

Facebook and eBay pledge to combat trading in fake reviews

In a win for online shoppers, Facebook and eBay have signed up to agreements to better identify, investigate and respond to fake and misleading reviews after the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) told them to address this issue.

More than three-quarters of people are influenced by reviews when they shop online, and billions of pounds are spent every year based on write-ups of products or services. Fake and misleading reviews are illegal under consumer protection law. Websites have a responsibility to ensure that this unlawful and harmful content isn't advertised or sold through their platforms.

In response to the CMA highlighting its concerns about the trade of fake and misleading reviews in the summer, Facebook has removed 188 groups and disabled 24 user accounts, and eBay has permanently banned 140 users.

Both organisations have also pledged to put measures in place that will help prevent this type of content from appearing in the future. As part of this, Facebook has agreed to introduce more robust systems to detect and remove such content. eBay has improved its existing filters to better identify and block listings for the sale or trade of online reviews.

During a further sweep of relevant platforms the CMA also highlighted new examples of fake and misleading reviews for sale via Instagram, and reported these to Facebook which operates Instagram. Facebook has committed to investigate the issue. The CMA will be seeking a commitment from Facebook to take action to tackle these further issues.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Chief Executive, said:

Fake reviews are really damaging to shoppers and businesses alike. Millions of people base their shopping decisions on reviews, and if these are misleading or untrue, then shoppers could end up being misled into buying something that isn't right for them – leaving businesses who play by the rules missing out.

We're pleased that Facebook and eBay are doing the right thing by committing to tackle this problem and helping to keep their sites free from posts selling fake reviews.

This CMA action is part of a wider programme of work tackling fake and misleading online reviews, which will include looking into the role of review sites.

The CMA is not alleging that Facebook or eBay are intentionally allowing this content to appear on their websites and is pleased that both companies have

fully co-operated.

Notes to Editors

1. The [Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008](#) (CPRs) contain a general prohibition on unfair commercial practices, requiring traders to exercise professional diligence towards consumers. They also prohibit commercial practices that are misleading or aggressive and set out 31 'banned practices' which will be unfair in all circumstances, regardless of their effect on consumers. For example, it will always be unfair where traders falsely claim or create the impression that they are not acting for their business purposes, or where they falsely represent themselves as a consumer.
2. Data on the number of people who use online reviews is available in [Ofcom's Adults' media use and attitudes report, 2017](#)
3. Information about the CMA's previous work on online reviews and endorsements is available on the [online reviews and endorsements page](#)
4. All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk, or by phone on 020 3738 6460.
5. More information can be found on the [fake and misleading online reviews case page](#).

[Lord-Lieutenant of Kent: 8 January 2020](#)

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restrictions

Addrees Ahmed (46) will be joined on the disqualified directors register by his wife, Robina Shaheen (42), also of Birmingham, after she allowed her husband to control the payroll company. Robina will be banned for six years.

Their bans came into effect on 7 January and both Addrees Ahemd and Robina Shaheen cannot, without the permission of the court, be involved in the formation, promotion or management of a company, directly or indirectly.

Academy Management Services Limited was incorporated in August 2016 and Robina Shaheen was listed as one of the registered directors, while Addrees Ahemd was not appointed a director and never was during the company's existence.

Addrees Ahmed was made bankrupt upon his own petition in December 2016 and that meant, amongst other restrictions, that he was restricted from acting as a director of a limited company.

But this did not stop Address Ahmed from acting as a director of the payroll company, while his wife played no role in the management of Academy Management Services and instead passed the control over to her husband.

In April 2017, the company entered into insolvency proceedings and despite having a duty to co-operate with the appointed Liquidator of the company, Addrees Ahmed failed to maintain and/or deliver up Academy Management Services' books and records.

This failure has meant that the Liquidator and the Insolvency Service have been unable to establish why the payroll company failed to disclose to the tax authorities £91,510 worth of funds paid to Academy Management Services by a third party for contracted work.

