

CMA clears NortonLifeLock / Avast merger

NortonLifeLock and Avast both offer cyber safety software to consumers under a variety of different brands. Products include antivirus software (also known as endpoint security software), privacy software (such as VPNs) and identity protection software. The companies announced plans to merge in a £6 billion deal in August 2021.

In its initial Phase 1 investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) concluded that the deal raised a realistic prospect of a substantial lessening of competition, and referred the merger for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation to consider those concerns in more detail in March 2022.

In a Phase 2 investigation, the legal standard to assess whether a deal raises competition concerns is higher, to reflect the more extensive investigation that takes place in a Phase 2 inquiry. When applying that more stringent test, the CMA provisionally concluded, in August 2022, that the deal does not substantially reduce competition in the UK and may not be expected to do so in the future. Following a consultation that ended on 24 August 2022, the CMA has upheld its provisional findings and cleared the deal.

The CMA's Phase 2 investigation has found that the supply of cyber safety software to consumers is rapidly evolving. Providers of paid-for and free services are continually developing and improving their products to meet different and changing customer needs.

While the CMA's Phase 1 decision raised concerns about the extent of competition that the merged business would face, a more detailed analysis of the deal has found that the merging businesses face significant competition. This comes from McAfee – their main rival – plus a range of other suppliers that currently have a smaller market position in the UK.

The CMA also found that security applications provided by Microsoft, which holds a unique position in the market as the owner of the Windows operating system, offer increasingly important alternatives for consumers.

In recent years, Microsoft has improved its built-in, bundled security application so that it now offers protection which is as good as many of the products offered by specialist suppliers. In addition, applications recently launched by Microsoft for its customers bring its cyber safety offering closer to those of the merging businesses and are likely to further strengthen Microsoft as a competitor going forward.

On this basis, the CMA considers that the merging businesses will continue to face sufficient competition after the deal completes and has concluded that the merger does not raise competition concerns.

Kirstin Baker, chair of the CMA inquiry group, said:

Millions of people across the UK rely on cyber safety services to keep them safe online.

Phase 2 investigations allow us to explore concerns identified in our initial review in more detail, as we gather further information from the companies involved and other industry players. After reviewing the evidence in an in-depth review, we are now satisfied that this deal won't worsen the options available to consumers. As such, we have concluded that the deal can go ahead.

For more information, visit the [NortonLifeLock / Avast merger inquiry page](#).

Notes to editor:

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.
2. A Phase 2 inquiry has a different statutory test to Phase 1. In its assessment of mergers at Phase 1, the CMA is required to assess whether the merger creates a 'realistic prospect' of a substantial lessening of competition (SLC). At Phase 2, the CMA applies a 'balance of probabilities' threshold. The realistic prospect threshold at Phase 1 is intentionally a lower and more cautious threshold for an SLC finding than that applied by the CMA after more extensive investigation at Phase 2.
3. The CMA ran a 3-week consultation on the provisional findings up to 24 August 2022, during which time anyone could make submissions to the CMA. The responses are published on the merger inquiry page.

[Baroness Sanderson to help develop new public libraries strategy](#)

- She will serve as the independent chair of a new advisory panel
- Panel's work will inform a new public libraries strategy due in 2023

Baroness Elizabeth Sanderson of Welton has been appointed by the Government to help develop a new strategy to make sure public libraries are providing the best possible service for their communities.

Libraries provide a vital service and the strategy will help establish ways in which they can improve to meet the needs of people in their area.

Baroness Sanderson is an experienced former journalist and government adviser who joined the Government benches in the House of Lords in 2019.

She has been appointed as the independent chair of a new advisory panel and will be expected to provide a fresh, challenging and impartial perspective on libraries to help formulate innovative new policy ideas.

Through the autumn and winter she will lead a number of sessions with the advisory panel of contributors who will be drawn from the library sector and beyond. Participants in the panel sessions will be confirmed in due course.

All sessions will be attended by representatives from Arts Council England, Libraries Connected, and the cross-party Local Government Association.

The sessions will help gather information to inspire a set of recommendations which will form part of a new government public libraries strategy for 2023, succeeding the previous [strategy](#) which came into force in 2016.

