

# Press release: Online dating giant vows clearer path to love

Venntro Media Group Ltd (Venntro), which has over 55 million users worldwide and supplies online dating services through just under 3,500 websites, has been investigated by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) over concerns about misleading claims and how it used people's personal data.

Venntro operates dating sites on behalf of major media outlets and other organisations, including both general and specialist sites that were marketed to people looking for a partner with a specific hobby, interest, ethnicity, locality or religion.

The CMA discovered that people who signed up to Venntro's websites were often unaware their information would be stored in a central database and that their profiles might be visible on the company's other dating sites. It also saw complaints from people who said they had signed up for sites featuring explicit adult content without realising that they were doing so.

The CMA was therefore concerned people could have signed up for a specialist site, yet some of the profiles they saw and people they paid to interact with were not actually subscribers to that site and did not necessarily share their interests. It was also worried that in certain circumstances messages sent between these people would not be received.

As a result of the CMA's investigation, Venntro has made legally binding commitments to make it clear to people before they sign up that it will share their information on other sites and obtain their full agreement to do this. It must provide a list of these sites and will not place members' profiles on sites containing explicit adult material without their additional active consent.

Venntro must also make it easier for people to delete their profile when their subscription ends and not make misleading claims about the number of members on its sites, or the number of messages sent through those sites.

George Lusty, Senior Director for Consumer Protection at the CMA, said:

With millions of people trusting dating sites to find their perfect match, it's important they fully understand how personal information will be used, before they sign up, and that sites tell the truth about what they can offer.

We took action against Venntro because we were concerned people's profiles were being placed on sites without their knowledge or permission, and that they were being misled about how likely they were to meet someone with common ground. As a result of our investigation, Venntro has now pledged to be more upfront with its customers in future.

In addition to this action against Venntro, the CMA has sent warning letters to 14 other leading dating websites and app providers demanding they review their terms and practices to ensure they are fair and comply with consumer protection law.

Together with the UK's privacy regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the CMA has published [advice for online dating businesses](#) to explain how to fully comply with both consumer and data protection laws. It has also published [advice about what people should watch out for](#) when using online dating services.

## Notes for Editors

1. Venntro also trades under the names 'Global Personals' and 'White Label Dating.' Most of Venntro's websites are managed on a 'white label' basis, which means that Venntro provides the basic infrastructure and its commercial partners provide their own branding to the customer-facing webpage. A large number of Venntro's dating websites are aimed at people with particular interests (like cycling or music) or characteristics (such as ethnicity or religion). The full changes that Venntro will be making are available on the CMA's [case page](#).
2. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) and Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA). The CPRs contain a general prohibition against unfair commercial practices and specific prohibitions against misleading actions, misleading omissions and aggressive commercial practices. Part 2 of the CRA aims to protect consumers against unfair contract terms and notices, and requires contract terms to be fair and transparent. Ultimately, only a court can rule that a particular term or practice infringes the law.
3. Companies that control and process personal data in the UK, including companies that operate dating websites, also have obligations under the new Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The laws are regulated by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), which is the UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.
4. Media enquiries should be directed to the CMA Press Office ([press@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gsi.gov.uk), 020 3738 6191).