BYE BUY CHILDHOOD: A report into the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood 2015

Valuing children as children, not consumers
## Contents

- Foreword from Mothers' Union 3
- Summary 4
- Section 1: The playing field 5
- Section 2: Valuing children as children, not consumers 7
- Section 3: Empowered parents? 12
- Section 4: Policy recommendations 14
Foreword from Mothers' Union

Mothers’ Union is a worldwide organisation working to support family life through grassroots membership. We believe in the value of family, in its many forms, as a source of love and support for individuals and the basis for a caring community.

Our Bye Buy Childhood campaign was launched in 2010, highlighting our concerns that childhood has increasingly become a marketing opportunity; and that children are being targeted by and exposed to inappropriate sexualised media and marketing.

Mothers’ Union called on the Coalition Government, in 2010, to adhere to its promise to tackle the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood; and in particular to prohibit the targeting of sexualised media, marketing and products at children. Our campaign also sought to challenge industry and parents to look at their practice; and to support families in managing the commercial world.

The campaign has had a wide reach: 2,000 copies of the Bye Buy Childhood report were produced and distributed alongside 15,000 pledge cards for members and supporters of the campaign to lobby political representatives with. In March 2011, Mothers’ Union presented a 19,000 signature petition to the Prime Minister, calling on the Government to tackle the commercialisation and sexualisation of children.

Shortly after the launch of Bye Buy Childhood, Mothers’ Union’s Chief Executive, Reg Bailey, was invited by the Government to carry out an independent review of the issue, resulting in his 2011 report Letting Children Be Children (the ‘Bailey Review’).

In 2013/14, Mothers’ Union carried out an evaluation of the Bye Buy Childhood campaign, along with further quantitative and qualitative research¹, to ascertain whether parents feel things have changed since our previous research in 2010. Repeating the questions used in the 2010 research, we found an increase in parental concern about the commercialisation of childhood; suggesting greater awareness amongst parents and that change has not yet been fully accomplished.

Whilst the Bailey Review and other work has galvanised industry and regulator goodwill and action to better protect children and empower parents, the Government needs to continue engaging with this important topic to maintain the good work that has been done and steer the UK towards being a world leader on this issue.

We believe more than ever that children should be valued as children and not targeted as consumers.

¹ ComRes interviewed 1,081 parents in Britain online between the 4th and 11th November 2013, and 1,001 parents in Britain online between the 18th and 24th August 2010. Data were weighted to be representative of all British adults age 18+. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Full data tables are available at www.comres.co.uk. ComRes also conducted five depth in-home qualitative interviews with parents and their children in London in June 2014.
Summary

It seems to me that children are constantly being bombarded by advertising and promotion of electronics, games consoles, tablets, phones etc. clothes and designer wear. 

Mothers’ Union member, UK

When you go on YouTube you get the little ads pop up in the bottom of a window of a clip or something that you watch. It’s subliminal. I think at this stage and at an age where they can be very easily led to think that actually this is okay. Well, I personally don’t think it’s okay. 

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

There is evidence that advertising and marketing are still the backdrop to the lives of children and young people, and that the ‘commercialisation of childhood’ - the treatment of children as consumers and as an audience to be marketed to - remains an issue that concerns parents today.

In this latest study we have sought to assess the impact of both marketing (the positioning and general promotion and selling of products or services) and advertising (the targeted promotion of products or services to specific audiences) on children.

In 2010, the childhood market was estimated to be worth £99 billion in the UK. The toy industry is booming in the UK with £2.6 million spent on traditional toys; and with children spending an average of £278 each on toys a year - one of the highest rates amongst OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. Overall, spending on all marketing and advertising in the UK has risen steadily over the past 14 years.

There are significant levels of unease amongst British parents about the negative impact of the commercialisation of childhood, with four in five (80%) parents voicing concern. Both our quantitative (online surveys) and qualitative (face to face interviews and member questionnaires) research shows that the effects of commercialisation are all too real and were identified by both the parents and the children interviewed.

Only half (51%) of parents feel equipped to manage the influence of advertising and the commercial world on their family and there is a clear sense that the effects of the commercialisation of childhood are not restricted to children; but that ‘peer pressure’ impacts on parents just as much as the children to whom these products are marketed. Four in five (81%) British adults say that being exposed to the media, such as advertising, films, television and the internet, encourages their child to ask them to purchase things that they see advertised - leading to ‘pester power’.

