

Annual Report 2024



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Chair's Statement



With the ad market growing significantly in 2024, the need continues for the ad industry to act collaboratively and constructively to sustain high standards in commercial marketing communications.

This importance is underscored by the further emergence of new legislation from the EU, particularly related to the technology and digital space. ASA's role as regulator remains at the forefront of seeking responsible advertising that is legal, decent, honest and truthful.

More than ever, collaboration is required in the regulatory space. With State Agencies echoing that no one entity can successfully regulate the ad ecosystem alone, ASA's deepening relationship with Coimisiún na Meán, and with other State agencies, copper fastens ASA's place as a leader in the advertising landscape. During the year, by entering into various State Agency agreements, ASA can join these other organisations at the forefront of enhancing oversight and enforcement of standards in the ever-evolving advertising and media landscape. With scope to enhance trust levels in advertising, these partnerships are an integral and critical part of moving the co-regulation agenda forward, ultimately in the interests of protecting consumers.

ASA has been continuing its work in seeking to support a fair and level playing field for brands. Equally, support for ASA in its work needs to be continued by brands and other stakeholders in the advertising ecosystem, particularly digital pure play companies. ASA's ambitious strategy, designed in 2022, is delivering against its expectations, as can be seen by results in this year's annual report. Further implementation of its strategy will only be possible by equitable support from funders.

The Board has comprehensively reviewed its Constitution to deliver changes that, amongst other things, provide wider scope for broadening perspectives through the new addition of independent non-executive directors, enhancing the independent nature of advertising self-regulation. I would like to thank the ASA Board members for their continued support in this regard.

My thanks and appreciation also to the Complaints Council and Review Panel for their contributions to upholding the standards in advertising for the benefit of all.

Finally, I want to thank Orla Twomey, Chief Executive, Michael Lee, Deputy Chief Executive, and the whole ASA team for their ongoing dedication and drive in pursuing the organisational agenda.



**Miriam Hughes, Chair,
Advertising Standards Authority.**

Chief Executive's Statement



The year 2024 was a transformative period for the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), marked by the establishment of strategic partnerships with key state agencies and enhanced engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders.

A significant milestone was the signing of the Co-Operation Agreement with Coimisiún Na Meán (CnaM) in December 2024. This agreement lays the foundation for collaborative efforts in overseeing and enforcing standards within the dynamic advertising and media landscape, including online and social media.

In addition to this, ASA focused on building relationships with other regulators. We entered into a partnership with the newly formed Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland (GRAI) to collaboratively address complaints related to gambling marketing communications. Furthermore, our collaboration with the Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO) aimed to streamline advertising processes for in-cinema promotions and other media outlets.

Our commitment to stakeholder engagement was exemplified by the ‘Trust in an Untrusting World’ event, which brought together a variety of perspectives. We were honoured to have Niamh Hodnett, Online Safety Commissioner at CnaM, discuss the role of the advertising self-regulatory system within the broader online regulatory framework. Additionally, we hosted a webinar titled “#Ad Guidelines for Honest Influencing on Social Media,” celebrating the anniversary of the Joint Guidance on Influencer Advertising and Marketing, developed with the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC).

On a personal note, I was privileged to assume the role of Chairwoman of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), an organisation dedicated to supporting the development and enhancement of advertising regulation across Europe through effective advertising standards bodies like the ASA.

This report highlights our achievements and the collaborative efforts that have strengthened our regulatory framework, ensuring that we continue to uphold the highest standards in advertising.



**Orla Twomey, Chief Executive,
Advertising Standards Authority.**

Advertising Standards Authority's Remit



Advertising Standards Authority's Remit

Policy

We work throughout the year on policy matters, primarily focusing on the interpretation and application of the Code in response to emerging trends in marketing communications and advertising content.

Our policy positions are based on the standards outlined in the Code, which aims to ensure that all marketing communications are legal, decent, honest, and truthful. In our regulatory tasks, we engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, including representative bodies, government departments, and state agencies.

Given the growth in digital, online, and social media marketing, we are increasingly committed to strengthening our relationships with global providers in these areas.

Advisory Corporate Services

We actively participate in external projects, offering our expertise both proactively and upon request. Additionally, we periodically contribute to the development and review of specific advertising standards across various sectors.

Complaints Investigation and Adjudication

We accept complaints from anyone who considers that a marketing communication may be in breach of the Code. All complaints are investigated for free.

