

The Law Superstore responds to the CMA Legal Services Report

The report has served to shine a light on many of the challenges currently facing the legal profession. While the lack of transparency surrounding pricing and customer service is not a new issue, it is one that has been disregarded by many within the industry until now. The Law Superstore believes that this cloaked approach is greatly affecting consumer attitudes towards the legal sector and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The CMA's interim report supports earlier findings by a number of regulators and industry bodies. Research by the LSB showed that while 50% of individuals experience a legal issue at least once every 3 years, only 20% use a lawyer. Furthermore, the SRA identified that of the 49% of adults with a legal need in the last 3 years, fewer than 1 in 10 instructed a solicitor or barrister.

The fact that the CMA directly referenced comparison tools indicated the important role that our comparison website will play in the future of the legal industry. This is supported by our own research, which found that 79% of the 3,000 people interviewed would use a legal comparison website given the opportunity. Crucially, 73% of those questioned also stated that they would prefer to pay fixed fees for legal services.

In assembling a panel of reputable and pre-vetted legal service providers on our platform, we have developed relationships with progressive, client-focused legal service providers committed to making it easier for consumers to find and buy legal services. Already, we have over 7,500 listed price points from our Partner firms for actual legal services. This affords consumers greater choice than they have ever received before. Nowhere else can they access so much data and compare legal service providers side by side on a range of attributes and criteria. However, there are still many firms in the legal sector who are reluctant to embrace transparency around pricing and customer service.

We were pleased that the CMA were able to use our findings and use them to illustrate the broader picture within the legal industry. We now believe that more needs to be done to enforce transparency and for legal service providers to use the tools at their disposal.

The Law Superstore is a ready-made solution to issues of transparency, convenience, choice and competition. While we are delighted to have welcomed a significant number of legal service providers onto our platform, many firms will continue to avoid the publishing of prices and customer reviews as long as they retain the option to do so.

To quote the Legal Services Consumer Panel, without regulatory intervention it will be impossible to "redress the current imbalance and apportion risk between providers and consumers fairly".

At The Law Superstore we are seeing a natural movement and alignment of pricing downwards as law firms start to compete for business. If this trend continues, the effect will undoubtedly be more affordable legal service for the consumer.