# Ask your new MP to write to the Minister to extend Bereavement Support Payment

# How to find your new MP’s contact details

You can find your MP’s email address at <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>*.* Then cut and paste the text below into an email to them, replacing the sections in yellow with your own text.

If you get a reply and are happy to share it with us at the WAY Widowed and Young, please forward it to media@widowedandyoung.org.uk

Dear [Insert name of your MP]

I would like to extend my congratulations on your recent election as MP of [insert name of constituency]. As someone who lives at [insert your address] in your constituency and a member of the charity [WAY Widowed and Young](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/), I am writing to ask for your urgent support for bereaved families like mine, whose needs have been overlooked in recent years.

[You could insert a paragraph about your own bereavement/experiences here]

First and foremost, I would like to ask for your help in supporting grieving families, by asking the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to restore the long-term support for bereaved families that was removed under the previous Government by:

* extending the duration of [Bereavement Support Payments](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/about/campaigning/challenges-to-bereavement-support-payments/extending-bereavement-support-payments)
* and uprating these payments in line with inflation.

[Insert your reason for supporting change, or delete this sentence]

Until 2017, if a parent died, Widowed Parent’s Allowance was paid to their surviving spouse or civil partner to help them bring up the couple’s children until they left full-time education or they reached State Pension age.

In April 2017, that support was slashed to just 18 months for newly bereaved families. Old-style Widowed Parent’s Allowance was replaced with the new-style Bereavement Support Payment – a “cruel cut” that was highlighted in the Liberal Democrat’s [Manifesto](https://www.libdems.org.uk/press/release/lib-dems-announce-pound400-million-boost-to-bereavement-payments-reversing-heartless-conservative-cuts) for the General Election. This change left 91% of families with grieving children supported for a shorter time than they would have been under the old system, and 75% are worse off than they would have been, according to the Childhood Bereavement Network.

**“Cruel cut”: 18 months is not long enough**

Eighteen months is simply too short a time. Many families report that the second and subsequent years following bereavement are even harder than the first, as the reality of their new circumstances sinks in. Studies indicate a ‘late effect’ of bereavement with some children showing new and greater difficulties two or three years after the death of a parent, despite a relatively mild initial reaction. Regardless of the age at which they were bereaved, children often revisit or re-experience their grief as they mature cognitively and emotionally and face additional changes such as starting or changing schools, bringing new parenting challenges and costs for their surviving mother or father – from early years through to adolescence.

Childcare and access to flexible working can be a significant barrier to returning to work – both for those who had been working prior to their bereavement, and for those who had previously been stay-at-home primary carers.

Stopping payments after 18 months has a significant impact on grieving families’ finances. Financial instability is very common, sometimes resulting in the loss of the family home – a recent study among WAY members showed that the cost of living crisis has left 65 per cent of members feeling concerned for their finances.

The financial impact is particularly stark for WAY members with children of all ages, who make up 70 per cent of the charity’s membership. Overnight, a household income can be reduced by more than 50 per cent (and sometimes considerably more if the person who died was the main breadwinner). This has only been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, which has left many widowed people struggling to pay household bills, cope with childcare costs and put food on the table.

**As a member of the charity WAY Widowed and Young, I am asking for your urgent help in restoring long-term support for bereaved families. This would really help to give families the security they need to rebuild their lives after loss and get back on an even keel.**

Other issues we are asking you to consider include:

* Bereavement Support Payments to be uprated in line with inflation – these payments have not been increased since they were first introduced in April 2017, leading to a significant decrease in value over the past seven years as the cost of living crisis has seen prices escalating.
* Bereavement Support Payments to be extended to cohabiting couples without children. [Read more](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/news/michelles-story)
* Reconsidering the National Insurance [eligibility criteria](https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment/eligibility) for Bereavement Support Payments that has led to some WAY members not being able to claim support. [Read more](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/about/campaigning/challenges-to-bereavement-support-payments/challenging-national-insurance-discrimination)
* We are also calling for MPs to support WAY Widowed and Young’s [Blank Space](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/about-us/campaigning/blank-space-birth-certificate-equality-for-bereaved-parents) campaign, which is calling for birth certificate equality for non-married parents. [Read more](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/about-us/campaigning/blank-space-birth-certificate-equality-for-bereaved-parents)

I would appreciate having a chance to meet with you to discuss the issues outlined above at your earliest convenience, and would be grateful if you could forward my concerns to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Liz Kendall.

I look forward to hearing from you – and to working together to improve the lives of bereaved families over the next five years and beyond.

Yours sincerely

[Your name]

[MAKE SURE YOU HAVE INCLUDED CONTACT DETAILS TO GET IN TOUCH – EITHER BY EMAIL OR PHONE]