The evolving nature of technology sparks considerable concern among British families, with parents highlighting a particular lack of control over their children’s use of mobile phones. In both aspects of the research, parents make a strong link between commercialisation and technology and often understand the two as intertwined.

Showing parents that there are measures in place to help and that they can influence and mediate their child’s exposure to the commercial world is an important response to the narrative of the commercialisation of childhood, as is empowering parents to feel that they have the capability to limit the influence of advertising and marketing. This report outlines our key concerns and puts forward new recommendations to ensure that best practice in this area does not go unnoticed, children are supported in developing resilience and effective support for parents is provided.

Mothers’ Union member comment in response to question: How do you perceive the commercial world around us?

Chapter 3 of the 2010 Bye Buy Childhood report outlines the impact of commercialisation on children, and highlights the impact it has on physical health, mental health and emotional well-being, values, education development and relationships - http://www.byebuychildhood.org/impact-report/section-three-impact-commercialisation-children

In addition to the ComRes interviews (outlined in footnote 1) ComRes carried out five in-depth interviews with parents and their children in London to understand in greater depth the realities of the commercialisation of childhood and the concomitant impact on family life.


http://www.ipa.co.uk/News/Q3-2013-Bellwether-Report-reveals-highest-ever-recorded-rise-in-marketing-spend#VJB/70FtCic

Mothers’ Union member comment in response to question: How do you perceive the commercial world around us? 
Section 1: The playing field

Since the launch of Bye Buy Childhood in 2010, the commercialisation and sexualisation of young people has received much attention; including the Government asking Mothers’ Union’s Chief Executive, Reg Bailey, to conduct an independent inquiry on the issue, resulting in a series of recommendations in Letting Children Be Children\(^9\), against which notable progress has been measured. Following this, Mothers’ Union has been pleased to see positive action taken by the advertising industry and regulators, such as the introduction of new guidelines on on-street advertising, the strengthening of online protection and the creation of the ParentPort\(^10\) online complaints service.

Less than one third (30%) of parents agree that advertising that can be seen by children is well regulated.\(^11\)

While the majority of the Bailey Review recommendations have been implemented, our latest research found that only 30% of parents agree that advertising that can be seen by children is well regulated, a decrease of nine percentage points since 2010. Additionally, there has been a seven percentage point increase in the proportion of parents who disagree with this statement over this time period, showing increased concern that advertising that can be seen by children is not well regulated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: British parents in 2013 (n=1,081); British parents in 2010 (n=1,001)

This increasing concern must raise the question whether parents are now more aware of advertising or whether the problem itself has got worse.

65% of parents agree that online advertising is less well regulated than more traditional forms of advertising.\(^12\)

In 2013 we also looked at perceptions of how online advertising is regulated compared to more ‘traditional’ forms of advertising such as print or television, and found that 65% of parents felt that online advertising is less well regulated than more traditional forms of advertising.

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Online advertising is less well regulated than more traditional forms of advertising?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: British parents in 2013 (n=1,081); British parents in 2010 (n=1,001)

---


\(^10\) [http://www.parentport.org.uk/](http://www.parentport.org.uk/)

\(^11\) Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

\(^12\) Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union
Our research indicates notable concern among British parents about the commercialisation of childhood, and while awareness has been raised by previous activities, more work still needs to be done to protect children and young people.

**Is advertising appropriate?**

In 2010, we sought to understand who parents thought had responsibility for monitoring the content of media and advertising, out of a number of bodies such as regulators, media companies, the Government and parents themselves. In 2013 slightly more parents placed responsibility on themselves than in 2010, and slightly fewer placed responsibility on regulators. Whilst the difference was not significant enough to detect a trend in perception of where the weighting of responsibility lies, we know that parents still do recognise the role they have to play, as well as still believing regulators and Government also have a responsibility.

We feel that the commercial world could do more to protect children from inappropriate content; and that parents still need help dealing with the content of media and advertising. Additionally, we strongly believe that there is still a clear role for regulators to play in holding advertisers to account, and considering whether a review of the current sanctions is necessary to assess whether the current self-regulatory framework determining what can be advertised to children is still appropriate.
Section 2: Valuing children as children, not consumers

I think it's unfair because kids, obviously they haven't got the money, they don't understand that things cost money and if you haven't got it you haven't got it. Also I think they're causing a lot of parents problems because (it) will just be, 'I want it, I want it, I want it, and cause you a lot of grief and force a lot of parents to buy things that they can't actually afford. No, kids shouldn't be targeted at this age, they're kids, they shouldn't be targeted.

