Children's wellbeing

It is our belief… that we should protect children, their data, and their wellbeing when they are exposed to advertising.

It is estimated that ad tech companies hold 72 million data points on a child by the time they turn 13 - an extraordinary amount of information, when they are on the cusp of digital independence. Children's internet safety relies upon the existence of trusted relationships between online platforms, children and parents.

The leadership position

The rights of every child must be respected, protected and fulfilled in the digital environment as in the physical world. Innovations in digital technologies affect children's lives and their rights in ways that are wide-ranging and interdependent, even where children do not themselves access the Internet. Advertisers should seek to advertise in a way that it sensitive to these unique needs both online and offline.

The commercial imperative

We believe organisations should make the following commitments to advertising and include the following criteria in all agency briefs:

Adherence to the CAP Code and ASA guidance.

For the purposes of the Code, a child is someone under 16.However, a marketing-to-children policy based on a +/- 13 age break is fast becoming a global standard, below which it is a parent's responsibility for privacy or above which it is the child's. Brands should aim to produce an 'Advertising to children' guide which outlines its approach towards best practice.

Child-focused advertising

- Use exclusively contextual targeting and include a carefully-vetted inclusion list.
- Use custom contextual pre-bid filters by known verification vendors. Ensure to set appropriate brand safety and suitability filters in accordance with clients' risk-tolerance.
- Leverage contextual targeting options (IAB Tier 1 and 2 categories) in DSPs.
- Turn off behavioural advertising for all under 18s.
- Opt out of collecting data on any under 16s, including behavioural and personal data.
- Collecting geo, demo, M/F and behavioural data across sites to retarget is strictly prohibited.
- Refrain from the profiling or targeting of children of any age for commercial purposes on the basis of a digital record of their actual or inferred characteristics, including group or collective data, targeting by association or affinity profiling. Practices that rely on neuromarketing, emotional analytics, immersive advertising and advertising in virtual and augmented reality environments to promote products, applications and services should also be avoided.
- Include a diverse variety of positive role models throughout all advertising to offer a realistic and representative reflection of society.
- Clearly distinguish Sponsorship, product placement and all other forms of commercially driven content, including the use of influencers using language that can be easily understood by the target audience.
- Promote positive messaging and values throughout campaigns and avoid glamourising negative lifestyles and behaviours or perpetuating gender or racial stereotypes.

- If advertising to under 13s, use a child-safe technology platform, such as SuperAwesome, to ensure safe, digital engagement with no data collection.
- No measurement plans for digital plans targeted to kids under the age of 13 (or higher, as applicable in the market) should be used.

Non-child-focused advertising

Age inappropriate adverts should not appear on websites specifically aimed at children or where they are likely to be seen by children. Advertisers should:

- Use sophisticated targeting mechanisms, such as combining age verification targeting with interest targeting, to help reduce exposure to age inappropriate advertising or age-restricted products (HFSS, alcohol, gambling).
- Implement strong age-verification systems on websites, exclude 'Unknown age' and avoid using platforms that do not have an age verification system in place.
- Ensure your digital media vendor is using a brand safety tool, such as TAG. Closely review any new platforms in your media plans for brand safety verification and check out guides and news on apps, games and social media sites using a platform such as [NSPCC's Net Aware](.).
- Ensure you are able to justify ad placement choices, particularly in new ad formats.
- If targeting the 'family' audience, follow the same ASA guidance as outlined for children.
- Work with third party verification services that are able to produce pre-bid segments excluding children's and children-appealing content.
- Use existing contextual solutions in DSPs to target away from kid and family directed context.
- Procure and/or vet an inclusion list of domains and apps which do not target children.
- Work with audience verification vendors to understand the composition of desired channels.
- Take into account the nature of influencer content, reputation and whether they are a suitable role model. Review their appeal to a younger audience and audit their social following through demographic analysis. Ensure the primary audience of the influencer's following are not "children" (under 18) unless the campaign has a positive message that takes into account their wellbeing.
- Licensed characters and celebrities popular with children must be used with a due sense of responsibility. Equity characters created by the advertiser may be used by advertisers to sell the products they were designed to sell. There are specific points around this for certain categories in the ASA BCAP Code.