that this has on modes and methods of community participation, and ultimately on urban regeneration and city development. Also, her research interests include the creation of inequalities in debates about nationhood, colonialism, and postcolonial society.



Dr Katie McClymont (Co-I)

Senior Lecturer in Planning & Architecture, UWE

Katie is a planner interested in planning theory, and its relationship with practice and community involvement in planning. Her current research interests focus on cemeteries in cities, and how policy can deal with spiritual values. Her areas of expertise are planning theory, public participation, values and professional practice, postsecular cities, community assets.



Dr Danny McNally
Postdoctoral Researcher in Human Geography
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Danny is a social and cultural geographer whose research focuses on contemporary urban issues and how these intersects with ideas of participation, difference and diversity. He engages with this through focusing empirically on 1) town and city planning, and 2) the arts and cultural sector. This academic work is supported by previous industry experience in urban planning policy and consultation work in galleries and museums.



Dr Brenda Mathijssen
Postdoctoral Researcher in Human Geography
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Brenda's background is in Religious Studies. Her research focuses on lived religion, death and meaning-making in contemporary societies, where set beliefs and practices are no longer widely shared and self-evident.



Dr Sufyan Abid Dogra
Fieldwork consultant

Sufyan is an anthropologist interested in exploring how practicing Islam in Britain is shaped by transnational networks of reformist Muslims. Currently, he is exploring the role of Islamic Religious Settings in Britain in tackling childhood obesity.

Chinese graves at Northampton cemetery



6. Acknowledgements

A vertical photograph showing a row of headstones in a cemetery. The stones are dark and rectangular, set in a grassy area. In the background, there are several large, leafy trees under a clear blue sky.

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www.deathscaresanddiversity.org.uk