Source: ComRes for Mothers' Union

Valuing children as children, not consumers, is at the very heart of our work. Whilst progress has been made since 2010, our latest findings show that there is still much work to be done to ensure that children are not exposed to inappropriate advertising, and are empowered to be resilient to commercial pressures.

68% of parents agree that advertising that can be seen by children can be harmful to them, an increase of nine percentage points since 2010.13

Children and young people are influenced by fads and trends which have an impact on their consumption habits.

If (we) see a billboard of Ronaldo wearing expensive shoes my son will say, (begging tone) 'Oh, please buy me this.' ... Or haircut, if it's TV commercial about new haircut or photo of David Beckham, kids can copy it. Sometimes it's a very strong message for them.

Source: ComRes for Mothers' Union

Our qualitative research clearly shows the all-pervasive nature of the commercialisation of childhood and the fact that the effects of the commercialisation of childhood are not restricted to children. The interviews demonstrated that ‘peer pressure’ affects parents just as much as the children to whom products are marketed.

In many instances, mass marketing has acted to ‘normalise’ products through the sheer volume of their presence in the market place. Many products and services aimed at children are surrounded by a deluge of advertising, online presence and merchandise, making them inescapable in the home, school and public space. The feeling that every other child seems to have a certain product does impact on parents and they sometimes feel that they cannot deny their children access to these products. Despite the cost that this often entails, parents do not want their children to feel isolated or excluded or that they are missing out on something which almost ceases to be seen as optional through its sheer prevalence in day-to-day life.

There's a lot of pressure, I think, to be a parent in this world and it is expensive. You can fight against it all, you know, I don't want to do that, I don't want to do that, but ultimately, no one wants their kid to be the only one, the only child that hasn't got this or hasn't got that. So it is difficult.

Source: ComRes for Mothers' Union

13 Source: ComRes for Mothers' Union
This pressure is not only limited to goods, but also extends to the type of media content children and young people are exposed to and view.

For example, some of his friends they’ve been allowed to go see PG 12 movies or movies that are above their age category where I think that actually I think if you go and see that you’ll be scared, or you’ll have nightmares or something like that, so I get the, ‘Oh it’s not fair, so and so gets to go and watch it, or so and so is allowed to watch these kinds of movies’. I know that's because maybe they’ve got older siblings who are allowed to watch them, and they’ll watch them at home and then these kids inevitably get drawn into watching things that are not suitable for them. I try and teach them what’s appropriate and what’s not appropriate.

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

Is advertising appropriate?

There is a greater belief in 2013 than in 2010 that advertising treats children as adults.14

Table showing whether parents agree or disagree that advertising aimed at children treats them like adults

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

Both our research and interviews showed that generally, parents do not think that advertising aimed at children is appropriate to their age, and furthermore believe that goods and services marketed to adults are appealing to children because of the way in which they are presented.

(I) think sometimes you get adult things advertised on TV that shouldn’t be, for example, especially during kids’ shows like on the kids’ channels, like I’ve seen adverts for the loan sharks, you know Wonga and all those guys I think have come up on kids’ shows and I just think I know that sometimes parents watch these with their kids, but I don’t think it’s appropriate, especially in the way that some of it is advertised it almost looks like it could be targeted for kids when you get certain characters, for example. Was it the Wonga that had the old people as sort of like soft toys, and I think that is something that kids can pick up on and go oh, is that something that is cool? What is Wonga? Can we go to Wonga and get some money? ... It's those kinds of things that worry me in terms of the commercialisation of children, all those things that are inappropriate for them.

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

8 Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union
How does advertising affect children and young people?

Our in-depth interviews revealed that parents are worried about the impact that the commercial world will have on their child’s “sense of self”, sharing the concern that commercial and social pressures could have a negative impact on their child’s confidence, with one key area of concern being body image.

Two-thirds (67%) of parents believe that advertising is responsible for giving an unrealistic body image ideal.15

“A big thing is the whole size thing, and already she’s said, ‘Oh the backs of my legs are fat’.
(Mother of 8 year old daughter)

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

“My biggest concern is that children are going to grow up feeling bad about themselves, with a very negative view of their own bodies/abilities and also that they are being made to grow up too quickly - leaving childhood behind at a time when they are not prepared for the pressures of an adult world - and not having time to enjoy the freedom of childhood and growing up."

