

# CMA lifts the lid on impact of algorithms

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is [now seeking evidence](#) from academics and industry experts on the potential harms to competition and consumers caused by the deliberate or unintended misuse of algorithms. It is also looking for intelligence on specific issues with particular firms that the CMA could examine and consider for future action. The research and feedback will inform the CMA's future work in digital markets, including its programme on analysing algorithms and the operation of the [new Digital Markets Unit](#) (DMU), and the brand-new regulatory regime that the DMU will oversee.

Much of people's lives is spent online, be it consuming news, socialising, dating, ordering food, or arranging travel. Many of these online activities and the markets that underpin them could not exist without algorithms, often in the form of artificial intelligence, and these have enabled considerable gains in efficiency and effectiveness. However, they can negatively impact consumers in various ways.

Algorithms can be used to personalise services in ways that are difficult to detect, leading to search results that can be manipulated to reduce choice or artificially change consumers' perceptions. An example of this is misleading messages which suggest a product is in short supply.

Companies can also use algorithms to change the way they rank products on websites, preferencing their own products and excluding competitors. More complex algorithms could aid collusion between businesses without firms directly sharing information. This could lead to sustained higher prices for products and services.

The majority of algorithms used by private firms online are currently subject to little or no regulatory oversight and the research concludes that more monitoring and action is required by regulators, including the CMA. The CMA has already considered the impact of algorithms on competition and consumers in previous investigations, for example [monitoring the pricing practices of online travel agents](#).

## **Kate Brand, Director of Data Science, said:**

"Algorithms play an important role online but, if not used responsibly, can potentially do a tremendous amount of harm to consumers and businesses. Assessing this harm is the first step towards being able to ensure consumers are protected and complements our wider work in digital markets to promote greater competition and innovation online.

"We want to receive as much information as possible from stakeholders in academia, the competition community, firms, civil society and third sector organisations in order to understand where the harm is occurring and what the

most effective regulatory approach is to protect consumers in the future.”

This work is being led by the CMA’s Data, Technology and Analytics (DaTA) unit, the largest team of data and technology experts in any competition or consumer agency worldwide.

As well as playing a vital role in informing the work of the new regulator, the DMU, it will play a key role in supporting our wider [Digital Markets Strategy](#) to protect consumers in dynamic markets online. The CMA intends to work closely with the ICO and Ofcom, through the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, in taking this work forward.

For more information, visit the [algorithms paper](#) web page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk).

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## [HMRC appoints new Director General for customer service](#)

News story

Myrtle Lloyd appointed as Director General for Customer Service Group.



Following an external recruitment process and approval from the Prime Minister, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has announced that the new Director General for Customer Service Group will be Myrtle Lloyd.

Myrtle is currently Chief Operating Officer at Her Majesty’s Passport Office, as well as Registrar General for England and Wales. Myrtle is also the Head of Profession at the Home Office for operational delivery.

Deputy Chief Executive and Second Permanent Secretary, Angela MacDonald, said:

I'm delighted that Myrtle will be joining us to lead the Customer Service Group, bringing with her a wealth of experience and expertise. 2021 will no doubt continue to bring many challenges to the way we work and deliver as an organisation, and Myrtle is very well-placed to help us rise to those challenges. I'd like to thank Karl Khan for his tenure as interim Director General, and his contribution to our Executive Committee over the past 5 months.

Myrtle Lloyd said:

I'm really looking forward to joining colleagues in HMRC and taking on the leadership of Customer Service Group. HMRC has delivered brilliantly during the pandemic, and it will be a privilege to experience that professionalism and excellence first hand. I also look forward to meeting new colleagues on the Executive Committee and joining Angela and Jim in leading the department through the next chapter of HMRC's story.

Myrtle will join HMRC on 1 March and will be based in Liverpool.

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**[37th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Mauritania](#)**



The United Kingdom recognises Mauritania's commitment to improving access to education at the primary and secondary level. We urge the Government to ensure that girls' equal access to twelve years quality education is at the forefront of their efforts in this regard.

