

## **Developing Child Friendly Media**

Contribution by Mike Jempson to Children & Media: Image, Education, Participation, 1999 Yearbook of UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen.

### **Some thoughts on developing child-friendly media**

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#### **Introduction**

This paper is offered as a contribution to the debate about how best to achieve child-friendly media. My original intention was to make a series of illustrated presentations to seminars for media professionals, flagging up issues with reference to specific extracts from broadcast TV programmes for children and newspaper coverage of children. Circumstances have made this discursive approach impossible, but I hope that this paper, delivered at a distance and with little direct knowledge of the media in the Philippines, will stimulate ideas and debate nonetheless. The examples are drawn largely from the UK, with appropriate apologies. However, the UK has a well-established system of media regulation, and its broadcasters have a long and proven track record in the global marketplace for the production of high quality programmes.

My experience is as a journalist. I have worked with children in the production of newspapers, and recently spent two years investigating child abuse networks for a TV documentary. I have just completed a training pack for journalists covering child rights issues.

I should perhaps explain that PressWise is a media ethics based in the UK, which offers advice to those with complaints about the mass media. We conduct research and provide assistance to print and broadcast journalists. We also work with the media regulators. The Report and Recommendations of our 1997 Child Exploitation and the Media Forum (see Appendix 1) have proved influential in a variety of arenas. This led to my appointment as Media/Child Rights Co-ordinator for the International Federation of Journalists, the development of guidelines for media professionals in coverage of child rights issues (see Appendix 2), and our involvement in a number of related UNICEF projects.

#### **Children and the media**

Children are a captive and impressionable TV audience. They are fascinated by television, which tells them stories and offers them exciting images of worlds they might otherwise

never see. So powerful a medium must take its responsibilities to child audiences very seriously.

A study of reactions to children's programming among 6-9 year olds in the UK by Dr Anne Shepherd of the University of Leeds (1) suggested that they could identify the 'good' and 'bad' characters in TV programmes but were often unclear about the main plot and tended to develop their own stories based on clues offered by the programmes.

These results were confirmed in a follow up study (2), which concluded that while 'children's ability to distinguish reality from fantasy on TV suggests that they realise that much of what they view is fiction,' it is harder to establish 'the stage at which they realise...that TV provides insights into other social worlds'. By the age of 8-9 years, children were found to be 'beginning to reach a more sophisticated view of TV reality'. However, a study of 11-13 year olds (3) has shown that they strongly identified with the plots and characters of 'soaps', which were perceived as a 'dramatic rehearsal' of the moral and social problems with which they would have to grapple in real life.

A more intensive study among 15-17 year olds (4) revealed serious concerns about misrepresentations of 'reality', under-representation of ethnic minority groups, and a desire that youth television should be explicit about issues such as the horrors of drug addiction. While they resented any suggestion that their own tastes and standards should be protected - in other words they wanted to be challenged, a natural development from the role that soaps (had) played in their lives - they did express concern, as do many older people, that younger people should be protected from disturbing material.

Such country-specific research cannot automatically be translated to different settings, but it does offer an indication that children and young people may be captivated by TV but they do not entirely suspend their critical faculties. After all they have their own personal experiences against which to judge what is presented to them on screen.

The charity Save the Children has gained an insight into children's attitudes towards their representation in the print and broadcast media, by talking to young people in Barbados, Canada, England, Israel, Namibia, Northern Ireland, Palestine and Romania (5).

They found that children were very clear about what they dislike most about their treatment by the print and broadcast media:

- the use of children's serious comments to make adults laugh;
- the use of very 'cute' children to add charm appeal;
- the use of photos and descriptions of children in miserable situations to evoke emotion, because it does nothing for children's self-respect, or for the audience's respect for them;
- children being patronised and spoken down to;
- adults speaking for children, when the children know more about the subject;
- children being made to perform like circus animals;
- adults showing off children's ignorance;
- adults putting words in children's mouths, or interrupting them;
- children being made to look passive when they are not;
- young people being lumped together as a problem group called 'youth/s'.(6)

Many of these features are to be found with TV programme schedules for children or family viewing. And a similar pattern of coverage was found to be flourishing in the British press when members of the young people's media project CHILDREN'S EXPRESS, conducted their own survey in 1998. (7) Imagine that stereotypes were the only images of adults offered by the media, and it is easy to see why children are not pleased by these forms of portrayal in the mass media.