Mothers’ Union Member UK16

Resilience – are we there yet?

The emotional and psychological ability to deal with different pressures in life is an important life-skill that benefits us from an early age. Developing this ‘emotional resilience’ enables children to also deal with the challenges and associated peer pressure that they face as they engage with the commercial world.

“I feel marketing puts my child in a vulnerable position. Marketing can be aggressive, and I wonder if a child knows that they can say no? Do they know to critically analyse the information presented? My guess is no, unless they are taught that there are other viewpoints it is hard for children to naturally not accept a message at face value."

Mothers’ Union Member UK17

Tanya Byron was one of the first to mention the importance of resilience in her 2008 review, Safer Children in a Digital World.18 In setting out the objective to increase resilience, she underlined the importance of equipping children to deal with exposure to harmful and inappropriate content, and also of equipping parents to help their children deal with such content.

Developing resilience is important, because it is not possible to shield children and young people entirely from the commercial world. Rather, it is important to equip children to be able to withstand the pressures of the commercial world and to think about how they can interact and behave in it. This important topic was a key driver in the Bailey Review, Letting Children Be Children, and the benefit of online resilience for children was highlighted in a recent study by Oxford University.19 However, resilience has not yet been achieved in many families, perhaps demonstrated by the fact that pester power, the power children exert on parents by asking for something many times in an attempt to wear them down so they get it, remains an issue.

Pester power: eight out of ten parents (81%) feel that media advertising encourages their children to ask them to buy things.20

15 Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union
16 Mothers’ Union member comment in response to question: What would you say is your biggest concern when thinking about children and childhood in the UK today?
17 Mothers’ Union member comment in response to question: What impact does marketing have on your child/children/grandchild/grandchildren?
19 A shared responsibility: building children’s online resilience. An independent research paper commissioned and supported by Virgin Media and the Parent Zone 2014
20 Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union
Our research found that pester power is a reality for most parents, with eight out of ten (81%) parents finding that the media, including advertising, films, television and the internet, encourages their children to ask them to buy things that they have seen advertised.

"I think the greatest pressures on my child are that of the media, through television, advertising, marketing and also the societal culture it breeds as my child has to grow up in that environment."

Mothers’ Union Member UK

"Took them to see film, like Brave, then you go past the Disney Store and they’re like, ‘Oh, I want ...’ you know, the doll from that film."

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

Both our interviews and feedback from Mothers’ Union members highlighted that peer pressure is prevalent and that the impact of peers and also older siblings cannot be underestimated either.

"I think peers (are) another external influence, but I also think that how peers influence each other is also shaped by culture as mediated through main stream media."

Mothers’ Union Member UK

"Going to friends’ houses (influences what they want). They come back from a play date, ‘O, so and so had this, I’d really like that,’ and especially friends that have got older siblings, because children always aspire, don’t they, to be older?"

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

We heard directly from a young person about the impact of peer pressure:

"I don’t know if you remember there were these things called Bey Blades? These little toys that you’d pull this trigger and then spin around, you’d have competitions with your friends. Everyone at my school had one, so then I went home one day and I told my mum to buy me one. The next day I went into school and we were just playing all day. ... That went on for quite a long time, but then obviously that died out, no-one used them anymore and then the next thing came along. It kept going on like that."

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

Concern about the pervasiveness of peer pressure was also expressed by Mothers’ Union members. In response to the question what they think the greatest external pressures are on children and young people, they answered:

"Pressure - and not being the odd one out (fashion)"
"Peer pressure, from school friends and getting the latest thing due to advertising campaigns"
"Peer pressure and advertising contribute much to their self esteem"
"Peer pressure and advertising on TV"

Mothers’ Union Member UK
Getting the balance right:

We are not calling for a ban on the commercial world. Indeed, we recognise that engaging with the commercial world is a part of life, and we cannot and should not wrap children in cotton wool to totally isolate them from it. Rather, we believe children need to develop resilience to pressures in life.

I understand that not all marketing is bad - after all products have to be advertised to be sold, and I do understand that people are targeted according to their particular interests, however I do feel that the targeting of very young people should not be allowed. This puts undue pressure on parents who may not be able to afford the products being advertised and also encourages children to feel that they must have a certain product, or take part in a certain activity to be part of the ‘in crowd’. This feeds on the natural uncertainties of being young.

