



MODULE 1	THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR	UNIT 1	THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR
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Purpose and Aim of the Unit:	The purpose of the unit is to develop learners' understanding of the evolving role of funeral directing within historical, contemporary and future UK society.
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LEARNING OUTCOMES This unit has 5 learning outcomes.	
The learner will:	
1	Understand the evolving role of the funeral director within the UK.
2	Understand the importance of presenting a holistic and professional image of funeral directing.
3	Understand any environmental regulation and their impact on the funeral service.
4	Understand how the use of technology is impacting upon the funeral service.
5	Understand the developing range of proposed methods for future disposal of the deceased.



Learning Outcome 1**Understand the evolving role of the funeral director within the UK.**

The Historical Role of the Funeral Director

The role of the funeral director has changed a great deal in the last half century. In terms of the history of the profession, funeral directors originated from family firms some of which were builders and joiners, with the title of 'Undertaker' added to their services.

When a death occurred the next of kin would inform their family doctor, which often meant the relatives running to the doctor's home, or using a public telephone (if one was available), as private telephones were rare. The same method was used, after the doctor had certified death, to call the "Layer Out". Every village and street had such a person nearby, who would have attended to all the family's past needs, including births!

Historically, women have been the caretakers of the sick, but they also played a large part in the care of the deceased.

During the 19th century, when carpenters and cabinet-makers began practicing undertaking, nurses and midwives were acting as layers-out of the dead. This carried on through the late 1800s and into the early 20th century, when most deaths still occurred at home.



It was during this period that undertaking was first emerging as a distinct occupational specialty. Newspapers advertisements referred to both male and female. However, funeral directors were still recognised as "tradesmen" and belonged to "brotherhoods" such as Steward of the Guild.

The funeral service industry was one of the few trades that welcomed women to play a part in caring for the deceased in the days when the business world was dominated by educated, land-owning, white men. Of course the 19th-century Victorian notions of decency were strict, and by this time women were only allowed to handle the remains of other women or children. (It was considered inappropriate for a man to embalm an unclothed woman he did not know.) Still, women were not prohibited from entering the trade, even though they were not commonly seen in the ranks of undertakers in the early years.

The Undertaker or Funeral Director was summoned to take the necessary measurements and details. He, in turn, would callout the Clergyman or Priest to perform the "Last Rights". Having made the arrangements with the family, a date and time would be fixed for the funeral to take place. The Undertaker would then arrange for his men to prepare and make the coffin, often late at night. The coffin would then have been made from "sets" of oak, mahogany, elm or agar timbers. Each coffin was made to size and sealed inside with wax and bitumen. The outside would then be sanded, sealed and polished with wax. Brass furniture and name plates which were hand painted would then be added. Should the coffin have been needed for cremation, then the interior was covered in a purple baize cloth with wooden handles and name plate.

The interior of the coffin would then have several shovels full of wood shavings put into it to provide the mattress and pillow and also to stop leakage. The coffin was then lined with sheeting. This process usually took between five and eight hours to complete.

The Undertaker and his men would then take the completed coffin back to the house. In many cases, the doorways were too narrow to take the coffin so windows had to be removed by the Undertaker's carpenter and replaced after the coffin had been taken in. This process had to be



repeated on the day of the funeral. All of this was carried out in the evening or at night so as not to disturb the neighbours.

The front room or parlour would have been chosen as the last resting place until the funeral. It was not until the late fifties that Chapels of Rest appeared in Funeral establishments. In some cases, a side Chapel in the Church would be made available, but that would have only been available for families selected by the clergy.

The deceased would have been laid out in their best nightdress or pyjamas or in their Sunday best and then placed in the coffin and left to rest with the family. A small altar was erected at the foot of the coffin and candles were placed one at each side. The coffin was placed on trestles on top of a pall which was laid on the floor to absorb any leakages.

Sweet smelling flowers were placed around the room to absorb any odours and the Undertaker would have visited at regular intervals to check on any unpleasantness.

Embalming was only performed for very wealthy clients, and the funeral would normally take place about three to four days after death.



The Contemporary Role of the Funeral Director



The funeral profession has a long and proud history of personal service to local communities. Not only do Funeral Directors need to directly meet their own clients' needs, but building a relationship of trust is of paramount importance, so that clients will return in the future. Current day funeral directing is open to much more competition for business than in the past.

As in the past, most funeral directors have a long term commitment to the community in which they serve, and as such, the reputation of the business can either stand or fall by the level of service provided and the professionalism of those employed. Nowadays, it is common for a business to have both male and female staff employed as 'funeral arrangers' and 'funeral directors'. The employment status is of course dependant on the size of the business, as in a small business, the Funeral Director will take responsibility for all activities; however, the role nowadays is no longer gender specific.

To understand more clearly the functions of, and the part the Funeral Director plays in society, some descriptions and definitions of his/her role should be examined.

- The Funeral Director should be an approachable, sympathetic professional who will assume the WHOLE responsibility for overseeing the arranging, organising and conducting a funeral in a manner befitting the status of the deceased and the requirements of the bereaved.



The functions of a Funeral Director are to be a technical adviser, agent, custodian of the deceased, master of ceremonies and contractor to the bereaved.

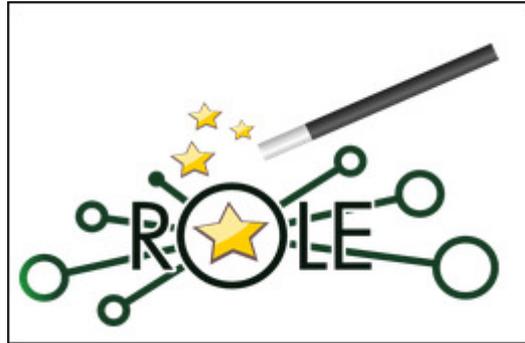
Funeral Directors perform a unique and indispensable role in society. It is a role that encompasses vocation, a profession and business all at the same time. The Funeral Director must always be available in time of need and capable of providing emotional support, expert advice and practical help.

