

BRITISH FASHION COUNCIL

MEDIA STATEMENT

14TH September 2007

Hilary Riva, Chief Executive of the British Fashion Council today issued the following response to the publication of the Model Health Inquiry's final report.

She said: "We welcome publication of the Model Health Inquiry's final report published today. The British Fashion Council commissioned the report in response to increasing concerns about the health risks to young models on the catwalks at London Fashion Week. The Inquiry has been supported and partly funded by the London Development Agency, Marks and Spencer and The Work Foundation. We thank them for their support.

The Inquiry has produced a thorough and valuable piece of work involving detailed and analytical research across a broad spectrum of our industry and made important and useful recommendations aimed at improving the working lives of young models, as well as introducing a specific structure to better protect and monitor their health.

The British Fashion Council has already acted on some of these recommendations and it is our firm intention to action all those within our remit without delay. We have to date issued contracts to designers to ensure they take responsibility for healthy backstage environments which are drug and smoke free and that they ensure no models under the age of 16 are employed to walk in their catwalk shows.

We have already been in personal touch with my counterparts in Milan, Paris and New York about the introduction of a standard and uniform medical certificate, confirming the general good health of models appearing on any catwalk, not just London.

This specific recommendation, while eminently sensible and well intentioned will require active support and participation from all territories because over 70% of models working in London fly in from overseas for the shows.

We specifically asked the Inquiry to review whether BMI was a useful measure to identify eating disorders. The Inquiry did not support the introduction of a 'weigh-in' system through BMI (Body Mass Index) testing due to the risk that it may worsen eating disorders among models, and would be both demeaning and discriminatory to our industry.

We agree with this assessment and the introduction of medical certificates, and subsequent monitoring will better support the general healthiness of models appearing on the catwalk.

We are unable to respond to all the recommendations in the report today, as there are many which will require further serious consideration and others that go beyond the remit of the BFC, such as: further investigation and scientific study into the prevalence of eating disorders; detailed investigations into the working conditions of models; and the establishment of a self-funded representative body for the modelling profession; and moving away from digitally enhanced imagery. All of these we welcome being involved with the appropriate agency/body regarding feasibility, funding and implementation.

The Inquiry highlights the importance of the role of model agencies and the Association of Model Agencies (AMA). We welcome the role and input the agencies and the AMA have given to the Inquiry and we look forward to working closely with them in reviewing the final report and implementing recommendations. Many have already demonstrated their support for these measures through the U16 ban and by introducing eating disorder seminars and helplines as well as making relevant literature available in all AMA agencies.

We note the Inquiry's Recommendation Thirteen for specific support for 'additional funding' for the BFC to 'sustain the wider role' the inquiry envisages for our organisation. This recommendation requires consideration by all relevant parties.

While recognising the 'at risk' health aspect of young models we believe that the Inquiry has also served a very important purpose in highlighting an issue which goes well beyond the catwalk and providing awareness and access to information to the wider community.

As the Chair of the Report, Baroness Kingsmill says there is a 'window of opportunity' opening and that as a global industry we hope we can deliver change which is both effective and enforceable, ensuring we are doing all we can to look after our models in the best way possible, sustaining and developing our vibrant industry, with London and the UK, maintaining its position as a pioneering creative force on the global stage."

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Editors Notes:

The British Fashion Council (BFC) is a non-profit making limited company, set up in 1986 to promote British fashion designers.

The BFC owns and organises London Fashion Week, the bi-annual showcase for British based designers, and the British Fashion Awards.