We initially assess complaints against the provisions of the Code and, where an investigation is warranted, we invite comments from the advertisers. If we find a potential breach, it may be sent to The Independent Complaints Council for a decision.

We are supported by all major media owners, including broadcast, outdoor, digital and the print media in Ireland. The media plays a pivotal role in contributing to upholding the highest standards in advertising. A principle of the ASA's function is to have advertising removed or amended which may be in breach of the Code. An integral part of the successful implementation of this framework lies in the media agreeing to decline publication of advertising which has been found in breach of the Code by the ASA's Independent Complaints Council.

Copy Advice

We offer a valuable service to review ads before they are published to ensure they follow the rules of the Code. This service is available for free to everyone involved in advertising - advertisers, their agencies, and the media.

The advice is non-binding on both the requester and on the ASA; while the requester does not have to accept the advice of the ASA, neither does The Independent Complaints Council, should the marketing communication subsequently come before them for adjudication. However, using this service makes it less likely that marketing communications will breach the rules of the Code.

Monitoring

We conduct monitoring exercises on individual marketing communications to ensure compliance with the Code requirements. These exercises can target specific media types or a combination of traditional and digital media and may focus on particular industries or areas of economic activity. Initially, the process is informal, with the advertiser or promoter asked to provide comments within a set time frame. If there is no response, the issue may escalate to a formal investigation. Additionally, our Monitoring Service oversees adherence to the adjudications made by The Independent Complaints Council.

Awareness, Knowledge Enhancement and Empowerment

We strive to ensure that there is a high level of awareness of the role of, and importance of, standards in advertising. We engage with advertisers, agencies and media on the provisions of the Code and how they are applied, with a view to enhancing knowledge and empowering effective use of the Code.

Stakeholder Engagement



Stakeholder Engagement

Coimisiún Na Meán

For decades, we have collaborated closely with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, whose functions have now been transferred to Coimisiún na Meán (CnaM). We continue to actively engage with CnaM to ensure ASA's continued strong and effective presence within the regulatory framework for both broadcast and online marketing communications.

In December 2024, ASA signed a co-operation agreement with CnaM, to establish a framework of cooperation between both organisations in matters of common interest relating to advertising and commercial marketing communication.

The cooperation agreement aims to enhance oversight and enforcement of standards in the ever-evolving advertising and media landscape, including online platforms and social media.

The partnership between both organisations further positions ASA as a leader in the advertising landscape, and both organisations will meet and engage regularly to discuss key trends, focusing on a range of matters of common interests.



Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland

We partnered with the Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland (GRAI), the new statutory body that, once established, will be responsible for the licensing and regulation of gambling services in Ireland, to streamline the process for complaints around advertising for gambling.



Under the new partnership, ASA and GRAI will work collaboratively on triaging complaints around marketing communications for gambling in Ireland. In this regard, the GRAI will in future deal with complaints regarding entities who hold a licence with the organisation, whilst the Advertising Standards Authority will handle other complaints.

The partnership between ASA and the GRAI reinforces the commitment of both organisations to ensuring that gambling advertising content adheres to the high standards of the Advertising Standards Authority Code.

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

We have an ongoing relationship with the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC). In 2023, we co-created and launched Joint Guidance on Influencer Advertising and Marketing. To mark the first anniversary of the launch of the Guidance, we hosted a well-attended webinar, entitled “*#Ad Guidelines for honest influencing on social media*”, with the CCPC joining the panel as a guest speaker. Our aim was to reinforce responsible marketing communications in influencer marketing and to protect the interests of consumers.



Irish Film Classification Office

We partnered with the Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO) in May 2024. This partnership will help to streamline the process for complaints relating to advertising in cinema, including commercial promotions for cinema that run in other media outlets. Under the partnership, IFCO will direct complaints to the ASA for further review and adjudication.

IFCO, who are the regulatory body responsible for classifying films exhibited in cinemas throughout Ireland, will now include a link to the ASA website in their complaint's procedure.

The ASA and IFCO will also meet annually to exchange and discuss data on any relevant trends.

ASA Event - Trust in an Untrusting World

We were delighted to host our engaging and thought-provoking event in Dublin on May 29, 2024. Reflecting our commitment to greater visibility and advocacy, the event brought together a diverse range of voices and perspectives.

Our guest speakers included Mark Little (Consultant), Niamh Hodnett (Online Safety Commissioner, CnaM), Claire O'Rourke (Research Director, Dentsu), and keynote speaker Dave Trott (Creative Director).

