

Press release: New government measures to update crematoria provisions

A package of measures to update crematoria to reflect the needs of different cultures and faiths in modern Britain has been announced today (8 April 2019).

The announcement follows the review of crematoria provision and facilities, where the government received around 150 responses from many faith and belief groups.

The plan will help make sure communities of all faiths have facilities that are fit for purpose and sensitive to their needs.

This includes a consultation to revise national guidance on the siting and design of crematoria, and an offer of support to community groups interested in operating their own crematoria.

Faith Minister, Lord Bourne said:

Cremations have become more and more common. This is why it is vital that there are high quality crematoria that respect cultural and religious traditions of all faiths and beliefs, and those of no faith.

This package of measures will make sure that local authorities and providers offer the appropriate facilities that reflect the communities they serve.

Cremations have become more and more common. In 2017 there were 467,748 cremations representing 77.05% of all deaths, with each crematorium having an average of 1,607 cremations in 2017.

The full package of measures to ensure crematoria are fit for purpose is:

- Revise national guidance on the siting and design of crematoria, subject to further consultation
- Offer support to community groups interested in operating their own crematoria or associated facilities
- Lord Bourne has written to local authorities to inform them that all reasonable steps should be taken to allow the needs of those with different faiths to be met in public buildings, encourage providers to be more transparent about their services, and have appropriate staff training to understand different faith requirements

The review into the size and provision of crematoria facilities was announced in autumn 2015, with a formal review published alongside the 2016 March Budget.

We received around 150 responses, of which 110 provided statistical information through our on-line survey. The majority of respondents were from the Hindu communities (particularly in North and West London and Leicester) but there was also representations from other faith and belief groups, and those of no faith. The responses highlighted (in order of priority):

- The capacity of crematoria to accommodate large groups as well as problems with car parking
- Difficulties with the design of crematoria (for example, fixed seating or catafalque) and a lack of facilities to carry out specific rituals (including separate prayer rooms, washing facilities, a viewing room to witness the committal of the coffin or proximity to water)
- Difficulties with booking slots, slots being too short and/or having to pay higher prices for weekends
- The need for new crematoria, and/or travelling long distances to access a crematorium in specific localities
- Insensitive or inflexible iconography or other services, such as prayer books or music
- A lack of awareness or insensitivity from some crematoria staff and funeral directors of the needs of the different faith and belief groups.