However, children are equally clear about what they want media professionals to do:-

- let children speak for themselves
- treat children as equals, human beings like everyone else;
- ask children what they think about issues covered in the media;
- give children the chance to speak freely to adults as well as to other children;
- see children as individuals, with their own thoughts, enthusiasms and concerns;
- let children be themselves, not what other people want them to be;
- take children's opinions seriously. (8)

One of the major problems is that children themselves are not taken seriously enough by media professionals whose main target is the adult market. Conventionally children are regarded as sub-group of society to be protected if not cosseted.

In commercial terms, of course, they are acknowledged as powerful allies of the advertiser. Convince children that they want or better still 'need' a product, and the advertiser can rely upon children to pester their parents until they purchase it. TV advertisers draw upon the same creative talent that produces TV programming and will often incorporate unsubtle references to the themes, styles and characters with which TV (and movie) audiences are familiar. Even if the price tag is way beyond the pockets of the bulk of their audience, TV advertising techniques can raise as many false expectations among children (and adults) as do glamorous TV and film representations of the adult world.

A child born into poverty, surviving on minimal attention, brutalised by a damaged parent, or brought up in an environment where life appears to be cheap, is likely to perceive the offerings of the media rather differently to a child who is valued at home, in school and within the local community.

Inevitably images of glamour and success, seductive advertisements for fast cars, expensive clothes and other consumer durables, and programmes that appear to extol the effectiveness of violence, will inspire those who have nothing to find ways of obtaining what others appear to take for granted. Tragically, and ironically, when children succumb and rely upon illicit means to obtain the goods they desire they are likely to be demonised by the very mass media that exposed them to temptation in the first place.

Even the most well adjusted child can be confused by the conflicting messages pumped out by the mass media, especially if their own lifestyle and experience is never reflected in what they see, hear or read. That is one of the reasons why the media must offer children the dignity and respect of recognition, and develop a consistent approach to the issues that confront children.

Often newspapers display a peculiar form of double standards - railing against corruption and abuse of power, yet ignoring what this might mean in terms of the way they present stories (and adverts). In the UK, for instance, some newspapers have published horrifying stories about child sexual abuse and the activities of paedophiles while also running pictures of naked women or explicit adverts for sex videos and masturbatory telephone chat-lines illustrated with pictures of women in school-girl clothes.

Among other socially undesirable consequences, this has the effect of confirming the powerlessness of the abused child. Forced to submit to an adult authority figure who insists on their silence with impunity, some abused children come to think of their assailant as somehow acting within his rights. Haunted by the anxiety that they will be in the wrong if they tell on daddy, uncle or the man next door, abused children may daily watch their torturer and

other adults openly enjoy the spectacle of quiescent pin-ups. The message is clear - adults can indulge their sexual whims as they wish, so long as they don't get caught.

Domestic newspapers and programme producers can be expected to be much more in tune with local social, political, cultural and moral attitudes. Foreign suppliers of programmes are much more likely to reflect their own domestic standards and preoccupations than to acknowledge the special cultural needs of overseas markets.

It is particularly important to bear this in mind when purchasing children's programmes. The product may be (relatively) cheap, but the long-term cost of importing different cultural, moral and social standards can be high. Cartoons are the staple diet of children's TV schedules everywhere. Their appeal is usually based upon simplistic representations of, for instance, good and evil. Because they are (supposed to be) 'fun', perhaps insufficient thought is given to the deeper messages they convey - about violence, for instance, or about the marketing of related products.