Discussions covered topics such as trust, misinformation and disinformation, regulation and co-regulation, and the future vision for the Advertising Standards Authority.



A full video recording of the event is available on our website.

ASA Chief Executive appointed Chair of EASA

ASA's Chief Executive, Orla Twomey was appointed as Chair of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) in June 2024.

EASA is a non-profit organisation based in Brussels, which brings together 28 European advertising self-regulatory organisations and 14 organisations representing the advertising ecosystem - advertisers, agencies, and the media.



As Chairwoman of EASA, Orla works with her fellow Officers to support the ad self-regulated network to set high operational standards for advertising and self-regulatory systems, while continuing to provide a space for the advertising ecosystem to work together at European and international levels to address common challenges – ensuring advertising standards are future-proofed.

ASA re-brand and website launch



We were delighted to launch our new branding and name in March 2024. Our updated name and fresh look aligns with our wider strategy to enhance our approach to fostering trust in the advertising landscape and demonstrates the invaluable industry expertise our organisation has amassed over the last four decades.

We also launched the new ASA website, which reflects our new branding and strategy. The redesigned site offers a more intuitive and user-friendly experience, making it easier for users to access essential information, guidance, and resources.

ASA win EASA Collaboration Award

We were delighted to win the Collaboration Award at the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) Best Practice Awards in London last October. This recognition was given to the ASA for our joint efforts with the CCPC in developing the Guidance on Influencer Marketing and Advertising.



Strategy



Five Strategic Priorities

These will drive the delivery of the strategy in pursuit of purpose and ambition.

1 Research, Advocacy & Thought Leadership

Objective:
To grow and develop ASA's positioning and reputation as an authoritative voice of influence in relation to advertising standards.

2 Proactive Stakeholder Engagement

Objective:
To proactively cultivate and enhance relationships with key stakeholders to enhance the reputation of ASA as a critical participant in the co-regulated ecosystem.

3 Compelling Service Proposition

Objective:
To deliver attractive, relevant and valued services for stakeholders.

4 Brand Awareness & Esteem

Objective:
To position the ASA Brand to create impact and stand out in the contemporary advertising regulation landscape.

5 Fit-for-Purpose Organisation

Objective:
To create a fit-for-purpose organisation, appropriately resourced and structured to deliver the strategy.

Strategic direction statement

ASA exists to foster trust in advertising for all.

Our ambition is to be renowned as the trust leader in advertising standards. We achieve this by being visible, vocal and active on all matters relating to standards for and in advertising.

ASA's skills in stakeholder engagement, deep subject matter expertise and breadth of commercial understanding enables it to create a coalition of relevant stakeholders that collaborate effectively to establish marketing communications standards that serve the common good.

ASA is the pre-eminent body recognised as skilfully navigating the traditional, digital and evolving media world and driving standards.

Our Vision

Our Vision is to build a culture that supports public confidence in, and industry respect for, high standards in advertising in Ireland.

Our Mission

There are three aspects to our mission:

- PROTECT**  **We protect** consumers and the public by setting and enforcing advertising standards, monitoring advertising, and taking action to remove advertising that is harmful, offensive or misleading.
- ENCOURAGE**  **We encourage** care and compliance in the advertising industry through a combination of empowerment, enforcement and education.
- COLLABORATE**  **We collaborate** with government and key stake-holders to ensure that everyone can have confidence in self-regulation.

Our Values



Code Implementation



Complaints

In 2024, we received 1,082 written complaints concerning 883 advertisements. This represents a decrease of 23% when compared to the number of complaints received in 2023. The number of individual advertisements that attracted complaints decreased by 22% compared to the figures for 2023 (883 compared to 1,134).

At 883, the number of advertisements that received complaints is a very small proportion of the thousands of advertisements that were published during the year in all Irish media – TV, radio, online, social, newspapers, magazines, outdoor, brochures, leaflets and cinema.

