



12 November 2008

Fiona Moriarty
Director
Direct line: 0870 609 3631
Email: fiona.moriarty@brc.org.uk

Franck David

Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions
Committee
Tower 4, TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Sent via email: 12 November 2008-11-12

Dear Mr David

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1169](#)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Petition PE1169 which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce and enforce measures that ensure that magazines and newspapers containing sexually graphic covers are not displayed at children's eye-level or below or adjacent to children's titles and comics and should be screen sleeved before being placed on the shelf.

The Scottish Retail Consortium (SRC) is the lead trade association representing the whole range of retailers in Scotland, from the large multiples and department stores through to independents, selling a wide selection of products through centre of town, out of town, rural and virtual stores.

Members of the SRC are responsible retailers. Our members take the legal restrictions and requirements governing the sale, promotion and display of the goods they sell very seriously and many go above and beyond what is required of them by law.

Strict enforcement of legislation governing the sale of age restricted products in particular is a key area of activity for our members and polices are in place, such as 'Challenge 21', to ensure as far as possible that young people are unable to access goods in our stores that are not intended for them.

Whilst we understand Ms Forbes' concerns, it is important to recognise that the place of the retailer is to respond to consumer demand and offer a choice of products to the consumer. The magazines referenced in the discussions at the Petition Committee and in the Petition



itself are legal products and a retailer is not in breach of any laws by selling these goods to customers.

SRC members are sensitive to the issues surrounding the display of such magazines and many have taken steps to restrict their visibility, such as placing them on higher shelves, or covering the front covers. Indeed there are voluntary guidelines on the display of magazines with sexual content. For example, the Periodical Publishers Association (PPA) guidelines address the display and positioning of lads' magazines and women's magazines with sexually graphic covers. The voluntary guidelines recommend:

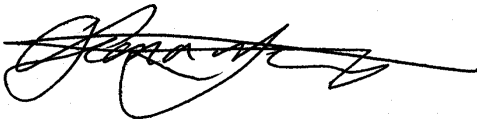
- *Retailers should not display these titles at children's eye-level or below, to ensure they are not in the direct sight of and reach of children.*
- *Retailers should not display these titles adjacent to children's titles and comics.*
- *Where display space restraints preclude the above, those titles with front covers that may cause concern are part-overlapped with other titles so as to minimize the potential for offence to parents with children.*

The guidelines, which have been drawn up in conjunction with the Home Office and the National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN), formalise the advice that publishers have historically given retailers in terms of encouraging a responsible approach to display.

However, retailers offer a wide range of products and consumers do not have to buy or browse those titles that they feel are not appropriate for them. Retailers respond to consumer demand and, if the legal demand from consumers to these products falls, not least through education, increased awareness and a change of attitude, then retailers will certainly respond to this change.

Should you require any further information please contact my office.

Yours sincerely



**FIONA MORIARTY
DIRECTOR
SCOTTISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM**