Press release: Asda has complied with its commitment to clear pricing

After completing a review of Asda's improved approach to clearer pricing on offers, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) welcomes the steps taken by the supermarket to make promotions clearer.

Last summer the CMA, working in partnership with Trading Standards Services, identified that some promotional pricing used by supermarkets could mislead shoppers. The CMA followed up these issues with a number of supermarkets and their trading standards partners. The CMA raised specific issues with Asda, and Asda subsequently agreed to make changes to the way offers were advertised.

A year on, having reviewed and independently verified the data around these changes, the CMA is content that Asda has stuck to its commitments to clearly label offers and discounts.

Asda's changes mean that the supermarket does not display the 'now' price for longer than it displayed the original ('was') price.

There have also been changes to multibuy offers, to ensure that these always offer a saving when compared with a single product before the offer.

The CMA welcomes the positive changes made by Asda and is satisfied that Asda's pricing is clearer for shoppers. This means that the CMA has formally closed its case.

Further details about the CMA's investigation can be found on the case page.

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter @CMAgovuk, Facebook, Flickr and LinkedIn.

2. The CMA's work with supermarkets follows its response to a super-complaint made by Which? on 21 April 2015 regarding pricing practices in the groceries market.

3. The CMA has not made a finding on whether supermarkets' pricing and promotional practices have breached consumer law. The CMA or other enforcers may take enforcement action if there is evidence that pricing and promotional practices breach consumer law. Only a court can conclude whether a particular practice infringes the law.

4. The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) came into force on 26 May 2008 and implemented the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive 2005/29/EC into UK law. The CPRs contain a general prohibition against unfair commercial practices, and specific prohibitions against misleading actions, misleading omissions and aggressive commercial practices. The CPRs are enforceable through the civil and criminal courts.
5. Trading Standards Services partners carry out responsibilities in relation to a particular business. Businesses can choose to form a partnership with a local Trading Standards Services (known as a primary authority). The primary authority scheme is a statutory scheme, administered by the Better Regulation Delivery Office within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). One forum in which primary authority officers meet is the Primary Authority Supermarkets Group.
6. BEIS welcomed the CMA's response to the super-complaint and set out some proposals relating to improving unit pricing for groceries, in line with the CMA's recommendations.
7. The CMA also made a submission to the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's consultation on the Pricing Practices Guide (PPG). CTSI published revised Guidance for Traders on Pricing Practices in December 2016.
8. Enquiries should be directed to Rebecca Cassar (Rebecca.Cassar@cma.gsi.gov.uk, 020 3738 6633).
9. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6798.

News story: Sir Mark Walport shares vision for UK Research and Innovation

Professor Sir Mark Walport, Chief Executive Designate of UK Research and Innovation, has given a speech outlining the vision, objectives and next steps in development for the organisation.

Be the best research and innovation agency

UK Research and Innovation will be formed in April 2018, bringing together the Research Councils, Innovate UK and a new body, Research England. The organisation’s ambition is to be the best research and innovation agency in the world.

New approaches needed to deal with disruptive change

Speaking in Westminster to a broad audience of research and innovation stakeholders, Sir Mark highlighted the strengths of the UK’s current research and innovation system and bodies. He also detailed the challenges and opportunities arising from disruptive change in society, technology, research and business that mean the UK needs to develop new approaches and structures.

Sir Mark commented:

> We are building on component parts of the funding landscape which, individually, are very strong, but there is considerable untapped potential for the whole to be much more than the sum of the parts.
>
> We need to stimulate and reward audacity, ambition and agility, where imagination and innovation are actively encouraged and important proposals do not fall foul of artificial divides.

Measured by the impact it delivers

Sir Mark explained that the success of UK Research and Innovation will ultimately be measured through the impact it delivers: through pushing the frontiers of human knowledge, delivering economic impact and creating better jobs and by supporting society to become stronger, healthier and more resilient.

View the full UK Research and Innovation announcement

[UK Research and Innovation Live Stream]

[Speech: Exceeding expectations]

Dr Alan Hassey provides an update on the work of the National Data Guardian’s Panel on understanding people’s expectations on data sharing

Last December I wrote an article about some work that we've been doing on the National Data Guardian's (NDG) Panel.

