

Title:

Ms

Forename:

Anna

Surname:

van Heeswijk

Representing:

Organisation

Organisation (if applicable):

OBJECT

Email:

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What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep nothing confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

You may publish my response on receipt

Additional comments:

OBJECT is a London-based leading human rights organisation that challenges the increased sexual objectification of women and the mainstreaming of the sex and pornography industries in the media and popular culture, because of their links to gender discrimination and violence against women. OBJECT raises awareness of these issues by lobbying policymakers, campaigning, and providing information to women's and human rights groups, as well as by working with grassroots activists, students and trade unions across the UK to ensure that the sexual objectification of women is debated

at both a public and political level.

Question 1a: Do you agree with Ofcom's assessment of those stakeholders likely to be affected by changes to the regulatory framework for Adult Chat and Psychic PTV services?:

Ofcom's assessment of stakeholders prioritises viewers, consumers and those making profit from these services. It does not take into consideration the impact that these sex industry chat lines and advertisements have on the women who work in the industry and on the way in which these 'Adult Chat' services normalise pornography and prostitution and the effect that has on how all women and girls are viewed in society. It is incorrect to use an Equality Impact Assessment to identify men as the group who will be most effected by a change in policy regarding the airing of sex industry adverts and pornography. It is women who are sexualised, objectified and degraded through 'Adult Chat' and an Equality Impact Assessment must therefore look at how limiting the access to these PTV services will help safeguard women's rights to live a life of dignity and equality as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women of which the UK is a signatory: 'To be treated with dignity is one of the foundations of human rights. To what extent can women claim respect in societies where there are extensive and increasingly legitimised, sex industries : treating a human being as a 'thing' a commodity, means that they are denuded of humanity such that abuse becomes acceptable.'

Dr Liz. Kelly, Equality and Diversity Forum Seminar, London 2006

Question 1b: Do you agree with our understanding of the industry and operators?:

'The sexualisation of popular culture and the ubiquity of sexualised imagery of women were described by stakeholder organisations at all the consultation events as conducive contexts for violence against women'

Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: A Template for an Integrated Strategy on Violence Against Women for the UK (2008)
End Violence Against Women Coalition

Question 2a: Do you agree with our analysis of the options available for regulation of the promotion of premium rate services of a sexual nature, and a) that on the basis of options, a change to the existing rules appears merited?:

Question 2b: of the options presented, Option 4 meets the regulatory duties and suggests least potential impact on stakeholders?:

No. This is an opportunity to ensure that Ofcom prioritises gender equality issues above those of profit. That would mean using this opportunity to place greater restrictions on access to pornography and phone sex on television.

Question 2c: that the scheduling restrictions of 9pm to 5.30am and requirements for labelling and EPG position under option 4 offer appropriate protection for

viewers?:

No. In terms of protecting children from these objectifying and degrading portrayals of women, labelling these channels in the 'Adult' section is clearly not sufficient as they will still be able to access them without restriction and 9pm as a watershed is too early and 5.30am to protect all children. This is not good enough and it does not meet Ofcom's duty to apply adequate protection for audiences against offensive or harmful material. A growing body of research has firmly linked the sexual objectification of women and

girls to a negative effect on individual health and well being, with increased sexualisation leading to severe dissatisfaction over body image and self esteem; high rates of eating disorders among women and girls; rising levels of women turning to plastic surgery and increased incidences of sexual bullying and damaging sexual relations between young people.

o The sexual objectification of women is also linked to the promotion and reinforcement of sexist attitudes ? via exposure to media which overwhelmingly contains gender stereotyping and affects perceptions of all women. This has significant overlap with racism via the objectification of women according to their ethnicity. Finally a large body of evidence demonstrates the connection between the sexualisation of women in the media and popular culture with violence against women.

o Popular arguments against taking action on this issue are centred around the human right of individuals to freedom of expression. However, such a right must be weighed against the need and importance of taking effective steps to protect the human right of women and girls to live their lives free of gender-based violence and discrimination. Moreover freedom of expression is a complicated issue ? given that how individuals ?choose? to express themselves is heavily media influenced.

To lessen restrictions on the sexualisation of women in the media goes against the Government drive to challenge the sexual objectification of women and girls because of its links with gender-based violence. This is clearly outlined in the Government Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the London Violence Against Women strategy and the Government sponsored research paper into the sexualisation of young people to be launched in February 2010.

Question 3: Do you agree with our analysis of the options available for regulation of the promotion of live personal psychic services, and a) on the basis of the options, that a change to the existing rules appears merited?:

Question 3b: of the options presented, Option 4 meets the regulatory duties and suggests least potential impact on stakeholders?:

Question 3c: that the restriction of promotion to specific live personal psychic services and the requirements for labelling and EPG position provide appropriate protection for viewers?:

Question 4a: Do you agree with the principles identified for changes to the Advertising Code rules on promotion of PRS of a sexual nature (rule 11.1.2) and psychic practices (rule 15.5)?:

Question 4b: Do you agree with the wording of the proposed rules? If not, please suggest alternative wording. :

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