



Family and Parenting Institute Briefing Paper

Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood

Executive Summary

Since it was founded 11 years ago, the Family and Parenting Institute has been at the forefront of the movement to address the commercialisation of childhood. Debate about the ~~adultification~~ of children now has a prominent position in the mainstream and with the publication of the Bailey review in June 2011, there is now significant political momentum behind this issue. This briefing paper from the Family and Parenting Institute highlights current developments and potential next steps in this debate.

We recognise there are wider applications of both terms but for the purposes of the paper we use these broad definitions:

- **Commercialisation** . when children are targeted as consumers
- **Sexualisation**¹ . when materials or content of a sexual nature are inappropriately imposed on children

The issues in brief:

- Parental attitudes have demonstrated consistently high levels of concern about the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood. Recent Department for Education research with parents found that 88 per cent of parents surveyed felt that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly
- The debate extends beyond Westminster with, a range of campaigns led by the third sector highlighting the depth of feeling. In response to concerns raised by parents, health professionals, educators and a host of commentators, several reviews have been commissioned to examine the evidence. In December 2010 the Children's Minister, Sarah Teather MP, asked Reg Bailey to carry out an independent review into the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood
- Research does not tell a straightforward story of the impact on children of highly commercialised or sexualised influences and there are a number of gaps in the evidence base. While associations have been identified, definitive proof of ~~cause and effect~~ is likely to continue to remain elusive. A host of factors are likely to exacerbate or mitigate the impact on children . and every child will respond differently. Given this, it has been suggested by several reviewers that a precautionary principle in relation to children might be justified.

The Bailey Review

FPI warmly welcomes Reg Bailey's review as a significant contribution to the debate on commercialisation and sexualisation. We believe it represents a realistic and grounded action plan for Government, businesses and regulators. We especially commend the emphasis in the review on the voices of families, and endorse the following recommendations in particular:

- Ensuring content of pre-watershed TV programming meets parents' expectations
- Ensuring regulation of advertising reflects more closely parents' and children's views
- Making it easier for parents to block age-restricted material from the internet
- Making it easier for parents to express their views about goods and services

¹ The American Psychological Association offers a more comprehensive definition of sexualisation . see Zurbruggen et al. (2007) Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls.

- Developing a retail code of good practice on retailing to children
- Prohibiting the employment of children as brand ambassadors
- Ensuring greater transparency in the regulatory framework by creating a single website for regulators
- Raising parental awareness of marketing and advertising techniques.
- Quality assurance for media and commercial literacy resources and education for children

Where next?

To exploit the full potential of the opportunity presented by publication of the Bailey Review, we urge the Government to consider the following:

1. **Family friendly as default:** Too often, a family-friendly environment is seen as an add-on option. We believe that more should be done to encourage a culture where companies adopt family friendly settings and approaches as the default option. This does not have to necessarily mean further costs or restraints; in fact there are obvious gains to be made by moving towards this business model.
2. **Enhancing our ability to engage with parents:** The views of families themselves must be at the heart of any strategy. Parents often feel powerless to effect change on this issue and rarely see any evidence that their attitudes shape decisions made by advertisers or broadcasters. We believe that the voices of parents must be embedded within the decision-making processes of regulators, broadcasters and those businesses who regularly market to families. This must go beyond tokenistic consultation exercises.
3. **The right tools to empower families:** Shielding children from negative influences indefinitely is no substitute for developing their resilience to commercial and sexualised influences over the long term. The concepts of *media* and *consumer* literacy are already well-established and there are a number of existing tools which aim to support parents and children to navigate this environment safely and confidently. However, media and consumer literacy represent only one dimension to a package of protection, alongside regulatory steps and family friendly filtering.
4. **We must respond in partnership:** FPI believes it is time for a much more effective partnership between business, regulatory agencies and families. *Government and regulators* need to lead on co-ordinating the response and hold businesses and content providers to account more pro-actively. The *third sector, civil society and educators* have a role to play in building the resilience of families and children to a highly commercialised and sexualised environment. *Businesses and the private sector* need to be incentivised to adopt more responsible practices.
5. **We must not lose momentum:** The Bailey Review adopts a voluntary approach - drawing on the *goodwill* of business and only proposing that the Government to consider further legislation after taking stock of progress in 18 months. While we agree it is right that businesses, broadcasters and regulators should be given the opportunity to lead the way, this also gives rise to the possibility that momentum on this issue could be lost. Pursuing a voluntary approach will require a proactive response from Government and regulators and the Department for Education should track the views of parents on commercialisation and sexualisation in order to assess the impact of the changes initiated by the Bailey Review.

