

eBay – response to CMA concerns

1. As part of its programme of work to tackle the problem of fake and misleading online reviews, the CMA wrote to eBay (UK) Limited ('eBay') to say it had identified listings on eBay concerning fake and misleading online review activity. When the CMA raised this with eBay, it confirmed that such listings were in breach of its policies and agreed to review its established processes to help prevent the illegal trading of online reviews on its Website.¹
2. In particular, eBay agreed to (a) immediately remove the fake and misleading review content identified by the CMA, (b) identify and remove similar fake and misleading review content present on its Website at that time, and (c) amend its policies to make clear that these activities are prohibited and review its procedures to help prevent such content from reappearing on its Website.
3. **In relation to (a) and (b), eBay has taken the following action across its Website:**
 - Promptly removed all content that was identified by the CMA as being illegal (namely, the listings referred to above).
 - Sanctioned 53 users who listed content that was identified by the CMA as being illegal by permanently suspending them from its Website.
 - Carried out an exercise to identify and remove similar fake and misleading review content present on its Website at that time, leading to:
 - the removal of all further identified fake and misleading review content;
 - the sanctioning of a further 87 users by permanently suspending them from its Website, and temporary suspensions for 176 users, as at the date of this announcement.
4. **In relation to (c), eBay has:**
 - Reviewed and made clearer its existing policies to inform users that the sale or trade of online reviews is explicitly prohibited on its Website (amending its Social Media and Reviews Manipulation Policy and Personal Information Policy).

¹ 'Website' means www.ebay.co.uk and any other internet-based site, platform or facility (in any form, including but not limited to 'mobile' and 'App' based formats) operated by eBay and which is directed to UK consumers.

- Reviewed and updated its existing filters (which aim to identify and prevent listings for the sale or trade of online reviews) to help prevent the reappearance of this fake and misleading review content on its Website.
- Agreed, as part of its regular review of the continued effectiveness of its filters, to consider whether the filters should be updated to further prevent the appearance of this fake and misleading review content on its Website, including in particular:
 - after completing its own regular manual checks for the effectiveness of its filters in relation to this fake and misleading review content;
 - after being notified by users/external parties of this fake and misleading review content on its Website; and
 - when reviewing attempted listings or posts that have been identified by the existing filters, for example, whether additional words/phrases should be added to increase the effectiveness of the system.
- Agreed to continue to apply effective and appropriate sanctions as per its internal enforcement guidelines when users are identified as being involved in attempting to list this kind of fake and misleading review content – including permanently suspending users from its Website where appropriate.
- Agreed to support and work with the CMA and Trading Standards Services in any enforcement action they may bring against eBay users.

5. In addition, eBay will maintain effective policies and procedures in relation to the content identified to:

- Allow third parties to effectively notify it of fake and misleading review content.
- Ensure that eBay acts promptly, when an allegation of such fake and misleading review content is brought to its attention, to determine whether it contravenes its policies.
- See that where such specific fake and misleading review content is identified as contravening its policies, eBay:
 - takes appropriate and prompt action to block or remove this fake and misleading review content;
 - takes appropriate steps to help promptly identify and remove similar fake and misleading review content;

- applies appropriate sanctions promptly and effectively against the users concerned as per its internal enforcement guidelines; and
- takes appropriate and prompt action to update its filters to ensure they remain effective, as described above.