	2024		2023		2022	
	Complaints	Advertisements	Complaints	Advertisements	Complaints	Advertisements
Carried forward from previous period	615	509	530	431	557	418
Received during period	1,082	883	1,402	1,134	1,189	899
Resolved in Period	1,469	1,183	1,317	1,056	1,216	886
Brought forward to next period	228	209	615	509	530	431

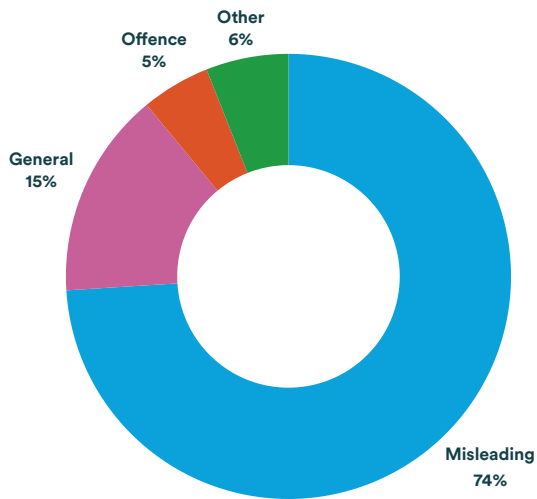
To learn how we deal with complaints, [click here](#).

2024 Complaints Resolution

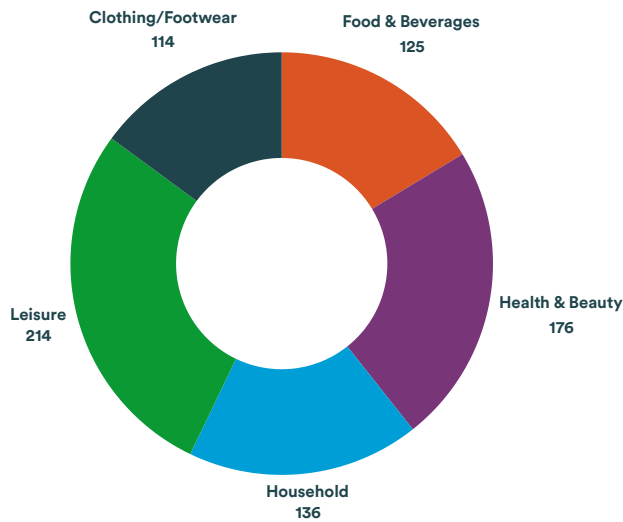
	2024		2023		2022	
	Complaints	Advertisements	Complaints	Advertisements	Complaints	Advertisements
Additional Information not provided	95	95	167	165	133	128
Out of Remit	249	219	118	110	150	126
No basis for investigation	379	318	424	348	329	250
Investigated - Informal Resolution	539	489	491	436	431	360
Investigated - Referred to The Council	207	104	117	69	173	75
	1,469	1,225	1,317	1,128	1,216	939

One of the features of the ASA system is that an advertisement can be the subject of different categories of complaint outcome.

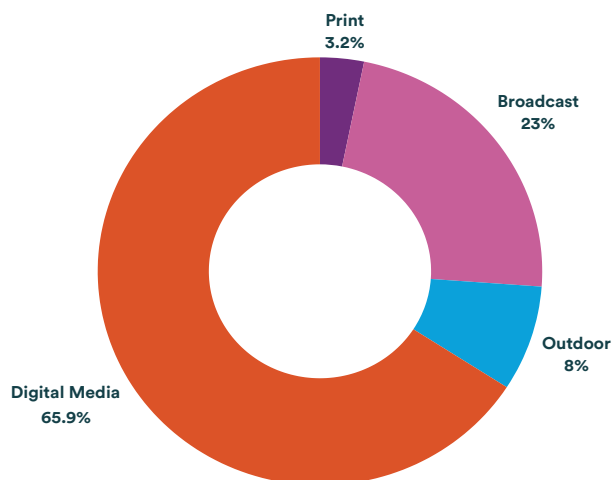
Grounds of Complaint



Complaints by Sector Top 5



Complaints by Media Top 4*



Influencer Marketing

Year	Total Complaints Received	No. of Influencer Related Complaints	%
2024	1,082	126	12%
2023	1,402	279	20%
2022	1,089	88	8%

Competitive Complaints

	Resolved 2024	Number in breach
Complaints	39	2
Ads	37	2


Copy Advice

	Copy Advice Requests
2024	103
2023	92
2022	88

For more information and analysis please [click here](#).