Though some would argue that the global market means that producers must be more sensitive to the cultural concerns of potential purchasers, the export of TV products has to be seen in terms of the national economy of the producer country. Often films and cartoons are vehicles for 'product placement' and children are particularly vulnerable to these subliminal messages. It is significant that the real economic value of popular cartoon or cartoon-like characters (Popeye, Power-Rangers, Teletubbies, etc) now lies far beyond their role as small screen entertainers. Children want the merchandise as emblems of their enjoyment of or identification with the characters. That in turn can influence local cultural values in the longer term.

If children are to grow up appreciating their own cultural heritage then the media have a responsibility to recognise, respect and nurture the cultures with which children are familiar at home. It is one of the strongest arguments for a healthy domestic media production industry, as well as making a significant contribution towards recognition of child rights.

### **The TV documentary production process**

TV attracts mass audiences locally, nationally and regionally. In the global market place images broadcast on TV are far more likely to reach international audiences than anything published in a newspaper.

I want to focus briefly on the documentary simply because it is the genre through which we learn about how individuals and groups in a society behave, and indeed how whole societies operate. Documentaries tell us, apparently in great detail, about serious issues and difficult problems and people and situations we do not know. They offer us more than the in-depth newspaper feature because they use moving images, because they have more time to explore their topic, because the stories they tell gain authority and authenticity by putting faces to voices, and because they can use music to evoke moods. But they are also expensive to make, and that means nowadays that they must find sufficient markets to earn their keep.

One aspect of the media marketing process that the public never sees, and so cannot be aware of, is the 'pitch' to obtain development funds for a commission. If a programme is to be broadcast the commissioning editor has to be convinced that it is 'watchable' and will be watched by the designated target audience. Producers have to meet these intangible 'value for money' expectations when seeking funds for their project. There is still no guarantee that the finished film will be purchased or broadcast. Eventual transmission will depend not just upon the quality of the final product, but the extent to which it lives up to the original 'pitch'.

During the development phase of a documentary, researchers will contact potential contributors and collect a great deal of information. They may appear to be 'listening' to those they contact, but their goal is to fulfil the intentions of the programme-maker rather than the protagonists. The potential contributors inevitably develop their own perception of the finished product, based on what they have been told. It may be far removed from what the producer has in mind. If they want to take part (and most people are still entranced by the idea of being on TV), they are likely to supply what they think the programme-maker wants - even though they may never meet or talk to the producer/director until filming starts, and they will rarely know or see what other contributions are being made.

They have no control over the structure and message of the finished product, which emerges from a 'hidden' process of selection, editing and dubbing. The discrepancy between what they imagined they were taking part in and what appears on screen can come as a real shock, by which time the 'damage' has been done. This has a particular significance for documentaries about children.

The plight of children is always a powerful theme. There are occasions when such documentaries can have a profound effect upon public consciousness (internationally) and can be a tremendous force for good. However if issues are simplified or sensationalised to highlight extremes, rather than attempting to explore the complexities of a situation, more harm than good may come of the programme.

Media professionals may acknowledge that, in themselves, such documentaries may do little to assist in resolving the problems of an individual child, but comfort themselves with the thought that they may at least alert the public to important social, economic, environmental, political, psychological or medical conditions, and encourage action or at least debate. Yet what may have begun as a story for domestic consumption about the problematic life of a child might have unforeseen consequences. A child's identity, circumstances, relatives, location and behaviour pattern, become widely known, bringing with it sympathy, anger, even notoriety. The child becomes an 'icon' representing a particular problem, or even a particular society.

Programme-makers cannot be expected to be experts in child psychology, nor would we expect those working in child welfare to know automatically how to make programmes to a professional standard. That is why Producer Guidelines are necessary if the complexities of childhood and children's needs and rights are to be understood - and why it is appropriate to appoint specialist commissioning editors for children's programmes.

When making programmes about and with children it is especially important to be aware of how the process is perceived by the children involved. They need to know what is expected of them at the earliest stage in the production process.

The TV programme is a construct that represents the child's life, often less accurately than it is perceived by the child itself. To most viewers (who lack a sophisticated knowledge of the medium and will not know the child) it is the child's life, and there is always a danger that once a child has been characterised (as good, highly talented, bad, dangerous, sad etc) on TV, the child and its peers will become convinced that this is the reality.