- “The Funeral Director’s purpose is to assume the total responsibility for organising and supplying the necessities for a funeral.” (‘What to do when someone dies’ - Consumers’ Association, 1967 ff.)
- “Caretaker of the Dead; Caregiver to the living; Compassionate Advisor, Administrator; Community Leader.” (‘Winning Ways: the Funeral Profession’s Guide to Human Relations - Todd W. Van Beck ,1999 Appleton & Lange)
- “In Britain, as in most other parts of the western world, the ceremonies of death are conducted by the clergy, but the practical arrangements are the responsibility of a highly specialized group of men who are part of a substantial industry. They are the Funeral Directors.” (‘The Art of Dying’ - I. Crichton, 1976)

There is a recurrent theme in the above statement and quotations, namely that the Funeral Director cares for the living as much as he/she cares for the dead, thus playing a unique role in society.

- “The care of the funeral, the manner of burial, the pomp of obsequies is rather a consolation to the living than a service to the dead.” (‘Civitas Dei’, Book 1 Section 12 - St. Augustine)





Let us consider the functions of the role of the Funeral Director in more detail:

1. Technical Adviser

Following a death, the bereaved turn to the Funeral Director for guidance, seeking the benefit of his or her knowledge and experience. Familiarity with regulations, statute law, local bye-laws, rites, procedures and options available, all form part of the advice a Funeral Director must be able to offer those they are called upon to serve, treating all information, however gained, as strictly confidential.

2. Agent

As an agent the Funeral Director liaises between the bereaved and the various organisations providing the services required. It is therefore essential that the Funeral Director has a comprehensive knowledge of what they are 'selling' in the role of agent.

For example, when arranging a cremation, the Funeral Director should understand the operational workings of their local crematoria and what facilities are available in respect of an organist, length of service allowed and the chapel capacity for example. Likewise, when arranging a burial, the Funeral Director should be aware of the types of grave that are available in the area and any restrictions that there may be on the placing of different types of memorials.

The Funeral Director also has to liaise with clergy and officiants, doctors, newspapers, coroners and/or procurator fiscals, printers, florists, monumental masons and indeed anyone connected with funeral service.



3. Custodian of the Deceased

As custodian of the deceased, the Funeral Director fulfils their primary role. The funeral profession essentially centres on the deceased. Being entrusted with the care of the body until the time of the funeral is a responsible task, calling for technical knowledge as well as the provision of adequate and proper facilities. The Funeral Director should understand the process of embalming and if not a practitioner of the science, should at least be able to describe fully its advantages.

4. Master of Ceremonies

The Funeral Director assumes the role of Master of Ceremonies on the day of the funeral. The ritual or ceremony of the funeral is extremely important and often is a complex operation involving many individuals and organisations. It is therefore incumbent on the Funeral Director to liaise with all those involved to ensure that the funeral is carried out according to the wishes and instructions of the family and that he or she is seen to be a team leader who is dignified, calm and efficient.

5. Contractor

When a family or an individual places an order for a funeral, they enter into a contract. Legal history shows that the person who actually places an order is liable for payment of the ensuing account. For this reason it is essential that clients are made fully aware of the services they are receiving.

The written estimate required by the Code of Practice of the National Association of Funeral Directors clarifies this position and prevents misunderstandings before the funeral takes place. In addition, clients must be made aware of any clause specifying rates of interest or additional charges levied on overdue accounts, and indeed any discounts, which may be available.



These five functions adequately describe the individual tasks that combine to become the work of the Funeral Director today.

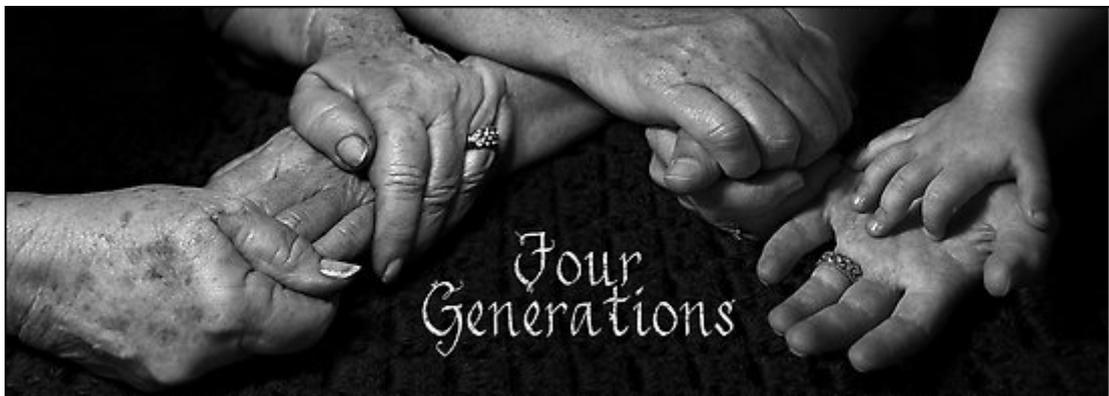
This last point reinforces the unique position that the Funeral Director holds in a community, that as a specialist functionary upon whom the bereaved call, they have certain responsibilities in terms of ethical behaviour, confidentiality and public health issues.



Future Role of the Funeral Director

No one really knows what the future will hold, however, from a business perspective, a progressive funeral director will look at the realities of funeral directing balanced with progressive thinking and consider the future business opportunities open to them.

Living in a multi-cultural society, the need to take proactive action to fully understand and embrace the range of cultural traditions and associated funeral rites will equip funeral directors with the knowledge and skills required to assist most clients.



The Four Generations

Traditionalist	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y Millennial
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Understanding the differences between the generations is fundamental in building a successful multigenerational focused funeral business. For each generation there are particular experiences that will mould specific preferences, expectations, beliefs and style.

Not every generation is alike, nor should they be treated by funeral directors in the same way.



Multi-generational funeral directing is the practice of appealing to the unique needs and behaviours of individuals within more than one specific generational group, with a generation being a group of individuals born and living about the same time.

When a funeral director factors in the different characteristics and behaviors of the generations, it should be easier to build relationships, gain trust, and compete and retain business. In fact, creating ageless multi-generational relationships is one of the key trends over the next 25 years. As such, an understanding of multi-generational traits and behaviours is very important to the funeral director of the future.

The Traditionalists (Veteran)



Values:

- Hard work
- Loyalty
- Personal interaction and relationships
- History
- Disciplined work ethic
- Structure and authority

Characteristics:

- Seniority important
- Less tech savvy
- Supportive of hierarchy
- Team players
- Prefer personal communication to technology
- Hardworking and loyal to employer

The Traditionalist Generation, born between 1927 and 1945, were brought up in a more challenging time with life experiences that included World War 2. The economic and political uncertainty that they experienced led them to be hard working, financially conservative, and cautious.