Ultimately, the most significant protective factor for children is provided by parents and families being able to model responsible media consumption and consumer behaviour. Just as parental engagement plays a significant part in a child's ability to read and write in their early years, so it should be seen as a key determinant of other forms of digital and consumer literacy.

Introduction

Unease about the speed at which children grow up is an age-old preoccupation of adults, but over recent decades this anxiety has been heightened by an ever-more commercialised and sexualised environment. In particular, the explosion in new media and emergence of increasingly sophisticated marketing techniques has fuelled fears about the adultification of childhood. This long-running debate now features prominently in the mainstream political agenda. In May 2010 the Coalition's Programme for Government included a key commitment to address the issue:

*'We will crack down on irresponsible advertising and marketing, especially to children. We will also take steps to tackle the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood.'*²

Following on from this commitment, the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, in announcing the creation of a Childhood and Families Task Force stressed that tackling commercialisation and sexualisation would fall under its remit:

*'we need to take steps to help children avoid the adult pressures that force them to grow up too quickly. Like the irresponsible advertising that sexualises children, that makes them anxious about how they look, that encourages them to place too much value on brands.'*³

Further underlining the Coalition Government's focus on this issue, in December 2010 Children's Minister Sarah Teather asked Reg Bailey (Chief Executive of the Mothers' Union) to carry out an independent review into the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood. With the publication of that review in June 2011, there is now significant political momentum behind addressing this problem. This paper presents a short overview of activity on this issue to date, along with outlining the Family and Parenting Institute's response to the Bailey Review.

A developing consensus?

The debate on the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood is not only confined to Westminster. The political attention it has attracted over the past year is at least partially a response to a chorus of disapproval in the media about risqué content which has been broadcast as part of family entertainment programmes and inappropriately sexualised products and services aimed at children.^{4,5}

A range of campaigns and reports have also served to highlight the scale of the problem. For example:

- In 2009 Girlguiding UK led a high profile campaign for compulsory labelling of airbrushed media images

² HM Government (2010) *The Coalition: our programme for government*
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/coalition_programme_for_government.pdf
Section 14 - Families and Children

³ Deputy Prime Minister speech transcript (17 June 2010) <http://www.dpm.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/deputy-pms-speech-children-and-families>

⁴ For example . The Daily Mail . 'Put your clothes on . it's a family show. Viewers outraged at Christina Aguilera and Rihanna's racy X Factor performances' (3 June 2011) - <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1337879/X-Factor-2010-final-Viewers-outraged-Christina-Aguilera-Rihannas-racy-performances.html#ixzz1PtzUW0l0>

⁵ For example . The Sun . 'Paedo heaven on our High Street' (15 April 2010) - <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/2933105/High-Street-stores-are-selling-sexually-provocative-clothes-for-children.html>

- In 2010 Mumsnet launched their *Let Girls be Girls* campaign which focused on heightened sexualisation in retail culture^{6,7}
- The Children's Society inquiry into a *Good Childhood* (the report of which was published in February 2009) drew attention to the impact of advertising which targeted children⁸
- In 2010 Mothers' Union published *Bye Buy Childhood* as part of a campaign to challenge the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood⁹

Since its inception, FPI has also been making the case for more action on commercialisation and has published a number of reports on the issue.¹⁰

- Our 2004 report *Hard Sell, Soft Targets?* drew on surveys and focus groups with parents to show considerable concern from families about the prevalence of advertising on television
- In 2007 *Marketing to Children and Parents – a checklist* detailed the five marketing methods parents dislike and proposed five steps towards family friendly marketing
- In 2009 *Business Thinks Family* updated the debate, and issued a request to business to work with families and in particular to ensure that their online marketing was fair and transparent
- Our 2010 UK *Family-Friendly Report Card* examined the UK's status on the commercialisation of childhood, requesting that the government should require advertisers to declare the amount they spend on advertisements for children.

