

INITIAL ASSESSMENT PRO FORMA

Review of the Muslim Burial section at Twickenham Cemetery.



The Muslim burial section at Twickenham Cemetery.

1. Name of lead officers responsible for completing the initial assessment:

Natasha Bradshaw

2. Name of 'policy'/service under review (for definition of 'policy' see ANNEX A)

Review of the provision of graves suitable for Muslim burials in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Cemeteries.

a. **New or proposed policy/service?**

b. **Existing policy/service?**

3. What is the aim, objective or purpose of the policy/service?

Twickenham cemetery has a Muslim burial area in unconsecrated ground where graves are prepared so that they are aligned towards Mecca, i.e. on a northeast to southwest axis. The body is placed in the grave so that the head is at the southwest end, facing towards Mecca.

It is traditional for the body to be buried quickly, sometimes within 24 hours of the death, as the Holy Prophet urged Muslims to bury their dead quickly.

Muslim graves must be raised from the ground between four and twelve inches, to prevent anyone walking or sitting on it, as this is strictly forbidden.

The levelling of graves is also forbidden by the Muslim faith and there must be only one body in the grave.

Failure to understand these requirements can cause offence.

The cemetery also allows the following, which some Muslims request:

- Shroud burials (sometimes this is preferred to being buried in a coffin)
- Women Cemetery staff cover their heads if in attendance
- Families can put the soil back in the grave themselves (known as backfilling)
- As the graves are on a traditional type section the grave can be mounded, families can have a headstone or headstone and kerb memorial.

The Cemetery team staff have had meetings and correspondence with Muslim community groups and Imam’s at Mosques to ensure that the service that they provide meets the needs and requirements of the Muslim community.

Feedback from recent meetings has been focused on extending the opening times of the cemetery. Burying a body within 24 hours can be difficult if the death occurs at a weekend or on Bank holidays. One request has been received from a Muslim Funeral Director for the cemetery service to offer a full burial service 365 days a year, in order to facilitate their burial requirements.

4. Is there evidence or reason to believe that this policy/service could have higher or lower impact on any of the following groups:

Equality strand	Would there be an impact?	Low or high impact
Age	No	Low
People from minority ethnic backgrounds	Yes	High
Women	No	Low
Disabled people	No	Low
Faith and or religious belief	Yes	High
Sexual Orientation	No	Low
Men	No	Low

Data

- a. **What data have you been using to assess the impact of this policy? (Please indicate for each of the equality groups listed above). It is also important to specify which equality groups have been consulted as part of this assessment.**

The table below shows the percentage of each religion living in London; the information contained in the table is based on data from the 2001 census. However the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is the least culturally diverse London Borough. Just over 9% of the borough's population is made up of non-white minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is Indian - 2.46%.

Population of Great Britain: by religion, April 2001

	Total population		Non-Christian
	(Numbers)	(Percentages)	religious population (Percentages)
Christian	41,014,811	71.8	
Muslim	1,588,890	2.8	51.9
Hindu	558,342	1.0	18.3
Sikh	336,179	0.6	11.0
Jewish	267,373	0.5	8.7
Buddhist	149,157	0.3	4.9
Any other religion	159,167	0.3	5.2
All non-Christian religious population	3,059,108	5.4	100.0
No religion	8,596,488	15.1	
Religion not stated	4,433,520	7.8	
All population	57,103,927	100.0	

The [National statistics website](#) provides us with useful updates and potential trends with regards to Equality and Diversity issues.

The table below shows the total number of Muslim burials that have taken place in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames cemeteries.

2008	3
2009	4 to date (September 2009)

As there are no mosques within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames we have made contact with all the mosques in the neighbouring Boroughs. Those being:

- Hounslow
- Wandsworth
- Kingston
- Hammersmith & Fulham

(Please see attached table one for further information)

The Cemeteries Team have met with Imams from the following Mosques:

- Hounslow
- Regents Park

The Cemeteries Team have also visited the [Gardens of Peace Muslim Cemetery](#) in Redbridge, discussed funeral services and possible requests with Haji Taslim Funeral

Services. The cemeteries team also met with Iranian families who had contacted Susan Kramer about suitable graves. They were very happy with the provisions at East Sheen Cemetery as it was their preference to have a full memorial with photo plaque.