Business loyalty is of an essence and they have advanced with the premise that the status in business is important – therefore as an example, the words and actions of the Doctor or Funeral



Directors were never questioned. This group do not like the change, they are not very risk tolerant, but have a respect for authority and hard work.

This generation set and obey the rules

Q: What do you think the expectations of a funeral service and the funeral directors are for this particular group of people?

The Baby Boomers 1946 - 1964



The Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, were brought up in an abundant, healthy post-war economy, becoming an egocentric generation.

They saw the world revolving around them. Nuclear families were the norm. More than anything, work has been a de-fining part of both their self-worth and their evaluation of others. Their life style revolves around the fact that they live to work, not work to live – the reality may be different!

Balance is a quaint idea but not really a possibility. As such, they see business hours at least 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. This is a significant tension point between them and the newer generations, as they expect others to have the same work ethic and work the same hours.

The earlier part of this generation followed the rules set by the traditionalists.



Q: What do you think the Baby Boomers expectations of a funeral service and the funeral director a) are now b) will be as this group ages?

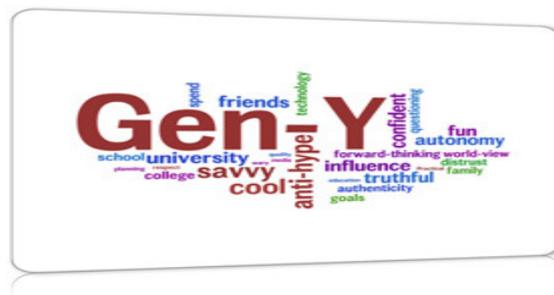
Generation X 1965 - 1980



The generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, was the first generation raised on “to do lists” and grew up with high rate of blended families. They were also brought up in the shadow of the influential boomer generation. They witnessed their parent’s sacrifice home life greatly for their companies.

As a consequence, they developed behaviours (not values) of independence, resilience and adaptability more strongly than previous generations. In opposition to the hard driving Boomers who live to work, they work to live and view the world with a little cynicism and distrust.

Q: What do you think Generation X expectations of a funeral service and the funeral director a) are now b) will be as this group ages?



Generation Y

The Y generation, born between 1981 and 2000, has been portrayed as the next big generation, an enormously powerful group that has the sheer numbers to transform every life stage it enters. This generation live and breathe through the use of social media.



They were brought up during the 'empowerment' years where everyone won and everyone got a medal. Raised by parents who nurtured and structured their lives, they were drawn to their families for safety and security. They were also encouraged to make their own choices and taught to question authority. This group was also raised in a consumer economy, therefore, they can be very demanding and expect excellence, first time, every time plus multiple options and choice.

Q: What do you think Generation Y expectations of the funeral service and the funeral director:-

a) are now?

b) will be as this group ages?

While a more conventional way of approaching funeral directing may appeal to the critical mass of the Baby Boomer decision makers, Generation X and Y may well place demands on the funeral service and funeral directing from a completely different perspective. *Note: Generation Z-Nexters- are for those born after 2000 .*



Let's look at some of the different characteristics and traits from the other groups more closely.

Traditionalist	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y Millennial
Born 1925 – 1945	Born 1946-1964	Born 1965-1980	Born 1981 and after
CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAITS			
LOYAL TO THE BUSINESS RESPECT THE AUTHORITY DEDICATION AND SACRIFICE DUTY BEFORE PLEASURE INDIRECT IN COMMUNICATING DEMONSTRATE OBEDIENCE RESPOND WELL TO BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO SENIORITY AND AGE CORRELATED ADHERENCE TO RULES	SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE – WIDER CONTEXT OF MOST SITUATIONS BRING FRESH PERSPECTIVES LITTLE RESPECT FOR TITLE DISAPPROVE OF STRUCTURE OPTIMISTIC CRAVE PERSONAL GROWTH SENSITIVE TO FEEDBACK HEALTH AND WELLNESS PERSONAL GRATIFICATION	POSITIVE ATTITUDE IMPATIENCE GOAL ORIENTATED MULTI-TASKING THINKING GLOBALLY SELF-RELIANCE INFORMAL/CASUAL WORK JUST A OTHER JOB / BUSINESS ATTITUDE TECHNO-LITERAL BALANCE NEED A LOT TO DO AND FREEDOM TO DO IT THEIR WAY WILL QUESTION AUTHORITY DEMAND CHOICE	CONFIDENCE SOCIABILITY DECREASE IN MORALITY LIVE DIVERSITY TENACITY TECHNOLOGICAL SAVVY MULTI-TASKING NEED FLEXIBILITY DEMANDING DON'T RESPOND WELL TO BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO THRIVE ON COMMUNICATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA



Other factors to consider for the future are:-

Pre-Need Funeral Planning: Pre-Need Funeral Planning is already experiencing a major shift. The more proactive funeral directors are already recognising the business advantages.

Online Funeral Arrangements

Consider what funeral arranging and funeral directing will look like if a growing percentage of all funeral arrangements occur online. What will be the impact upon the profession?

There is a belief out there that a quality funeral service requires human contact. Consider the implications to the funeral service should this belief be challenged.

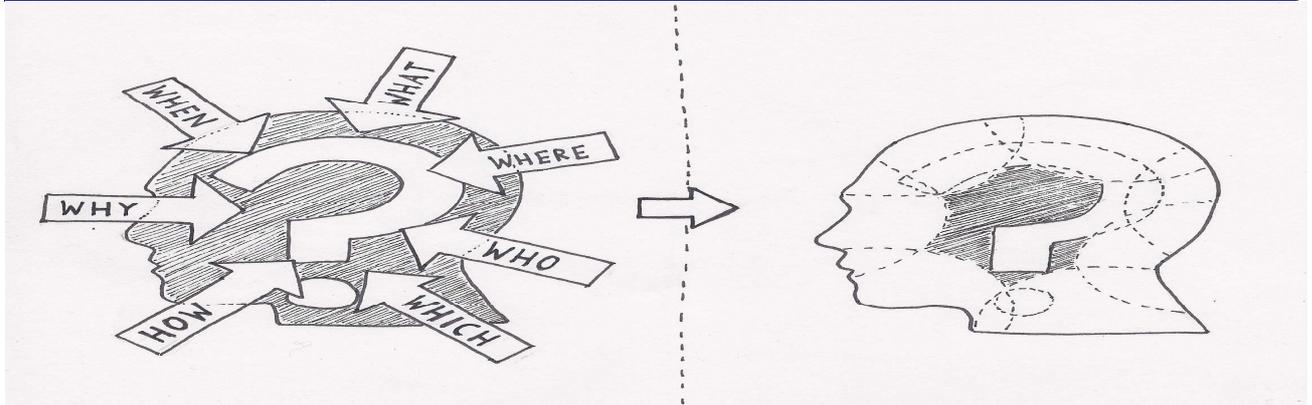
New Look Funeral Directing Business Model

