

## 2023 Advertising Advisory Committee report

**The Advertising Advisory Committee (AAC) advises CAP and BCAP on the consumer and citizen issues arising from key aspects of broadcast and non-broadcast advertising regulations. The members are independent of the advertising and media industries and are drawn from a range of different backgrounds, to ensure that ad rules are effective, evidence-based and responsive to public concerns.**

2023 was a busy year for the ASA system as a whole and the AAC has spent a good deal of its time during the year engaging with key initiatives such as the Internet Platform Principles (IPP) pilot which ended in mid-year, the continuing and exciting developments in the use of data science to identify and monitor problem areas in advertising, the ASA's response to the government's Online Advertising Programme and the development of the 2024-28 ASA Strategy. The AAC added an innovation of its own to enhance its understanding of consumer perspectives on advertising by initiating a programme of informal discussions with external organisations. In June we were joined by Rocio Concha, Director of Policy & Campaigning at Which?, for a discussion on the Online Safety Act and other issues; and in October Angela Salt, Chief Executive of GirlGuiding, joined us to share her concerns about the negative effects of some advertising on young girls.

The issue of body image in advertising - the core theme in the engagement with GirlGuiding - was a major focus for the AAC during 2023 - as we tackled the complex issues around the use of digitally altered images in advertising and their effect on girls and young women, including consideration of the case for clear labelling where images had been digitally altered. The consultation and roundtable on body image were followed up in the autumn with a seminar involving young people (organised jointly with GirlGuiding and Childnet) which was attended by two AAC members and informed the committee's view that - even in the absence of new rules - the ASA should be using its 'soft power' to inform and influence industry approaches to body image issues, not just in relation to girls and young women, but also on matters of images of muscularity in young men and on possible differences in how body image issues may play out differently in ethnic minority communities. Other agenda items of note during the year were the need to challenge some mobile phone providers on their advertising of mid-contract price increases; encouraging the ASA to respond proactively to the Government's White Paper on the Gambling Act even if there was little in its recommendations that related specifically to advertising; the continuing concern about how to address 'carbon neutral' or 'net zero' advertising claims and the need to respond effectively to government plans to limit the advertising of less healthy foods.

At the end of 2023 two members of the AAC - Mike O'Connor and Nabila Zulfiqar - stepped down at the end of their six-year terms. I would like to thank them for the significant contribution they both made to the work of the AAC and also to welcome two new members, Christine Forde and Craig Simmons. As ever, I would like to thank Shahriar Coupal, Malcolm Phillips and all their colleagues for their exemplary support to the committee in providing the analysis to enable us to engage constructively across the disparate range of complex issues that come forward.

**Sam Younger CBE**  
**Chair, Advertising Advisory Committee**