

Inaugural meeting of the Online Advertising Taskforce
27 July 2023, 11:30-12:30
Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Minister for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries welcomed members and set out the aim of the Taskforce which is to drive forward the non-legislative work against illegal advertising and on the protection of children against adverts for products and/or services that are illegal to be sold to them (the 'in-scope harms'). The Minister outlined the two key objectives of the Taskforce: 1) to improve the evidence around in-scope harms; and 2) enhance voluntary initiatives, ahead of future regulation. He acknowledged interactions with other pieces of digital legislation, notably the Online Safety Bill and the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill.

Robert Specterman-Green (RSG), Director of Media and Creative Industries in DCMS, noted the recent publication of the [government's response to the Online Advertising Programme consultation](#) and its intention to build on the existing self-regulatory structure in a proportionate and targeted way. RSG thanked members for their active involvement throughout the consultation process.

Mark Lund, Deputy Chair, introduced himself and noted the importance of advertising to the UK and the need to maintain trust between advertising and consumers, particularly around in-scope harms.

Anthony Browne MP (AB) introduced his role as the government Anti-Fraud Champion and outlined interactions between the Taskforce and the government's fraud strategy, including the development of a new Online Fraud Charter. AB highlighted the alignment of timelines of the Charter and the Taskforce.

2. Confirmation of the Terms of Reference

The Taskforce formally confirmed the [Terms of Reference](#).

3. Ways of working and initial discussions

Janis Makarewich-Hall (JMH), Deputy Director for Radio, Advertising and Press in DCMS highlighted the key output of the Taskforce, which is to collaboratively develop an Action Plan with specific commitments to achieve its two objectives. JMH welcomed members' initial reflections on key considerations for the development of the Action Plan.

Guy Parker (GP) provided an overview of the Advertising Standards Authority's (ASA) Intermediary and Platform Principles (IPP) pilot for platforms and intermediaries to ensure transparency and protect users from harmful advertising. GP expressed support for the Government's response to the Online Advertising Programme and outlined ASA's focus on protecting children. While they are keen to support action against illegal advertising, GP explained that their remit is focused on regulating legitimate actors.

Phil Smith (PS) highlighted the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers' (ISBA) focus on child protection, working with platforms for better age-assurance standards. PS also noted ISBA's work on the Influencer Marketing Code of Conduct and partnership with IAB on the Gold Standard against illegal advertising.

Christie Dennehy-Neil (CDN) discussed Internet Advertising Bureau's (IAB) Gold Standard, which aims to increase adoption of certificates, enhance transparency, and block bad actors. CDN also highlighted the Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG)'s efforts to develop technical standards for safer digital advertising. CDN noted that not all standards apply equally to companies across the supply chain and the importance of identifying evidence gaps before finding solutions.

Konrad Shek (KS) presented the Advertising Association's (AA) Tracking Report on public perception of advertising. He mentioned the AA's involvement in a Trust working group targeting suspicious advertising, including frauds and scams. KS discussed AA's involvement in MediaSmart, a media literacy programme for children. KS also mentioned his peripheral role in the European Digital Advertising Alliance, which provides an advertising reporting mechanism.

Members agreed on the importance of improving the evidence base around in-scope harms, in order to understand where the gaps are and how best to address them. Some members noted the importance of clarifying the taxonomy of the in-scope harms to support targeted progress.

4. Closing remarks

The Minister emphasised the importance of the upcoming work on developing the action plan, and thanked members for their active participation, noting that the next meeting would take place in the autumn.