

## Legal restrictions on advertising in the UK

In the UK, US, and other countries, there are legal rules and standards for advertising, which require truthful advertisements in order to protect consumers.

These rules often apply to religious advertising, especially when it relates to healing of physical conditions. Therefore branches of the Church of Christ, Scientist should be aware of these rules and how they may impact public advertisements of church services, Christian Science lectures, Reading Room activities, etc.

The Mother Church has learned recently that the advertising rules are stricter in the UK than in other countries and have been more strictly enforced since 2012. In 2012 a Christian Science lecture advert in the UK was cited as violating these rules because a claim of "healing with scientific certainty" was viewed as an improper claim or promise of physical healing. In general, a violation could create adverse publicity, and repeated violations could result in restrictions on future advertisements. In this case there was a citation, but no fine was levied, nor was the citation publicly posted on a government website because the branch took corrective action right away. These advertising rules have also been enforced against other Christian groups for similar claims.

In the UK, non-broadcast advertising is regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) under the Committee of Advertising Practice code (CAP Code). These include print ads such as in newspapers, magazines, brochures, leaflets, mailings, flyers, posters, and signs, and electronic ads, such as on websites and in emails.

To summarize, the main principles of these ASA rules with respect to religious advertising are that:

- One should not make claims, promises, or inferences of healing of a physical or mental condition through prayer.
- One should especially not mention healing of specific physical conditions, or set an expectation of receiving physical healing through prayer.

(Note: These rules govern advertisements, but not the message delivered at the event itself, such as the religious content at a church service or lecture.)

For information and advice about the ASA rules and how these rules may apply to you, please refer to the rules themselves, which can be found at <http://www.cap.org.uk/Advertising-Codes/Non-broadcast-HTML.aspx>

Guidance specific to rules related to religion and spiritual healing is available at <http://www.copyadvice.org.uk/Ad-Advice/Advice-Online-Database/Religion-and-spiritual-healing.aspx>

If one is in doubt as to whether or not a given advertisement is within the ASA rules, one may submit the advert in advance to the ASA for preliminary advice with a quick turn-around. Information about this service can be found at <http://www.copyadvice.org.uk/Ad-Advice/Bespoke-Copy-Advice.aspx>