Government reviews and the evidence base

While the Bailey Review is the most recent contribution to the debate, it builds upon a series of reviews commissioned by the Government during the last 5 years focusing on commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood.¹¹ These include:

⁶ Girlguiding UK - Tell us the truth - Girls call for honesty over airbrushing - http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/system_pages/small_navigation/latest_news/tell_us_the_truth.aspx

⁷ Mumsnet - <http://www.mumsnet.com/campaigns/let-girls-be-girls>

⁸ The Children's Society . Recommendations from the Good Childhood enquiry - <http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/research/initiatives/good-childhood-enquiry/recommendations-enquiry>

⁹ Mothers Union (2010) *Bye Buy Childhood*. London: Mothers Union. http://www.muenterprises.org/wp-content/themes/byebuymu/files/bye_buy_childhood_report_pdf.pdf

¹⁰ National Family and Parenting Institute (2004) . *Hard Sell, soft targets?*; Family and Parenting Institute (2007) . *Marketing to children and parents – a checklist* - <http://familyandparenting.web-platform.net/item/document/334/9>;

Nairn, A; Family and Parenting Institute (2009) . *Business Thinks Family* - <http://familyandparenting.web-platform.net/item/publication/56/10>;

Family and Parenting Institute (2010) . *UK Family Friendly report card 2010* - <http://familyandparenting.web-platform.net/item/document/2848/1>

¹¹ Buckingham, D. (2009) *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing: Report of an Independent Assessment*. London: DCSF/DCMS - <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/00669-2009DOM-EN.pdf>;

Buckingham, D., Bragg, S., Russell, R. and Willett, R. (2010) *Sexualised goods aimed at children* research report. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament - <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/equal/reports-10/eor10-02.htm>;

Papadopoulos, L. (2010) *Sexualisation of Young People Review*, Commissioned by the Home Office UK <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Sexualisation-young-people2835.pdf?view=Binary>

Byron, T. (2008) *The Byron Review: Safer children in a digital world*. London: DCSF.

Byron, T. (2010) *'Do we have safer children in a digital world?' A review of progress since the 2008 Byron Review*. London: DCSF . both at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/ukccis/about/a0076277/the-byron-reviews>;

Phoenix, A (2011) . *The commercialisation and premature sexualisation of childhood* . London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre -

http://www.cwrc.ac.uk/news/documents/CWRC_commercialisationsexualisation_review_final_version_2June2011_Master.pdf

- *The impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing* Professor David Buckingham
- *Sexualised goods aimed at children: research report* Professor David Buckingham
- *Sexualisation of young people review* Dr Linda Papadopoulos
- *Safer Children in a Digital World* Professor Tanya Byron (this deals primarily with children's online activity rather than commercialisation, so is not discussed in this paper)
- A further review, by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre was prepared to inform the Bailey Review. This was a rapid review, building on those previously conducted, looking at the literature since 2008 on the impact of commercialisation and sexualisation on children and parents and also covering international work.

Understanding the impact of commercialisation

While there is clear evidence of increasing commercialisation within society and the persuasive impact of marketing in influencing purchasing, there is much more limited evidence on how this impacts on attitudes, behaviour and wellbeing. In particular there is a lack of firm research evidence on the *causal* relationships between marketing exposure and impact, both positive and negative.

The 2009 Buckingham review argued that the impact of increasing commercialisation on children's wellbeing must to be seen in the context of wider social and family changes resulting in particular from the growth of the consumer society and changes in technology.

The review identified a range of positive and negative impacts associated with children and marketing. It acknowledged that the commercial world offers many opportunities in entertainment, creativity, communication, learning and cultural experience but that the benefits of this are hard to separate out and quantify. It also identified a number of the negative impacts of commercialisation on areas such as wellbeing (including body image, sexualisation and gender identity) and mental health; materialism; pester power; peer pressure and physical health, particularly increased risks of obesity.

Buckingham concluded that establishing definitive proof on the impact of the commercial world on children would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to find and suggested that in the circumstances, a precautionary principle in relation to children might be justified.¹²

Understanding the impact of sexualisation

Professor Buckingham's 2009 review also included an overview of the evidence on sexualisation of childhood as a negative aspect of commercialisation. It highlighted a key evidential limitation, that most of the research to date in this area on impact relates to adults not children.

Buckingham further explored the issue of sexualisation in a subsequent report for the Scottish parliament on sexualised goods aimed at children. This looked at the prevalence of such products and the attitudes of parents and children towards them. It found that people define sexualisation in different ways and have a very wide range of reactions to such products. On prevalence, it concluded that whilst there are some sexualised goods aimed at children on the market, there were relatively few of them and availability was limited.

