



UK MOBILE OPERATORS ANNOUNCE INDEPENDENT CLASSIFICATION BODY

Thursday, 21st October. London. The UK mobile phone operators, O2, Orange, T-Mobile, Virgin Mobile, Vodafone and 3, have today appointed a body to oversee the self-classification of new forms of adult commercial content on mobiles.

The new body, which will be named the Independent Mobile Classification Body (IMCB), is a subsidiary of premium rate regulator ICSTIS, and has been formed for this purpose. It will prepare a framework against which providers of commercial content to mobile subscribers will be able to self-classify new forms of content such as still images and video clips.

Commercial content that is classified as 18, in accordance with this framework, will not be made available to customers under the age of 18. The independent body will also be able to investigate complaints about content providers not classifying content in line with the framework.

This appointment is a significant milestone in the implementation of the industry's Code of Practice for new mobile content, published in January 2004.

The work will be carried out and funded entirely separately from ICSTIS's role as the regulator of premium rate services. Nevertheless their reputation and experience, gained in the premium rate market, will ensure that customers, operators and content providers can have the confidence in the independent framework for new mobile content.

Paul Whiteing, project director for the IMCB, welcomed the appointment of the new body commenting: "Mobile phones with enhanced features, such as video-playing capabilities and picture messaging, are becoming increasingly available. These features give access to an exciting world of content-rich entertainment and

information, but we need to recognise that this new world also presents challenges - especially when it comes to protecting children. I'm confident that ICSTIS can bring to bear its 18 years of experience in the premium rate sector on this new initiative to protect children."

The framework will be based on comparable standards in other media, such as film and computer games, and the first draft is scheduled for publication on 1st January 2005.

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