Mothers’ Union Member UK

However, resilience is not an ‘all or nothing’ scenario. It is not achieved either by a child or young person having no exposure to the commercial world, nor by their total submersion in the commercial world. It is also important to acknowledge that part of building resilience is ensuring that children and young people are equipped to engage with the commercial world. Whilst children do not necessarily see themselves as consumers their actions show that they can be discerning and are influenced by commercial pressures.

(Researcher): "How do you choose your games?”

(Child): “Well it depends what game I want or what games I don’t have, like on the reviews, how much it costs, stuff like that. .... I don’t want to buy a game for like 20 pounds and then find out it’s really bad.

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

There is a balance to be achieved:

Exposure can be positive as well as negative, we need to educate our children to let them know exactly what commercialisation is and how they are influenced by marketing and not just in a negative way.

Mothers’ Union Member UK

And this is what resilience is: making sure that children and young people are educated, equipped and empowered to respond to the commercial world.

24 Mothers’ Union member comment in response to question: How do you perceive/understand the commercial world around us?
25 Mothers’ Union member comment in response to question: Do you think that your child/children/grandchild/grandchildren would be different if they were not exposed to the commercial world
Section 3: Empowered parents?

It is not just young people who need to be empowered to respond to the commercial world around them, it is parents too.

Only half (51%) of parents feel equipped to manage the commercial world.\(^\text{26}\)

The parents we spoke to in our interviews felt that they bore the ultimate responsibility for the protection of their children from the effects of the commercial world. These effects were largely seen as an inevitable consequence of modernity.

However, we found that in 2013 more parents than in 2010 felt that they have little control over their children’s use of social networking, video games, television, films, magazines and the internet.

Whilst we saw a small increase from 57% to 62% of parents who feel that they have some/a lot of control over their children’s use of social networking sites, at the same time there was a larger increase of 11 percentage points from 24% to 35% of parents who feel that they have little or no control over the content that their children view on these sites.

This could be due to the way that young people often access these sites – on the go - and also perhaps due to the rate of technological change, which not all parents feel they can keep up with. Indeed, the research seems to back this up with an additional question in the 2013 survey revealing that parents feel that they have the least control over mobile phone use.

![Bar chart showing the level of 'NET: little/no control' parents feel they have over the content their child/children views via various sources.](chart.png)

*Base: British parents in 2013 (n=1,081); British parents in 2010 (n=1,001).*

\(\text{Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union}\)

I mean my friend’s kid, it’s her birthday next week and she’s on and on and on about an iPad. Because all her friends have got them ... so it’s tough because you want your kid to have what everybody else has got, but then sometimes you just can’t do it.\(^\text{12}\)

*Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union*
In the qualitative research, parents made a strong link between commercialisation and technology and conflate the two, often citing which technological devices their children and young people use when asked about the impact of commercialisation.

“I feel equipped for traditional marketing and advertising. When it comes to technology there are some apps which I’d never even heard of, like Kik, which are developing new language and ways of communicating which parents can’t be involved in. That’s a worry for me.”

Mothers’ Union Member UK

It was also made clear that time spent using technology is an important area for parental control. Where parents are taking steps to protect their children from the impact of the commercial world, they are often doing so by limiting the amount of time they allow their children to use technology.

“We do have limits on things, and we judge it on a fairness basis. If I see that he’s been on his iPad for too long, I’ll say okay, time to give that a rest and do something else, so he usually goes, ‘Can I watch TV?’ No, let’s do something non-electronic, so I think my personal opinion is that there is an over abundance of electronic interaction which, again, it has been documented as impacting on people’s social skills.”

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

The portability of communications devices may also play into a feeling of lack of parental control, and could pose a dilemma for parents, particularly where they are not able to directly supervise their child’s activity.

“Well, I can hear (my younger son) sometimes watching on You Tube something which I don’t like, a lot of laughs, screams... I try to stop him but I can see he still loves it. Sometimes I can’t stop it, or maybe I’m not strict enough.”

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

The prevalence and impact of technology was also a consistent concern among the parents interviewed, particularly in terms of being aware of exactly who their children interact with, and having some say over this. This was a particular concern of parents we spoke to whose children play video games: while parents of younger children felt that they can put limits in place as to who their children talk to online via these games, parents with older children perhaps felt that they have less control over this:

“Yes, you can (speak to people through games on the iPad), but my mum and dad won’t let me have social media so I can’t connect with my friends.”