We've been looking at how health and care information needs to be shared for people's individual care and how to ensure there are no surprises for patients and service users about this.

The article discussed implied consent, which is routinely used by health and care professionals as the legal basis to share information about patients and service users to make sure that individuals get the care they need. The article was called 'reasonable expectations'. This was a reference to the importance of ensuring that when information is shared on the basis of 'implied consent', it's important that this is done in a way that the patient or service user would reasonably expect.

The piece was published to provoke debate about an important issue, to open up discussion and help us decide whether any further work was needed to look at this subject. The response to the piece exceeded my own expectations.

It certainly did stimulate discussion and we are very grateful to all those who took time to reflect and respond. The viewpoints expressed were wide ranging. There were some who felt that the boundaries described to the use of implied consent were not restrictive enough. At the other end of the spectrum, some argued that the limitations described in the article would curb the flow of information in a way that would be against individuals' best interests.

The range of opinions reflects the continuing variation in understanding of how implied consent can and should be used in health and care. This is understandable. After all, a key question here is whether information is being used and shared in a way that meets people's reasonable expectations. And those expectations can and will vary and be influenced by a variety of factors. Perhaps most importantly, what efforts have been made to inform people about how information might be used and shared.

The need for more work to reach a consensus on this issue was highlighted in the 2013 Information Governance Review led by Dame Fiona Caldicott prior to her appointment as National Data Guardian. It issued a recommendation for a piece of work to bring together the health and social care professional regulators to achieve this, which was echoed in the report published a year later tracking progress.

In April this year, the General Medical Council's (GMC) revised confidentiality guidance came into force. This was updated after extensive consultation, during which the GMC heard that doctors wanted more clarity on the circumstances in which they can rely on implied consent to share patient information for direct care.

There are resonances between what the GMC revised guidance says about implied consent and the thinking that the NDG panel has been doing. The guidance will be very helpful to doctors on the ground, but we believe there is still a need for a greater consensus across the whole of the health and social care system about how to ensure that information is shared in a way that aligns with people's reasonable expectations.

To progress this, the NDG will be testing with members of the public what their expectations are around data sharing, what the boundaries should be and think through how these expectations should be informed and assessed. To do this we will be undertaking a piece of public engagement work with partners – we will provide more details on our web pages later this summer. To help shape the questions and issues that should be put to members of the public, we will be holding a seminar with Sheffield University later this month to bring together clinicians, information experts, commissioners, lawyers and ethicists.

We're approaching this with an open mind, although I believe that running through this work will still be that vital test – would people reasonably expect how information about them is used and shared?

Press release: Foreign investors see opportunities in Wales

Foreign investors continue to see investment opportunities in Wales as new figures published today by the Department for International Trade showed the country attracted 85 inward investment projects in 2016-17.

This led to over 2,500 new jobs being created and nearly 9,000 safeguarded providing security and stability to thousands of families.

In another record year, the UK attracted 2,265 foreign direct investment projects which led to the creation of nearly 15,000 new jobs across the country.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

> The latest set of figures demonstrate the need to seek and drive further international business investment in Wales – bringing jobs, prosperity and opportunity for communities. That is why I am fully committed to ensuring Welsh businesses are central to UK Government trade missions.
>
> Seeking new markets and investment partners will enable us to land the major deals that will grow the Welsh economy and help to forge lucrative relationships around the world. Our departure from the EU is an opportunity to step up to our commitment to attracting inward investment – not step away from it.

> Enterprises – whether large or small – can be assured that the UK Government and the Department for International Trade is ambitious for Wales and is committed to doing all it can to provide certainty and stability. We must continue to make Wales an attractive destination, matching the commitment shown by companies like Aston Martin, in securing sustained investment for the long-term.

International Trade Secretary, Liam Fox, said:

> Wales with its renowned pharmaceutical, life sciences and creative sector industries continues to be a draw for foreign investors who want to take advantage of the expertise this country has to offer. As an international economic department, the Department for International Trade will continue to promote the UK as a whole to potential investors and support the Business Wales to attract inward investment.

