



Department for Culture, Media & Sport

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Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
London
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Dear Dame Caroline,

Update on the Online Advertising Taskforce

I am writing to provide an update on the Online Advertising Taskforce and the work of its six industry-led working groups. Advertising is a key creative industry, providing over £40 billion in adspend for 2024, and £109 billion in indirect GVA across the UK economy more broadly. As £4 in every £5 of advertising budgets is now spent online, this element will only increase in prominence. You may have seen that advertising was identified as one of the high-growth potential sub-sectors in our Creative Industries Sector Plan, with strong connections across the Creative Industries and wider economy. To ensure the UK online advertising industry continues to thrive, it is vital that advertising is trusted, and online advertising harms are anticipated and reduced.

The Online Advertising Taskforce was set up in 2023 with the aim of ensuring that the UK online advertising industry continues to thrive while providing the necessary protections for consumers. It brings together government and industry to work towards improving transparency, accountability and trust in the online advertising supply chain. Six industry-led working groups focus on addressing specific challenges faced by the sector, bringing forward innovative solutions and helping secure wider industry buy-in. Each group is chaired by an advertising industry leader and has membership from industry, regulators, civil society and government.

In December 2024 I [announced](#) that the Taskforce will be extended for at least another 12 months, to enable it to continue delivering a programme of work to help address its two key in-scope harms: illegal advertising, and minimising children being served advertising for products and services illegal to sell to them. Earlier this year the Advertising Association also agreed to set up a new AI-focused working group, which has started work to explore the likely implications of AI on the advertising sector.



In May 2025's Taskforce meeting, working groups set out updated targets, along with delivery of key projects and proposals. I would like to provide an overview of the excellent work that is being carried out.

Information Sharing Working Group: This working group, chaired by the Advertising Association, has been examining existing information sharing mechanisms as well as the barriers to greater sharing of intelligence on malvertising between trusted partners in the advertising eco-system. Given the competition and data privacy challenges concerning the sharing of information between private actors, it means that in practice, while individual companies have lots of data for their own areas, they do not have a complete picture of the threat landscape affecting the advertising supply chain. This reduces the ability for platforms to act collaboratively to shut down threats.

The group has since evolved into a smaller subset of stakeholders to develop a working pilot utilising the Global Signal Exchange (GSE) platform, run by the non-profit DNS Research Federation. The GSE is effectively a marketplace for trusted stakeholders to share fraud related signals intelligence and is already being used by the financial, online dating and retail sectors to address volume cybercrime. If the pilot is deemed successful, it will provide the basis to share raw signals in real-time and at scale, recruit other partners and connect with law enforcement to act on specific intelligence.

Given its specific focus for tackling malvertising, this pilot also aligns with the Government's expanded Fraud Strategy announced in [March 2025](#). The Government committed to introduce an expanded Fraud Strategy in our manifesto, and development has begun; it will consider all harms, including fraudulent online advertising.

Gold Standard Working Group: The Gold Standard is a certification scheme run by the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB UK) that seeks to improve the digital advertising landscape through the implementation of standards for buyers and sellers of digital media space. Its purpose is to create a safe and responsible ecosystem, work towards greater consumer safety online, and increase business and consumer trust in online ads. The Working Group is concerned with promoting awareness and uptake of the Gold Standard.

A new Gold Standard specification was launched in January 2025, with updates to expand its scope and increase its effectiveness; this includes expanding to encompass specifications for retail media and CTV, and a new sustainability pillar in the Gold Standard criteria. These new additions have helped to strengthen the Gold Standard initiative, and enable a wider range of participants to work together to tackle shared challenges and digital advertising harms, reducing advertising fraud and improving supply chain transparency.

IAB UK and the working group are working to target and encourage companies to register or recertify for the new Gold Standard specification. They have engaged with 66 interested companies since the launch of the new specification, and the target is to have 100 major companies certified or registered by the end of October 2025.

Intermediary and Platform Principles (IPP) Working Group: Chaired by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), this group focuses on supporting platforms and intermediaries (typically third-parties who connect buyers and sellers of advertising inventory) to promote and enforce the UK non-broadcast advertising code. The code sets out a range of rules for advertisers on topics such as misleading advertising, harm and offence, and advertising to children, with the intention of ensuring that advertising is legal, decent, honest and truthful.