Given the generational differences and growing expectations and demands of the clients', the need to review and introduce a new way of working may emerge that turns the conventional methods of funeral directing on its head!



Learning Outcome 2

Understand the importance of presenting a holistic and professional image of funeral directing.



Professional Appearance

Your professional appearance and public presentation (i.e., your dress, cleanliness, make-up, hair, facial expressions, verbal and non-verbal communication, demeanour etc) projects an image to clients and to other funeral service colleagues and third party representatives.

It is essential for a Funeral Director, irrespective of age or gender, to present a positive professional image to gain the respect your clients deserve. Your image speaks for you before people can get acquainted with you and can rightly or wrongly be used to determine your level of expertise. Remember, a poor image is remembered and is hard to forget!

All funeral staff and especially funeral directors are from the initial face to face contact being observed by clients, family members, including other professions all funeral directors come into contact with i.e. Coroners; Police; Hospice and Hospital staff; police; administrators and other external personnel.

Your appearance affects their impression of you and your business. Professional dress and appropriate behaviour are therefore expected.



The Principles of Professional Behaviour

Funeral Directors should demonstrate professional and ethical behaviour with clients and in the handling and caring for the deceased at all times. Clients are entitled to expect that all members and their employees will demonstrate an acceptable level of care and respect.

This includes:-

- Safe, dignified and respectful care of the deceased
- Un-biased and ethical verbal and non-verbal behaviour
- Sharing of objective and professional advice, based on up to date funeral service knowledge and professional judgement.
- Members and their employees must not under any circumstances allow any personal views or prejudice about the deceased, or the client impact on the level of care or service provided.
- Avoidance of personal views and prejudice applies to:-
 - cultural background
 - disability
 - race, ethnic or national origin
 - gender
 - lifestyle
 - marital or parental status
 - religion or belief



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- sexual orientation

 - social or financial status of the deceased, or of the client.

Clients must be able to trust members and their employees in the caring for, and showing respect for the deceased at all times. In order to justify that trust, members should pay particular attention to the following aspects of professional practice:-

- Ensure professional and ethical behaviour is demonstrated relating to the care of the client and of the deceased as a primary concern. This includes verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

- Ensure professional knowledge and skills are current and reflective of up to date funeral service practice.

- Avoid unfairly discriminating against the client by allowing personal views and prejudices to adversely affect the professional relationship, or in caring for the deceased.

- Recognise and work within the limits of individual and personal competence.

- Treat the deceased as an individual and show respect for their dignity at all times.

- Treat the deceased and the client politely and considerately at all times.

- Respect the deceased and the client's right to confidentiality.

- Listen to the client and respond to their concerns and preferences.

- Be honest and open with the client and act with integrity at all times

- Avoid discriminating unfairly against clients or the deceased.

- Never abuse or jeopardise the clients' trust in you or the public's trust in the profession.



Working with colleagues in the Funeral Service

Professional and ethical behaviour also extends to respecting the views, skills and contributions of workplace colleagues, and other related professionals.

Members and their employees are also expected to be able to demonstrate unity and respect for the diversity of employees involved in any aspect of providing a professional service on behalf of the client. Professional and ethical behaviour in the workplace extends to showing respect for employees irrespective of:-

- o cultural background
- o competence and ability
- o race, ethnic or national origin
- o gender
- o lifestyle
- o marital or parental status
- o religion or belief
- o sexual orientation



Avoiding the use of derogatory language

Speaking in a respectful tone, refraining from the use of derogatory language are critical attributes to demonstrate at all times for everyone employed in the funeral service.

It is inappropriate to make derogatory remarks about the deceased, the client or indeed any other employee due to their race, religious belief, skin colour, nationality, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability. Those who consistently use this type of language will find that other people find it offensive and inappropriate, and as such, may cite grounds for legal scrutiny and penalty. Be careful!

Clothing and other expressions of Religious Belief or Culture

Dressing appropriately is paramount when working in the funeral service. However, it is the responsibility for employers to determine appropriate workplace dress, taking into account factors such as client expectations, the responsibilities of the role, health and safety considerations and religious or cultural requirements of staff members.

It is also important to respect the religious and cultural beliefs of the deceased, including the clothing and dress of the client, and other mourners attending a funeral service.

Maintaining Professional Boundaries

It is particularly important to maintain a professional boundary when handling and caring for the deceased. Inappropriate behaviour and handling is recognised as unethical behaviour during life, and therefore, following death, the same principle for the respect and dignity of the deceased should apply at all times.

Respect and the dignity of the deceased during preparation and dressing should be adhered to throughout the period of care.



Learning Outcome 3	Understand any environmental regulation and their impact on the funeral service.
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Environmental Factors and the Funeral Director

Nothing is ever as simple as black or white. There are currently only two options available to the bereaved for the committal of their dearly beloved's mortal remains, burial or cremation. Simple, or is it?

Caring for the environment is a long term issue and small incremental increases in improvements now will lead to massive total impacts in the future.

Should we consider the impact of our actions over the short term of human life or the short term of creation?

What is the short term when a human being lives for an average of less than 80 years, history has been recorded for 3000 years and the planet has been in existence and inhabited (in one form or another) for many millions of years.



The human experience is too short to understand whether we are having a material effect on our planet or whether the planet will continue to do its own thing regardless of the behaviour of its occupants. Fanatics will argue on either side for hours and hours.

