

Appeal for collection for Quaker Social Action: 16 May 2021

Quaker Social Action is a small charity, originally based in East London, whose main campaign in recent years, about funeral poverty, has been featured in national media. Their 'Down to Earth' service, established in 2010 to provide one-to-one support for people who are organising a funeral and struggling with costs, recently passed the milestone of 5,000 clients supported by their UK-wide helpline.

It is particularly poignant that this milestone has been passed during the current pandemic. During this week, 10-16 May, which is [Dying Matters Awareness Week 2021](#), they have been reflecting on their experience of helping people affected by funeral poverty. One of the themes for this week has been being prepared for death financially. Sadly, from their decade of experience in supporting people preparing for a funeral – usually bereaved families – QSA know that many people who die are not in the right place financially.

The issue of funeral poverty affects thousands of people in the UK every year. With the average cost of a funeral in the UK standing at £3,837 in 2020, Royal London estimates that 9% of people faced with organising a funeral struggle to pay.

Down to Earth's small team of experienced advisors help people organising an imminent funeral to understand options and costs, to reduce costs by comparing prices, and to raise money towards funeral costs through benefit entitlements and charitable grants. Every day the team speaks to people who are faced with funeral costs they can't afford. Low incomes/benefits, high living costs, unemployment and long-term ill health combined with soaring funeral costs can all lead to funeral poverty, as can responding to a sudden death. Down to Earth's overall aim is to help people to achieve a meaningful funeral that does not leave them in debt.

The pandemic has caused tens of thousands of unexpected and untimely deaths in the UK. Sadly the peaks in the UK death rate were reflected in unprecedented demand for Down to Earth's helpline.

Whilst the Down to Earth team's work is challenging, and sometimes harrowing, it is also a privilege. Helping bereaved families to provide the farewell they want for their loved one can alleviate a great deal of stress, and enable them to grieve normally.

A 'Down to Earth' client said: *"You have no idea the pressure this takes off of us. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, you've been a godsend."*

You can find out more about QSA from their web-site:

<https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/about-us> or facebook. Earlier this week the Down to

Earth team shared some of their experiences via a webinar. I can forward a link to anyone who is interested in watching this.