While broadcasters have statutory responsibility for the content of broadcast advertising, online platforms do not. An initial IPP pilot was conducted by ASA and IAB UK from 2022 to 2023. This tested a set of principles for major companies operating in the digital advertising supply chain to agree and adhere to on a voluntary basis, helping to ensure their advertisers comply with the advertising codes online.

Following successful evaluation of the IPP pilot, ASA and IAB UK are now seeking to implement a permanent full-scale IPP framework, involving existing pilot participants and wider coverage. This will support greater adherence to the non-broadcast advertising codes, resulting in more responsible advertising online.

Age Assurance Working Group: Chaired by the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers (ISBA), this group seeks to improve standards of age assurance to reduce children's exposure to advertising for age-restricted products. It is building a more detailed understanding of the current landscape for age assurance online, and how it can be improved. The group is currently developing a pilot scheme to measure levels of on-target audience compliance and to understand if age-restricted adverts are being served to children. This pilot will work with brand owners and platforms, and will be used to establish a baseline for measuring age assurance, as well as assess the merits of developing a methodology for future periodic reporting. The group plans to be able to report on their findings by the end of the year.

Influencer Marketing Working Group: Chaired by ISBA, this group was set up to identify and agree better standards in this area of advertising, to be incorporated into the next iteration of the Influencer Marketing Code of Conduct, an industry initiative which is co-owned by both ISBA and the Influencer Marketing Trade Body (IMTB). The Code includes requirements for brands working with influencers, the agencies who represent them, and the influencers themselves.

The CMS Select Committee's inquiry into influencer culture in 2021/22 recognised the Code of Conduct as an example of industry best practice, and presented a range of strengths and suggested areas for improvement. Originally launched in 2021 as a world first, the Code has gone through subsequent iterations to increase its effectiveness and drive higher standards for brands, influencers and talent agencies, as well as address new and emerging trends in the rapidly evolving influencer landscape.

The key deliverable of the Working Group has been the design and launch of the [fourth edition](#) of the Code, which took place in November 2024. This saw the inclusion of additional areas to help ensure responsible marketing, such as protecting children and young people from age-inappropriate or age-restricted influencer content, ensuring that ads are representative, protecting the health and wellbeing of influencers themselves, promoting ad accessibility, considering environmental sustainability, and promoting ethical standards in the use of virtual influencers and AI. ISBA, the IMTB and the working group are now focused on increasing coverage of and sign up to the Code by working with brands, agencies, influencers and industry bodies. A new wave of signatories was announced in May 2025, and this is believed to represent approximately 35% of the market; a stretching target of 50% by the end of 2025 has been set. More brands have since indicated that they intend to sign up to the Code, and platforms have been approached to discuss working with influencers themselves to promote the Code's provisions.

AI Working Group: Chaired by the Advertising Association, this group explores AI's effect on trust, transparency and accountability in advertising content and placement. The group has started work to review existing industry principles for use of AI and plans to develop an overarching code of conduct that can be used across the advertising sector - this will be a global first. The Advertising Association already collates evidence on trust in advertising, which includes conducting in-depth analysis every two years and reporting on the findings. For its next report, they plan to include key questions related to how AI use can impact trust, to help build the evidence base. The group also plans to examine key complex issues such as labelling of AI usage. The International Council for Advertising Self-Regulation (ICAS) Think Tank has produced two comprehensive reports on the issues that could arise from self regulatory organisations (SROs) requiring AI-generated ads to be labelled, which are now published for industry consideration. These will be reviewed by the working group.

Next Steps

The Taskforce and its six industry-led working groups are determined to reduce advertising harms, and continue to deliver world-leading measures to achieve this, demonstrating industry leadership in tackling harms. I am grateful for the hard work of the Taskforce members, and I am keen to promote and support the work that is being delivered. Looking to the future, the Taskforce is expected to meet again in autumn, where working groups will provide further updates on their respective workstreams, and I hope to be able to write again to set out the further progress that has been made. In due course we will publish a progress report to update on the outcomes of the work detailed above.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Chris Bryant MP
Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism