

22nd May 2010: Advertising Abortion on TV - Marie Stopes finds a loophole

Marie Stopes International has announced that Channel 4 will broadcast abortion adverts from 24th May. According to the Daily Mail, the Telegraph and other newspapers they are exploiting a loophole in the law which allows them to do so as a 'Not for Profit' organisation

When the Broadcasting Committee of the Advertising Standards Authority sought views on a proposal to allow this type of advertising on TV and Radio, many people raised a number of points with them:

- BPAS and Marie Stopes perform thousands of abortions each year paid for by the NHS. The extra money to pay for expensive advertising on TV and Radio would no doubt become part of the overhead in running these organisations. This means that it would be found from the charge to the NHS of carrying out abortions. As a taxpayer, not only do I pay for abortions on the NHS, I would also be paying to advertise for them.
- I do not want my TV viewing polluted with people hawking their pregnancy services (aka abortion services) no matter how 'tastefully' presented. And no doubt it will be tastefully presented. All the best advertising brains will be focused on how to present the product. Such advertisements will give a moral equivalence to shopping or buying any other service.
- The ASA believes that advertisements should avoid giving offence. Advertisements by such pregnancy advice services will give offence to me, and to others who have moral and religious principles.
- Advertisements for smoking are not allowed on TV or Radio. So why should advertisements for pregnancy services / abortion or condoms be allowed?

A further point: last year the ASA sought the views of interested organisations and the general public about this issue. Now we find that Marie Stopes have found a loophole. Was last year's exercise a waste of public money? If not then MSI are breaking the law. If MSI are within their rights, ASA are to be **censured** for wasting public money.

On the Channel 4 website there is a quote that:

The main regulations are the BCAP Television Advertising Standards (TAS) Code and Rules on the Scheduling of Television Advertisements, the Ofcom Broadcasting Code, and Ofcom Rules on the Amount and Distribution of Advertising. These rules are framed to ensure that advertisements are 'legal, decent, honest and truthful' and do not mislead, cause harm or serious or **widespread offence** to viewers.

Does Channel 4 really believe that advertisements of this type are not going to cause widespread offence to viewers?

Last year when the ASA sought the opinions of the populace, it was taken aback by the 40,000 responses it received.

What can we do?

Our voice counts! People who feel strongly about this should write to Channel 4 Chief Executive

Mr David Abraham
Chief Executive
Channel Four Television Corporation
124 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2TX

They could also write to the Broadcasting Committee of the Advertising Standards Authority. The address is:

Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice
Advertising Standards Authority
Mid City Place
71 High Holborn
London WC1V 6QT
Telephone 020 7492 2200
Fax 020 7404 3404
Email: consult@cap.org.uk

It would be reasonable to ask why they wasted public money last year seeking the views of organisations about advertising these services on radio and TV if Marie Stopes are allowed to do it anyway?

Finally, they need to write or email their local MP. Email addresses can be found at the website <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

And the address is

Name of MP
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

Our local MPs are richard.drax.mp@parliament.uk or letwino@parliament.uk

Other Useful Links

Ed West of the Daily Telegraph has an excellent article in his [blog](#)¹ of 20th May

The Daily Mail also has an on-line poll. [Click here](#)² to get to this site where you can cast your vote.

¹ <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/edwest/100040371/britains-first-abortion-television-advert-will-be-a-new-low/>

² <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1279816/Marie-Stopes-First-UK-TV-advert-selling-abortion--pro-life-groups-demand-ban.html>