

Funeral Link



How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Funeral Link



Title	Funeral Link
Organisation	Funeral Link
Category	Fully validated
Poverty Impact	Mitigation
Introduction to the Project	
<p>Funeral Link is a Dundee based charity set up in 2018 to provide advice and practical support for those who wish to provide a funeral for their loved ones but find that the cost is beyond their means. They offer emotional support during the bereavement and grieving process through one-on-one meetings in local areas such as cafés, community halls or a participant's home, and connect those grieving with other organisations that can provide support.</p>	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?			
Dr Carlo Morelli			
How did the idea for the project come about?			
The Scottish Government funded research from Dr Carlo Morelli on funeral poverty where he concluded that an organisation is required to meet the demands.			
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?			
<p>Yes. Dr Carlo Morelli presented such reports at the Funeral Poverty Forum to justify the charity's existence:</p> <p>Bickerton, R., & Morelli, C. (2019). Funeral Poverty in Dundee: Funeral Link Evaluation. University of Dundee. https://doi.org/10.20933/100001153</p> <p>Further information about development of the idea is available at:</p> <p>https://www.dundee.ac.uk/projects/funeral-link-addressing-problem-funeral-poverty</p>			
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
Dundee Pensioners Forum and Ruth Bickerton.			
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
Yes. Legislation used for Social Security Scotland involved input from people with lived experience of poverty which influenced the creation of Funeral Link.			
Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?			
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.

Which organisation provided funding?	The Scottish Government
How much was required?	Unknown
What was the specific source of funding? (e.g., particular grant or policy)	Unknown

Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.

Staff/Volunteer Time	Yes – academics such as Ruth Bickerton and Dr Carlo Morelli.
Facilities / Workspace	Yes – Dundee University which carried out research.
Equipment	Yes - laptops, broadband and telephones to gather information.
Local Knowledge	Yes – opinions and ideas of people who had been or currently still experiencing funeral poverty was essential.
Food and Drink	No.

What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?

Shame and embarrassment felt by many people due to their lack of ability to provide a dignified funeral for their loved ones. This made it difficult to find people willing to provide their input. Initially, there was also some resistance and misunderstanding by funeral directors.

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What, if anything, helped enable development of the initial idea of the project?
Financial sources from the Scottish Government that enabled research to create the funeral poverty report.
How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?
3 years. Research for the report started in 2016 and ended in 2019.
Who made the decision to introduce the project?
Dr. Carlo Morelli

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?			
No			
Yes, a pilot project			✓
Yes, a feasibility study			✓
What did the pilot study or feasibility study involve?			
<p>The feasibility study was the research that took place between 2016 and 2019.</p> <p>The pilot study took place during the first year of service during late 2018 and late 2019.</p>			
Who was responsible for the design and/or delivery of the pilot or feasibility study?			
<p>Dr. Carlo Morelli and Ruth Bickerton were both responsible for the feasibility study.</p> <p>Linda Sterry was responsible for the pilot study.</p>			
Were those with lived experience of poverty among those involved in the design or delivery of the pilot project or feasibility study			
No			
Yes			✓
<p>People with lived poverty experience are essential to the work of Funeral Link and are therefore, always involved in every piece of work produced by the charity. This group of people are especially prevalent in the pilot study as this was evaluation of service in its early stages.</p>			
Was funding required to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No		Yes	✓

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Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the pilot project or feasibility study.

Which organisation provided funding?	The Scottish Government and the University of Dundee were the two main benefactors.
How much was required?	£120,000 overall. It is unknown how much was spent per study.
What was the specific source of funding?	A grant by the Scottish Government.

Were specific resources needed to support the pilot project or feasibility study?

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please provide details of the resources that were required for the pilot project or feasibility study.

Staff/Volunteer Time	N/A
Facilities / Workspace	N/A
Equipment	N/A
Local Knowledge	N/A
Food and Drink	N/A

Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated?

No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Evaluations took place through annual reports and financial statements. OSCAR (Office for Scottish Charities Regulator) evaluated both studies to ensure they were financially viable and future of the project.

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Was there evidence from the pilot project or feasibility study that confirmed that it was working / it would work?

No	
Yes	✓

The feasibility study provided evidence for the need of a funeral provision in Dundee and the pilot study confirmed the charities success in carrying out their aims in helping impoverished individuals with funeral arrangements.

Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?

Dr. Carlo Morelli.

Was the design of the project modified following the pilot project or feasibility study?

No	
Yes	✓

The charity was initially set up under the name Dundee Funeral Support Service (DFFS) but it was soon realised the need for education and wellbeing support as the demand for funeral support is not high enough to ensure the future of the charity. Other elements were recognised as essential parts of the charity, including creating a dialogue about death and implanting preventative measures like creating funeral plans for clients before death.

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
Online and telephone.		
Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?		
	Yes	
	No	✓
Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?		
Events, such as the Funeral Poverty Form held by the charity, local and national news (they have appeared on STV News), and advertisements in the city of Dundee, leaflets and posters are on display in community areas like cafes and libraries.		
What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?		
People from the statutory and voluntary sectors often refer potential clients to the charity, as do Funeral Directors		
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
In person meetings most often take place with past clients to ensure their wellbeing.		