We note Mauritania's cooperation with the UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations to provide protection for refugees and migrants.

We recommend that Mauritania:

1. Increases efforts to end all forms of slavery and discrimination, especially based on caste or ethnicity, and investigates and prosecutes traffickers and those holding people in slavery.
2. Adheres to existing international frameworks to protect migrants and refugees, including those attempting to travel to the Canary Islands who land in Mauritania.
3. Adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections.

Thank you.

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## Attorney General appoints Andrew T. Cayley as Chief Inspector of HMCPSI

The Attorney General, the Rt. Hon. Suella Braverman QC MP has appointed Andrew T. Cayley CMG QC as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI).

As part of the recruitment process, Mr. Cayley was subject to a pre-appointment hearing with the Justice Select Committee on Thursday 14 January. The committee recommended Mr. Cayley's appointment. He is expected to take up post on 1 April 2021.

Andrew T. Cayley was the Director of Service Prosecutions from 2013 to 2020. He led the Service Prosecuting Authority through major reforms and the Service Justice Review. From 2009 to 2013 he was the United Nations Chief International Co-Prosecutor of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Here he was responsible for prosecuting the leadership of the Khmer Rouge for the genocide, extermination and murder of up to two million of their citizens between 1975 and 1979.

From 1995 to 2007, he was Prosecuting Council and Senior Prosecuting Counsel at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). At the ICTY he was co-counsel in a case that secured the court's first conviction for genocide regarding events at Srebrenica in Bosnia-Herzegovina in July 1995; he also led for the prosecution in several other high-profile cases involving various aspects of the Yugoslav conflict. Also at the ICC, Mr Cayley led the investigation and pre-trial proceedings regarding allegations of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since 1 July 2002 in Darfur, Republic of Sudan.

Mr Cayley first qualified as a Solicitor of the Senior Courts in 1989, transferring to the English and Welsh Bar in 2007. He is a Governing Bencher of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple. He was appointed Companion of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George for services to human rights and international criminal law in 2014, and appointed Queens Counsel in 2012.

Commenting on the announcement, Attorney General the Rt. Hon. Suella Braverman QC MP said:

I'm pleased to announce Mr Cayley as Chief Inspector. His role is crucial to driving improvements across the justice system especially for victims. I'm confident that Andrew's extensive prosecutorial and leadership experience will stand him in good stead to successfully lead the Inspectorate. I look forward to working with him during his tenure.

Commenting on the announcement, Andrew T. Cayley CMG QC said:

I am honoured that the Attorney General has appointed me as Chief Inspector, a role that is so vital to improving the criminal justice system and reinforcing public trust in it. I look forward to leading the team in delivering a comprehensive and high-quality inspection programme.

Mr Cayley has been appointed following a fair and open assessment process conducted in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. He donated £10,000 to the Conservative Party in 2019.

### **Role of HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service, the head of HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) is appointed by the Attorney General. This is a fixed-term public appointment. The Chief Inspector acts independently of the Attorney General and of government.

HMCPPI has a statutory duty to inspect the operation of the CPS and SFO and report to the Attorney General, who superintends both organisations. Its reports play an important role in effective superintendence. The operational relationship between the Attorney General and the Chief Inspector is set out in a protocol agreed between the Law Officers (the Attorney General and Solicitor General) and the Chief Inspector.

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## **[Grenfell Tower site update: summary and Q&A from 8 December 2020 online event](#)**

At our online event on 8 December 2020, we updated attendees on the safety works taking place at the site. We also explained the principal contractor procurement currently underway, and how the community can be involved in the process.

We shared details of how the community can have their say about the Tower and the future memorial, as well as giving a reminder about the health and wellbeing services available.

Event attendees were able to post questions to our panel from the Grenfell site management and programme team, and a member of the local NHS health team.