Perhaps all that is reasonable for those who provide funeral services is to help the bereaved make an informed decision which is compatible with their own beliefs, environmental or otherwise. There is not a huge amount of scientific research available about the impact of funerals on the environment. That which does exist either applies very specifically to certain scenarios and cannot be meaningfully transferred to others, or is commercially motivated and not necessarily very well balanced. There is a choice to be made; are you a funeral director that offers a green funeral or a green business that provides funeral services. With that thought in mind the following are some areas in which reasoned consideration should be given.

FUNERAL CARS

Reducing the number of cars that travel to a funeral has benefits in that the amount of exhaust emissions produced and traffic congestion (which leads to an inefficient use of fuel) is less. Whilst the mourners may each travel to the funeral in their own individual small engine, fuel efficient cars, one consideration for reducing the impact of a funeral is that it may be desirable that the mourners travel together in one larger (if less fuel efficient) car such as a limousine?

If the limousine is full and carrying a maximum load of passengers and conveying a pall bearer to the funeral that would otherwise have travelled separately it is conceivable that the limousine could be replacing 4 cars making the same journey. There are benefits for the mourners in travelling together beyond those to the environment too.

There are now electric removal vehicles in operation in the funeral sector and as technology continues to develop this may well extend to other funeral vehicles, however current limitations with these vehicles are a reduction in load capacity and range of operation.



Presentation of Vehicles

Once vehicles have been cleaned properly with the right cleaning products (environmentally proven or otherwise) it will require less water and cleaning products to keep the presentation of them to a high standard (subject to extreme weather circumstances obviously).

It is possible to install water butts or other rainwater harvesting devices to capture water which can then be used to wash cars. Daily checks on the tyre pressures on all of the vehicles will not only go some way to ensuring colleague and client safety it will also ensure the efficient use of fuel driving.

Local Options

If the client has a choice, is it necessary to travel the additional miles to a nicer crematorium rather than use the closest?

Consider, could a different location nearby be used for the funeral service instead, with just the committal taking place at the crematorium? Is it compatible with the desire to provide or receive an environmentally responsible funeral to choose to travel to the nicer burial park rather than use the nearer municipal cemetery? If it is desirable to travel that extra distance special consideration should be given as to how many vehicles will travel and keeping that to an absolute minimum without denying any mourner the chance to attend the funeral.

IN THE OFFICE

There are a myriad of simple but effective things that can be done in the office to reduce the impact of the daily business of funeral directing on the environment. By simply turning out the lights when leaving a room or turning off the PCs at night instead of leaving it on standby will reduce the amount of energy you consume. Consuming less energy has the added benefit of reducing costs too.



CARE OF THE DECEASED - Refrigerate or Embalm?

Neither refrigeration nor embalming is particularly environmentally friendly processes. The chemicals required in both can have a considerable detrimental effect on the environment and are not very pleasant for us personally either.

However, for the welfare of both clients and colleagues alike it is desirable to reduce the effects of decomposition as far as possible before the funeral takes place.

There are embalming products available that do not have damaging ingredients and unpleasant effects on the planet or ourselves, however, the efficiency of these alternatives is such that most funeral directors find themselves with a straight choice between embalming and refrigeration.

When choosing the following points should be considered: –

- How long is it necessary to wait before providing the funeral?
- Does the client wish to view the deceased?
- Is the deceased to be buried in a cemetery where there are restrictions on the use of formalin based embalming fluids?
- Embalming fluid is an unpleasant substance before it is used to embalm. Does it remain like that once it has performed the tissue fixing task for which it was injected into the body?
- Refrigerant gases are not thought to be good for the environment, what happens to them when they are replaced?
- How much energy does it take to keep a refrigerator at the required temperature for safe body storage?



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- How is formalin (formaldehyde dissolved in water) / formaldehyde made? e.g. A temperature of more than 400°C is required to make formaldehyde.

Without carrying out significant research into either it is not possible to make an objective decision in relation to this very involved dilemma.

THE FUNERAL Burial or Cremation?

Commercial crematoria have been operating in the UK for approximately 100 years and over that time cremation has become the most common form of committal with around 70% of the funerals provided a year resulting in a cremation.

That is not to say that cremation is a new phenomenon to the world at large. Cremation has been the predominant method for disposal of the deceased for centuries in other parts of the World. The principal difference being the fuels used and the amount of filtration the emissions are subject to.

According to an article that appeared in the Indian newspaper, The Hindu, in May 2005 – 40 million trees are consumed and 7.5 million tonnes of carbon monoxide are emitted a year as a consequence of the conventional Hindu system for cremation. Innovative new solutions to this ancient problem have been implemented but in comparison cremation in the UK could be considered a relatively clean manner of disposing of the deceased.

Burial does not need carbon based fuels but that does not mean that there are no emissions as a result - as the body and the coffin that is buried breaks down and Methane gas (amongst other things) is released. Methane is a greenhouse gas and has a carbon footprint which when considered over a much longer period is greater than the carbon footprint of a cremation. This is because as a climate changing gas Methane is 11 times more harmful than the gasses that are emitted during a cremation.



Above ground interment or any sort of non-earth burial in an American style casket will not suffer from these emission issues to the same extent. However there are longer term issues such as a lack of space and the need for maintenance in perpetuity that count heavily against such a choice.

In the short term, cremation consumes fossil fuels and gives (scrubbed) carbon emissions whilst in the longer term, decomposition releases carbon emissions into the atmosphere. There is no doubt that the method of committal is the biggest contributor to environmental detriment in the funeral process but it is not terribly easy to choose one over the other on environmental merits alone.

How far away the nearest crematorium or cemetery is should also be borne in mind. If one is significantly closer than the other then choosing the closest may be the simplest way to reduce the carbon footprint of a funeral.

Alternatives to burial and cremation continue to be and have been developed though currently none of those options are acceptable in law. We will look at the alternatives emerging later. The same questions about energy consumption, the source of all the constituent parts of the process must be understood when considering whether any new process is better or worse for the environment than the existing two options.

Choosing a Cemetery

Unless there are some very strict controls on who can use a cemetery and what can be interred there in terms other than cosmetic ones it can be hard to tell the difference between an alternative burial ground and a traditional cemetery.

Accepting only solid wood or alternative construction (willow, bamboo, seagrass, water hyacinth etc) coffins or not allowing stone masonry may go a small way to reducing the consequences to the environment of a burial but if this is not part of a wider policy it is unlikely to be significant.



