
HUMANISTS UK RESPONSE TO THE COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY CONSULTATION ON FUNERALS MARKET

Briefing from Humanists UK, 04 January 2019

ABOUT HUMANISTS UK

Humanists UK is the national charity representing and championing the rights of non-religious people. Founded in 1896, we are trusted by over 70,000 members and supporters to campaign for equal treatment and freedom of religion and belief for all both in the UK and internationally. Our policies are informed with the support of over 150 of the UK's most prominent philosophers, scientists, broadcasters, and other thinkers and experts and we seek to advance them with the help of over 100 UK parliamentarians in membership of the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group.

At Humanists UK, we advance free thinking and promote humanism to create a tolerant society where rational thinking and kindness prevail. Our work brings non-religious people together to develop their own views, helping people be happier and more fulfilled in the one life we have. Through our ceremonies, education services, and community and campaigning work, we strive to create a fair and equal society for all.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) consultation.

Humanists UK has a qualified and accredited Humanist Ceremonies network of over 450 celebrants, working in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Channel Islands. We take over 10,000 ceremonies a year, the majority of which are non-religious funeral ceremonies.

We also help vulnerable people access easily like-minded and effective non-religious pastoral support that is specially tailored to work for them. Our trained and accredited non-religious pastoral support volunteers operate across hospitals, prisons, and the armed forces.

Humanists UK welcomes the findings of the CMA in the Interim Report, published on 29 November, and is in full support of the proposal to make a market investigation reference in relation to the supply of services by funeral directors at the point of need, and the supply of crematoria services in the UK.

We are in full agreement with the critical areas of concern which the Interim Report has identified and welcome the opportunity for a full investigation into how people who have to arrange funeral ceremonies can be better supported emotionally, psychologically, and financially.

Our celebrants witness the distress of those arranging funeral ceremonies first-hand, and our network is committed to making improvements in the funeral industry. In particular would like to see:

- Transparency of information, choice, and real costs

- Transparency of service - with a willingness to explain every aspect of what is being paid for
- Freedom of choice - to have the funeral ceremony that is right for the deceased, including one which accurately reflects their belief system and not that of another stakeholder
- Freedom to exercise consumer rights, and encouragement to do so, particularly in cases of difficulty where switching providers and/or making complaints becomes necessary

Recommendation: Humanists UK strongly urge the CMA to include Humanists UK when consulting further with representatives of the major faith and belief communities. Humanism is a rapidly growing belief system, and the need for a funeral service sympathetic to the humanist approach to life and death is growing exponentially.

For more details, information and evidence, contact Humanists UK:

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