CMA REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS RISK REDUCING CONSUMER CHOICE SAYS LEADING DIRECT CREMATION PROVIDER

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Pure Cremation, the UK's first dedicated provider of direct cremation, has welcomed the increased price transparency in the funeral market as recommended in the Competition & Markets Authority report, but expresses concern that other moves will actually reduce consumer choice.

The report from the government-led Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) follows a two-year investigation into the wide variations in pricing for funeral and cremation services across the country.

It was prompted by the exponential increase in the cost of funerals which have consistently outstripped inflation for more than a decade, accompanied by unprecedented levels of funeral poverty.

Whilst no price caps are being implemented as originally expected, the report demands transparency from all funeral directors and crematoria on pricing and ownership, plus reviews of volumes and revenues from all crematoria and funeral home groups.

All funeral directors will now be obliged to publish their full list of fees on their website and give clear advice about any additional charges that might apply. This is something Pure Cremation has done since it first launched in 2015 and they see this as the most positive recommendation in the report.

What is of concern however is the recommendation that all funeral directors should offer the same scope of services, totally disregarding the fact that a growing proportion of consumer are seeking to break with tradition and turning to alternative providers such as Pure Cremation.

Catherine Powell commented: "We believe that families should be free to spend as much or as little as they wish on a funeral based on full disclosure of costs from the outset. It is vital to empower each family to make informed choices and select the services that are right for them and their budget.

"But to force non-traditional providers to offer the same scope of services may put some out of business, reducing choice and much-needed competition. We believe this actually contradicts the purpose of the CMA investigation because the direct cremation operators that can comply will have to increase prices to cover the cost of investing in facilities and services that families will never use. "

The desire to break away from the traditional funeral has in just recent weeks been borne out by Pure Cremation's Big Future of Funerals Survey Report* which presents a striking new insight into changing attitudes towards death, funerals and remembrance.

These views were also reflected in a recent YouGov survey which revealed a cultural shift in the Brits' attitude to saying goodbye to a loved one away from the trappings of a traditional send-off and towards a celebration of life.

The YouGov survey found that celebrating life, keeping costs down and recognising the wishes of the deceased ranked far higher than conforming to traditional funeral options and Catherine believes that this significant trend must be considered before the CMA's recommendations become enacted in any regulatory framework.

Catherine continued: "Clarity of service offerings and price transparency are of course essential, but we must ensure that the bereaved have the widest possible range of both options and providers available to them. They have a basic right to choose for themselves and this must be respected.

"As the leading providers of an alternative, low cost service we understand the true needs and expectations of 21st century families and are proud to have helped them reshape the whole funeral landscape.

"Anything that risks reducing or removing this choice is a huge backward step."

***The full Big Future of Funerals Survey can be found at** The Big Future of Funerals Survey Report (yumpu.com)

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