

# Guide to Responding to the Government Consultation on Further Advertising Restrictions for Products High in Fat, Salt and Sugar



## General

- Welcome the opportunity to respond to [the government consultation on advertising of food and drink high in fat, salt and/or sugar \(HFSS\)](#). Explain why you are interested, as a parent, professional, individual or organisation.
- Remind the Government of their [ambition to halve childhood obesity by 2030](#), and why you think reducing children's exposure to unhealthy food and drink advertising will help.
- Be clear that you support the introduction of a 9pm watershed on HFSS adverts across all media – if you agree this should not just be TV and online, but include radio, cinema, outdoor broadcast and event-related advertising and sponsorship, then say so.
- For your response to count, you must tell the Government which of the Options for restrictions on TV and online you support. Your response must arrive no later than **11.59pm on 10 June 2019**.

## TV

- In the consultation the Government proposes three options for TV.
  - Option 1: a 9pm-5.30am watershed for broadcast TV for products high in fat, salt and sugar (so these products cannot be advertised between 5.30am and 9pm).
  - Option 2: a 'ladder' approach where some HFSS food products with slightly lower scores (but still HFSS) would be allowed to advertise (eg. 10am-3pm).
  - Option 3: no watershed (ie. no change to current rules)
- The Children's Food Campaign is supporting Option 1: introduce a 9pm – 5:30am watershed on broadcast TV. We reject Option 2 as too confusing, would still allow many junk foods to be advertised, and would undermine the government definitions of HFSS products.
- There is a wide body of evidence that advertising does have an impact on children's preferences. Whilst banned since 2008 on dedicated children's TV, HFSS product advertising is still allowed during family viewing, including many programmes (Britain's Got Talent, I'm A Celebrity, music, sport and soaps) watched by millions of children.
- Parents back a 9pm watershed. Almost 9 in 10 (87%) of parents taking part in the Children's Food Campaign Parents' Jury survey on Junk Food Marketing in July 2018 support a 9pm watershed for junk food advertising<sup>1</sup>.
- A 2016 study by University of Liverpool and the Obesity Health Alliance found almost 60% of food and drink adverts shown during programmes popular with both adults and children were for HFSS foods which would be banned from children's TV channels. In the worst case example, nine unhealthy food adverts were shown before and during a single episode of Hollyoaks, watched by over 140,000 children<sup>2</sup>.
- According to a Cancer Research study, children who can recall seeing unhealthy food and drink adverts on television every day are more than twice as likely to be obese.<sup>3</sup> This leads

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/parents\\_jury\\_survey\\_2018/](https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/parents_jury_survey_2018/)

<sup>2</sup> Obesity Health Alliance (2017). A Watershed Moment: Why it's Prime-Time to Reduce Children's Exposure to Junk Food Advertising.

<sup>3</sup> 2018. Cancer Research UK. A Prime Time for Action: new evidence on the link between television and on demand marketing and obesity

to children pestering parents to buy unhealthy products.<sup>4,5</sup> Restricting the advertising of products high in fat, salt and sugar during the times when children are most likely to watch television,<sup>6</sup> would help reduce their intake of products high in fat, salt and sugar.

- A 9pm watershed is supported by a wide range of the public, parents, teachers, nurses, doctors, academics and health organisations<sup>7</sup>.
- The Nutrient Profile Model is an evidence-based tool which was developed explicitly for the introduction of advertising restrictions for food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar. It is already applied, without any exceptions or additional categories, to dedicated children's TV channels, websites and other children's media. The Children's Food Campaign supports the use of the same model for any new restrictions. We believe that variations on this model, or applying 'advertising freedoms' to products already banned in children's media will be both complicated and confusing.

### Online and digital

- In the consultation, the Government presents four Options
  - Option 1: a 9pm-5.30am watershed online
  - Option 2: strengthen current targeting restrictions (ie. reduce the current child audience threshold from 25% to a lower level)
  - Option 3: a mix of options 1 and 2
  - Option 4: no change to current regulations
- We support Option 1: to introduce a 9pm-5:30am watershed online, and this should be applied also to radio, cinema, outdoor digital, advergames and mobile apps, and equivalent increased restrictions in print media.
- Evidence shows that children who use the Internet for over 3 hours per day are almost 4 times more likely to buy junk food products than children who use the Internet for little or no time.<sup>8</sup> It also makes children almost 3 times more likely to pester their parents for junk food.<sup>9</sup> Restricting the advertising of products high in fat, salt and sugar online would help reduce children's intake of products high in fat, salt and sugar.
- Current regulations are full of loopholes and failing children. When popular YouTube vlogger Zoella promoted Nutella to over 12 million subscribers on her channel, the Advertising Standards Authority said it was allowed because only 21% of them are aged 13-17. Despite this not registering any children under 13, it fell below the current 25% child audience threshold required for ads to be currently restricted. Three million children could be exposed to junk food adverts shown on Zoella's channel before restrictions would apply.
- Adverts for junk food on bus stops are banned outside of primary and secondary schools, but allowed near nurseries and children's centres, ostensibly because lower numbers attend these<sup>10</sup>. But this means a child aged 3-4 is not protected to the same degree as a child aged 5-16, which is unacceptable. All children should enjoy the same right to protection from exposure to junk food marketing.
- We support use of the Nutrient Profile Model to identify food and drinks which should be subject to the restrictions, as outlined above for TV.

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<sup>4</sup> Hastings, G. (2006). The extent, nature and effects of food promotion to children: a review of the evidence. WHO 16

<sup>5</sup> McDermott L et al. (2006). International food advertising, pester power and its effects. International Journal of Advertising

<sup>6</sup> <http://obesityhealthalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/OHA-9pm-watershed-position-Feb-2019.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://obesityhealthalliance.org.uk/2019/03/17/support-9pm-watershed-junk-food-adverts-parents-politicians-academics-doctors-nurses-campaigners-charity-leaders/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/ifm\\_briefing\\_jan\\_19.pdf](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/ifm_briefing_jan_19.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/ifm\\_briefing\\_jan\\_19.pdf](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/ifm_briefing_jan_19.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.sustainweb.org/news/nov18\\_asarulings/](https://www.sustainweb.org/news/nov18_asarulings/)