

ETHNICALLY DIVERSE FAITH PERSPECTIVES ON END-OF-LIFE CARE AND DEATH LITERACY

A Community-Based Participatory Research Project in Birmingham

M. Rozario¹, J. Droney², A. Gadoud³, S. Spear¹, K. Sanders¹, J. Phillips¹, J. McManus⁴, J. Verne¹, P. Whitney⁵, M. Doherty¹

¹St Mary's University | ²Royal Marsden | ³Lancaster University
⁴Public Health Wales | ⁵Archdiocese of Birmingham

INTRODUCTION

Considerable inequity exists in end-of-life care access across the UK, with cultural influences impacting death literacy. Birmingham has one of Europe's largest migrant populations (340,000+ Muslims, plus Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Sikh communities) yet these groups remain underserved in end-of-life care. This pilot study addresses healthcare disparities in ethnic minority communities, responding to Lord Darzi's findings and Health & Social Care Committee recommendations.

AIMS

1. Co-produce culturally appropriate approaches to discussing death and dying
2. Identify cultural and faith-specific barriers and facilitators
3. Develop culturally sensitive recommendations

METHODS

Community-based participatory research was used (Feb-July 2025):

Community Advisory Group was established: 4 members (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism) - they were identified through the lead on Interfaith for Birmingham Archdiocese - they were community members and leaders.

Focus Groups:

2 focus groups of 9 participants with mixed representation from the following religions: Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Buddhism including faith leaders, community workers and faith members.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Cultural and religious practices matter at end-of-life
- Death is taboo amongst many ethnically diverse faith communities
- Two-way knowledge exchange bridges the equity gap
- Community-based participatory research works



The illustration was co-created with the Community Advisory Group.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



Build trust & communication with faith communities.

Provide private spaces for prayer & family gathering.

Train healthcare staff about different religious practices, possibly using visits to places of worship.



Make quick processing after death a priority where religiously required.

Provide a 24-hour contact for advice on religious rituals.

Invite faith representatives to educate staff & produce clear, simple guidance on different traditions.

Infographics: Sandwell Council – collaborators in the research project

Offer workshops on death rituals & bereavement.

Provide information bilingually & in visual formats.

Encourage open discussions about taboo subjects (e.g., suicide, cancer).



Work with healthcare staff to explain faith requirements.

Promote understanding of different world views (e.g., karma, moksha, mukti).

Advocate for employers to recognise mourning practices.

IMPACT & DISSEMINATION

Research highlighted at a knowledge exchange community event to celebrate the anniversary of Nostra Aetate (1965 Vatican Council Declaration on Interfaith Relations) which took place at St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham.



“ A very rare and very valuable set of insights into how each of the faiths approach dying, death, and the mourning period afterwards. ”

Bishop Patrick McKinney
Lead Catholic Bishop for Interreligious Dialogue
& Key Organiser of the Nostra Aetate Event