Input into the development of the recommendations will also come from the British Library, local authority library services and community-managed libraries, as well as other government departments, to bring in a wide range of views and insights.

Libraries Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

Libraries have a unique and precious role in communities across the country – something which was thrown into relief during the pandemic. As we bounce back from that, we want to make sure we are drawing on a wide range of expertise and best practice to give them the support they need to keep serving the public so well.

Baroness Sanderson and the panel of expert and outside voices will help us achieve this and I look forward to seeing the recommendations they put forward.

Baroness Sanderson said:

I'm thrilled to be taking up this new role. Libraries play such an important part in our lives, be that instilling a love of reading in childhood or encouraging economic, social and mental wellbeing throughout adulthood and into old age.

Too often undervalued, they are one of the most critical forms of social infrastructure we have and I look forward to working alongside the experts, and listening to a wide range of voices, so that we may help develop ideas as to how we may promote and protect our libraries into the future.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The role is unpaid.
- Participants in the advisory panel sessions will be confirmed in due course.
- While responsibility for managing library services sits with local authorities, the Government has a duty to ensure councils are meeting their statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, as well as providing support to councils looking for ways to improve their service.
- DCMS funds Arts Council England, which is the national development agency for public libraries. ACE is delivering the Government's £20.5 million Libraries Improvement Fund, which will transform library services in England by helping them upgrade their buildings and improve digital infrastructure. Awards made through the scheme this year include £495,000 for the Sandwell Library and Information Service in the West Midlands and Sheffield Libraries which was given £340,000.
- [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England](#) was the first ever national libraries strategy, produced by the Libraries Taskforce and co-sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Local Government Association. The Libraries Taskforce ceased in March 2020, with its [final closure report](#) published in June 2021.

[Attendance drive steps up as new term starts for millions of pupils](#)

Schools are being advised to work in partnership with councils and consider targeted family support or home visits where there are barriers to attending school.

This is part of a package of new and innovative measures to ensure that more children are in school every day, including targeted support for individuals who need it and improved data tools that will better identify and solve consistent issues.

The Department for Education is also launching a three-year 1-2-1 attendance mentoring pilot from this term, aimed at tackling the factors behind non-attendance such as bullying or mental health issues. It is being launched in Middlesbrough this year, before expanding to other areas of the country next year. The pilot will provide tailored support to over 1,600 persistently and severely absent pupils over the three-year period.

Schools, academy trusts, local authorities and the government will also have access to a powerful new attendance data visualisation tool is also being launched to help to spot and respond to issues. This data is supporting the launch of the new, interactive national attendance dashboard alongside the publication of the first full fortnightly attendance data of the term. This is expected later in September and will provide ongoing transparency and vastly improved potential for insight and analysis of daily, weekly and termly trends.

The majority of schools are now seamlessly sharing daily register data with the department, where it is aggregated and presented back in dashboards to schools, academy trusts and local authorities. This enables teachers to analyse attendance with greater ease, allowing issues with individual pupils, or groups such as children on free school meals, for example, to be spotted more quickly.

With millions of pupils set to return to schools and colleges over the coming days, there will be a renewed focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as [evidence](#) shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

As outlined in the [Schools White Paper](#), the government is introducing a wide range of tools and programmes to tackle low attendance, including [new best practice guidance](#) on improving attendance for schools, trusts and local authorities.

The guidance makes clear that schools should provide individualised support to families that need it, for example through referrals to other organisations and services, including councils, and issue fines and other sanctions where absence is unauthorised.

There are now over 10,000 academy schools open in England as a result of over 100 new academies converting yesterday, Thursday 1 September. This represents well over half of all students and more than four in five secondary schools.

29 local authorities have expressed an interest in setting up local authority-established multi-academy trusts as part of the trial planned for this year, driving momentum towards all schools becoming academies and receiving the support of a strong academy trust to raise standards across curriculum, attendance, and teacher development. The scheme will be carefully tested via a limited number of successful applications this year.

Education Secretary James Cleverly said:

I want to wish all pupils starting the new school year the very best of luck. From making new friends to learning from inspirational teachers, this is a really exciting time for them.

