

**Product:** Non-Commercial (Fundraising)  
**Advertiser:** Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children  
**Medium:** Internet

**Advertisement:** The advertisement depicted acts of abuse including physical abuse on a child, perpetrated by a male figure, in the home. While the abuser is seen striking, shaking and throwing the child to the ground, he (the child) quotes from a manifesto of children's rights as follows:

*"I can't wait til I grow up,  
and have the right to be happy,  
to be kept safe,  
to be kept warm,  
to feel loved,  
to be listened to,  
to be heard,  
to never ever ever cower or tremble or shake,  
Or have my innocence punched or kicked or screamed away,  
I'll fight for the rights of children like me, who don't have a childhood.  
I can't wait until I grow up."*

The announcer then stated *"Join the fight for children's rights."*

**Complaint:** Complainants objected to the advertisement on the basis that it was unbalanced in its treatment of the subject of abuse in the home. The advertisement only depicted a male as being the aggressor and the complainants considered this to be unbalanced.

Some complainants also objected to the level of violence acted out on the child in the advertisement.

**Advertisers' Response:** The advertisers set out that they were an advocacy service for children in Ireland and that they provide a range of independent and unique services that they considered to be preventative and empowering in nature.

They said that in 2010 Childline received over 800,000 calls and answered over 500,000 of these. Children contacted them for many reasons and 13% of calls received in 2010 were in relation to child abuse and welfare. Where children disclose to Childline that they are at risk of or have in fact been abused and have given identifying information, their case would be referred to the HSE or the Garda Síochána.

The ISPCC also operates Childfocus, Teenfocus and Leanbh. Childfocus and Teenfocus work with children in the home or other secure settings and Leanbh works with children that are homeless and begging on the streets of Dublin. All these services adhere to Children's First Guidelines and practice mandatory reporting.

They said that the campaign "I can't wait to grow up" was based around a manifesto of children's rights. The manifesto was written from a child's perspective and the

purpose of the advertisement was to raise awareness of the very tough and sensitive issue of child abuse in Ireland.

In relation to the issues raised by the complainants, they said that the video made no reference to fathers or male partners, and they did not consider the advertisement discriminated against any person or persons.

They confirmed that the child depicted in the video was not harmed in the making of the advertisement and his guardian was present during the video shoot.

**Additional Information:**

The Secretariat asked the advertisers to detail in relation to the calls received by Childline what percentage of the calls were from children of a similar age to the child in the advertisement and of those children calling what percentage were abused by males.

While the advertisers provided further information regarding the Childline service and a profile breakdown of phone and online statistics from 2010, they were unable to provide the information required as this was not collected by them.

The Secretariat checked independently and found that comprehensive independent statistics were not available for the type of child abuse illustrated.

**Code Sections:**

1.6(c) The Code is applied in accordance with the following criteria: Compliance with the Code is assessed in the light of a marketing communication's probable effect when taken as a whole and in context. Particular attention is paid to: • the characteristics of the likely audience, • the media by means of which the marketing communication is communicated, • the location and context of the marketing communication, • the nature of the advertised product and the nature, content and form of any associated material made available or action recommended to consumers.

2.16 Marketing communications should respect the dignity of all persons and should avoid causing offence on grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the traveller community.

2.17 Marketing communications should respect the principle of the equality of men and women. They should avoid sex stereotyping and any exploitation or demeaning of men and women. Where appropriate, marketing communications should use generic terms that include both the masculine and feminine gender; for example, the term 'business executive' covers both men and women.

2.24 A marketing communication should not mislead, or be likely to mislead, by inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, omission or otherwise.

**Conclusion:**

Complaints Upheld.

The Complaints Committee considered the detail of the complaints and the advertisers' response. The Committee noted the sensitive and confidential nature of recording individual information from callers to the Childline service.

They accepted that the level of violence portrayed while disturbing was realistic and

that the primary message being conveyed in the advertising was the existence of this abuse. They also acknowledged the range of services provided by ISPCC.

They noted that an earlier campaign for the Christmas appeal had also used a male figure and considered in the absence of reliable statistics, the portrayal of only male characters as the abusers was in breach of the provisions of the Code. The Committee upheld the complaints on the basis that without supporting evidence, the advertisement contravened Sections 2.16 and 2.17 of the Code.

**Action  
Required:**

The advertisement must not appear in its current format again.