



Siinda Comments on the UK CMA Consultation on Publishers Conduct Requirement (CR) February 2026

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Executive Summary

This submission responds to the CMA's proposed Publisher Conduct Requirement (CR) from the perspective of publishers, aggregators, and search intermediaries. The rise of search generative AI significantly alters traffic flows, attribution, and incentives for content creation. The Publisher CR must ensure meaningful, granular choice over training and grounding, without tying participation in AI features to general search visibility. Per-feature transparency and access to performance and engagement metrics are essential to address information asymmetry. Prominent, clickable, and neutral attribution must be guaranteed within generative outputs. A clear prohibition on self-preferencing in citation, prominence, and linking is critical to prevent foreclosure. Page-level controls must not result in indirect ranking penalties. Publishers should be able to communicate reasons for blocking AI use of their content. Without robust safeguards, generative search risks entrenching gatekeeper dominance and undermining content sustainability. A strong Publisher CR is therefore essential to protect competition, media plurality, and consumer trust.

This submission draws on the competition concerns identified in Siinda's September 2025 analysis regarding non-discrimination, transparency, AI integration, and fair linking in search services .

The emergence of search generative AI features significantly alters traffic flows, attribution models, and incentives for content production. Robust safeguards are therefore necessary to prevent foreclosure and self-preferencing.

Consultation questions

6.1 General Views on the Publisher CR Design

We support the CMA's objective of ensuring publishers retain meaningful choice, transparency, and attribution in relation to search generative AI features.

However, the effectiveness of the Publisher CR will depend on:

- A clear prohibition on self-preferencing in generative outputs.
- Neutral treatment of publisher content relative to gatekeeper-owned content;
- Robust transparency and performance reporting obligations;
- Effective separation between search, training, and grounding functions.

As highlighted in Siinda's prior submission, partial or block-specific remedies risk entrenching dominance rather than restoring contestability . The same structural risk arises in generative AI contexts.

6.2 Ensuring Publishers Have Sufficient Choice

(a) Separate Controls Over Training and Grounding

We support the provision of **separate, granular controls** over:

- Use of publisher content for model training;
- Use of publisher content for grounding (real-time referencing);
- Inclusion in general search indexing.

If implemented, these measures will reduce coercive bundling between visibility in search and participation in AI training; and prevents forced trade-offs between traffic and data extraction while strengthening publisher autonomy.

If not implemented, the risks include a de facto tying between general search indexing and generative AI usage together with increased bargaining imbalance and structural dependency. The former Siinda paper already highlights the need to separate authorisation for data usage between Search and Gemini . The same logic applies here. Clear separation reduces the risk of leveraging dominance from search into AI services.

(b) Page-Level Controls Outside of General Search (Google-Extended)

We support page-level controls that operate independently of general search indexing. This will allow differentiated content strategies and protect high-value or premium content. It requires clear documentation and default non-retaliation safeguards **together with a no ranking penalty associated with opting out of AI usage**. Opt-out mechanisms must not result in indirect demotion — this is where a strong **self-preferencing ban** is essential.

6.3 Greater Transparency for Publishers

(a) Per-Feature Performance Information

We strongly support per-feature reporting (e.g., AI Overviews, generative summaries, traditional links). As the previous DMA submission emphasises, granular metrics (impressions, clicks, CTR, position) are essential to address information asymmetry .

Per-feature reporting would:

- Allow publishers to assess substitution effects;
- Reveal displacement by generative features;
- Support evidence-based complaints;
- Enable proportionate participation decisions.

Without per-feature transparency, publishers cannot assess whether generative features are diverting traffic.

(b) Understanding the Quality of Clicks from Generative AI Features

Publishers require metrics beyond volume, including:

- Dwell time
- Bounce rates
- Scroll depth
- Conversion proxy signals
- Query context

There is a need for transparent performance metrics via APIs. Similar transparency should apply to generative AI referrals. Quality metrics are critical to determine whether generative features provide high-intent traffic or substitute meaningful engagement with superficial clicks.

Dissemination could occur through:

- Search Console-level dashboards;
- Secure API transmission;
- Standardised reporting templates.

6.4 Attribution

(a) Mechanism for Communicating Reasons for Blocking Content

We support a mechanism allowing publishers to explain why content is blocked from generative features. This would improve regulatory monitoring, enhance proportionality and prevent mischaracterisation of publisher intent; such a mechanism would strengthen the CR without imposing disproportionate burdens.

(b) Metrics Explaining Attribution and Factuality

We recommend requiring disclosure of:

- Frequency of citation;
- Prominence of attribution within generative outputs;
- Position relative to gatekeeper-owned sources;
- Error or correction rates;
- Model hallucination incidents involving specific publishers.

Attribution must be prominent, clickable and equal in visibility to any gatekeeper-owned content. Any preferential prominence granted to proprietary sources would constitute self-preferencing and should be prohibited.

Data should be disseminated via publisher dashboards, aggregated transparency reports and regulator-accessible audit feeds.

Cross-Cutting Issue: Self-Preferencing Ban

The Publisher CR must include an explicit prohibition on:

- Preferential citation of gatekeeper-owned services;
- Preferential prominence of proprietary reviews or content;
- Systematic ranking advantages in generative outputs;
- Linking practices that redirect to gatekeeper-controlled environments instead of

Partial compliance risks entrenching dominance and in the generative AI context, the foreclosure risk is even more acute because:

- AI answers may displace links entirely;
- Attribution may become secondary;
- User journeys may terminate within the gatekeeper ecosystem.

Without a clear self-preferencing ban, the Publisher CR risks becoming procedural rather than substantive.

Conclusion

The Publisher CR represents an important safeguard in the transition toward generative search.

To be effective, it must:

- Guarantee granular publisher choice over training and grounding;
- Provide per-feature transparency and quality metrics;
- Ensure prominent, neutral attribution;
- Include a clear and enforceable prohibition on self-preferencing;
- Prevent indirect retaliation against publishers who exercise choice.

These measures are necessary to preserve contestability, protect content incentives, and maintain consumer trust in digital information markets.