

Online tribute and charitable donation services see strong post-pandemic growth

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a wholesale shift in the way funerals were conducted, none more so than how charitable donations were collected and tributes made.

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In-memory giving matters; not only to the families remembering their loved ones, but also to the charities they are supporting.

Charities that faced a huge reduction in income during lockdowns relied on income from donations from funerals, which increased as people were unable to spend on other traditional ways of tributes, such as flowers, due to restrictions.

Families, unable to meet or hold wakes, relied heavily on online tributes to share memories and photographs, and that trend seems to have not just continued, but grown despite society now living with COVID and all restrictions ending.

Just last month, the charity MuchLoved, one of the UK's leading online tribute and fundraising organisations, announced that it had surpassed a huge milestone, raising over £100 million for charities and good causes in the UK since it was founded in 2007.

Working with over 2,000 funeral branches throughout the UK, the charity provides online memorial tribute pages for families,

where they can celebrate their loved ones and donate to good causes.

Jonathan Davies, MuchLoved's Chief Executive, said: "We are delighted to have reached such an incredible milestone, and know that these donations will have helped many worthy causes. This just goes to show how much in-memory giving matters; not only to the families remembering their loved ones, but also to the charities they are supporting.

"The extraordinary times we have been through, during the pandemic, have highlighted exactly how vital online tributes are for families coping with a bereavement."

Despite life returning to normal, post-pandemic, MuchLoved said the number of tribute pages created is, in fact, increasing, with an average of 15% more pages being created this year than last year. It also reported that, while the value of online donations has decreased slightly, more online

muchloved
The Online Tribute Charity



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Charities love online donation platforms such as ours as it saves them time and money processing cheques or cash and they love GiftAid too as it adds 25p to every £1 donated.



donations overall are being made, so overall online in-memory giving continues to grow. They said families are also increasingly using bereavement support services on their platform, such as lighting candles, which has increased by over 300% in the last five years.

It's a trend echoed by other leading suppliers to the sector. Darren Minns, Commercial Director for Funeral Notices, which has 4.9 million tribute pages, said that memory giving proved vital support and funds to charities during the pandemic as none of their usual fundraising events could take place, and is something that the public has really bought into.

He said: "As we went into lockdown in 2020 we noticed a huge increase in the number of funeral directors requesting an online donation service in their notices and an increase in the number of people making donations in memory of loved ones. We were hearing back from charities at the time that memory giving was essentially their life support, helping to keep them afloat in unprecedented times.

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Darren said memory giving is now one of the most important aspects of funeral-notices.co.uk and supporting charities, funeral directors and families is his key objective for the site. He added: "Funeral directors love our online donation service because it saves them time and money in processes and helps them meet a growing demand from families, without the need of a costly subscription.

"In 2021, more than 12.8 million people visited funeral-notices.co.uk, viewing more than 226 million pages. That audience puts us in a great position to help families achieve some fantastic collections for charity."

Darren said the value of online tributes is their legacy and long-lasting nature. "I recently received some feedback from a lady who had sadly lost her granddaughter," he said. "She told me she found peace when adding tributes to her granddaughter's tribute page. She said 'It's like you have taken a weight off me and I get to say the things that I can't say out loud to her. I feel more peaceful and content afterwards'. Comments like that make our jobs worthwhile."

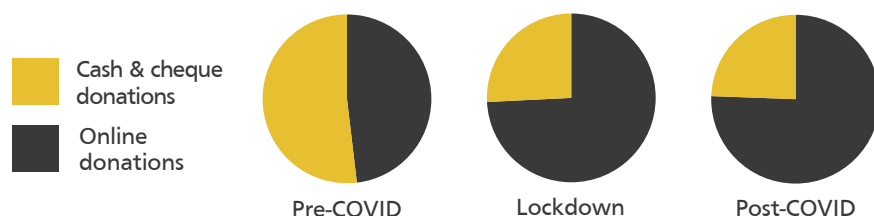
Howard Rawlings, Director of Donatis Giving Ltd, which runs InMemory, said the shift towards online had already begun before the pandemic, but now makes up the vast majority of donations.

He said: "In the years before COVID, we saw a slow but steady shift away from cash and cheques towards online, but this had still only reached a point where online donations accounted for a little under half the total raised.

"We weren't surprised to see a significant move towards online donations as the effect of lockdown restrictions took effect, but had always expected this to be temporary. We were preparing for the pendulum to swing back once restrictions eased and mourners could once again choose to put cash in the service collection instead of giving online.

"However, what actually happened is the reverse; in the period after restrictions eased, not only did online hold its share, it actually increased slightly. It's likely this is down to an increased awareness of the benefits of online giving among mourners, celebrants and ministers, as well as funeral directors seeing the benefits of moving donations online.

"Whatever the reasons, this shift is good news for all concerned - charities get more GiftAid and the funeral director has to spend less time managing donations."



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