For instance, publicity lends a perverse status to juvenile crime. A teenage offender's notoriety may generate fear, abhorrence or even pity among adults, yet may turn the offender into a 'hero/model' within the peer group upon whom s/he relies for validation. So the image becomes the reality, and the problem more intractable.

My point is simple. No matter how great the journalistic value or how worthy the intentions of a documentary about children, the primary concern of the programme-maker must be the well being of the children involved.

### **Working with children**

Children have much to offer the journalist or broadcaster seeking a new angle on stories, because:

- they want to speak out;
- they have fresh and interesting things to say;
- they have a different perspective from adults;
- some issues - such as education, play, child abuse - affect them more than adults;
- sharing what they have to say increases mutual understanding between adults and children and helps narrow the generation gap (very often, old and young demonise each other because they do not talk back);
- involving children boosts their confidence in their own abilities, and helps them to develop;
- they are media consumers too, and they like to hear what other children think and feel;
- they have a right to be listened to, have their views taken into account, and express themselves in the media. (9)

However, interviewing children requires special techniques. They need to be able to trust the adults they are working with, feel safe about what they are doing, and be aware of the likely consequences. That means allowing time to build relationships, to ensure that children know not just what they are taking part in but why. It also means that everyone involved (including their parents or guardians) is clear about the possible implications for the children.

Even taking pictures of children can give rise to special problems. Controversy about exploitation of photographs of young children taken quite legitimately for private and commercial use convinced British commercial photographers to draft their own guidelines to protect themselves and child models (See Appendix 3). At the core is the notion that the child's interests are paramount, and this should be an overriding principle for all media professionals.

A checklist may offer some guidance about whether the approach is being handled responsibly.

- Has time been allowed to get to know the interviewees?
- Have you explained clearly and honestly the sort of story you are working on?
- Is your approach based upon a fixed view about how you want the children to respond?
- Have you done justice to what the children actually said - will they recognise themselves in what you have written, or have you tried to interpret their words from an adult perspective?
- Have you obtained the appropriate consents - from the children, and responsible adults - for use of names, and the taking and publication of the children's images?
- Have you assessed (and discussed with your interviewees and their guardians) the risk to the children of publishing their identity?
- Have you double-checked the truth of allegations made to you by children?
- Have you made sure the children know how to seek help, or contact you - and to see a copy of the finished article?
- What messages do you think adults will receive from your piece?

Sometimes the best people to interview children, are children. Training them in journalistic techniques is an investment in their future.

## **Creating space in the media for children**

In this section and the next I have summarised some examples of how children might be 'engaged' in the production of their own media and outlined some of the most effective TV formats currently in use in the UK.

Newspapers specifically for children have not been a great commercial success in the UK. Some newspapers try to attract the next generation of readers with comics and youth sections, encouraging a sense of belonging with competitions and an agenda centred on popular culture, but produced by adults. Local papers may use pictures of groups of children to attract extra sales from relatives. Some run a young people's page with a 'club' to which they can belong, but editorial control is rarely shared with the target audience.

In 1981, when I was editor of a local paper in a working class district of London, we encouraged youth clubs in the circulation area to produce their own weekly page. A qualified youth leader helped them to develop their ideas and supervised their research, and professional sub-editors provided technical assistance, but the children chose their topics and had the final say.

The page broke new ground, and a few rules. After one group visited a police station to produce a feature, they superimposed a pig's head over the face of an officer who had agreed to be photographed. The story hit national headlines. I defended the young people's right to express their opinion, but the paper's credibility was damaged and from then on page proofs were double-checked before printing!

More recently, I worked with primary school children in Bristol to produce their own 4-page tabloid, with news, features, interviews, pictures and a cartoon strip. Each edition had a different editorial team aged from 6-11 years, and was funded from advertising and sales based on rates worked out by the children. The production process taught them about desktop publishing, design, economics, mathematics and social skills as well as writing.

The CHILDREN'S EXPRESS project which operates in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the USA, enables young people to learn media production skills, produce their own journalism and helps to find outlets for their work.

