Torsten Bell MP

Minister for Pensions

House of Commons

Dear Torsten

I wish to bring your attention to an important issue regarding the Social Fund Funeral Expenses Payment (FEP).

I have received [a briefing paper about the FEP](https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Grief%20is%20hard%20enough%20-%20Fix%20the%20Funeral%20Expenses%20Payment.pdf) from the charity Quaker Social Action (QSA). QSA’s Down to Earth project campaigns to end funeral poverty and this briefing is part of their campaign [Grief is hard enough: Fix the FEP](https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/campaigns-research-0/funeral-expenses).

Research has found that the proportion of families experiencing ‘notable financial concerns’ when paying for a funeral has risen every year for the last five years in England and Wales and is now at 1 in 5 people. Across the UK, people facing these difficulties borrow £3,109 on average to cover the costs.

QSA suggests that the FEP ‘does not meet the policy aim of supporting those most in need’ and urges the Government to reform the payment’s eligibility criteria in line with Scotland’s Funeral Support Payment. It is reported that the Scottish payment reaches 40% more people than the FEP does.

QSA’s paper raises serious concerns that some people on the lowest incomes cannot get the FEP despite having no family support with the costs. The House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee in 2016 also assessed that the criteria ‘may be inadvertently excluding some claimants who should receive an award’.

I would like to ask you to consider reviewing and reforming the eligibility criteria of the FEP to ensure more bereaved people are able to get the support they need at what is likely to be an already deeply distressing time for them.

QSA would be delighted to meet with you to discuss this issue and share their insights. I would be grateful if your officials could contact the Down to Earth co-manager Lindesay Mace at [lindesaymace@qsa.org.uk](mailto:lindesaymace@qsa.org.uk) to set up a meeting.

Best wishes,