Strong appeal to under-18s in Gambling ads

CAP

Enforcement Report

September 2026

About this report

CAP Enforcement Reports explain the actions CAP takes to address non-compliance in specific sectors. They also show how these actions affect overall compliance rates.

These reports use insights from our AI-based Active Ad Monitoring system (AAMs) to track ads in certain sectors.

This report examines the impact of enforcement against advertisers who published gambling ads on social media, containing imagery likely to be of strong appeal to under-18s between June 2026 and July 2026. It highlights high levels of compliance.

Why this sector matters

Protecting children online is a key part of our work. Gambling is an ongoing area of focus because of the potential for harm if ads break the rules, especially for vulnerable groups and children. Our rules require that the context and content of gambling ads are responsible.

Previous regulatory action

CAP Code rule 16.3.12 was amended in 2022 and introduced a stricter standard of "strong" appeal, rather than "particular" appeal, for content that may unduly attract the attention of under-18s.

CAP developed **Advertising Guidance to help advertisers understand and apply the rule.** and the ASA subsequently published rulings, showing its real-world application.

CAP issued an Enforcement Notice on 4 June 2026, to provide further guidance on the rules that apply when advertising gambling, particularly on social media. This came after further ASA rulings assessing the likelihood of gambling ads having strong appeal to under-18s were published in April and May 2026 and to remind the sector of their responsibilities to abide by the rule during the football 2026 World Cup.

What did we do?

After the Enforcement Notice was issued, CAP monitored multiple prevalent social media accounts, reviewing approximately 10,000 pieces of social media content, to ensure paid and non-paid-for content complied with the strong appeal rule. We started monitoring and took targeted enforcement action from Thursday 11 June 2026, coinciding with the start of the World Cup, concluding monitoring on Sunday 19 July 2026, the World Cup Final date.

We reviewed approximately 10,000 pieces of social media content and identified 45 ads that were likely to be of strong appeal to under-18s. This suggests a compliance rate of approximately 99.5% against Code rule 16.3.12.

Compliance enforcement action and key themes

We contacted eight advertisers about 45 non-compliant ads, all of which they subsequently removed.

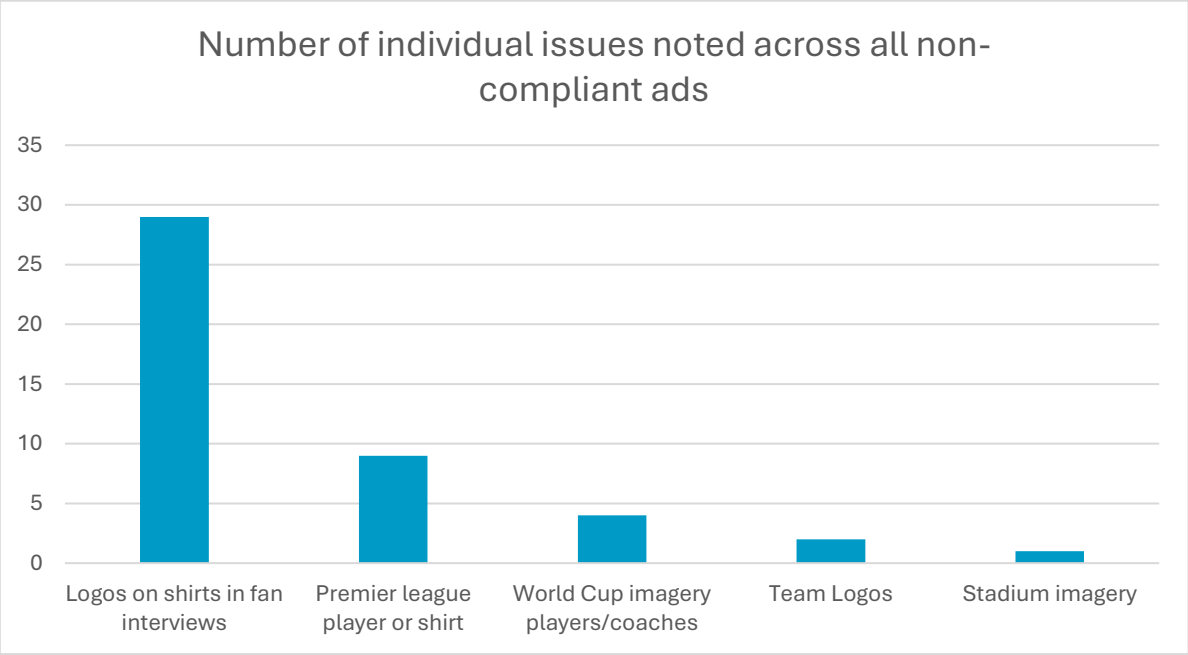
Among the ads that broke the rules the main issues we identified were:

- Fan interviews, involving fans wearing national team, premier league or other major European club football shirts where the team logo was clearly visible.

- Imagery of England or international ‘star’ players with wording about their performance in a match, or their lack of inclusion in the team, and of UK national team mangers.

- A club sponsor including one of the international club players in the club’s kit.

- Content that identified a stadium where a World Cup game was being held.



Impact on compliance

Beyond advertisers taking steps to swiftly remove isolated instances of non-compliance, our monitoring observed a noticeable shift in how gambling advertisers presented football-related content during the monitoring period. Encouragingly, advertisers took steps to limit the likelihood of their ads being of strong appeal to under-18s by:

- Using generic depictions of people who were not footballers.
- Blurring or obscuring logos on football fan shirts to make them less identifiable, or by interviewing fans who were not wearing national team shirts.
- Avoiding imagery featuring footballers, teams or other visual elements (such as identifiable stadiums) likely to be of strong appeal to under-18s.

Phase 2: opening Premier League ads

Prior to concluding this piece of work, we also conducted monitoring of gambling ads that were published during the opening weekend fixtures of the Premier League. This was to ensure that compliance rates remained high when moving from international football to club football.

Only four individual ads across four advertisers were found to be in breach.

- One advertiser had already removed the ad prior to our contact.
- The other advertisers swiftly removed the non-compliant ads, two doing so within two hours of notification.

Conclusion and next steps

This monitoring exercise found high levels of compliance across the sector. Where non-compliance was identified, advertisers acted promptly to remove the content. CAP will continue to conduct periodic monitoring during major sporting events and take targeted enforcement action where necessary to maintain high levels of compliance.