Copy is researched and produced by children aged 9 to 18 years old, after school, at weekends, and during holidays, under professional supervision. The younger age groups are trained as reporters; the older ones as editors. They work in teams to investigate stories of concern to them, or take commissions from the mainstream print and broadcast media. All material is recorded, transcribed and discussed, before the final version is produced. The project is heavily subsidised, but it has had great success, winning awards for written and broadcast material. National newspapers and TV companies use their material, and in the USA they have published books examining social issues from the perspective of the child.

Editors interested in developing more child-centred publications might wish to consider the following:

- appointing a children's editor or child correspondents;
- making sure the project is carefully planned and properly supervised, and that those taking part do so with their parents' knowledge and consent;
- devising procedures and guidelines to protect children from harm when they are working with you - chaperones, health and safety measures, etc?
- developing simple guides to ensure that the children understand what they can and cannot do - e.g. the basic rules of journalism;
- ensuring that the children's expectations are realistic and that there are opportunities for them to receive feedback, and can contribute to the evaluation of the project;

Most important of all it is essential that participating children are not exploited purely for commercial purposes. Such projects should be seen as part of a broader system of media education that helps children to understand how the media operates and its role in their lives.

### **Children's TV programme formats**

BLUE PETER, one of the best-known BBC TV programmes for children in the UK, has just celebrated its 40th year. It has a magazine format and is broadcast soon after children return from school. Over the years its agenda has been increasingly influenced by children's own ideas. It features do-it-yourself craft activities, celebrates children's success in a variety of fields, runs non-exploitative competitions, and organises national appeals to help children who are less well off in the UK and abroad. Its presenters are young and they engage in take part in exciting leisure pursuits (scuba-diving, parachute jumping, skiing etc,) which give children ideas about activities they might want to take part in as they grow up. Each year the crew also visits different parts of the world to give children an insight into how other children live and the issues that concern them.

The BBC also run a regular programme called CHILDREN'S NEWSROUND which deals simply and directly with the main news stories of the day, including difficult topics like child abuse, famine and natural disasters, as well as special features of particular interest to children which may not make it onto adult news bulletins. Since the main new broadcasts are aimed at adults they are not popular with children. Having their own version enables children to discuss current affairs with adults, as well as while protecting them from the distressing footage that often accompanies the adult version.

One of the UK's commercial broadcasters, Channel 4, has won awards for its WISE UP programme for teenagers, in which young people are encouraged to set the agenda. Programme ideas and guest presenters are sought from viewers and school visits. Guest reporters then 'make' a segment of the programme, often investigating a problem that has arisen in their own lives. They receive professional advice and assistance from a mainly young production team. The programme has a racy, youthful style with fast-moving, hand-held camera shots, but it is carefully edited and produced within formal guidelines laid down by the official regulators.

Several popular children's TV programmes now involve young people in presenting the show, from inside the studio and out on location, interviewing other children as well as celebrities and hosting competitions and games. Such programmes are heavily supervised and the young people are carefully chaperoned. They have their critics, but they are a welcome departure from earlier attempts to entertain children with fast-talking, fast-moving, colourful shows that many felt were demeaning to the children because the emphasis was on the personalities and idiosyncrasies of the presenters.

Each broadcaster in the UK employs 'anchors' who introduce the daily package of children's programmes - indeed these parts of the TV schedule are specifically marketed as 'Children's BBC' (CBBC) etc. These young presenters are often assisted by puppets and develop their own quirky relationship with the viewers who are encouraged to send in letters, pictures etc. To some extent they act as 'surrogate guardians', since work and other domestic pressures mean that many parents are less able to be present to supervise their children's viewing. In recent years there has been a growing use of the phone, fax and e-mail as a means of allowing children to participate in their favourite programmes. This in turn provides a form of interactivity that may be missing from the circumstances in which the children watch. It also floods the broadcasters with new ideas from the children themselves.



## **Conclusions**

Negotiating improvements in the way children are represented in the media requires care. Understandably journalists and programme-makers resent external interference, especially from those who can use their power, influence or money to restrict their activities. That is why it is important to involve journalists and programme-makers in the development and review of internal guidelines and codes of conduct.

