

Advert claiming cure through prayer is banned

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The Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) has banned an advert by Healing on the Streets - Bath (HOTS) that claimed healing through prayer.

The HOTS website stated "Our vision is to Promote Christian Healing as a daily life style for every believer, through demonstration, training and equipping. We are working in unity, from numerous churches outside the four walls of the building, In order to Heal the sick ".

The [ASA ruled](#) that 'A video on the website made claims that HOTS volunteers had successfully prayed for healing for people with cancer, fibromyalgia, back pain, kidney pain, hip pain, cataracts, arthritis and paralysis. We noted the testimonials on the website and in the video but considered that testimonials were insufficient as evidence for claims of healing. We therefore concluded the ads were misleading'.

The ASA also 'noted we had not seen evidence that people had been healed through the prayer of HOTS volunteers, and concluded that the ads could encourage false hope in those suffering from the named conditions and therefore were irresponsible. We acknowledged that HOTS had offered to make amendments to the ads, and to remove the leaflet from their website. However, we considered that their suggested amendments were not sufficient for the ads to comply with the CAP Code.'

The ASA were concerned that 'the ads could discourage people, and particularly the vulnerable or those suffering from undiagnosed symptoms, from seeking essential treatment for medical conditions for which medical supervision should be sought.'

HOTS - Bath have [stated that](#) they will appeal against the decision. Their defence is that 'All over the world as part of their normal Christian life, Christians believe in, pray for and experience God's healing. Over that time the response to what we do has been overwhelmingly positive, and we find it difficult to understand the ASA's attempt to restrict communication about this. Our website simply states our beliefs and describes some of our experiences'.

They also comment "It seems strange to us that on the basis of a purely ideological objection to what we say on our website, the ASA has decided it is appropriate to insist that we cannot talk about a common and widely held belief that is an important aspect of conventional Christian faith".

Senior Campaigns Officer Tessa Kendall said: "We are pleased with the ASA adjudication. This was not a case of ideological objections as HOTS claimed, nor a restriction on their freedom of expression. They were claiming to cure specific diseases and conditions. The ASA response was a scientific, evidence-based approach to protect vulnerable people from unproven (and unproveable) claims".

HOTS- Bath is a registered charity and we will be filing a complaint with the Charity Commission.

If you would like to report any religious groups making unfounded and potentially dangerous healing claims, the [ASA website](#) has clear instructions on how to contact them or the NSS office can help you.

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