A compassionate response to funeral poverty in the context of council funerals

Lindesay Mace
Down to Earth co-manager (influencing lead)



Down to Earth is a service run by the charity Quaker Social Action

QUAKER SOCIAL ACTION

Funeral poverty in 2025

QUAKER SOCIAL ACTION



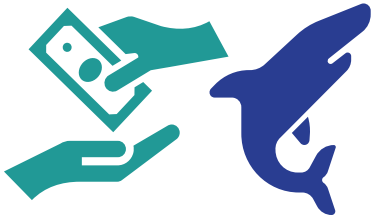
1 in 7 people – ‘notable financial difficulties’*



Image: iStock.com/jojotgdc

£2,365 was the average amount they had to ‘find’

Image: iStock/PIKSEL



8% borrowed from an illegal money lender or ‘loan shark’



70% reported an impact on their mental health

Image: “Lets talk about mental health” by The People Speak!, CC BY-NC 2.0

*All stats from SunLife’s Cost of Dying 2026 Report

Providing dignity

“People who have not been accorded dignity in life need to seize it with particular urgency at times of death.”

– Mark Drakeford, ‘Last Rights? Funerals, Poverty and Social Exclusion’, 1998



Image: iStock.com/JacobWackerhausen

Key elements



Family & friends can attend



Celebrant or faith leader – input from family, friends, carers



Burial wishes met & graves marked



Cremated remains returned if wished, at no cost

Funeral Expenses Payment (FEP)

- 1000s of people on income-related benefits denied
- ‘Reasonable’ burial or cremation fees
- £1,000 for funeral director fees and everything else
- Yorkshire: £2,057 avg. funeral director fees*
- FEP pays 49% of that



Image: iStock.com/PIKSEL

*SunLife’s Cost of Dying 2026 Report

Tools not barriers

“Officers … are trapped between the devil … and the deep blue sea.”

– Mark Drakeford, ‘Last Rights? Funerals, Poverty and Social Exclusion’, 1998

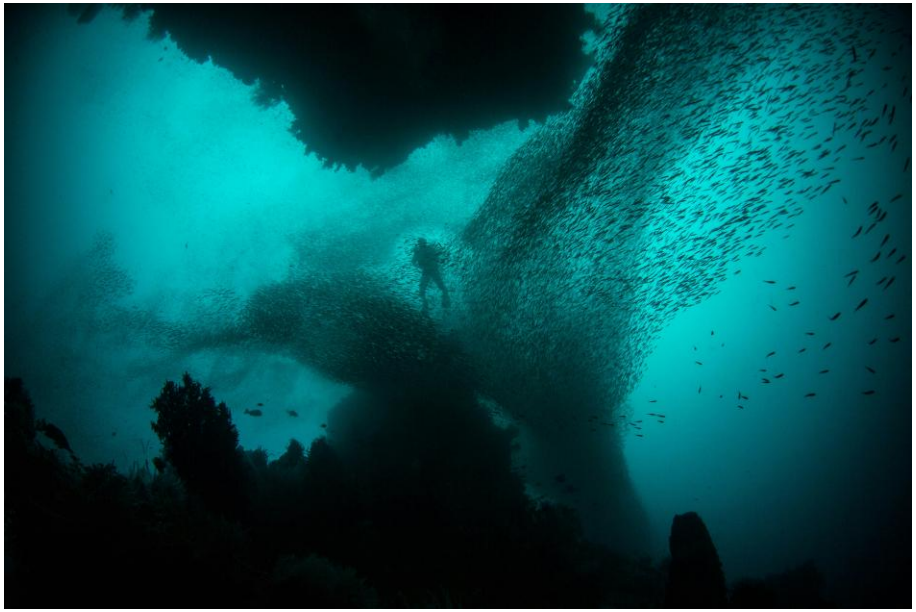


Image: Unsplash.com/AlexRose

Down to Earth

QUAKER SOCIAL ACTION

Online guides inc.

- Reducing costs
- Raising funds
- FEP eligibility checker
- Funeral wishes planning



UK-wide helpline

- Low incomes and benefits
- Funeral can’t have happened
- Online referral form

Practical tools

QUAKER SOCIAL ACTION

Bereavement training – Cruse Bereavement Support

Turn2Us grant search

Down to Earth

Online guides, inc. FEP eligibility checker, and helpline

Training on the FEP and more



Thank you for listening

Don’t hesitate to get in touch:
lindesaymace@qsa.org.uk

DownToEarthSupport.org.uk

QUAKER SOCIAL ACTION