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The British Fashion Council's Action Plan in response to the Model Health Inquiry's Recommendations published in 'Fashioning a Healthy Future' September 2007.

The Model Health Inquiry (MHI) set out a wide-ranging and detailed agenda for action to ensure the models who showcase leading designer fashion at London Fashion Week are better protected and enjoy a healthy future. The British Fashion Council (BFC) established the Panel to carry out its review in response to increasing concerns about the health risks from eating disorders posed to young models, and to propose effective, and practical action. We fully endorsed the report's approach and welcomed its recommendations.

Since '*Fashioning a Healthy Future*' was published in September, the BFC has been working to develop an action plan that responds to the Inquiry's proposals. This report sets out a detailed update on our progress against the specific recommendations.

Several key recommendations have already been implemented and in some areas the BFC is taking additional steps to support models. A number of proposals – especially those built on partnerships with international organisations - do require further work; this work will continue. The Panel also made a number of recommendations that fall outside the BFC's remit. In these cases we have held discussions and are working closely with relevant government departments and other organisations, such as the Association of Model Agencies and Equity, to keep up the momentum for change.

Action plans are necessary but attitude and culture change are also vital if we are to achieve significant change. An important impact of the MHI was the increased profile it gave to eating disorders, as well as the issues and challenges faced by models and the modelling industry. The issues and recommendations have been extensively debated inside the fashion industry and more widely. As a result, many organisations working in the fashion industry are actively exploring, or even implementing, new standards of best practice.

The BFC is determined to take advantage of the 'window of opportunity' identified by the Inquiry, while sustaining and developing our vibrant industry to further strengthen London's position as the most creative and dynamic of the fashion capitals.

Protecting the Most Vulnerable

Recommendation One: Ban on Models under 16 at London Fashion Week

The increasing youthfulness of girls appearing on international catwalks was identified by the MHI as a major risk to health.

The resulting proposal to ban models under the age of 16 was widely welcomed and the BFC took urgent steps to implement this recommendation at the September 2007 London Fashion Week (LFW). Contracts have been put in place with designers showing on the LFW schedule, these strictly stipulate that all models must be 16 years of age and older, and have been embraced by all designers. The BFC also wrote to organisers co-ordinating off-schedule shows, drawing their attention to the strict age code and warning that any breaches would result in the BFC refusing to market or promote future shows with which they were involved.

The BFC will continue this course of action at future Fashion Weeks, monitoring and enforcing the contractual obligations. An independent auditor will be employed to carry out spot checks at 10 per cent of shows on the official show schedule, and take action to tackle any examples of contract breaking, including issuing written warnings at first breach and refusing participation in LFW to those who flagrantly breach the age rule.

We will also write to the Association of Model Agencies (AMA), its members and other non-AMA agencies who represent models involved in LFW requesting that they keep copies of passports and birth certificates to authenticate the age of models employed at LFW.

The Inquiry also recommended that the BFC identify additional support for models aged 16-18, including provision of chaperones as appropriate. We have discussed this proposal in some detail with the AMA and believe that this recommendation needs to be considered in a wider context. Age may not be the only determining factor of vulnerability. If a model is new to London he or she will need support whatever his or her age. We have agreed to work with the AMA and other organisations to investigate ways of providing practical support.

Recommendation Two: Criminal Record Bureau Checks

The Inquiry recommended that checks should be mandatory for those in the fashion industry working with models aged below 16, in order to provide further protection. We have examined this proposal in some detail, and found that there is no legal requirement for Criminal Record Bureau checks; currently employers would need to fulfill this requirement on a voluntary basis. During our discussions with the AMA we have been told that a number of agencies are instigating such staff checks on a voluntary basis and we welcome this action. We have asked the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to consider how government could implement this recommendation on a statutory basis, if appropriate.

Safeguarding the Health of Catwalk Models

Recommendation Three: Medical Health Certificates as a Requirement for Models Appearing at London Fashion Week

The BFC specifically asked the Inquiry to review whether Body Mass Index (BMI) was a useful measure to identify eating disorders. The Inquiry did not support the introduction of a 'weigh-in' system through BMI testing, powerfully arguing that the introduction of such a system is not accurate for young women under 20 years of age who may still be growing, may result in worsening eating disorders amongst models and was thought both demeaning and discriminatory to the model industry. Instead the Panel proposed that from September 2008 models participating in LFW should provide a medical certificate attesting their good health.

A significant part of the report's analysis was the stress on London's position within the international context, and the need to take action across national boundaries to secure effective change. The panel identified the importance of learning from the experience of Milan, which had announced it was introducing medical certification for models. As detailed later in this report, BFC Chief Executive Hilary Riva has already met with her counterparts in Italy to discuss Milan's approach to model health. At this stage Milan is concentrating its efforts on education and voluntary behaviour change rather than enforcement.

The BFC will continue to liaise with Milan and hope to invite a representative from Milan to share with us their best practices later this year. The BFC will also commission a detailed feasibility study of the practicalities of introducing medical certificates. The results will be set out in a report to be published by 31 July 2008 with the aim of developing a pilot scheme during September 2008's LFW.

The Inquiry recommended that models should organise their own certificates to present to the agencies they work with. We have referred this back to the panel to develop an initial list of UK and internationally qualified practitioners who are able to provide these certificates.

Recommendation Four: Models Working at London Fashion Week be Engaged only through UK-based Agencies

The MHI recognised that the effective implementation of any medical certification system would be hampered by the international nature of the modeling industry, and proposed that to overcome a range of practical obstacles, all models working during LFW should be engaged solely through UK-based model agencies.

We have looked at this recommendation carefully, but have received advice that this may be anti-competitive and in contravention of European single market rules. We have asked DCMS to consider whether this proposal can be implemented legally.

Recommendation Five: Establish a Health Education and Awareness Programme

'Fashioning a Healthy Future' laid strong emphasis on the role of education and awareness raising in safeguarding the health of models. The BFC was asked to take the lead and work with the AMA in establishing a programme that would include workshops, buddying schemes and the development of an advice and support website for models and their parents and those who work with them.

The BFC welcomed this recommendation and we have already held detailed discussions with the AMA and other partners. We have been impressed by the example of Dance UK's Healthier Dancer Programme (HDP), which works to promote the physical and psychological health of dancers. The programme supports best practice through:

- Advice and information on health, fitness and injury prevention for dancers at the start of their professional training and throughout their careers
- Healthier dancer events for dance professionals, dance medicine and healthcare practitioners and scientists - promoting in-depth, shared understanding of healthier dance practice
- The Practitioners Register, a UK wide database of medical practitioners and complementary therapists with experience of working with dancers
- Facilitating research into dancers' health, injury and performance

- Working with experts in medicine, science, health and dance to improve and develop our understanding of healthy dance practice and set standards for the dance sector.

We will work with the AMA and other partners to scope out and cost a UK Healthier Model Programme using UK Dance's scheme as a possible template. Our favoured approach is to work closely with the eating disorder charity Beat, sign-posting models to their expert advice and support, as well as using the website as a portal directing models to appropriate agencies to provide support in other areas.

Many model agencies have already put in place eating disorder seminars and helplines to support their staff working with models, and the models themselves, as well as making information literature available in their offices. The AMA will also continue to liaise with Beat to set up seminars and training on a regular basis for staff and models. The outcome of their discussions with Beat will be fed into the scoping project.

The MHI also proposed that the healthy eating message be promoted through an accessible DVD, made available throughout the fashion industry. Two Panel members, Dr Adrienne Key and Erin O'Connor, took part in a filmed conversation designed to raise awareness about eating disorders. The resulting creative film can be viewed via the MHI website and on YouTube (Mid December: the film had received 1,059 views and rates five stars).

Recommendation Six: Create Healthy Backstage Environments

'Fashioning a Healthy Future' laid emphasis on the creation of healthy backstage environments during LFW to support busy models and raise awareness of healthy eating. The BFC took action to implement this recommendation immediately. Healthy food was provided backstage at all scheduled shows during September's LFW and a no-smoking policy was strictly enforced.

Maintaining a healthy backstage environment will become a contractual obligation for all on-schedule designers at future LFWs and external auditors will carry out spot checks (at the same time as model ages are checked). Designers using outside venues will also be briefed to ensure their security teams monitor and enforce healthy environments backstage.

The MHI also suggested that the BFC introduce random drug testing to ensure that shows are drug free. We have consulted legal experts on this issue and been advised that it would not be appropriate for the BFC to perform this role but the BFC strongly endorses an anti-drugs policy. There will be zero-tolerance of drugs at all shows, and we will ensure that the message is clear that any model or any other participant suspected of taking, or providing drugs, will be escorted from the premises and reported immediately to police.

