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DRIVE, SHE SAID

THE AA'S KERRY
COOPER ON
ROSTERS AND
RELATIONSHIPS

NOMINEES REVEALED

WHO MADE THE CUT
FOR THE RESEARCH
AWARDS 2005?

WHEN IN ROME...

MARKET RESEARCH
IN ITALY

SPECIAL
REPORT
HEALTHCARE

COI proposals spark debate on criminal checks for kids researchers



THE COI HAS PROPOSED CRB CHECKS FOR ALL ITS MR SUPPLIERS THAT SURVEY CHILDREN

NEWS IN FOCUS

BRIAN TARRAN

The UK government's marcomms arm, the Central Office of Information, may soon require all its MR suppliers, who work with children and vulnerable adults, to run criminal background checks on their staff.

A spokesperson for the COI confirmed that proposals were under discussion, saying: "COI always supports best practice,

particularly when researching children, young people and vulnerable adults."

It is known to be in talks with the Association for Qualitative Research, which for the past 12 months has been piloting a scheme aimed at making it easier for companies to have their staff vetted if needed.

Background checks are conducted by the Criminal Records Bureau, a branch of the Home Office. AQR has become a registered organisation with the CRB, enabling it to provide the required counter-signature on applications made by members.

AQR chair, Fiona Jack said: "We talked about it and really

felt strongly that it would be horrific if anyone had inappropriate access [to children or vulnerable adults] through research."

There are currently no statutory requirements on researchers to be vetted by the CRB, however the Market Research Society has published guidelines on conducting research with children.

Glen Smith, chairman and CEO of the Children's Research Unit believes these guidelines are "sufficient" and that the COI's proposals were "over the top". He added that children were rarely interviewed face-to-face these days, with survey work migrating to the internet.

Former children's counsellor, Barbie Clarke, MD of Kids and Youth, said it was "about time" the issue was raised, although she questioned the feasibility of CRB checks for large teams of – mainly part-time and temporary – quant interviewers.

Clarke said her main concern is that it takes "just one awful case of someone being abused" by a person posing as a researcher to ruin the trust the industry has built with parents.

Aegis confirms interest of £1.5bn suitor



AEGIS CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ROBERT LERWILL

Synovate could soon be in the hands of new owners after parent company Aegis confirmed it had received a takeover approach, valuing the media buying and MR group at around £1.5bn.

Aegis did not name its suitor, however as *Research* went to press, French ad group Publicis revealed it had held "very preliminary conversations" with the London-based company.

"At this stage, it is extremely premature to conclude that these conversations will lead to an offer," Publicis said.

Analysts have speculated that a bidding war could break-out between rival ad groups Omnicom, WPP and Havas.

Havas chairman, Vincent Bollore bought a 6% stake in Aegis in August.

RESEARCH NEWS WIRE

HIGHLIGHTS
FROM THE RESEARCH
DAILY NEWS SERVICE

24.08.2005 WPP'S C\$110M GOLDFARB ACTION IN DISCOVERY

WPP's C\$110m lawsuit against the former owners of MR agency Goldfarb Consultants is entering the pre-trial discovery phase this autumn. Details of the case are sketchy, however papers filed in April 2004 say the claim is "for losses [WPP] allegedly suffered... in connection with the business of Goldfarb" – the agency founded by Martin Goldfarb in the 1960s, and which WPP acquired in April 1998.

25.08.2005 FEIL QUILTS KIMBERLY- CLARK FOR SARA LEE

Kimberly-Clark's vice president and senior marketing officer, Kim Feil has quit the health and hygiene goods company for a post at Sara Lee. The move comes just seven months after Feil was handed the newly-created post at Kimberly-Clark, which put her in charge of the corporation's North American and European marketing services groups, including the marketing research teams.

26.08.2005 MRA PLANS US PUBLIC RELATIONS BLITZ FOR MR

The US Marketing Research Association (MRA) is to blitz the US business community with a PR campaign extolling the benefits of using MR to make business decisions. Executive director, Larry Brownell said the MRA was committed to waging a "long-term image campaign" that would work at the grassroots level to convince business leaders, and the general public, of the importance of MR.

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