In signing his undertaking, Addrees Ahmed did not dispute that he acted in capacity as a director of Academy Management Services while being disqualified as he was bankrupt at the time and did not have permission from the court. Addrees Ahmed also did not dispute that he failed to deliver adequate accounting records to the Liquidator.

And Robina Shaheen did not dispute in her undertaking that she breached her duties to the payroll company by not playing an active management roll and passing control to her husband, while also failing to promote the success of Academy Management Services, failing to exercise independent judgment and failing to exercise reasonable care, skill or diligence.

Dave Elliott, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

Both Addrees and Robina are culpable for their actions. Addrees knew of his restrictions, whilst Robina as a registered director failed in her duties to ensure the payroll company was managed

properly.

We will continue to investigate the conduct of directors and where there is sufficient evidence, as there was in this case, instigate disqualifications proceedings in the public interest.

Addrees Ahmed is of Birmingham and his date of birth is 21 January 1973.

Robina Shaheen is of Birmingham and her date of birth is 17 August 1977.

Academy Management Services Limited. (company registration number: 10319166).

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

Guidance on the main statutory consequences flowing from a [bankruptcy restrictions order or undertaking](#).

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Foreign Secretary statement on attack on Iraqi military bases](#)

We condemn this attack on Iraqi military bases hosting Coalition – including British – forces.

We are concerned by reports of casualties and use of ballistic missiles.

We urge Iran not to repeat these reckless and dangerous attacks, and instead to pursue urgent de-escalation.

A war in the Middle East would only benefit Daesh and other terrorist groups.

[Raising expectations of children and](#)

parents, high standards for teachers and tackling bad behaviour: how schools in 'left behind' areas can improve

In [Fight or flight? How 'stuck' schools are overcoming isolation](#), Ofsted defines stuck schools as those that have not been judged good or better since September 2006, and have had at least 4 full inspections during that time. Currently, the 415 schools that fall into that definition serve 210,000 pupils but have potentially left 2 whole cohorts of children without a good education.

Stuck schools say that they struggle with a combination of issues: isolation, meaning it's hard to recruit and keep good teachers; poor parental motivation, meaning children are not encouraged to learn or even attend school at all; and unstable pupil populations, meaning the year groups are constantly disrupted.

However, we found that other stuck schools with all of these issues were able to 'unstick' themselves by focusing on a few core areas: high academic standards, getting behaviour right and improving governance.

Stuck schools are typically in deprived areas, where there might have been a decline in traditional industry and a lack of cultural opportunities. They are often in towns or small cities with a neighbouring major city that is more attractive to teachers, and has more jobs and opportunities. Sometimes, they are simply isolated in very remote areas. The 3 areas with the highest proportion of stuck schools are Derby, Southend-on-Sea and Darlington.

Ofsted's research found that some stuck schools had a deep and embedded school culture, resistant to change, with staff not believing that it was possible to overcome the factors that stood in the way of children receiving a great education. Other schools were chaotic and continually changing. For example, one school had been under the leadership of 14 different headteachers in 10 years.

Stuck schools have been inundated with improvement initiatives from central and local government over the years, few of which have proved successful. By contrast, schools that have improved have been able to identify their specific needs and get support tailored to those needs. It's clear that identifying what has gone wrong is vital to then getting it right.

Ofsted is well placed to help these stuck schools diagnose the issues through its new inspection framework, and so to help the school and its partners to get on with improving the school. But we also need to increase the depth of diagnosis we give these schools. We are recommending that the government funds Ofsted to trial a longer, deeper inspection approach with some of these

schools, with the aim not of passing judgement but of enabling support to improve. We have made good progress with the Department for Education already.

HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

Stuck schools are facing a range of societal problems such as cultural isolation, a jobs market skewed towards big cities and low expectations from parents. However, we have shown that schools in these places can still be good or better by holding teachers to high standards, tackling bad behaviour and getting the right leadership in place. Our inspectors have found that the majority of schools in challenging areas are providing children with a good education that sets them up to succeed in later life.

What the remaining stuck schools need is tailored, specific and pragmatic advice that suits their circumstances – not a carousel of consultants. They are asking Ofsted to do more to help, and we agree.