Complaints

RESOLVED

1,469 

Formal complaints resolved in 2024

IN BREACH

86 

Advertisements found to be as in breach of the ASA code

MISLEADING

74% 

74% of all complaints made on the basis that an advertisement was MISLEADING

OFFENSIVE

5% 

5% of all complaints made on the basis that an advertisement was OFFENSIVE

Top 5 Sectors

Top 5 sectors of advertising which raised concerns for the public



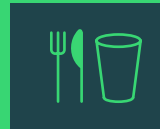
Leisure
214



Health & Beauty
176



Household
136



Food & Beverages
125



Clothing/
Footwear
114

Complaints by Media

923 

Digital media complaints



Digital Media
923



Broadcast
325



Outdoor
113



Print
39



Brochures/
Leaflets
30

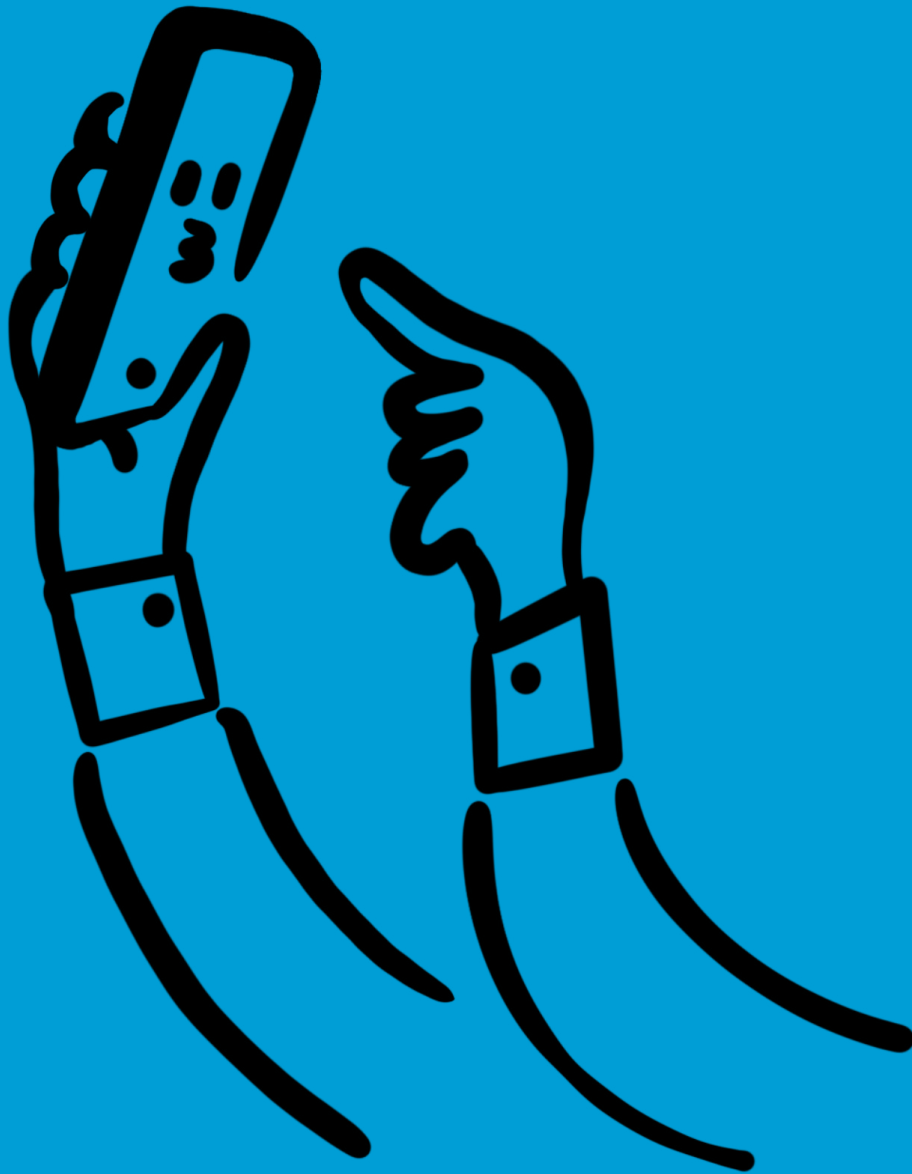


Direct Marketing
12



Cinema
5

The Independent Complaints Council



Chairperson's Statement

I have great pleasure in presenting my fourth report as the Chairperson of The Independent Complaints Council.

The Council formally considered 207 complaints in relation to 104 advertisements during 2024. In addition, a further 104 advertisements dealt with by the Executive were reviewed by the Council. The actual number of advertisements assessed by the ASA in 2024 was 883, an decrease on the number of advertisements assessed in 2023. Each case is assessed on its own merits, and the number of advertisements sent to the Council by the ASA Executive is determined by the requirement for adjudication rather than achieving any particular target.