¹² Buckingham, D. (2009) *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing: Report of an Independent Assessment*. London: DCSF/DCMS - <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/00669-2009DOM-EN.pdf>;

A review of sexualisation was conducted by Dr Linda Papadopoulos as part of the Home Office task force on violence against women and girls.¹³ The review defined sexualisation as the imposition of adult sexuality on to children and young people before they are capable of dealing with it, mentally, emotionally or physically. It looked at how sexualised messages might be affecting the development of children and young people and influencing cultural norms, along with assessing the evidence of a link between sexualisation and violence.

This review concluded that premature sexualisation of children and young people was prevalent and did place them at risk of a variety of harms with regards to body image; behaviours; self-esteem; expectations of sexual relationships and potentially placing them at increased risk of abuse. It proposed that far-reaching action was required to address these and create the tools and spaces for them to develop and explore their sexuality in their own time.¹⁴

Understanding what parents think

The Family and Parenting Institute's 2004 report *Hard sell, soft targets?* drew on surveys and focus groups with parents and exposed significant concern from families about the amount of advertising on television. Some 84 per cent of parents in the MORI poll commissioned said they thought that companies targeted their children too much.¹⁵

Levels of concern amongst parents on this issue have remained high. In a poll conducted for FPI in the run up to the 2010 general election, 36 per cent of parents felt that less marketing to children on television and the internet should be a priority for the incoming government to make Britain more family friendly. More recently, Department for Education research with parents as part of the Bailey review found that 88 per cent of parents surveyed felt that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly. Particular concerns were:

- Programmes or adverts on TV before the 9pm watershed which they felt were unsuitable or inappropriate for children e.g. increasingly sexualised content in music videos and pre-watershed TV with too adult themes in some soap operas
- The impact of celebrity culture, adult style clothes that were not age appropriate and music videos in encouraging children to act older than they are
- Pressure to buy non-essential items for their children so they don't feel left out
- Advertising and displays in public places (shop window displays, advertising hoardings) that they felt were inappropriate for children to see because of their sexual content.¹⁶

What do we still need to know?

In his 2009 review Professor Buckingham identified significant gaps in the knowledge in a number of areas, in particular on materialism; sexualisation and the impact of new media on children. He made the case for better designed studies looking at specific areas, acknowledging the complexity of the issues and the range of influences involved. In particular,

¹³ Papadopoulos, L. (2010) *Sexualisation of Young People Review*

¹⁴ However, the Papadopoulos report has subsequently been criticised for overstating the certainty of its conclusions and not providing an adequate critical evaluation of the underlying evidence.

¹⁵ National Family and Parenting Institute (2004) . *Hard Sell, soft targets?*

¹⁶ This survey was carried out as part of a wider evidence gathering exercise for the Reg Bailey Review between 16th February and 6th March 2011 with 1025 parents of children aged 5-16 in the UK.
<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/summary%20of%20bailey%20parents%20omnibus%20questions.pdf>
<http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/pressnotices/a0076619/almost-nine-out-of-ten-parents-think-children-are-being-forced-to-grow-up-too-quickly>

he suggested that longitudinal studies were needed which could allow for rigorous comparisons over time, looking at children's consumption of media and interaction with the commercial world, taking account of the other factors and influences in their lives.¹⁷ Bolstering these conclusions, the most recent review by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre concluded that further research should:¹⁸

- Explore the complex influences and mediating factors involved (such as family and peer groups) and looks at how consumption fits into children's lives
- Examine the factors and impact of these longitudinally
- Explore the effect of key dimensions such as family type, income levels and ethnicity
- Examine the topic of boys and sexualisation
- Develop a better understanding of the wider impact of societal commercialisation and sexualisation on children and parents and how families process these influences.

Clearly, the research conducted so far does not tell a straightforward story of the impact on children of commercialised or sexualised influences. While associations can be clearly identified, even with further research definitive proof of cause and effect is likely to continue to remain elusive. The range of factors likely to exacerbate or mitigate the impact on children is considerable . and every child will respond differently to the influences around them.

However, the fact that the relationship between commercialisation, sexualisation and children is not yet fully understood does not mean that children are not being affected. On the contrary, the anxieties of parents and the increased complexity of the media environment confronted by this generation all point to a pressing need to address the issue.

