

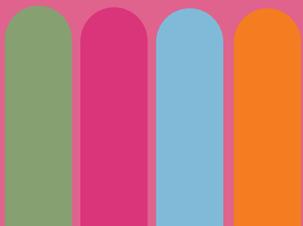
# Labelled for Life

Managing the Commercial World as a Family

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## Bye Buy Childhood

In 2010, Mothers' Union launched the Bye Buy Childhood campaign against 'the commercialisation of childhood', calling on advertisers, retailers and the media to stop treating childhood as a marketing opportunity. Since then, the campaign has been successful in raising public awareness of the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood, leading to significant policy change in the UK.

As a global membership of four million parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, godparents and other family members, we also offer families encouragement and practical support. In 2012, Mothers' Union published the first edition of *Labelled for Life*, which offered suggestions on how to manage the impact of the commercial world on children and family life.

Since then, technology has advanced, and regulations on selling to children have changed. This second edition of *Labelled for Life* is still packed full of the same helpful suggestions and encouragement on guiding and supporting children and young people; alongside updated information on how to manage technology, how to make complaints and where to seek advice.

Our hope is that children won't feel that their value and identity is tied up with big brands, what they look like or what they own; but instead that they understand and feel secure in their own inherent value.

# Section 1

## The commercial world

The 'commercial world' refers to all that is aimed at selling to us, including marketing. Marketing plays an important role in our lives. It informs us about products and services - what they do, where we can find them and how much they cost. Marketing includes anything that is used to promote a product or service, such as its packaging, pricing, placing and promotion.

As a parent, or other concerned family member, it is helpful to understand how the commercial world engages children and young people, and how they engage with it. Those under 16 will have never known a world without the internet and mobile technology and the marketing that has developed alongside it; so it is especially important to understand the online world, which is so much part of their lives.

As well as selling specific goods and services, companies use marketing to win brand loyalty across a lifetime. Brands tap into what appeals to children and young people, as well as setting what is on trend, in order to encourage them to spend money.

Fictional characters and cartoons are hugely attractive to children. Many films and television series for children are franchised and generate a huge array of merchandise.

Celebrities such as pop stars, actors, 'reality TV' stars and sports personalities are a source of aspiration to many children, not only for their talents but also for their appearance and lifestyle. Celebrities are also used as 'brand ambassadors', creating a link between aspiration and the brand.

How brands make themselves attractive to children and young people

### Marketing platforms

Modern marketing is based on integrated and interactive strategies. Companies use a number of platforms that interact with one another to sell products and services, creating 'wrap around' advertising.

### Television and radio advertising

Television and radio advertising still hold sway with children and young people. The growth in child-specific channels provides advertisers with an easy to target audience. However, broadcast advertising to children is one of the most regulated areas of advertising in the UK and Ireland.

### On-street advertising

Adverts in public places such as on billboards, buses and bus stops provide highly visible and inescapable marketing messages. Regulations in the UK have been tightened in recent years to restrict on-street adverts featuring sexualised imagery.

### Product placement

A number of brands pay television channels, programme makers and film makers to feature their products or brand names. However, products cannot be placed in children's programmes or channels, in the UK and Ireland.

### Peer to peer marketing

Word of mouth can be one of the most cost-effective and persuasive methods of advertising. Marketers use a number of ways to engage people in this form of advertising; although under the Advertising Association's voluntary pledge in the UK, under-16s cannot be employed directly or indirectly for this method of marketing.

### Online/digital marketing

It is important to understand that the world for many children and young people is not divided into the 'online world' and the 'real world'. The two are an inextricably linked and online interaction can be as real and meaningful as face to face. Participating in online communities can be a way to gain a sense of belonging and to explore and express identity.

### Online adverts

Paid for advertising appears on many websites, and can appear in the form of banners, adverts on the side of the screen or as pop-ups.

### Behavioural advertising

Tracking cookies are pieces of data that allow a website to store information gathered on a user's device and later retrieve it. This information is then used to target the user with related advertising directly on screen. Websites in the UK and Ireland must obtain consent from visitors for the use of cookies and other tracking technologies.

### Social networking

Most social networking sites feature paid for advertising. They are also used by brands as a means of encouraging peer to peer marketing, for example through 'sharing' and 'liking' things on Facebook.

### User-generated content

Many websites allow users to upload content such as videos and music, for example YouTube. The content of some videos may be promotional or contain endorsements or product placement, and there is often paid for advertising on these sites as well.

### Blogs and vlogs

Online written blogs and video blogs (vlogs) may feature product recommendations. If the blogger or vlogger has been paid for their endorsement, the content is considered as advertising and this should be indicated on the webpage.



## Section 2 Managing the commercial world as a family

The commercial world is part of life and children cannot be shielded from it. Rather, they need to be equipped to manage it well throughout their life. There are a number of approaches you can use to equip your child and, of course, each approach needs to be applied appropriately to your child's age or level of understanding. There are also technological safeguards you can put in place to protect your child from certain online content.

### Set an example

Parents, carers and other family members have a significant influence on a child's life. Your consumer habits set a powerful example to them, so consider what messages you think they get from the purchases you make and the media you use.