The cemeteries service has always met with requests for Muslims to be buried in East Sheen, Teddington and Twickenham Cemetery, however up until now they have been on a section with people of other beliefs such as Church of England, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Buddhist, Atheist and Agnostic (Jewish people choose to be buried in private Jewish Cemeteries).

The inclusion of a Muslim burial ground at Twickenham cemetery is a relatively new development at the Cemetery. It was included as part of the extension of the cemetery following the reclaiming of an allotment site. From the planning stage of the extension we have been actively seeking the opinions and needs of community groups and Imams to ensure that we provide a high level of service.

These meetings have identified that procedures for burials vary from mosque to mosque and from family to family. Families may also have different requests depending on their country of origin, cultural differences, and age if they are from mixed marriage or second generation.

Not all families expect a burial to take place within 24 hours of the death as family members may often have to travel long distances and sometimes back from Asia, South East Asia, Africa or the Middle East to attend the funeral.

Certain legal requirements must take place before a burial can go ahead for example the death needs to be certified and registered. This may involve the coroner and therefore unlikely to take place within 24 hours.

It has been identified that as with Christian derived religions, Muslim requirements may vary. The Cemetery staff offer to meet with all families so individual needs and requests can be met when possible.

b. Are there any data gaps that you have identified?

The data that is used to identify trends etc is derived from the 2001 census and is not now reflective of the ethnic make-up of the borough.

We do need to hold further consultations and meetings with Muslim community groups to raise the profile of the Cemetery.

c. How could you seek to fill these data gaps?

- The Cemetery Service will review, continue to review and monitor the number of burials that take place in the Muslim burial section. After any burial we send out a burial survey. However, due to the low level of Muslim burials this data is very limited.
- Continue to hold meetings with Imams and Muslim community groups to ensure that we are meeting customer expectations and to continue to strive to meet their requests.
- Invite the Imams and other community faith leaders to join the Bereavement Services Liaison Group for the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Extending the opening times of the Cemetery is not a viable option at present; it would mean that Job descriptions and staff contracts would need to be changed and over-time pay expenditure would rise. We do not have the budget for this, and due to the low numbers of burials, it would not be necessary. Should a customer from any religious background require a burial at the weekend or on a bank holiday, we always consider their request and try and accommodate them. We rely on the goodwill of the officers and ground staff to come in on their days off.

5. Are there any additional measures that can be adapted/undertaken to progress equality/diversity issues in this area?

- We could add a section about Muslim burials on the public website to ensure that we raise the profile of our service.
- We could consider producing an article for Arcadia.
- Consider procedures and good practice from the London Boroughs that we currently benchmark with.

7. In what ways could you promote good community relations in this area?

Engage with Muslim community groups and continue to meet with Imam's.

8. Are there any steps you can take to meet disabled people's needs by adjusting the policy, service or employment practice?

Not applicable to this EINA

9. Please provide any further information that you think is relevant to the initial assessment

All relevant information is already included.

10. From your assessment do you think a full assessment is needed? Please provide reason for your answers.

The Cemetery Office does not need a full assessment at the moment as take-up levels are still very low. We will continue to monitor these statistics and, should there be an increase in the take up of Muslim burials, then we may need to reconsider the opening hours of the Cemetery. At present, we are able to consider/accommodate any customer requests for burials outside of our opening hours and rely on the goodwill of our staff so we do not have to review the service.

11. If a full assessment is not needed please provide an outline of any equality objectives, which have arisen from your initial assessment of gaps or further areas to progress. These need to also be included in Directorate equality/diversity action plan and your Service Plan.

Equality Strand	Action	By When	By Whom	Outcome
Religion	Continue to review and monitor the number of burials that take place in the Muslim burial section and other cemeteries	Ongoing but to review on bi-annual basis. September 2009 March 2010	Natasha Bradshaw	Should there be a rise in the number of Muslim burials we can review our service.
Religion	Engage with Imam's from Mosques and local Muslim community groups	We will consult when changes to our Service provision are being planned	Natasha Bradshaw	Our Service is inclusive and considers the views of our customers.