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?		
No		✓
Yes		
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?		
No		
Yes		✓
Funeral Link has appointed someone that previously used their service numerous times to their Trustee Board.		
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>		
No		
Yes		✓
Oversight. Every panel at their Funeral Poverty conference contained people with lived experience of poverty where they were able to provide significant input.		

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
Ewan Gurr.	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	
Yes	✓
No	
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
Most of it	✓
About half of it	
Just a small proportion of it	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	
No	
Yes	✓
Trustee board with 5 trustees that are responsible for governing the organisation.	
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	
No	
Yes	✓
OSCR, which is funded by the Scottish Government to regulate the voluntary sector, provides statutory oversight for the organisation.	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?

Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓

Funeral Link is in-line with the Social Security Act 2018 as the organisation helps individuals access funeral support payments to provide suitable access to help lay their loved one to rest with dignity.

In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?

Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓

Funeral Link has been given access to grants (such as the announcement from the Scottish Government in November 2024 where they promised to invest £52 million in funeral support).

Is the project part of any other strategy?

Don't know	
No	✓
Yes	

In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this strategy?

Don't know	✓
No	
Yes	

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Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	✓
Yes	
In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?	
Don't know	
None	
Negative	
Positive	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?		
No		<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please provide details of the external funding that was used secured to support this work?		
Which organisation provided funding?	Robertson Trust, Northwood Charitable Trust, NHS Tayside Charitable Foundation, Hill Crest Foundation, Dignity Ltd. And various other small charitable donors.	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Unknown	
How much funding was secured?	Around £100,000 average annually. Last year (2023) they secured £115,000.	
For how long has funding been secured?	Since 2018.	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?		
Don't know		<input type="checkbox"/>
No		<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is future funding from the same external source based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered from this work?		
No		<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Applications for funding to these sources must be made every year.		

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Has a specific sum been secured from the host organisation to support this work?	
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide details of the funding that was used secured from the host organisation to support this work?	
How much funding was secured?	
For how long has funding been secured?	
Is future funding from the host organisation a possibility?	
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is future funding from the host organisation based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?	
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	
We would dissolve the organisation.	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?			
No			
Yes			✓
This project is the entire work of the organisation.			
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?			
No			✓
Yes			
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?			
No			
Yes			✓
There was a freelance consultant that was paid for their time during their work in the organisation.			
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?			
No			✓
Yes			
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?			
No		Yes	✓

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Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?		
Facilities / Workspace	Office and community areas which are the most common places of work for this organisation as their office is not suitable for the wider delivery of their project. Their office currently only contains enough space for their employees, which is something Funeral Link wishes to change in the future to better accommodate bereaved clients. The office space is also used for education and planning purposes.	
Equipment	Data collection system	
Local Knowledge	From participants	
Food and Drink	Tea and coffee are often provided.	
Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?		
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?		
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The data collection system used.		

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Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	
No	
Yes	✓
NHS Listening training was provided to staff.	

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
<p>The report by Dr. Carlo Morrelli and Ruth Bickerton provided details on the overall funeral industry in 2019, including burial and cremation costs and additional costs.</p> <p>Available at: https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/42077861/Funeral_Link_Final_Report_July_2019_1_.pdf </p>		
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?		
	Yes	✓
	No	
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?		
Ewan Gurr.		
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?		
Annually.		
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project?		
Keeping in contact with previous clients continually monitors the impact of the service.		

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What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes	✓	No	
Profile of users	Yes	✓	No	
Experience of users	Yes	✓	No	
Outcomes for users	Yes	✓	No	
Anything else	Yes	✓	No	
How much money the service saved clients for funeral arrangements.				
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?				
			No	
			Yes	✓
The organisation now takes preventative measures by answering inquiries to individuals who wish to make their own funeral plans. This limits stress felt by families after death as plans are covered.				
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?				
			No	✓
			Yes	
Has the insight from the external organisation's evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?				
			No	
			Yes	

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Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	
Yes	
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	
Yes	✓

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?		
Fully met		✓
Making progress toward meeting Aims		
Not making progress		
What difference has the project made?		
The service provides value to every individual involved as they were given access to grieve the loss of a loved one without stressing over affording a dignified funeral.		
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?		
No		
Yes		✓
The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 created a larger demand for this service and the cost of a funeral has risen by 126% in the past two decades.		
Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?		
Yes		✓
No		
Has the project changed through time?		
No		
Yes		✓
What changed	The development of education and wellbeing support.	
Why has it changed	Covid-19 created a larger demand for emotional support.	

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Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
The demand for preventative funeral support.		
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
Reducing the cost of funerals will have helped those who find difficulty managing the cost of living.		

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?		
The wellbeing element of the service provides emotional support and guidance during a difficult time.		
What, if anything, is working less well?		
The organisation has seen a decline in referrals for funeral support in the past year.		
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?		
There is a need for constant communication with people in the community to best tackle poverty. Societal trends must also be observed to understand what should be applied to the organisation.		
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
Strategic plans have made to expand across Scotland.		
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?		
Very easily as there is a need for funeral support in every town.		