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

Commercialisation is all around us. In asking parents what influences their children:

“The whole music video thing terrifies me... especially with having a girl...They just grow up so, so quickly. I think they’re just overly sexual. They all are. They’re just, yes, they don’t need to be but the way they dance, the way they dress. It’s women primarily... their fan base are young girls, and it’s just terrifying.”

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

---

27 Mothers’ Union member comment in response to question: To what extent, if at all do you feel equipped to deal with the impact of the commercial world on your child/children/grandchild/grandchildren?
Hopes for the Future:
In considering what parents want for their children, particularly with regards to the commercial pressures around them, our research revealed that parents want to equip their children to be confident and ‘their own people’.

“...be their own person and not follow the crowd or think, get influenced by all these things that we’re trying for them not to get influenced by. That they can see that’s not a good idea, or just not to be too caught up in the whole how you look, the whole consumerism ... just to be their own person... and not follow the crowd. Be brave, strong and confident enough.”

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

Ensuring parents are resilient:
Despite parents not feeling confident in managing the commercial world, they do feel they have a role to play with their children.

“Parents need to take charge of their children and be responsible for them and not leave it all up to the teachers and the police... Parents need to show them how to be grown-ups when the time comes ... they (children) need to understand that actions have consequences and you need to take responsibility for your actions.”

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

“Well, I really do agree that childhood has been commercialised quite a lot and it’s up to the parents to a point to try and sort of protect the child from that.”

Source: ComRes for Mothers’ Union

Policy recommendations:
It is our belief that the following recommendations will help to ensure that:

- Children are not exposed to inappropriate advertising and marketing.
- Children are more resilient to commercialisation and peer pressure.
- Parents are empowered to manage the impact of commercialisation and are more resilient to pester power.

In this way we can value children as children, not consumers, and further achieve our aim of ending the commercialisation of children.
Whilst parents need empowering to manage the impact of commercialisation on their children, they and their children should not face undue pressure from the commercial world. Resilience is important but managing commercial influences should not have to be a battle.

**Recommendation one:** We recommend that Parliament continues to address the impact of the commercial world on children. It is important that this issue continues to receive cross-party support.

**Recommendation two:** We recommend that existing practices are monitored and scrutinised to ensure that existing regulation is working.

It is important that industry adheres to best practice as well as regulation so that children are not exposed to inappropriate advertising. We believe that the UK should continue to strive to be an example of best practice in its approach to the commercialisation of childhood.

Mothers’ Union strongly believes that when the impact of commercialisation on children is under consideration or being provided for, it is important that the standards set go above and beyond the minimum.

**Recommendation three:** We recommend that Government and regulators strengthen wording in the regulation of marketing and selling in relation to children so that it is harder to comply with the letter while avoiding the spirit of regulation.

Government needs to consider why parents are still concerned about the commercialisation of childhood and work to ensure that children are not exposed to inappropriate advertising and marketing. Whilst regulations on advertising to children and the display of sexualised content in the media have been tightened since the Bailey Review, there is evidence that a few companies are still repeatedly pushing the boundaries.

**Recommendation four:** We recommend that Government reviews whether current sanctions offer sufficient disincentive and, with the regulatory bodies, consider stiffer penalties after a certain number of complaints have been upheld.

Parents need to be better equipped to deal with the commercial world through increased awareness and more support. Whilst information is available, it is either not being accessed by parents or is not helping enough parents. Parents need information which is easily accessible and easy to understand.

**Recommendation five:** We recommend that Government puts into place incentives, measures and funding to increase parental engagement, with the energy that was shown with the introduction of ‘active choice’, in line with recommendation 10 of the Bailey Review; as well as investing in long-term monitoring and evaluation of such measures, including the numbers of parents reached and also the impact on parental awareness and understanding.

Developing resilience is critical to empowering and equipping children to withstand the pressures of the commercial world. Understanding the commercial world and preparing children to know how to interact with and behave in it is a critical part of ensuring protection against and resilience to commercialisation.

**Recommendation six:** We recommend that Government evaluates the media literacy resources aimed at children and whether they have developed greater resilience in children, in line with recommendation 11 of the Bailey Review; and provides the long term necessary investment to do so.