

ECPAT UK submission to IMPRESS Code consultation

Please find below a brief note on Clause 3 of the IMPRESS Draft Standards Code, submitted by leading children's rights charity ECPAT UK.

ECPAT UK has more than 20 years' experience working to uphold the rights of children abused in or at risk of child trafficking and transnational sexual exploitation.

In addition to the following suggested amendments to the Draft Standards Code, ECPAT UK has concerns regarding the continued use of "victim blaming" language on cases involving child sexual exploitation. Despite changes to UK legislative guidance removing reference to abusive terms such as "child pornography" and "child prostitution" from law, the UK media continues to use such terms when referring to child sexual abuse and exploitation. We recommend an addendum on semantics be included in the Standards Code as follows:

Any reference to "child pornography" should be removed and replaced with "child abuse images".

Any reference to "child prostitution" should be removed and replaced with "child sexual exploitation".

3. For each sub clause within Clause 3 of the Draft Standards Code, we recommend that the age of consent be raised to 18, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3.1 The injunction on identifying children under 16 (under 18) should also make reference to "jigsaw identification" (such information that makes a child identifiable), particularly when identifying children in the criminal justice system.

3.2 In accordance with the provision on payment in 6(iv) of the Editors' Code, the IMPRESS Code should include the following: "Children under 18 must not be paid for material involving their welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child's interest."

3.3 The IMPRESS code must also make reference to the Editors' Code provision of "not using the fame of parents as a sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life."