All the evidence shows that being in school is vital for helping pupils achieve their potential. That is why it is so important for them to attend every day they possibly can.

It's also great that we can mark the new school year with a major milestone – over 10,000 academies are now open in England. The academies programme has been transforming children's education for over a decade now and I look forward to building even more momentum so all schools can join strong academy trusts in the coming years.

Since 2010, there has been nearly a 20 percentage point rise in the number of good or outstanding schools, reaching 87 per cent of all schools in December 2021. Academy trusts played a crucial part in this, taking on poorly-performing schools and turning them around.

More than seven out of 10 sponsored academies which were found to be underperforming as an LA maintained school in their previous inspection now have a good or outstanding rating.

But there is more to do. New regulations that came into force yesterday allow the government to intervene for the first time in schools that have more than one consecutive rating of requires improvement or inadequate.

This will support the transition of these schools into strong trusts, which consistently drive school improvement.

Sylvie Newman, executive headteacher at Donisthorpe Primary School said:

Donisthorpe Primary School is a good school with many strengths and we have been exploring joining a multi academy trust for a number of years, but choosing the right one has been very important.

The primary motivator is keeping our unique identity but to also providing Donisthorpe with group strength and an opportunity for us to feel part of something 'bigger' and to draw knowledge and share expertise.

We will be able to provide opportunities for staff to progress their careers within the trust thereby strengthening retention.

Alongside this, schools will shortly be provided their budgets for free period products for this year, which they are strongly encouraged to use to access the wider range of products expected to be available through the scheme, to help ensure that no child feels the need to miss school as a result of their period and help end period poverty.

Finally, from this month teachers will be able to claim the government's [levelling up premium](#). This is for teachers of high demand STEM subjects in the country's most disadvantaged schools and worth up to £3,000 tax-free this academic year, as well as the next two years afterwards.

Birmingham 2022 gives nation a cause for celebration

- 8 in 10 people think major UK events including Birmingham 2022 give people an opportunity to celebrate
- Record 1.5m spectators bought tickets for events across the West Midlands
- Stats on Games participation, job creation and legacy projects show lasting impact on local communities

Nearly half the UK tuned in or turned up to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, new polling shows, with eight in 10 people saying it gave the country the chance to celebrate.

The findings, in a survey conducted by Ipsos on behalf of DCMS, means the Games – delivered in record time – drew an estimated overall UK audience on TV, online and in person of more than 20 million. Birmingham 2022 also drew an estimated global TV audience of hundreds of millions as the city shone on the world stage.

The survey also reveals that two in three people from Birmingham and the surrounding area engaged with the Games, with a quarter of those polled saying they turned out to watch the Queen's Baton Relay as it travelled through the city.

The statistics are published today in a new report Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights which shows the positive benefits the event has had on sport and cultural participation, job creation and the regional economy.

Nigel Huddleston, Minister for the Commonwealth Games, said:

These results really underline that Birmingham 2022 was more than just the 11 days of fantastic sport. The West Midlands and the UK really got behind Birmingham 2022 and recaptured that 2012 spirit, giving the whole country the opportunity to come together and celebrate our amazing athletes.

The legacy of the Games has only begun, and I can't wait to see the region continue to reap the economic, cultural and social benefits from delivering a showstopper summer.

Ian Reid, CEO of Birmingham 2022, said:

These results are testament to a lot of hard work by an incredibly dedicated team. Birmingham and the West Midlands did itself proud and there was a real feeling of renewed opportunity right across

the city and region. Venues were packed, spectators had a fantastic experience, and local businesses felt the real-time economic benefits as tills were ringing thanks to increased visitor numbers. The legacy of these Games is just getting started and these results demonstrate the positive impact and benefits that major events deliver.

A record 1.5 million spectators bought tickets for the event, making it the most popular Commonwealth Games ever to be hosted in the UK. More than 5 million people came to Birmingham city centre during the two-week period of the Games – a 200% increase on the same period in 2021. Millions more followed on TV and online. The opening ceremony attracted 5.2 million viewers and a total of 28.6 million tuned into the Games on the BBC. The event was also streamed 57.1 million times on the BBC – a record for a Commonwealth Games.

