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**Advertising regulator issues call for evidence on TV food advertising to children and announces review of non-broadcast food advertising rules**

* *TV rules were introduced over a decade ago in response to evidence of TV advertising’s modest direct effect on children’s immediate food preferences*
* *The rules currently ban the inclusion of ads for high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) products in children's media and other media of particular appeal to children*
* *Rules currently restrict the content and scheduling of HFSS ads to ensure they don’t encourage poor nutritional habits and don’t appeal inappropriately to younger children*
* *New non-broadcast rules were introduced in July 2017, extending these restrictions to non-broadcast media, including companies’ advertising on their own websites and social media spaces*
* *Together, the TV and non-broadcast rules support wider efforts to tackle childhood obesity and respond to the reality of children’s multi-media lives*
* *Call for evidence will help test whether TV rules remain in the right place*
* *Review of non-broadcast rules will inform how the rules are working in online spaces, such as children’s websites and social media, and if restrictions remain proportionate*

The Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP), the body responsible for writing the UK advertising rules, has today (Wednesday 4 April) announced two initiatives that will:

* Examine thoroughly evidence around the impact of TV HFSS food advertising on children
* Review tightened restrictions, introduced last year, around HFSS food and soft drink advertising in non-broadcast media

This will help inform CAP’s work in ensuring the advertising rules are in the right place, are being followed by advertisers and continue to be effective in protecting children in their multi-media lives.

The TV rules, which were introduced in 2007 and remain some of the strictest in the world, respond to evidence of TV’s modest direct influence on children’s immediate food preferences. They also respond to wider societal concerns about childhood obesity and the need to reduce the number and change the nature of food advertisements seen by children.

The tough restrictions have had an impact, children’s exposure to HFSS ads on TV has reduced significantly – 37% between 2005 and 2009 – with new data showing exposure to all TV food and soft drink ads is 40% lower than it was in 2010. Reflecting changes in children’s media consumption habits and food advertisers’ marketing spend, CAP last year introduced a ban in non-broadcast children’s media of HFSS ads including on websites, social media and online video platforms.

However, the significant reduction in children’s exposure to HFSS ads does not correspond to a reduction in childhood obesity rates. It is widely acknowledged that factors other than advertising are the main influences on our children’s waistlines, including socio-economic circumstances, parental choices, school policies, sedentary pastimes, levels of understanding about nutrition and the availability of HFSS products.

But CAP is committed to making sure the advertising rules remain in the right place – that means taking account of the best available evidence on the impact of TV HFSS advertising on children as well as reviewing how the new non-broadcast rules are working. These initiatives complement and sit alongside measures the UK Government is taking as part of its strategy to tackle childhood obesity.

In light of calls for tougher advertising restrictions, CAP considers that it is important to provide up-to-date analysis of the latest evidence in this area. It sister body, the Advertising Standards Authority, is also currently undertaking the first dedicated analysis of children’s exposure to TV ads for HFSS products since 2010 and it will publish the results in the summer.

The call for evidence on TV advertising closes on 16 May 2018. CAP will evaluate the latest evidence and publish its analysis in the autumn. And CAP commits to begin its review of the non-broadcast HFSS restrictions on 1 July 2018, one year after the rules came into force. It will evaluate the effectiveness of the new restrictions in delivering comprehensive protections that reflect the reality of children’s multi-media lives and publish its findings in the autumn, which may include additional steps that it considers necessary to achieve the rules’ objectives.

Director of the Committees, Shahriar Coupal says:

*“These two initiatives signal our clear commitment to make sure the rules continue to protect children and achieve our aim of reducing children’s exposure to ads for less healthy food and soft drinks. The causes of childhood obesity are multiple and complex, with advertising playing a limited role, but it’s crucial we review the latest evidence to sense check the rules are working and respond where evidence shows they need to change. It’s important our rules reflect and remain fit for children’s multi-media lives.”*

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**Notes to editors:**

1. The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) is responsible for writing and maintaining The UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing covers advertisements placed in traditional and new media, sales promotions, direct marketing communications and marketing communications on marketers’ own websites.
2. Further information about CAP and full details of its call for evidence on TV food advertising to children and the review of the non-broadcast food advertising rules are available at [www.cap.org.uk](http://www.cap.org.uk)
3. The ASA is the independent regulator of advertisements across all media in the UK. It does so in the public interest and with the co-operation of advertisers, agencies and media owners who are committed to observing the Advertising Codes. The ASA acts independently of both the Government and the advertising industry.