To achieve a significant difference an alternative burial ground's policy would need to include such considerations as: –

- the burial is only available to people that live within a ten mile radius of the cemetery,
- the coffin and linings preferably should be manufactured by the most local coffin manufacturer from materials available locally (this may well preclude coffins of alternate construction and elaborate linings),
- the coffin materials are checked by the funeral director prior to cremation.
- no non biodegradable materials are contained in or on the coffins (biodegradable plastic handles can be sourced),
- the coffin lining would have to be made of naturally occurring fibres,
- the deceased is not dressed in anything that is made of fibres that won't biodegrade (ideally this should be a gown provided by the same local supplier that provided the coffin lining),
- mourners limited to the number of cars that can be brought to the site (an average of 1 car per 4 people for example) - *clearly this option may be in direct conflict with meeting the clients wishes and may not be an option.*
- No memorialisation.

In practice, if the measures outlined above are applied as far as is reasonably possible then the choice is more to do with the quality of the surroundings and tranquillity of the location than doing the right thing by the planet.

The Coffin Dilemma

When sourcing a coffin it is important to think what went into making it. If it is a wooden coffin; where in the world did the timber come from? Was it grown and harvested in a responsibly managed way? This may depend on what sort of timber it is. Some hardwoods (often generalised



as Mahogany) take 300 years for a tree to reach maturity, so can they be grown and harvested sustainably?

There are good forests and there are bad forests. It is possible to source a mahogany species from sustainably managed forest sources and looking for wood that carries the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) logo is essential. Using FSC-certified wood avoids the lumber which has been felled and shipped illegally thereby helping to save the Rain Forest and its unique habitat.

Other hardwoods grow more quickly indeed different varieties of the same species may grow at different speeds. Oak in particular is very sustainable and can be found in plentiful supply in Eastern Europe and North America. This could mean that the credentials of the coffin constructed of solid Oak has a better environment credential than a coffin made of recycled wood. Without carrying out proper due diligence it is very hard to know which is better.

Whatever material a coffin is made of there is a complex story of provenance to be considered. What proportion of a chipboard coffin is recycled wood and what proportion is new processed timber? How much energy is used in producing cardboard? Was the willow from which a coffin is made grown in the same place that the coffin was manufactured? Seagrass is one of the world's most important absorbers of carbon dioxide and foods for sea-dwelling animals but ensuring that it has been responsibly grown and harvested is not easy. How far has the bamboo in a bamboo coffin been shipped? Was it shipped as bamboo or as a coffin?

If cremation is the most suitable (environmentally) method of disposing of the deceased is it better to put more combustible material into the cremator (reducing the amount of natural gas required) or to use a coffin that has been proven to be better for the environment but has a lower calorific value (so more natural gas is used)?

Handmade and rustic in appearance it is easy to believe that a coffin constructed of Willow, Bamboo, Banana Leaf, Seagrass or similar is "greener" than a coffin of traditional construction when the difference in carbon footprint between the two is, in reality, minimal. Judgements



should be made about such things based on facts not appearances and this requires some degree of investigation into a product's provenance.

In practice the coffin is only a small part of a funeral's environmental impact. The nature of the coffin chosen is of little significance if the other choices surrounding the rest of the funeral do not take into account the cost to the environment.

Choosing a "green" coffin will certainly not transform a standard funeral into a "green funeral" but understanding the provenance of the coffin as one of the many decisions made in connection with the funeral can contribute to the whole that is a funeral where the cost to the environment is kept to an absolute minimum.

Flowers

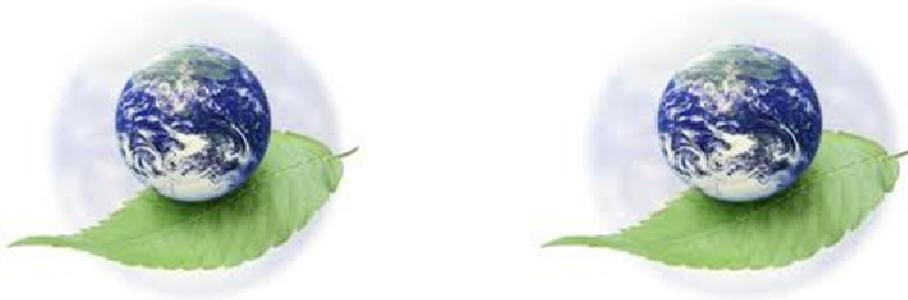
There is no escaping the fact that most florists (by necessity) source their flowers from the most cost effective and reliable suppliers. Being a reliable floristry supplier is to be able to provide perfect blooms of many varieties all year round. However, this means either growing flowers in a greenhouse or growing flowers a long way from their final destination.

Using seasonal flowers grown as close as possible to the final point of supply will go a long way to minimising the negative impact on the funerals environmental credentials. There is the opportunity for hypocrisy here too. There is little point choosing a willow or seagrass coffin for a funeral in the winter and then choosing to decorate it with spring flowers. Consulting with the florists to ascertain what flowers are in season and where they get their flowers from and relaying that to the client is about as far as a funeral director can take their environmental due diligence is such cases.

Without substantial research many of the decisions made in relation to funerals and the environment will be based on client needs or the best advice available. From the anecdotal evidence and limited science that is available what is clear is that client choice is inevitably put on the line if the detriment of a funeral service is to be kept to an absolute minimum. If some simple



things are considered in the course of arranging a funeral and managing a business it is possible to reduce the impact that funeral services have on the environment whilst retaining the ability to personalise a funeral to an individual client's taste.



Useful Reading

Environmental Regulations <https://www.gov.uk/environmental-regulations>



The Future Role of the Funeral Director – Use of Technology

Learning Outcome 4	Understand how the use of technology is impacting upon the funeral service.
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The future role for funeral directors will benefit from embracing the introduction and increasing use of new technologies, such as company websites, tribute web sites, on-line condolence books and online death registry, all of which are becoming more common worldwide.

Traditionally, families and friends of the deceased have always attended a funeral. However, as the geographical spread of people increases globally, the use of technology is becoming ever more popular allowing clients to ask if arrangements could be made for those unable to physically attend the funeral, to watch a loved one's Funeral Service on the Internet. The use of technology through the Internet is known as a webcast.