Developing greater understanding 'at the top', and especially among those responsible for training media professionals, about the needs and rights of children, is as important as ensuring that journalists and programme-makers develop relationships of trust with other professionals who work with children (teachers, social workers, etc.).

Out of such dialogue could come clearer guidance governing the conditions under which children are filmed (including specific regulations about chaperones), as well a 'best practice' arrangements covering research and presentation of sensitive subject matter.

Mistakes are bound to be made, but greater openness also means a willingness to take responsibility for mistakes, and their consequences. If it is justifiable for the media to highlight the shortcomings of the authorities, it is equally valid for the public to challenge the shortcomings of the media. That means developing systems of regulation that acknowledge the rights of the public - to receive accurate information, to respect for their privacy, to appropriate redress - as well as the principle of press freedom.

And finally, those of us who work in the media have immense responsibilities. For the most part our intentions are good, although both the print and broadcast media appear to imagine that the public, including children, can only deal with issues if they are presented in simplistic form. If we try to tell the truth in all its complexity, and avoid succumbing totally to commercial pressure, we can sleep more easily. The more sensitive and well researched the journalism we produce today about and for children, the more confident we can be that their future will be better. And if we learn to respect their rights, they will learn to respect ours.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Extract from Recommendations of the Child Exploitation & the Media Forum (1997), chaired by Elizabeth Lawson QC.

- More opportunities need to be given to young people to express their views, and be listened to, about the issues raised by the Forum, in all disciplines concerned - the media, the caring services and law enforcement.
- Even the most responsible reporting of child abuse can have a dramatic and lasting effect on victims and their families...We urge newspapers, magazines and the broadcast media to bear this in mind, especially in terms of the way information is presented to the public. In particular we urge them to arrange and pay for suitable counselling to be available for victims of child abuse who disclose their experiences to them.
- Care must be taken to ensure that media coverage of child exploitation is accurate, informative and educational and protects the children concerned whether they live in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.
- ...Newspapers and magazines should not juxtapose news or feature stories about sexual abuse alongside sexualised images of young girls and naked women, or on pages that carry

advertisements for sexual services, especially those featuring adults dressed like school-children.

- We...would question whether children should be involved in modelling careers at a young age. We urge all photographers, photographic agencies, parents of child models, modelling agencies and advertising agencies to move swiftly to formalise industry guidelines, to ensure they are widely known and understood, and that adequate monitoring mechanisms are in place. Evidence of adherence to the guidelines should be a prerequisite of publication of images of children.

- There is a clear need for much more communication, co-operation, understanding and trust between those involved in protecting children and those who report on child exploitation.

- There is a need for more training of social work departments on how to deal with the media, and of journalists on the role and responsibilities of social workers.

- Child exploitation needs to be understood by the public but in explaining the issues, especially the physical or sexual abuse of children, care must be taken not to betray confidences from children or parents who are in need of protection. There should be a policy of openness in local authorities and other social service agencies when allegations of abuse of children in care are made, providing the children concerned cannot be identified.

- More detailed consideration needs to be given to calls for the media to be granted greater access to court procedures involving children...but there are serious issues of accountability and transparency that merit further investigation.

- Child exploitation is an international problem. Any efforts to address child exploitation and the media in Britain should take into account international initiatives, particularly those flowing from the Declaration and Agenda for Action of the World Congress Against Commercial Exploitation of Children.

## **APPENDIX 2**

International Federation of Journalists Draft Guidelines for Media Professional on Coverage of Child Rights Issues

Informed, sensitive and professional journalism is a key element in any media strategy for improving the quality of reporting concerning human rights and society. The daily challenge to journalists and media organisations is particularly felt in coverage of children and their rights.

Although the human rights of children have only recently been defined in international law, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is already so widely supported that it will shortly become the first universal law of humankind.

To do their job of informing the public effectively, journalists must be fully aware of the need to protect children and to enhance their rights without in any way damaging freedom of expression or interfering with the fabric of journalistic independence.