Dame Louise Martin DBE, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, said:

Birmingham 2022 was a spectacular Games that has set a new benchmark for Commonwealth sport. It was the first to award more medals to women than men, had the largest ever integrated para programme and was the most sustainable Commonwealth Games ever hosted.

Along with special sporting moments, Birmingham 2022 will also be remembered for the way the people of Birmingham embraced the Games, creating a welcoming, electric atmosphere that inspired our Commonwealth athletes to reach new heights.

Importantly, the Games will also leave a lasting legacy, having accelerated regeneration, created jobs and skills opportunities and been a catalyst for investment to help those who need the most support to get physically active.

The significant core public investment in the Games of £778 million has accelerated investment and regeneration in Birmingham, the West Midlands and beyond. Alexander Stadium was transformed for the Games and communities, and Sandwell Aquatics Centre is providing elite and community swimmers and divers with a brand new, world-class facility.

The event also created 40,000 jobs and skills opportunities for local people, including 14,000 volunteer positions. A dedicated Jobs and Skills Academy invested over £10 million to train unemployed residents to take advantage of the Games-time roles. Six in 10 people from Birmingham and Sandwell said the Games has had a positive economic impact on the area, by supporting the local economy and raising its profile in the UK and abroad.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said:

As I reflect on the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, I can honestly say I've never felt prouder to be from the West Midlands. This summer's spectacle must represent a starting point and not a finish line. I want to see a lasting legacy for the people of the West Midlands for generations to come and it's already clear that there is immense potential to deliver just that.

We brought communities together in a moment of collective celebration, we upskilled thousands of local residents, we doubled our pipeline of inward investment leads, and – with Sandwell Aquatics Centre and the revamped Alexander Stadium in Perry Barr – we're providing a tangible legacy for future sporting superstars.

It's great news that Games sporting equipment will now be shared free of charge with local grassroots organisations and I look forward to seeing much more good news in the weeks, months and years ahead.

The Games has amplified ongoing investments in Perry Barr, including the refurbishment of the train station, wider transport improvements and the creation of up to 5,000 new homes supported by a £150 million investment by the government.

This public investment has also helped to unlock over £85 million additional funding from a range of public and third sector bodies including a £35 million investment from Sport England to deliver a physical activity legacy. As part of this work, a wide range of sports equipment used by teams and athletes during the Commonwealth Games from boxing gloves to martial arts mats and basketballs will be gifted to local sports groups and clubs across the West Midlands.

Cllr Ian Ward, Leader of Birmingham City Council, said:

This is precisely why I championed bringing the Games to Birmingham for so long. When people questioned whether we could afford to host the Commonwealth Games, I was always convinced that we simply couldn't afford not to do it.

The Games were about so much more than 11 days of world-class sport. They delivered homes, jobs, transport improvements, cultural opportunities and a collective sense of pride.

The people, communities and businesses of Birmingham rose brilliantly to the challenge and together we hosted an unforgettable festival of sport, culture, hospitality, and sheer unbridled enjoyment.

Tim Hollingsworth, CEO of Sport England, said:

The Games were a wonderful platform to create lasting impact in communities across the country – bringing us together through sport, culture, community and friendship.

Sport England's 'Uniting the Movement' strategy takes a long-term approach to challenges with activity levels – including tackling the deep-rooted inequalities that prevent some people from taking part in sport and activity. Our £35million investment into the Games targeted support to where it's most needed, in order to create inclusive opportunities for people to come together and get active in their communities – now and for years into the future.

Notes to editors

The embargoed Birmingham 2022 Highlights Report has been published on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/birmingham-2022-commonwealth-games-the-highlights>

Further Ipsos polling results

- Almost 8 in 10 (78%) people say major UK events including the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games gave people the opportunity to celebrate.
- 3 in 4 (75%) people agree that major UK events including the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games gave people the opportunity to come together nationally.
- 3 in 4 (72%) people agree that major UK events including the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games gave people the opportunity to come together in their local community.
- 2 in 3 (61%) people agree that events like the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games make them feel proud of the UK.
- 6 in 10 people in Birmingham (60%) agree that the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games has had a positive impact on the economy in

Birmingham and Sandwell.