The Bailey Review

'We do not want to cut children off from the commercial world completely as we believe that it brings benefits and parents tell us that they want to manage the issue themselves, supported by proportionate regulation and responsible businesses'

'Letting Children be Children'¹⁹

Reg Bailey

The Family and Parenting Institute warmly welcomes Reg Bailey's review as a significant contribution to the debate on commercialisation and sexualisation. We believe it represents a realistic and grounded action plan for Government, regulators and businesses. We especially commend the emphasis in the review on the voices of families

*'Because of the responsibilities that parents have for their children, we believe that their views need to be given extra consideration in this regard, more than perhaps any other section of society'*²⁰

¹⁷ Buckingham, D. (2009) *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing: Report of an Independent Assessment*. London: DCSF/DCMS - <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/00669-2009DOM-EN.pdf>;

¹⁸ Phoenix, A; Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre (2011) *The commercialisation and premature sexualisation of childhood* on pages 41 and 42.

¹⁹ Bailey, R - *Letting Children be Children - Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood* (2011) London: DfE - <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/CM%208078#downloadableparts>

²⁰ Bailey, R - *Letting Children be Children - Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood*

We also welcome the fact that the review notes that consulting parents is not enough, it is also important for all to be *seen to have listened and to have acted on what they have heard.*²¹ The review also comments extensively on the need for businesses and retailers to become more attuned to the needs of parents and children, stating that: *'They need to be explicitly and systematically family friendly, from design and buying through to display and marketing.'*²²

The Bailey Review also highlights the link between the capabilities of parents and the skills of children with regard to commercial pressures:

*'The greater parents' awareness and understanding of marketing communications, the more they will be able to support their children in understanding and navigating the commercial world.'*²³

There are a number of the Bailey review's proposals which align with our previous research and arguments made in previous publications. Below we highlight several of the recommendations which we particularly endorse:

- Ensuring the content of pre-watershed television programming better meets parents' expectations
- Ensuring that the regulation of advertising reflects more closely parents' and children's views
- Making it easier for parents to block adult and age-restricted material from the internet
- Making it easier for parents to express their views to businesses about goods and services
- Developing a retail code of good practice on retailing to children
- Prohibiting the employment of children as brand ambassadors and in peer-to-peer marketing
- Ensuring greater transparency in the regulatory framework by creating a single website for regulators
- Raising parental awareness of marketing and advertising techniques
- Quality assurance for media and commercial literacy resources and education for children

As part of the full package of recommendations outlined in the review, the adoption of these actions points by businesses, regulators, broadcasters and the Government should go some way to addressing the concerns of parents. However, the publication of the review itself is only the beginning of a longer process of reform which will require sustained engagement from a range of stakeholders. In the final section of this paper we outline several principles which should inform this process.

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

Where next?

The Bailey review and the preceding Government reviews represents a pragmatic route forward which both respects the autonomy of parents and the need of children to interact with their commercial and media environment. After a number of years giving voice to parents' concerns on marketing to children, FPI welcomes the level of attention currently being directed at this issue by policymakers. This is a real moment of opportunity to engender a culture change amongst broadcasters, businesses and advertisers. To exploit the full potential of this opportunity it is important to consider the following:

1) Family friendly as default

Too often, a family-friendly environment is seen as an add-on option. We believe that more should be done to encourage a culture where companies adopt family friendly settings and approaches as the default option. Child-proofed business practices should not only be applicable to companies directly targeting families and children, but should represent standard practice. This is particularly relevant in the online arena where pressurised parents often report that they are not able to keep pace with technological developments, or the range of media sources their children are accessing.

In particular, it is not always clear when parental controls in laptops, mobile phones, software or ISPs are available. They also often need to be expressly activated, with children commonly learning to circumvent them easily. The easily overridden controls in operation on television-on-demand services have further exposed the need for effective family-friendly filters on technology to operate as standard.

Making the shift to becoming family friendly need not mean further costs or restraints on broadcasters, advertisers and retailers; in fact there are obvious gains to be made by making the shift to this business model in terms of picking up new business from parents and families. Alongside the reputational impact of becoming a responsible broadcaster, manufacturer or retailer, businesses will secure the trust and valuable customer loyalty of families in the long-term.

2) Enhancing our ability to engage with parents

The views of families themselves need to be at the heart of any strategy designed to tackle the commercialisation and premature sexualisation of childhood. Parents often feel powerless to effect change on this issue, and rarely see any evidence that their attitudes shape decisions made by advertisers or broadcasters. Businesses and government regularly struggle to go beyond tokenistic stakeholder engagement. Research consistently indicates that awareness is low amongst parents when it comes to complaints processes. Families should be able to find straightforward pathways of accountability that allow them to challenge content or products which they consider unsuitable.