The figures published today show that the US retains the top spot accounting for 577 projects of all inward investment projects to the UK. China (including Hong Kong) remains in second place with 160 projects and last year's third place India is joined by Australia and New Zealand in joint third place with 127 projects each.

Demonstrating the diversity of the UK's economy, sectors that performed particularly well include technology, renewable energy, life sciences and the creative industries which all saw an increase in the number of projects.

As part of the government's drive to attract inward investment, in January this year the department launched a major global marketing campaign – Invest in GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland – to promote the UK's offering to international investors.

To date, the campaign has generated 1.4 million page views of the invest section of the great.gov.uk digital service and recorded over 540 prospective investor enquiries.

Notes to Editors

- The department records wider types of inward investment projects, including mergers and acquisitions and those that are not publicly announced by foreign investors
- Therefore, the FDI project figures reported are different from those reported by external organisations, such as EY and FT, who track FDI project flows mostly based on investment announcements
- These external organisations report on calendar year, while the department's statistics are for financial year
- EY's UK Attractiveness Survey 2017 ranked the UK first in Europe for FDI projects in total

Press release: New figures show UK attracts more investment than ever

Figures published by the Department for International Trade have today revealed that the UK attracted more foreign direct investment (FDI) projects than ever before for the year 2016 to 2017.

With more than 2,200 projects recorded, the post-referendum figures show an increase of 2% on the previous year. The data also shows that 75,226 new jobs were created, and 32,672 safeguarded, amounting to over 2,000 jobs per week across the country.

Overall, the UK is the number one destination for inward investment in Europe, with the technology, renewable energy, life sciences and creative industries all seeing an increase in the number of projects.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, said:

> Almost one year on since the EU referendum, the UK continues to attract record levels of inward investment and remains extremely attractive to foreign investors.
>
> As an international economic department, we continue to promote the strengths of the UK as a great inward investment destination, with an open, liberal economy, world-class talent and business-friendly taxation.

Overview

Of the record number of projects that the UK attracted, the Department for International Trade helped to secure over 80% of them.

The US retains the top spot investing in 577 projects in the UK, with China (including Hong Kong) remaining in second place with 160 projects. In third place is France with 131 followed by last year's third place India and Australia and New Zealand with 127 projects each.

Government support for investment

As part of the government's drive to attract inward investment, in January this year the department launched a major global marketing campaign – Invest in GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland – to promote the UK's offering to international investors.

To date, the campaign has generated 1.4 million page views of the invest section of the great.gov.uk digital service and recorded over 540 prospective investor enquiries. It is already producing positive results with Chinese e-commerce company Kuajing.com opening a London office and UpCloud, a Finnish cloud hosting company, setting up a UK base with plans in place to expand this – both investment decisions that were made after engaging with the campaign.

Investment across the UK

Looking across the UK, inward investment continues to spread to the regions and devolved administrations:

- the Northern Powerhouse attracted 348 projects, creating nearly 15,000 new jobs
- the Midlands Engine attracted 223 projects which resulted in 8,341 new jobs being created
- through 183 FDI projects, 5,547 new jobs were created in Scotland
- Northern Ireland secured 34 projects, which created a total of 1,622 new jobs
- Wales attracted 85 projects, with 2,581 new jobs created

Five reasons why the UK is a great place for overseas businesses to invest:

1. Opportunities: More than 420,000 new businesses set up in 2015 in the UK [Source: BankSearch].
2. Ease of doing business: UK is seventh in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business ranking (2017).
3. FDI confidence: the UK comes fourth in A.T. Kearney's FDI Confidence Index in 2016, up one place on 2015.
4. Competitive tax environment: Tax system ranked in the top 10 most business friendly in the world according to the October 2016 World Bank: Ease of Doing Business report.
5. World-class talent and skills: In 2015 to 2016, the UK was the top-rated major European economy for growing, retaining and attracting global talent [Source: Insead, Human Capital Leadership Institute: The Global Talent Competitive Index 2015-16].

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