- 6 in 10 people (58%) in Birmingham think that the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will have improved perceptions of the area, with less than 1 in 10 saying it won't.
- Nearly half of people nationally (46%) have watched, followed online, or taken part in Birmingham 2022 events.

Birmingham 2022 delivered some important Commonwealth Games firsts:

- Delivery in a record 4.5 years rather than the usual 7 years, with over half of the total delivery time in extraordinary circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- The first major global multi-sport event to have more women's medals than men's and the biggest para-sport programme in Commonwealth Games history;
- Commonwealth Games sporting debuts for basketball 3x3, wheelchair basketball 3x3 and cricket T20.

Birmingham 2022 been part of a landmark year of celebration for the UK and the Commonwealth. In June, The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations saw people and communities from across the UK, Commonwealth and beyond come together to celebrate this historic milestone, marking Her Majesty The Queen's 70 years of service. Further cultural events are continuing throughout the year through UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, with PoliNations launching in Birmingham's Victoria Square on 2 September.

Physical activity and wellbeing

Further quotes

Sahara Mohammed, Operations Manager of the Impact Fitness Academy said:

The Commonwealth Games being in Birmingham were brilliant for showing the amazing community we have in our city.

At Impact, we focus on developing children not only in their wrestling and boxing ability, but in helping them become more confident and resilient people for the community and beyond.

We welcome in people from all backgrounds, particularly those from disadvantaged communities, and give them a place to develop their talents and passions. Hopefully, we'll see one of our members in the next Commonwealth Games!

Alex Mee, Cluster General Manager at Bloc Hotels, said:

As the first business to achieve Games Ready accreditation, we were thrilled to play our part by offering a warm welcome to visitors from all over the Commonwealth. The hotel was bustling and the atmosphere throughout the Games was incredible, with our Games Ready trained staff playing an important role in providing local knowledge and advice to help guests make the most of their stay.

Bloc Hotels is incredibly proud of its Birmingham roots and the Games provided us with the opportunity to show our guests, and the rest of the world, why.

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Business and Tourism Programme (BATP) is the first economic legacy programme of its kind aligned to the Games, designed to strengthen bilateral ties between the UK and Commonwealth markets.

Gideon Orovwiroro, Chief Operations Officer at Kora, said:

Through BATP, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games provided a valuable gateway into the UK and West Midlands, facilitating conversations with the region's investment promotion agency, the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC). Their support was key to our expansion, in the form of our new Birmingham office, and will enable many more businesses and individuals to use our innovative payments infrastructure.

Susan Lapworth appointed as Office for Students Chief Executive

Press release

Susan Lapworth has been appointed as Chief Executive of the Office for

Students until the end of August 2026.



Susan Lapworth has been appointed as Chief Executive of the Office for Students (OfS) following an open appointment process conducted by the Department for Education.

Susan has served as OfS interim Chief Executive since May 2022, prior to which she was its Director of Regulation, and has worked in the higher education sector for 19 years.

The Office for Students acts as the independent regulator for Higher Education in England. The Chief Executive is responsible for setting and delivering the strategic vision for how the OfS will achieve its aims of championing the interests of every student, whatever their background, and making sure that all students have a fulfilling higher education experience.

The appointment will take effect from 1 September 2022 until the end of August 2026.

Susan will work closely with the OfS board, Government and higher education stakeholders to deliver the OfS's regulatory priorities for the next four years.

Secretary of State for Education James Cleverly said:

As interim Chief Executive of the Office for Students, Susan has demonstrated her leadership skills and put students' interests first. She has extensive knowledge and experience of our world-class higher education sector, so I'm pleased to make this appointment.

I look forward to seeing her play a pivotal role in improving graduate outcomes and ensuring that all students receive the high-quality academic experience they deserve.

Chief Executive of the OfS Susan Lapworth said:

I am delighted to have been appointed as the OfS's chief executive. English universities and colleges make an enormous contribution to

society and individuals, through teaching, research and work in their communities.

This complex and diverse sector would not have a regulator if its work was unimportant and I look forward to continuing to work with the excellent team at the OfS to ensure that students from all backgrounds can access and succeed on high quality courses which leave them well prepared for life after graduation.

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