Religion	Review Borough statistics and national trends.	September 2009	Natasha Bradshaw	Planning the Cemetery Service to reflect Borough demographics and to ensure that all sections of the community are provided for.
Religion	Update public web pages to include a section about the Muslim burial area.	October 2009	Liz Farrington	Raise the profile of the service to all potential users.
Religion	Draft an article for Arcadia.	Find out from Ellie Ridgeway the deadlines for article inclusion	Liz Farrington and Natasha Bradshaw	Raise the profile of the service to all potential users.

SIGN OFF

(For each name and date)

Manager: **Nathan Pritchard – Head of Customer Services and Performance.**

Date: 24th September 2009

Table one

Mosque name	Borough/Description	Theme	Management
Kingston Jamai Mosque	Kingston upon Thames	Deobandi	Pakistani
Haji Taslim Funerals	Funeral Directors		
Tooting Islamic Mosque	Wandsworth	Deobandi	Gujerati
Battersea Islamic Centre	Wandsworth	Deobandi	Pakistani
Balham Mosque	Wandsworth	Deobandi	Gujerati
Idara-E-Jafferiya	Wandsworth	Shia	Pakistani
Al Muzzammil Mosque	Wandsworth	Deobandi	Guyanese
Husseini Islamic Mission Mosque	Hounslow	Deobandi	Gujerati
Sunni Muslim Association	Wandsworth	Sufi	Bareilvi
Musallah (Multi Faith Prayer Room)	St George's Hospital Chapel	Mult Faith Prayer Centre	NHS - Anglican Chaplain
Al-Muntanda Al-Islami Trust	Hammersmith & Fulham	Salafi	Arab
Shepherds Bush Mosque	Hammersmith & Fulham	Salafi	Arab
Anjuman-e-Burhani	Hammersmith & Fulham	Shia	Bohra
An-noor Islamic Centre	Hammersmith & Fulham		
Hounslow Jamia Masjid	Hounslow	Sufi-Bareilvi	Pakistani
Chiswick Mosque	Hounslow		

Islamic Funeral Services	Funeral Directors		
--------------------------	-------------------	--	--

(Appendix 1)

Environment Directorate/ Cemeteries Service
Natasha Bradshaw
Cemeteries Manager
Phone: 020 8876 4511
Email: n.bradshaw@richmond.gov.uk

16 September 2009

«Mosque_name»
«Address_1»
«Address_2»
«Address_3»
«Postcode»

Dear Sir/Madam

Burial provision in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Cemeteries service is committed to delivering a professional and caring service to the bereaved.

We recognise that each person's needs are different and we will try to make every funeral as personal and dignified as possible.

In response to listening to our residents and community faith leaders, I am pleased to let you know that we have a new area in our Twickenham Cemetery which is suitable for Muslim Burials.

The graves will be laid out so the head is lying on the right shoulder facing towards Mecca. We will allow burial shrouds or coffins (wood, cardboard, wicker and bamboo). We do not allow metal caskets or metal coffins in any of our cemeteries.

The section is unconsecrated and we will allow graves to be for one person only. Families will be allowed to have a memorial if they wish. It can cover the entire grave or if they prefer they can have a headstone and leave the earth in front mounded. They can of course just leave the grave mounded.

Graves will be prepared on a next in line basis. Reserved graves will not be allowed, as it would mean that to open them for burial would cause disturbance to the surrounding graves.

We will do our utmost to provide graves within 24 hours, a service which we have always offered to all our community.

Families can backfill the graves themselves, but we do need to know this in advance so the necessary tools can be made available. We want to ensure the safety of all staff and visitors and ask for your help in achieving this.

We always try to provide a service on a Saturday or Sunday but there is an extra fee for this.

The fees until 31st March 2010 are as follows:

Resident Purchase	£1800	Non Resident Purchase	£3600
Resident Burial (for 1)	£670	Non Resident Burial (for 1)	£1340
Total	£2470	Total	£4940

Saturday Service (if staff available) additional £480

Sunday Service (if staff available) additional £645

If you would like to make an appointment to meet with a member of our staff and be shown the area, please contact the cemetery office.

I enclose a full fees list and the criterion for resident fees.

I would be grateful if you could let me know the name of the person who advises the bereaved at your Mosque and their contact details, including the email address.

We will continually review this service and any comments and feedback are welcome from you and the community.

Yours sincerely

Natasha Bradshaw