



Enforcement Notice:

Ads for drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation services by clinic referral companies

Who we are

We are the [Committee of Advertising Practice](#) (CAP). We write the advertising rules, which are enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the UK's independent advertising regulator. You can read about the UK advertising regulatory system on the [ASA website](#).

Why are we contacting you?

The ASA has published a series of [rulings](#) concerning ads for drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation clinic referral companies. These are services that do not provide treatment directly at clinics they own or operate, but principally refer consumers on to clinics (a type of lead generation). The rulings detail a pattern of misleading advertising issues which are outlined in this Notice. When advertising these services, care must be taken not to mislead consumers, whom by the nature of the services on offer, may be [vulnerable](#).

Scope

This Notice applies to ads for referral companies for drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation services on advertisers' own websites.

Enforcement

Please take immediate action to review your advertising and make any changes as needed. From **21 September 2026** we will deploy the ASA's AI-based [Active Ad Monitoring system](#) to actively scan for websites that breach this Enforcement Notice. This may result in sanctions, which might include publishing an advertiser's name and record of their non-compliance on a dedicated section of the ASA website and – where advertisers are unwilling or unable to comply – referral to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), equivalent regional regulators, or Trading Standards where relevant.

Guidance



Advertisers must not mislead consumers nor falsely claim or imply that they are acting for purposes outside their business, and must make clear their commercial intent

Website homepages must [expressly and prominently state](#):

- the nature of the business – e.g. that it is principally a referral service¹

¹The ASA has [ruled](#) that advertisers which provide some services direct to consumers, such as online rehab support services, which do not require CQC registration, still requires the business model be disclosed principally as a referral service, if that is the case.

- how the business is funded, e.g. that it receives a commission for placements taken at partner rehabilitation services

The ASA has ruled against websites that disclose this information on [separate pages within the website](#), [down the page of the homepage](#) or by [using a clickable pop-up <?> graphic, even if it placed at the top of the page](#).

Do not imply a service is impartial if that is not the case

The ASA has ruled against the claims:

- [“unbiased advice”](#) where a referral company received a commission for facilitating an individual’s stay in a partner rehabilitation facility.
- [“\[service name\] has no bias for one clinic over another”](#) in a case where the website was owned by a treatment provider.

Do not use claims that imply the business provides treatment direct at clinics it owns or operates if that is not the case

The ASA has ruled against claims that use of “we” and “our” in relation to rehabilitation companies and services such as:

- [“our rehabilitation centre”](#)
- [“our \[...\] counsellors”](#)
- [“we provide addiction treatment”](#)
- [“we offer a variety of rehab programmes”](#)

Do not exaggerate the services provided by a referral company

- The ASA has ruled that the term [“counsellor”](#) is likely to mislead consumers who are likely to understand such titles to carry a level of external qualification related to specific addiction counselling.
- Additionally, the ASA has ruled [“addiction specialists”](#) is likely to be understood to refer to staff able to provide a specific level of addiction support.
- Do not imply that a service provides [medical treatment or treatment that requires registration with the CQC, if that is not the case](#) – make sure there is a clear delineation between any services offered directly by the referral company and those offered by third-party professionals onto whom patients may be referred.



Do not falsely imply approval, endorsement or authorisation by any public body, or other body, if this is not supported by substantiation

- Referral companies are not required to be CQC registered. Do not claim or imply that a referral company is CQC registered, for example by [displaying the CQC logo](#).²
- Use of the following logos is likely to suggest an association with the relevant public body:
 - [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy \(BACP\)](#)
 - [Nursing & Midwifery Council \(NMC\)](#)
 - [National Health Service \(NHS\)](#)
- Use of the names and logos of insurers is likely to imply an affiliation with those companies; do not display any such logo if it is likely to mislead.

² The CQC has its own guidelines on the use of its logo [here](#).

Appendix: Relevant Code rules, legislation and useful reading

Please refer to the following relevant [CAP Code](#) rules:

- 2.3** Marketing communications must not falsely claim or imply that the marketer is acting as a consumer or for purposes outside its trade, business, craft or profession; marketing communications must make clear their commercial intent, if that is not apparent from the context*. (This rule reflects a prohibited practice from Schedule 20 of the DMCCA. See note in Section 3 for more details).
- 3.1** Marketing communications must not materially mislead or be likely to do so.
- 3.7** Before distributing or submitting a marketing communication for publication, marketers must hold documentary evidence to prove claims that consumers are likely to regard as objective and that are capable of objective substantiation. The ASA may regard claims as misleading in the absence of adequate substantiation.
- 3.50** Marketing communications must not feature a testimonial without permission; exceptions are normally made for accurate statements taken from a published source, quotations from a publication or references to a test, trial, professional endorsement, research facility or professional journal, which may be acceptable without express permission.

Other useful reading

Please also refer to the following articles which outline the ASA's current position on a number of relevant topics:

- [Clarity for ads in the addiction treatment referral sector](#)
- [Lead Generation Marketing](#)
- [Misleading advertising](#)
- [Official endorsements](#)
- [Testimonials and endorsements](#)

The CAP [Copy Advice](#) team provides bespoke, confidential advice on your non-broadcast advertising.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England.

- The CQC regulates health and adult social care services, working with the public, systems and providers of care to protect people, and to promote and improve the quality of care.
- The CQC monitors, assesses and regulates services, and publishes findings. Where CQC finds poor care, it can use enforcement powers [to take action](#).

Contact the Care Quality Commission

- www.cqc.org.uk
- Email: enquiries@ccq.org.uk
- Telephone: [03000 616161](tel:03000616161)