Use of Webcasts

LIVE funeral webcasting connects families all over the world *at the time of the funeral service* and is broadcast in 'real time'. It brings comfort to the family members who are unable to attend the funeral in person. However, LIVE funeral webcasting involves use of a laptop computer, ensuring there is connection to the Internet, making sure the video camera is working properly and is pointed optimally for viewing, and relies on access to Wi- Fi.



ON DEMAND funeral webcasting is viewed *after the funeral service*, and usually the actual video/DVD footage is made available within hours of the funeral service ending. Therefore, since the videoing of the funeral service automatically stores audio and visual images, the video/ DVD can be watched at any later date and as many times as the family member or loved one would like. By offering to use On-Demand funeral webcasting, the only requirements are the setting up of a video camera, and operating the “record” button

Use of Skype

This service allows funeral directors to communicate with clients by voice, video, and instant messaging over the Internet. Phone calls may be made to recipients on the traditional telephone networks. This service could also be used for the purposes of making long distance arrangements, or communicating with the family of the deceased if they are based overseas.

Use of Tablet – hand held technology.

As an alternative to Funeral Arrangers and Funeral Directors offering numerous brochures and leaflets for families to look through, now, at the touch of a screen, families can view the entire collection of products and services using high quality technology through the use of a Tablet – which provides an up to date, easy and more efficient option.

The hand held Tablet, a portable computing device, is normally used for web browsing, email, sharing photos, watching videos, and reading digital publications – all of which will play a key role in transforming the funeral arrangement.

Given there are a number of important choices to be made when making funeral arrangements – coffins, caskets, music, readings, memorial stationery and floral tributes to name but a few, using Tablet technology can provide families with the opportunity to view the latest range of our products and services in high-resolution electronic formats. The portability of the device will give families the choice to meet with a Funeral Director either onsite at the funeral home or in the comfort of their own homes. Providing all the relevant information is loaded onto the Tablet via



applications, with just the touch of a button, families can view necessary images and brochures on a crisp full colour multi-touch screen

Flat Screen Technology in the funeral home

Funeral Directors may choose to invest in flat screen technology within the chapel of rest to enable family and friends to spend time with their loved one, comforted by rolling images of family life enjoyed together as a celebration of life. The same could be used during the funeral service for the benefit of comfort to the mourners attending on the day of the funeral.

Search for a Funeral Director

Clients can now access the internet specifically for the purposes of finding a funeral director. For example the website funeralmap.co.uk[™] is unique in its concept in that it enables the client to find the funeral service business and any services they may require to help them arrange a funeral in one easy-to-use place, and to see their exact location.

The internet makes it easy to share information with family and friends. A client enters their Postcode or town, or can search by category to find local Funeral Directors, crematoria, woodland burial sites, cemeteries and much more... funeralmap.co.uk[™] is completely independent and does not endorse or recommend any of the products or services listed

Online Memorials

It is now possible for Funeral Directors to create an online memorial website enabling their clients to pay tribute to their loved ones. For the client it is a beneficial way of sharing memories and celebrating the lives of the deceased. Clients are provided with the facility through password protection, to upload and share memories, photos, and video footage of their loved one, creating an everlasting online tribute to the deceased, accessible by friends and relatives irrespective of their location.



Internet - Google Search

The internet is now a useful tool for planning routes for long distance removals for example or for funeral corteges. The use of Google Maps enables the Funeral Director and staff to find routes and view locations through the use of 360-degree street-level imagery in advance of visiting premises prior to the removal of the deceased or on the day of the funeral. An advance check of the location may assist with being able to quickly identify difficulty in access or other considerations to make upon arrival.



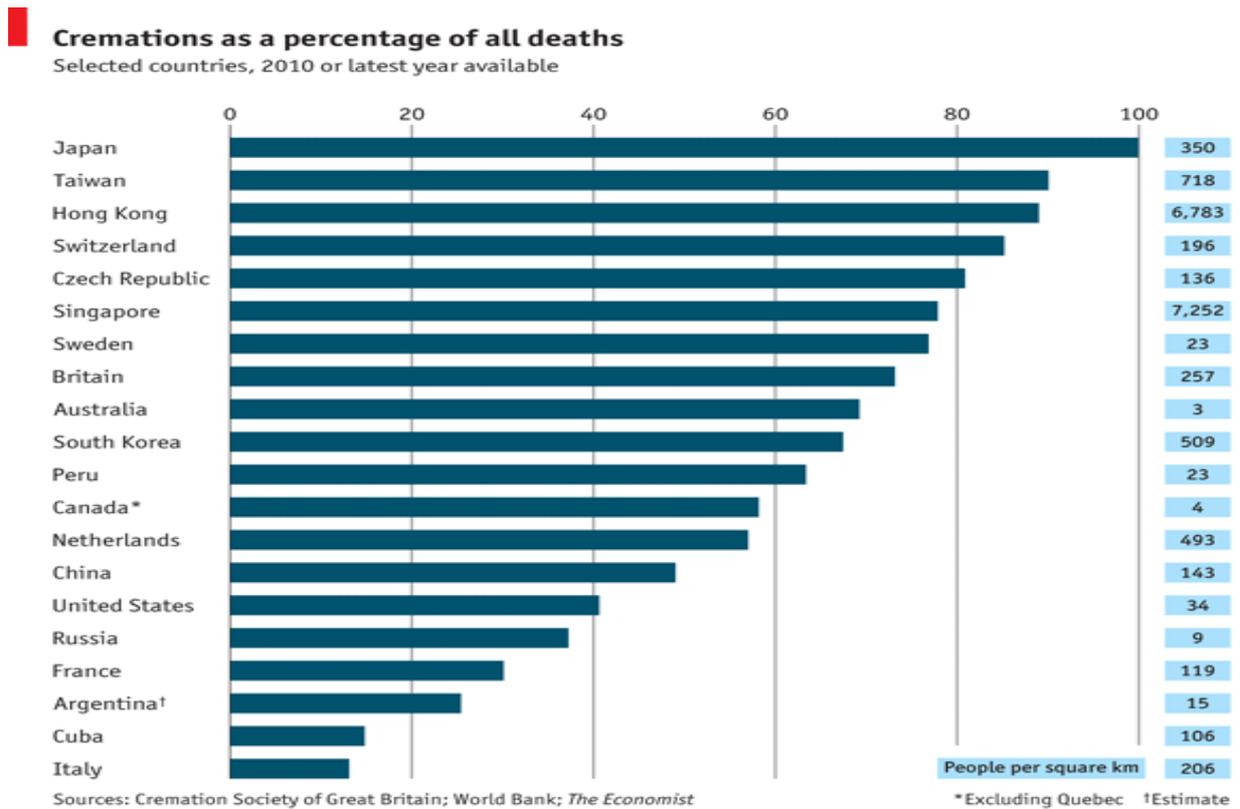
Learning Outcome 5

Understand the developing range of proposed methods for future disposal of the deceased.

