# Beckii Flint urges UK code to protect child influencers from exploitation and stress



A former ‘kidfluencer’, Beckii Flint, is advocating for a UK code of conduct aimed at safeguarding children involved in commercial online content, following her rise to fame as a teenager. Flint gained significant recognition as a YouTube star, particularly in Japan, at just 13 years old, and she now reflects on the ongoing effects of that experience, stating she will “live with the consequences” for the rest of her life.

In an interview, Flint shared with ITV News her continuing struggles with anxiety and stress stemming from her unexpected viral fame. She underscored the importance of considering the risks associated with children who promote themselves and commercial brands on social media, urging marketing agencies, brands, and parents to take these dangers seriously.

The prevalence of children on social media is noteworthy, with 77% of those aged eight to 17 having profiles, and a third of children aged five to seven claiming online presence. A recent survey by The Harris Poll indicates that aspirations to become a ‘kidfluencer’ are on the rise, with nearly 29% of today’s children preferring to be YouTubers over astronauts (11%).

The financial potential for child influencers has become substantial, with the UK’s top ten ‘kidfluencers’ boasting over 57 million subscribers and an astounding 19.18 billion video views. According to public relations experts, earnings for child influencers in the UK can reach thousands of pounds per post, dependent on their follower counts. Additionally, some high-profile American influencers, like Ryan Kaji, aged 13, have accumulated significant wealth from their content, with estimates of his worth around $100 million.

Flint began posting dance videos to Japanese pop music on YouTube in 2009, leading to her viral status, which transformed her life. Reflecting on the experience, she recalled the moment her video gained traction, saying, “One day I woke up and there were thousands of notifications in my inbox.” She noted that, as her popularity grew, so did negative comments, which have lingered in her mind over the years.

Amidst her success, Flint found herself in situations where the pressure to conform to industry norms was intense, including an incident at just 13 years old when she was pressured to participate in a bikini photoshoot. She recalled, “There was this expectation that I would be doing these things that the other Japanese pop idols were doing at a similar age,” but her family ultimately decided against it.

Despite enjoying certain facets of her early career, such as recording music and being part of a K-pop group, Flint expressed regret about sharing too much personal information online. She stated, “I made decisions when I was very young that have affected my privacy for the rest of my life,” leading to persistent anxiety and stress from her early experiences in the spotlight.

Now at 29, Flint has taken her experiences to launch a social media agency and has begun working with various stakeholders to develop a ‘kidfluencer’ pledge. She argues that the existing Online Safety Act lacks sufficient measures to protect child influencers, especially regarding their financial interests and working hours. Flint views the unregulated nature of this industry in the UK as a critical issue. She cited that children involved in family blogs might be working excessively without proper safeguards.

Furthermore, there has been a broader discussion surrounding child influencer safety, especially in light of recent documentaries highlighting exploitation in the industry. Netflix's “Bad Influence”, explores the darker aspects of child influencing, including the lawsuit filed by former members of a popular YouTube group against their management for alleged exploitation and abusive treatment.

Despite attempts by MPs to address the challenges facing child influencers in the UK, there has been limited action. A government spokesperson acknowledged the significance of influencer culture, indicating ongoing monitoring of current frameworks but failing to outline concrete steps for improvement.

In contrast, several U.S. states have begun implementing protective laws for child influencers, like California, where regulations require a portion of minor influencers’ earnings to be deposited into trust accounts. Such measures aim to mirror protections already established for child actors.

The issues surrounding child influencers extend beyond financial considerations, with disturbing cases of exploitation surfacing, including the recent criminal activities surrounding former YouTuber Ruby Franke, who was jailed for horrific child abuse revealed through her content, highlighting the need for more stringent regulations in this space.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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