



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

From Maggie Throup MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Vaccines and Public Health

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Iain Stewart MP

By email to: [iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk)

7 October 2021

Dear Iain,

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 June on behalf of a number of your constituents about advertisements for unhealthy food and drink. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I understand your constituents concerns and I am grateful to them for taking the time to raise this matter with you.

We agree that COVID-19 has brought the risks of obesity into sharp focus, and that is why tackling obesity remains a key priority for this Government. As a country, we consume too many calories, as well as too much sugar, saturated fat and salt. This has profound impacts on people's health and represents a huge cost to the health and wellbeing of the individual, the NHS and the wider economy.

Evidence suggests that high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) product advertising is more prevalent on TV than other food and drink product advertising. Studies show that children's exposure to HFSS product advertising can affect what and when they eat. This can happen both in the short term, increasing the amount of food children eat immediately after being exposed to an HFSS advert, and in the longer term, by shaping children's food preferences from a young age. Over time, excess consumption can lead to children becoming overweight or obese, which puts their future health at risk.

We published our full response to the 2019 consultation *Introducing further advertising restriction on TV and online for products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS)* and the 2020 consultation *Introducing a total online advertising restriction for products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS)* on 24 June, confirming we will introduce a 9pm watershed restricting advertising of HFSS products on TV. We are also introducing restrictions on paid-for advertising of HFSS products online. The introduction of these new restrictions will mean a reduction in children's exposure to advertising of less healthy foods, demonstrating the Government's ongoing commitment to tackle unhealthy eating habits at source.

The TV and online restrictions could remove up to 7.2 billion calories from children's diets per year in the UK, which could reduce the number of obese children by around 20,000.

We are using the Health and Care Bill to introduce the restrictions on TV and online, simultaneously at the end of 2022.

We have been careful to consider the views of a wide range of stakeholders and experts in response to our public consultations on these policy proposals. We have narrowed the

products in scope to ensure this work was focused on foods related to childhood obesity and, as part of ensuring that the policy balances both the health benefits and the costs to business, we have included a number of exemptions in the HFSS advertising policy.

We are committed to an evidence-based approach to tackling the problem of obesity across all ages, with an increased focus on prevention to help reduce the health risks that being overweight or living with obesity brings. Helping people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight is one of the most important things we can do to improve our nation's health.

I hope this reply is helpful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maggie Throup', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**MAGGIE THROUP**