Developing Range of Proposed Methods for Future Disposal of the Deceased.

At present, Cremation is the most popular choice in the UK for the disposal of the deceased, depending of course on cultural belief. However, Cremation is less environmentally friendly due to emissions, which is prompting research into alternative new methods.

The table below represents the popularity of Cremation across many countries worldwide.





Crymotation or Resomation

There are two new methods for disposing of the deceased that are being considered.

Crymotation, which is also known as promession, is a freeze-drying method.

This Swedish method enables the deceased to be frozen in liquid nitrogen until the body is brittle enough to break up. Within a week of death the body and coffin (preferably a simple wooden coffin) are cooled to a temperature of -180 C then placed in a tank and covered in liquid nitrogen further reducing the temperature. Once frozen, the body which by now is very brittle is then moved into a mechanical vibrating machine with a 5cm vibrating movement that breaks up the remains in about 60 seconds. Any water is then removed in a vacuum chamber leaving around 30% of the original mass in 2-4mm pieces. Any metal including toxic mercury based tooth fillings and surgical parts are removed in a metal separator. This process is a closed procedure with no human intervention required except from starting the process and removing the remains at the end.

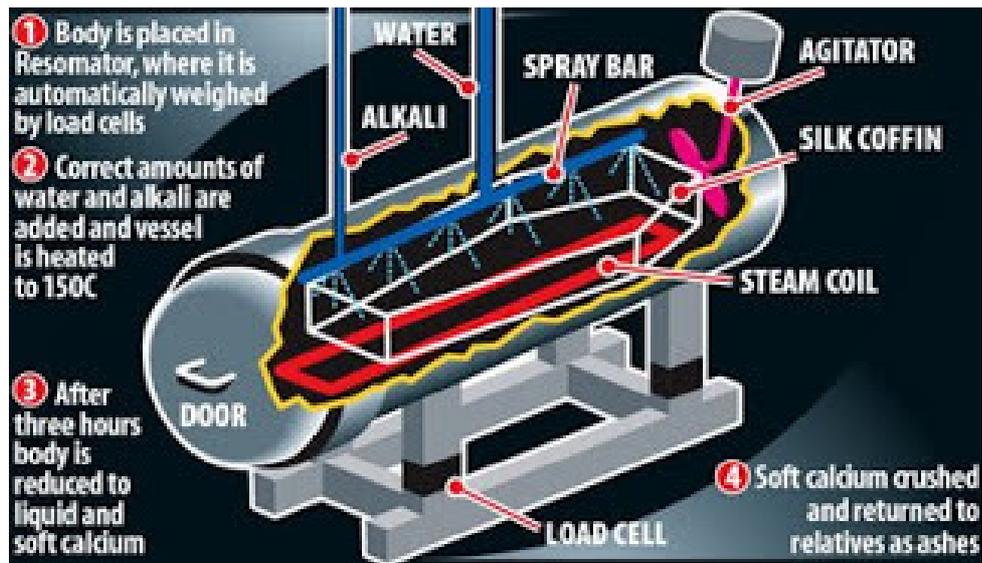
The dry odourless organic remains are placed into a 1m² biodegradable coffin made out of corn starch. To allow the remains to turn into compost they are buried in a shallow grave of no more than 50cm in top soil and left for a period of 6-12 months by which time the remains should have been absorbed by the earth and converted into soil. A plant or tree can be planted on top of the earth to absorb the nutrients during the composting. The remains could also be cremated in the container which is believed to be more environmentally friendly as all metal has been removed from the body and therefore preventing the emission of toxic mercury during cremation.



Resomation is a water-based method.

Resomation involves the body being dissolved in an alkaline solution and, again, the remains reduced to dust.

The body dissolves into its chemical components. The deceased is placed in a silk bag and put into a machine with water and potassium hydroxide and heated with high pressure.



Both options are environmentally friendly. In addition to this, the bereaved would potentially gain some comfort knowing that they are contributing to reducing the carbon footprint.

Crymotation or Resomation may sound somewhat gruesome to 21st Century ears, but just over 100 years ago, so did Cremation to most 19th Century Britons. Yet Cremation fell out of favour as a method of disposing of bodies for centuries, because of the rise of Christianity and the belief in the bodily resurrection of the dead. In the late 19th Century, Queen Victoria's surgeon, Sir Henry Thompson, became convinced cremation should be offered as an alternative to burial. He helped set up the Cremation Society of Great Britain.



The case of Dr William Price, who claimed to be a druid and cremated his infant son, was a turning point for those in favour of cremation. He was prosecuted in 1883, but the judge ruled that cremation was not illegal unless it caused a nuisance.

However, it remained a minority choice in the UK for many decades. Some Christian denominations, such as the Greek Orthodox, still do not endorse it.

Even traditional burial is not as 'green' as might be supposed mainly due to the depth at which the coffins are placed which slows down decomposition. However, a woodland burial, where the deceased is buried in a shallow grave speeds up the process of decomposition.

Please note: there is no legislation in the UK at present for either Resomation, or indeed for Crymotation



Proof of Learning – Assessment Criteria

MODULE 1	THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR	UNIT 1	THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR
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Module 1 Unit 1	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
	The learner can:
1.1.1a	Compare and contrast the role of funeral directing from the following perspectives: a) historical;
1.1.1b	b) contemporary.
1.1.1c	c) Describe the responsibilities that may be incumbent upon UK funeral directors in the future.
1.1.2	Explain the importance of presenting a holistic, professional image of the funeral director.
1.1.3	Analyse changing environmental factors and their impact on the funeral service.
1.1.4	Describe the increasing use of technology and its impact upon the funeral service.
1.1.5	Evaluate the developing range of proposed methods for future disposal of the deceased.