

News story: CMA publishes Annual Report for 2017/18

The [report](#), which the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has laid before Parliament, looks back on work carried out during 2017/18, and highlights the impact the organisation has made over that year for households and businesses across the UK.

The CMA carried out competition enforcement investigations to protect vulnerable customers, crack down on cartels and tackle illegal online practices. It used its full array of powers flexibly and secured important enforcement outcomes across a range of sectors, including [online auction platforms](#), [residential estate agency services](#) and [supplies of household fuels](#).

Through its consumer enforcement, much of which focused on digital commerce, the CMA addressed unfair practices in markets as diverse as [secondary ticketing](#), hotel booking and car hire. This includes securing landmark [changes for online gambling players](#), with four leading operators formally committing to stop unfair online promotions.

The CMA built on previous years' improvements to its merger control, operating with increased pace and with more targeted interventions. It carried out several major merger investigations, including Tesco/Booker, Wood/Amec and [Fox/Sky](#). In the latter, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport accepted the CMA's recommendation that the anticipated acquisition was not in the public interest due to media plurality concerns and has [required the sale of Sky News to Disney](#).

The CMA carried out an in-depth review into one market long central to people's lives and during a period of life when they can be at their most vulnerable (care homes), calling for urgent reform of the sector so that people get the support they need in their old age. This was alongside another review into a rapidly-evolving area of the economy ([digital comparison tools](#)), in which it set clear ground rules for all online comparison tools on issues such as communicating how they use people's personal data and clearly displaying important information like price and product description. Following both these market studies, the CMA launched enforcement action and [secured important policy changes](#) by major care home providers and over £2 million in compensation to a large number of residents who had paid significant upfront fees.

Millions of households and businesses are seeing the benefits from the CMA's market-wide reviews of the [£10 billion energy sector](#) and the [£35 billion retail banking sector](#), with a range of innovative and important remedies coming into effect. For example, four million energy customers on pre-payment meters are paying lower bills thanks to a price cap and smaller businesses are no longer trapped into expensive auto-rollover contracts. Banks must now support the tech-enabled Open Banking revolution, it is easier for customers

to switch bank and banks must warn customers if they are about to slip into an unarranged overdraft.

Over the year, there was a step-change in the level of co-operation between the CMA and sector regulators, as shown in the latest [Annual Concurrency Report](#). The CMA has, or in some cases continues to carry out significant work alongside other regulators, including the market investigation into [investment consultants](#) following a referral from the Financial Conduct Authority. Almost all the regulators with powers to enforce competition law have now launched an investigation of their own since the start of the new concurrency regime in 2014.

The CMA remains a strong voice for competition, within the UK and overseas, and is preparing to play a bigger role on the world stage following the UK's exit from the EU. Planning for the new arrangements, which include a significantly increased merger and antitrust review role, as well as a new responsibility to enforce State aid rules, is an important priority for the organisation. The CMA is expanding to ensure it is ready for these new responsibilities, including by opening a larger office in Edinburgh.