

BODY IMAGE PLEDGE

BE REAL

BODY CONFIDENCE FOR EVERYONE



INTRODUCTION

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Why do we need a Body Image Pledge?

The **Body Image Pledge** is part of the Be Real Campaign, created to address body image anxiety, a critical health problem suffered by one in four people in the UK¹ which can ultimately cause low self-esteem and depression². Research has shown that children as young as five are now worried about how they look³; primary school age children have started dieting⁴ and appearance is the largest cause of bullying in schools⁵.

Body image anxiety stops children from putting their hand up in class⁶; discourages children and adults from exercising⁷; leads to a variety of eating disorders⁸; young people taking less care of themselves during sex⁹; substance abuse¹⁰; and is directly linked to weight gain¹¹.

What is the Body Image Pledge?

Developed with businesses, charities and subject matter experts, the **Body Image Pledge** is comprised of four parts which set out in simple, straight forward language how organisations and individuals can bring about responsible change in their approach to body image issues.

The **Pledge** and its principles have been based on Reflections on Body Image, the widely publicised recommendations from a three-month inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image, as well as a wealth of subsequent research¹². The **Pledge** acknowledges the positive work that has been undertaken to date by relevant industries and organisations but recognises that more needs to be done. The **Pledge** aims to encourage collaborative working to bring about lasting cultural and behavioural change.

What causes Body Image anxiety?

Advertising, media and 'celebrity culture' are the main social influences on body image¹³. Research has shown that the aspirational ideals they invariably promote – thin women, muscular men, youthful looks and caucasian features¹⁴ – can only be attained by five per cent of the population¹⁵. In some cases the images portrayed are not even real, with images digitally manipulated to significantly enhance body shape and remove perceived imperfections.

Whilst advertising will always have an aspirational and positive aspect to it, it should be recognised that it can also have a detrimental impact. Comparison with these unrealistic 'role models' is causing feelings of inadequacy¹⁶ and in extreme cases with highly damaging and life-threatening consequences¹⁷. It also is damaging to the economy too – depression and anxiety costs the UK £16.4 billion annually¹⁸; obesity £15.8 billion¹⁹ and eating disorders £15 billion²⁰.

What are we asking for?

The **Body Image Pledge** calls for the responsible portrayal of body image by the advertising, fashion, media and music industries, as well as by other relevant organisations.

We are asking companies in these sectors and other organisations to make a commitment to publicly endorse and sign up to the **Pledge**.

What difference will it make?

Research shows that positive body image is associated with increased physical activity, healthier eating and improved emotional health²¹. People feel better about themselves seeing media images of average-sized men and women²².

Authentic and diverse body images provide significant returns to business, too. Women, in particular, respond more positively to natural images²³, are more trusting of brands that don't use airbrushing²⁴ and dramatically increase their purchasing intentions when they see models in advertising who look like them²⁵. A similar pattern can be seen in young males, with more than half of boys believing it unacceptable to use digital techniques to manipulate body shapes²⁶.

Everyone benefits.

For further information on the Be Real Campaign, including links to download the **Body Image Pledge Toolkit** and **Handbook**, visit www.berealcampaign.co.uk.

BODY IMAGE PLEDGE

Reflect Diversity

Communications, as appropriate, should reflect the UK population's diverse range of body shapes and sizes, skin tones, ages, genders, ethnicities, disfigurements, abilities and disabilities.

Reflect Reality

Images should show people as they are in real life, with alterations limited to technical corrections, such as light or deleting stray hairs.

Images should show what is realistically attainable for most people from using the products or services promoted.

Promote Health & Wellbeing

Models should be healthy and age-appropriate. Emphasis should be placed on health and wellbeing not weight or appearance.

Promote the Pledge

Promote and advocate the **Body Image Pledge**; encouraging others to adopt its principles and follow responsible body image practice.

Educate and train staff in responsible body image practice as defined by the **Pledge**.

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