The following guidelines for journalists have been drawn up by the International Federation of Journalists on the basis of an extensive survey of codes of conduct and standards already in force across the world.

The purpose of this draft is to raise media awareness of children's rights issues and to stimulate debate among media professionals about the value of a common approach which will reinforce journalistic standards and contribute to the protection and enhancement of children's rights.

All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism.

Media organisations should regard violation of the rights of the children and issues related to children's safety, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate.

Journalistic activity that touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children.

Journalists and media organisations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs and, in particular, they shall:

- Strive for the highest standards of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children;
- Avoid the use of stereotypes and shall not use sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;
- Consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimise harm to children;
- Guard against unnecessary visual identification of children and shall, where appropriate, use pseudonyms in interviews;
- Give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind;
- Ensure the independent verification of information provided by children and shall take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
- Avoid the use of sexualised images of children;
- Use fair methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or responsible adult, guardian or carer;
- Verify the credentials of any organisation purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children.

### **APPENDIX 3**

UK Association of Photographers Draft Code for Child Models,

1. Photographers should try to stop taking pictures of children in underwear, especially for mail order catalogues (a known and easily accessible source of paedophile material). Assistance from large mail order firms and large groups of department stores who produce smaller catalogues and PR pictures needs to be sought.
2. Photographic collections of children held with stock libraries need to be monitored carefully, to be doubly sure who they are selling to and what they will be used for.
3. Manipulation of stills and films, and especially pop videos, where children are being used a lot, need to be looked into. (One parent was asked if her son could be filmed dancing

and pulling off his shirt - the plan was to then manipulate his sister's head onto his body. The mother refused and it didn't happen.)

4. No child should ever go on any shoot without a chaperon.
5. The chaperon should have the right to be in the same room where the child is working, at all times. If at any time the chaperon feels the child is being misused, over-worked or bullied, s/he should be able to withdraw the child from the session without forfeiting the fee - especially in such cases where the child is asked to do something utterly different to that for which they were hired.
6. A chaperon must never leave a child in a session on her or his own, however boring it may be to sit and wait for the session to finish.
7. If a parent cannot take a child to the shoot, s/he should notify the photographer with the name of the chaperon and make sure the photographer has a telephone number to contact the parent/s in an emergency.
8. Children must not be allowed to travel unaccompanied in mini-cabs or taxis. If this is really necessary a radio-controlled black cab should be used in order to keep the child in contact with an adult known to them.
9. If a child (usually a young teenager) is sent on a shoot without a chaperon, the agency and photographer/client must be notified before the shoot and given the right to cancel if they are not willing to accept responsibility for the child. At all times, the parents' contact number must be supplied in advance in case of emergencies.
10. If the model agency has a call from a photographer/client for one of their children's books, and the photographer or client is new to them, references need to be sought before the book is sent.
11. Children are often worked far too long, or kept hanging about on shoots. Strict guidelines are needed as to how long each age group may work.
12. Parents must be educated, possibly through women's magazines, in what are normal modelling activities and what are not.

### **Footnotes**

- 1 *Children, Television and Morality*, UK Broadcasting Standard Council Working Paper 1, Dr Anne Shepherd, University of Leeds, 1990
- 2 *Children, Television and Morality II*, UK Broadcasting Standard Council Working Paper 5, Dr Anne Shepherd, University of Leeds, 1992
- 3 *Morality, Television and Pre-Adolescent Young Minds*, UK Broadcasting Standards Council Working Paper III, Margaret Dunn & Caroline Gallagher, Research International 1990.
- 4 *Television and Young People*, UK Broadcasting Standards Council Working Paper VI, John Caughie, University of Glasgow 1992.
- 5 *Interviewing Children: a guide for journalists and others*, Sarah McCrum and Lotte Hughes. 2nd edition 1998, Save the Children, ISBN 0 9524107 0 2
- 6 *Interviewing Children: a guide for journalists and others*, Sarah McCrum and Lotte Hughes. 2nd edition 1998, Save the Children, ISBN 0 9524107 0 2
- 7 *Kids these days...* Children's Express UK, 1998
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