I want to pay particular thanks to the members of The Independent Complaints Council who not only carry out their work in a considered and objective manner, but also bring a range of important professional skills to the adjudication process. The Council is comprised of industry and non-industry members. As Chair, I am fortunate to be able to draw on a diverse and wide-ranging depth of expertise across the Council. These skills are complemented by the considerable experience provided by the industry members of the Council. The strength and breadth of experience that members individually and collectively bring has contributed to the hallmarks of the consistent sound decision making of the Council over the year. The Council members all give their time voluntarily in order to uphold high standards in Irish advertising.

Finally, I would also like to thank the Executive and the Board of the ASA for their work and support during the year.



**Brian O'Gorman,
Chairperson,
The Independent Complaints Council.**

The Role of The Independent Complaints Council

The ASA's Independent Complaints Council is responsible for:

- Reviewing and ruling on complaints submitted by the public, ASA members, government departments, or any other parties, based on the ASA Code.
- Initiating corrective actions when necessary and issuing appropriate directives.
- Informing the ASA Board when corrective actions or directives are not followed or are ignored.

The Independent Complaints Council varies in size from 11 to 15 members, including an independent Chair. It includes individuals from the advertising industry as well as those with no industry connection to ensure objective complaint investigations and operated with special regard for the interests of consumers. Each member acts independently and evaluates cases on their own merits according to the ASA Code.

While the ASA Executive may resolve cases informally when a formal review isn't warranted, The Independent Complaints Council can still request to review any of these cases for formal adjudication.

In 2024, The Independent Complaints Council met formally six times. Their rulings are regularly published in the media and posted on the ASA website.

Analysis of Adjudications

Of the 104 advertisements considered by the Council, complaints in relation to 86 were upheld and 17 found not to be in breach of the provisions of the Code. As in previous years, the principal reason advertisements were found to be in breach of the Code was because they were considered to be misleading. In the case of the three remaining advertisements, the Council decided that it was more appropriate to make a statement providing advice/guidance or indeed warnings for advertisers in relation to future campaigns.

The Independent Complaints Council Resolution

	2024		2023		2022	
	Complaints	Advertisements	Complaints	Advertisements	Complaints	Advertisements
Submitted to the Council	207	104	117	70	173	75
Upheld/ In Breach	182	86	82	59	107	59
Not Upheld/ Not in Breach	22	17	32	9	64	13
Statement	3	1	3	2	2	2

Investigated advertisements and Outcome by Sector

Media	Investigated	In Breach	Not In Breach
HEALTH & BEAUTY	16	14	2
HOUSEHOLD	16	13	3
LEISURE	13	10	3
FOOD & BEVERAGES	12	6	6
CLOTHING/FOOTWEAR	8	8	0
EDUCATION	7	7	0
MOTORING	6	4	2
PROPERTY	6	6	0
ALCOHOL	5	5	0
BUSINESS	4	4	0
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3	2	1
AGRICULTURE	2	2	0
FINANCIAL	2	2	0
MISCELLANEOUS	2	1	1
EMPLOYMENT/BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	1	1	0
PUBLISHING	1	1	0
COMPUTERS	0	0	0
NON-COMMERCIAL	0	0	0
TRAVEL/HOLIDAYS	0	0	0
TV/AUDIO/VIDEO	0	0	0
Total	104	86	18

Review panel

The Advertising Standards Authority's Review Panel consists of a Chair and two ordinary members. The Chair is independent of both the advertising industry and the ASA. One ordinary member has a background in the advertising industry, while the other represents consumer interests.

If an advertiser or complainant disagrees with a decision made by The Independent Complaints Council, they can request a review. The Review Panel will consider their request based on one of the following three grounds:

- New, fresh or additional relevant evidence has become available, which could have a significant bearing on the Decision concerned (in such cases, an explanation as to why such evidence was not previously available and/or provided, will be required).
- The Decision concerned was clearly and manifestly in error having regard to the provision of the Code, was wholly irrational, or clearly made against the weight of the evidence before the Complaints Council at the time of the making of the Decision.
- There was a substantial flaw in the process by which the Decision was reached.

The Review Panel can refer the case back to The Independent Complaints Council for reconsideration. The Council will make the final decision on whether an advertisement breaches the Code. In 2024, the Advertising Standards Authority received one request for review.
