

Understanding the CAN Children's Code

Explainer for Agencies

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THE EACA MEMBERS

THIS GUIDE PROVIDES A CONCISE OVERVIEW OF THE CAN CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND WELLBEING CODE, ISSUED BY THE 5RIGHTS FOUNDATION, WHICH EACA HAS VOLUNTARILY COMMITTED TO SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENT ACROSS THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTOR. IT OUTLINES HOW THE CODE APPLIES TO ADVERTISING AGENCIES WHOSE CAMPAIGNS MAY REACH OR AFFECT YOUNG AUDIENCES IN DIGITAL SPACES.

- 1. What is the CAN Children's Code?**
Definition, origin, and its growing relevance as a voluntary standard
- 2. Why it matters for you**
How child audiences may encounter your campaigns – and why ethical standards apply
- 3. Key Principles to Know**
The six core principles: Safety-by-Design, Responsible Practice, Age Appropriateness, Agency, Privacy, and Diversity & Inclusion
- 4. What you can do now**
Practical steps for agencies: from ad briefs to checklists and media placement decisions
- 5. Final Thought**
Strategic benefits of applying the Code – and EACA's formal commitment to advancing children's rights

What is it?

The Children's Rights and Wellbeing Manifesto by the Conscious Advertising Network (CAN) is a **voluntary standard** designed to **help advertisers ensure** their **campaigns respect children's rights**, particularly in **digital environments**.

Though **not EU law**, it's **becoming** a widely endorsed **best practice**, especially for agencies working with or around child audiences.



Why it matters for you



Even if you're **not directly targeting children**, your **ads might still appear on platforms** frequently **used by minors**. The CAN Code sets out **ethical, reputational, and practical standards** that agencies should know, especially under increasing scrutiny around **digital wellbeing** and **child protection**.

Key Principles to Know

Safety-by-Design

- Build safety into every stage of campaign development – from platform selection to creative decisions.

Responsible Practice

- Align with legal frameworks (e.g. GDPR, DSA, UK's Online Safety Act) and conduct Child Rights Impact Assessments where relevant.

Age Appropriateness

- Avoid dark patterns, harmful profiling, or placements on platforms without age assurance. Ads must be suitable for the likely audience.

Children's Autonomy

- Respect children's autonomy: clear labelling of paid content, no manipulative ad formats, and no exploitative influencer partnerships.

Privacy

- Apply privacy-by-design principles. Turn off profiling for under-18s. Avoid tracking and emotional analytics aimed at minors.

Diversity & Inclusion

- Promote fair representation, avoid stereotypes, and design inclusively across all ad formats and environments.

What you can do now



Review your ad briefs: Do they address safety, privacy, and inclusivity from the start?



Assess media placements: Could your campaign be seen by children? Are platforms age-gated?



Ask clients if they want CAN principles reflected in their campaigns (CAN recommends inclusion in RFPs).



Update internal checklists with CAN - inspired practices (a practical starting point even if you don't target children).

Final Thought



The CAN Children's Code isn't just about compliance – it's about **future-proofing your work, enhancing brand trust, and contributing** to a **safer digital space**. With digital regulation tightening, particularly around youth audiences, understanding and applying these principles is a strategic advantage.

EACA is firmly committed to advancing the CAN guiding principles on Children's Rights and Wellbeing as a strategic standard for ethical advertising. These principles serve as a binding reference point across all EACA-led initiatives, partnerships, and industry engagement, reinforcing our role in shaping a safer digital environment for young audiences.

**Any questions?
Please don't hesitate to contact**



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