### Set clear and consistent boundaries

Placing appropriate boundaries around your child's experience of the commercial world is as important as any other boundaries you set to protect and guide them. There are several considerations that may be helpful:

- What devices, such as mobile phones, you allow your child to use or own; and what unmonitored or unsupervised access to media, such as television and internet, you allow your child
- What you tell your child is not acceptable for them to watch on television, view online or read in magazines. Consider also what film and game age-ratings you enforce in the home
- What boundaries you expect your child to observe when outside the home, for example what media they view at a friend's home
- What limits you set around the amount of time your child uses screen based or interactive technology
- How much 'pestering' to buy things you are prepared to put up with and at what point it undermines your authority as a parent or carer

- What action you will take if your child crosses a boundary, and how will you communicate this
- What guidelines, if any, other family members can set; or what you expect them to respect

**Manage your child's expectations of what they can have and how they can use the commercial world**

What your child expects they can have and what you think is reasonable may differ. In working out how to manage your child's expectations, you could think about:

- How often your child expects to get the things they ask for; whether it is every time or only on special occasions
- What your child's expectations are of getting 'must have' items
- Your child's perception of your financial situation and whether you expect them to contribute towards purchases

Children also face expectations from friends, at school and in the media about how and what they should consume - think about how your child wants you to help them fit in with others' expectations.

Managing these expectations can be challenging, as parents and carers don't want their child to be excluded by their peers. However, you can help equip your child to be well balanced in their expectations as they grow into adulthood.

**Talk to your child about commercialisation and, when appropriate, sexualisation**

Talking together about these issues and why you set boundaries helps to build up a common understanding. Advertising and marketing strategies are often included in the school curriculum and can form a talking point at home too. You could talk about:

- Why your child wants certain items and what has influenced their choices
- The reasons, values and experiences that guide your decisions, as a parent or carer, for not buying some things or putting boundaries around their use of technology

- How your child uses the media and what they are interested in - for example their favourite toys, clothes, television programmes or music
- The wider impact of the commercial world, for example on the lives of those who produce consumer goods in poor working conditions across the world; and the impact of consumerism on the environment
- Why marketers use sex to sell and why the media portrays sex in the way it does

It might feel embarrassing to discuss sexual issues together, but it is important to ensure that your child is nurtured to have a healthy view of sex and relationships; as well as an understanding of what some of the differences might be between the way sex is presented online or in the media, and how it might be in reality.

At an appropriate age, talk to your child about 'sexting'. This is the exchange of nude or sexual images or messages through mobile phones or the internet. Many 'sexts' include pictures that people have taken of themselves. Unfortunately, the reality is that many young people will have received or shared such messages.

Be aware that in the UK it is illegal to take, hold or share 'indecent' photos of anyone under-18 (including by those under 18). In Ireland, anything that could be considered as producing or distributing child pornography is illegal.

There might also be other websites that concern you or have upset your child, such as those endorsing suicide, anorexia and bulimia and self-harm.

**Talk to your child about peer pressure and bullying**

Children and young people often feel pressure from their peers, as friends' opinions do matter to them. Peer pressure may be particularly strong in relation to owning certain goods, such as footwear and electronic devices.

Talk to your child about any pressures they feel and what they and their friends believe is important. Reassure them that it is

okay to be different, and that true friendship isn't based on what you own or look like.

Take ownership of your decisions around what you won't allow your child to own, wear or do, and give your child permission to 'blame' you for those decisions. In some cases, children face bullying and even theft of possessions - your child will need your help if this is happening to them.

If your child is being bullied online or via text, keep the messages as proof in case you want to notify the police; and let your mobile or internet service provider know.

It might be helpful to get to know the families of your child's friends, if you don't already, and share experiences of commercialisation. They might also share your concerns and this could help break down any sense of competition. You could agree together on a certain course of action.

Also, reflect upon the peer pressure that you face as an adult - do you feel as if you have to 'keep up with the Joneses'? You are certainly not alone in feeling this pressure.

Your child will eventually be old enough to make their own decisions about how to deal with the commercial world. You can help them develop the skills to manage it well in a number of ways.

Learning to save is an important skill for life. Having to save up pocket money to buy something provides a test of the importance of a purchase to your child. Children can also learn to put the value of goods into perspective if they see the comparative value of things. You could discuss with your child what else they could get for the price of what they want to spend money on, for example a pair of trainers may cost the same as a ticket to see a show or a football match.

Discussing the family budget with your child can teach them money management skills. For example, you could work out together how much money you could save by buying shop brands rather than brand names.

It may also be helpful to consider how much influence you are happy for your child to have over the household spend and give them choices within those boundaries.

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### Consider alternatives to the commercial world

Technology-based play is not necessarily always commercialised - much is fun, stimulating, educational and safe. But there are alternatives that children and families can engage in, many of which children naturally initiate themselves.

Outside play, imaginative play, drama, sports, trips to museums, nature parks and creative and messy activities can be fun and inexpensive. They can inspire your child with countless benefits. Keep an eye on local notice boards, newspapers and online for activities for children or find some books or websites with ideas for fun and games.

Celebrations and festivals such as birthdays and Christmas can be commercialised and expensive. Alternatives to buying presents could include making a financial contribution to your child's/ grandchild's/ godchild's future, such as a savings account. Think, as well, about ethical gifts such as Fairtrade products or donations to charity.

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### Ensure that you understand marketing, the media and technology and set up necessary safeguards for your child

It may well be true that your child is tech-savvy, but familiarising yourself with new technology and electronic marketing will help you understand the technological world and the commercial pressures and potential risks your child may face.

### Use the commercial world to teach your child life and money management skills

Guide your  
child's use of  
the internet

Help your child to look at the internet with a critical eye and understand that some websites are advertising tools; and that not everything on the internet is necessarily true or that people are who they say they are.



## Guide your child's use of the internet

Talk about how online behaviour is not different from 'real world' behaviour – for instance, would your child discuss personal information with a stranger on the street? Find out who they talk to and what they reveal about themselves online, to friends as well as to strangers.

Remind them that they leave behind a digital footprint for others to see, now and in the future. Even if they can remove something they have put online it could have already caused problems for themselves or others.

## Put in place technological safeguards

Whilst there is a commonly held belief that children are digital experts, research shows that just over half of 11 to 12 year olds don't know how to change privacy settings on websites, so it is wise to guide them through it.

Whilst installing internet filters and other safeguards it might be helpful to have a conversation with your child about why you are doing this. Older children may question whether you trust them, but it is important to highlight that, as a parent or carer, you have a duty to protect your child from harmful materials; and you may not wish to see them yourself either. There are several ways to filter the internet content that makes its way into your home.

## Platform/application level

Check terms and conditions of applications and platforms to see whether they will share your information and details with others. Also set privacy settings to control what information is shared and to ensure your child's personal details are kept private. A number of social networking sites have age restrictions on them, although these are often reliant on the user entering their own date of birth with honesty.

## Device level

Make sure you have set the parental controls on any internet enabled devices you have. On Windows products, this is usually found under Family Safety or User Accounts in the Control Panel; or under Restrictions in Apple 'i' products. These help you control the content your child can access. Many retailers will ask you to decide whether to activate parental controls at the point of purchase.

Within your device settings you may also be able to restrict behavioural advertising content. You may still see adverts but it won't be based on what content you have already viewed.

## Network level

Most internet service providers (ISPs) will ask you upon setting up an internet connection whether you wish to turn on parental controls. If you are an existing customer, contact your ISP or look at their website for details of how to set controls up. These controls can block specific sites and block children from using the internet at times you specify on their user accounts.

Technological precautions are not fully guaranteed to prevent children deliberately or unintentionally accessing unsuitable material. Educating and talking to your child is equally important in helping them to be a safe and responsible digital citizen.

# Section 3

## Getting your views heard

The media, advertisers and retailers are regulated by a mixture of law and self-regulation in the UK and Ireland. Regulators of the different industries uphold guidelines, codes of conduct and compliance systems.

### UNITED KINGDOM

The easiest way to complain about any products, marketing or media aimed at or available to children in the UK is through the **ParentPort** website: [www.parentport.org.uk](http://www.parentport.org.uk).

This directs you to the relevant regulator for your complaint.

Alternatively, you can complain directly to the relevant regulator.

#### Television, video-on-demand and radio programme content (not advertising content)

Any complaints should be made in the first instance to the programme producers.

Following that, you can contact Ofcom

In writing: Ofcom, Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA

By phone: **0300 123 3333** or **020 7981 3040**

Online: [www.consumers.ofcom.org.uk/tell-us](http://www.consumers.ofcom.org.uk/tell-us)

#### Advertising on television, radio, cinema, internet, email and text, print, press, posters, sales promotions and direct advertising and marketing

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

In writing: Mid City Place, 71 High Holborn, London WC1V 6QT

By phone: **020 7492 2222**

Online: [www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk)

### Clothing

The British Retail Consortium

In writing: 2 London Bridge, London SE1 9RA

By phone: **020 7854 8900**

Online: [www.brc.org.uk](http://www.brc.org.uk)

### Online behavioural advertising blocking

Your Online Choices

[www.youronlinechoices.com](http://www.youronlinechoices.com)

## REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

### Television and radio

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI)

In writing: 2-5 Warrington Place, Dublin D02 XP29

By phone: **01 644 1200**

By email: [complaints@bai.ie](mailto:complaints@bai.ie)

Online: [www.bai.ie](http://www.bai.ie)

### Advertising, promotion and online behavioural advertising

The Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI)

In writing: Ferry House, 48 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2

By phone: **01 613 7040**

By email: [standards@asai.ie](mailto:standards@asai.ie)

Online: [www.asai.ie](http://www.asai.ie)

# Section 4

## Further Support

### UK

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

Childline: **0800 1111**

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Childnet

[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

Internet Watch Foundation

[www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Safer Internet Centre

[www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

### IRELAND

Childline: **1800 66 66 66**

[www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie)

Irish Internet Hotline

[www.hotline.ie](http://www.hotline.ie)

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)

[www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)

Webwise

[www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

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