Recommendation Seven: Establish a Representative Body for Models

During the Inquiry's review a large number of models pressed the case for establishing a representative body to support them. Panel members did hold discussions with Equity over representing models but was unable to report progress before publication of their report. Instead, they proposed that models be given support to establish their own self-funded organisation. Following publication of *'Fashioning a Healthy Future'* the BFC continued the dialogue with Equity and models themselves pressed the case. We are delighted that the union announced early in December 2007 that it had taken the "historic decision" to accept into membership models who do catwalk and photographic work. BFC will continue to liaise with Equity to broker relationships with retailers, publishers and modelling agencies.

The BFC committed to providing a *'Foundation Room'* at September's Fashion Week to give models the space to meet and discuss issues as well as access to information and advice. The BFC supported a *'Model Sanctuary'* established by panel member Erin O'Connor which offered a private location during September 2007's LFW; models were informed of this via their agents and backstage at shows. The venue was well used, models enjoyed the opportunity to meet and relax. Important information and advice on health and healthy eating – including details of how to contact Beat (the eating disorder charity) was made available. We have now committed to supporting similar sanctuaries at future Fashion Weeks.

Recommendation Eight: Action on Digital Manipulation

Criticism of digitally enhanced body images, and the part it plays in magazines in perpetuating an unachievable aesthetic, was raised during the inquiry. While conceding the issue was outside its remit, the Panel urged the fashion industry to consider a voluntary code governing the use of digital manipulation. We are writing to the British Society of Magazine Editors, the Periodical Publishers Association and the

Advertising Association to raise awareness of the recommendation and other issues raised by the report.

British Designer Fashion Industry and its Place in the Global Marketplace

Recommendation Nine: Collaborate with International Partners

LFW operates in a fiercely competitive global marketplace and this was strongly highlighted in the report. The BFC was urged to establish partnerships with similar organisations in international fashion centres to achieve best practice across national boundaries.

The international dimension to safeguarding models' health is extremely important - not least because more than 70 per cent of models working in London fly in from overseas for the shows – often at the last moment. The BFC strongly believes that an effective medical certification scheme will require the active support and participation of all the major centres (see also Recommendation Three). To this end, BFC chief executive Hilary Riva has written to her counterparts in Milan, Paris and New York, and has held meetings with the representatives of Camera della Moda Italiana and the Council of Fashion Designers of America to investigate best practice and the possibility of developing an international code of conduct. In each of these centres the emphasis continues to be based on education and awareness raising. Discussions will continue and we will report back annually on progress.

Ensuring a Healthy Future

Recommendation Ten: BFC Work with AMA on Best Practice for Booking Models

The BFC has held discussions and will continue to work with AMA and other partners to review the code which covers contracts, health training for staff, mentoring and buddy systems, counselling and photo shoot de-briefs. Equity is interested in sharing this best practice code in order to develop it and raise awareness amongst their members. We believe that Equity is best placed to develop this area of support now that it has announced it is opening its union to models.

Recommendations Eleven and Twelve: Further Study into Eating Disorders among Models and Investigation into their Working Conditions

The MHI called for two detailed studies to be carried out by appropriate organisations in

order to understand more fully the prevalence of eating disorders among models and the pressures they face. The BFC endorses these recommendations and is committed to co-operate fully with any appropriate studies established.

Recommendations Thirteen: Additional Funding to Support a Wider Role for the British Fashion Council

The BFC was set up in 1983 with the specific remit of organising LFW to showcase UK designer fashion and promote emerging talent. Originally supported by UK manufacturers, the BFC is now largely supported by retailers and magazine publishers. LFW – held twice yearly - is funded by commercial sponsorship and revenue from the shows. Recently, the BFC has received London Development Agency grant funding to build a sustainable infrastructure for LFW and develop business support for new designers.

'Fashioning a Healthy Future' proposed that the BFC's remit should be extended to providing a leadership role for the fashion industry as well as covering fresh responsibilities including the protection and support of models. The report conceded that additional funding would be required to support any increased responsibility.

The fashion industry currently does not exist as a single unit or entity; it is made up of a large number of different bodies with a range of interests and agendas. The BFC remains open to the idea of a wider role, but it must be for representatives of the different bodies involved in fashion and the DCMS to decide whether it is the appropriate body to take on a greater representative function. We have referred this recommendation to DCMS for further discussions with relevant bodies.

Recommendation Fourteen: Establish a Permanent Model Health Panel

The Inquiry team proposed that a permanent panel be established to monitor the response to *'Fashioning a Healthy Future'* and the members committed themselves to forming the first permanent panel. The BFC has agreed to support the MHI panel and will provide secretariat support until the implementation of the action plan.

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