

Sarah Owen MP
Chair
Women and Equalities Committee
Committee Office
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

28 February

By email

Subject: Advertising Standards Authority's response to 'The Rights of Older People' Report

Dear Ms Owen,

I'm writing on behalf of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in response to your report on 'The Rights of Older People', which you published on 19 February.

The Committee's report on this important topic was thought-provoking and we have considered its recommendations in relation to our ongoing project on 'The Depiction of Older People in Ads'. We are pleased to respond to the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 36 of the report and provide an update on this project.

The UK Advertising Codes contain rules which require advertisers to prepare ads with a sense of responsibility, and which prohibit ads from causing serious or widespread offence. As per these rules, particular care must be taken to avoid causing offence on the grounds of protected characteristics, one of which is age.

At the ASA we're always keen to proactively understand whether we need to do more to protect consumers. In our new five-year strategy, [AI-Assisted collective ad regulation](#), we committed to prioritise protecting vulnerable people, and to identify and develop our understanding of vulnerable groups.

As you are aware, our project is considering to what extent, and how, certain depictions of older people in advertising can give rise to serious or widespread offence, or harm, and

Legal, decent, honest and truthful

Chair The Rt Hon the Baroness Morgan of Cotes **Chief Executive** Guy Parker
ASA Council (Broadcast) Matt Barwell, Murphy Cobbing, Elizabeth Gordon, Alison Hastings, Claire Hilton, Mark Howe, Rotha Johnston, Richard Lloyd, Kirsten Miller, Rebecca Rumbul, Krystle Sargent and Monisha Shah

whether the ASA's current approach in this area offers adequate protection to prevent any such harms.

Since we last updated the Committee, in December 2024, we have continued to make good progress with the project:

- As well as completing the qualitative phase of our research, the quantitative phase of our fieldwork is now complete. The survey explored attitudes towards different portrayals of older people in advertising as well as looking at views towards depictions of older people in specific ads. This involved surveying over 4,000 respondents aged 16+ across the UK, to deliver a nationally representative sample. The large sample size will allow us to examine trends across different demographic groups, including looking at areas of intersectionality.
- We are now awaiting the finalised version of the research report which we aim to publish in Q2 2025. Any subsequent steps are ultimately contingent on the conclusions of the research report.

Once the research report is finalised, we would be delighted to present our findings to the Committee. Please note that, while the Committee's report quotes the ASA as saying "that researching harmful gender stereotypes was "easier" because they "invoke a binary" in that they are either about gender or not", the transcript of Q202 correctly records that the binary in question was the presence or absence of people sharing a characteristic.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Jo Poots

Project Sponsor and Head of Complaints and Investigations