

Response to CAP's consultation on gender stereotyping

Introduction

This consultation highlights themes that were raised in the Council's 2017 report [cosmetic procedures: ethical issues](#). We would like to comment on Annex 1 of CAP's consultation: particularly scenarios 6 and 7, and their accompanying guiding principle.

Response

We welcome CAP's and BCAP's proposal to introduce a new rule on gender stereotyping, and are pleased that the following scenarios for ads that would *not* fit the new rules have been included:

Scenario 6

An ad that depicts a person who was unhappy with multiple aspects of their life, then implies that all their problems were solved by changing their body shape alone to conform to gender-stereotypical norms, without addressing other aspects of their life. This does not prevent responsible ads for weight loss products or services.

Scenario 7

Where an ad features a person with a physique that does not match an ideal stereotypically associated with their gender, the ad should not imply that their physique is a significant reason for them not being successful, for example in their romantic or social lives.

Further, we also agree with the proposal to include the following guiding principle to accompany these two scenarios:

Ads may feature idealised body shapes and physical features stereotypically associated with women (e.g. a small waist) and men (e.g. an abdominal 'six pack') but they should take care to avoid suggesting that an individual's happiness or emotional wellbeing should depend on conforming to an idealised gender-stereotypical body shape or physical features.

In our report, we recommended that CAP makes it clear that claiming, or strongly implying, that there is a likely link between cosmetic procedures and emotional benefit, is not acceptable in advertisements. This guiding principle offered by CAP in its consultation document is a positive step forward in addressing the Council's recommendation.

However, **we suggest that scenario 6 might be amended** to include a clause that refers explicitly to cosmetic procedures, as we indicate with emboldened text:

*“An ad that depicts a person who was unhappy with multiple aspects of their life, then implies that all their problems were solved by changing their body shape alone (**e.g. through the use of cosmetic procedures**) to conform to gender-stereotypical norms without addressing other aspects of their life. This does not prevent responsible ads for weight loss products or services.”*

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