We believe that parents' voices must be embedded within the decision-making processes of regulators, broadcasters and those businesses who regularly market to children and families. Decisions about what constitutes appropriate content, marketing or products should therefore be put back in the hands of families themselves. Working with parents as partners can also extend to testing and product development, along with involving parents in designing services (including complaints processes) which align with the needs of families.

3) The right tools to empower families

Shielding children from negative influences indefinitely is no substitute for developing their resilience to commercial and sexualised influences over the long term. As Professor Buckingham commented in his 2009 review: *'This is to shift the question from one of protection*

to one of provision – to ask what children should have a right to receive.²⁴ The next generation's capacity to critique promotional material is key to limiting the negative impact it has on their self-image or levels of materialism.

This resilience is core to children's longer-term emotional well-being, and such skills will have a far wider application. Given the emerging evidence on the compounding impact that commercialisation can have in conjunction with poverty we should also be alert to the varying needs of children from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds.

The concepts of media and consumer literacy are already well-established and there are a number of existing tools which aim to support parents and children to navigate this environment safely and confidently. These resources (emerging from within formal education and beyond it) have been produced to develop children's skills in making financial decisions and decode media messaging.

Of course, media and consumer literacy represent only one dimension to a package of protection, alongside regulatory steps and family friendly filtering. Ultimately, the most significant protective factor for children is provided by parents and families who are modelling responsible media consumption in the home. This highlights the need for any initiatives with children to engage closely with parents too. Just as parental engagement has been shown to play a significant part in a child's ability to read and write in the early years, so it should be seen as a key determinant of digital and consumer literacy.

4) We must respond in partnership

The incremental pace of change so far reinforces the importance of seizing the opportunity for sustained reform which is now presented by the publication of the review. Given the all-encompassing nature of the commercial world children now inhabit, action needs to be taken by a range of stakeholders working in partnership:

- **Government and regulators** need to lead on co-ordinating the response and hold businesses and content providers to account more pro-actively
- The **third sector, civil society and educators** have a role to play in building the resilience of families and children to a highly commercialised and sexualised environment.
- **Businesses and the private sector** need to be incentivised to adopt more responsible practices.

The Family and Parenting Institute believes it is time for a much more effective partnership between business, regulatory agencies and families. We want to see a bold and ambitious response from a range of partners, building on the recommendations of a range of previous reviews to create a more family-friendly commercial and media environment which allows children to thrive.

5) We must not lose momentum

The Bailey Review adopts a voluntary approach - drawing on the goodwill of business and only proposing that the Government to consider further legislation after taking stock of progress in 18 months. In its positive reception to the review the Government also acknowledges the fact that: ²⁵ *that the majority of the recommendations are directed at industry and the regulators and we look to them to see that these recommendations are implemented as fully as possible.*

²⁴ Buckingham, D. (2009) *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing: Report of an Independent Assessment* at page 164

²⁵ The Government's response to the Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood Written Ministerial Statement The Minister of State for Children and Families (Sarah Teather MP) 07 June 2011 - <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a0077692/the-governments-response-to-the-independent-review-of-the-commercialisation-and-sexualisation-of-childhood>

While we agree it is right that businesses, broadcasters and regulators should be given the opportunity to lead the way, this also gives rise to the possibility that momentum on this issue could be lost. As we have seen, previous reviews have been commissioned and parents have yet to see a real difference in the commercial environment. So far, a wait and see approach has yet to deliver for families.

Furthermore, adopting a voluntary approach still demands a proactive response from Government and regulators; as well as penalising content producers, distributors and businesses who break the codes, those who *do* adopt family friendly approaches should see recognition of their efforts. There are a number of other positive interventions available to Government and others, amongst them developing the resilience of families and children so they can get the best from their media environment. To do this effectively, we will need to build the evidence base about the protective factors children will need in today's commercial world.

We also believe it is advisable for the Department for Education to continue to track the views of parents on commercialisation and sexualisation annually, in order to assess the impact of the changes proposed by the Bailey Review. Parents represent the best judges of the needs of their children, and it is appropriate that the action taken in the coming years should be informed by their assessment of the problem and progress made.

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