

Merton Council Advertising Policy:

Advertising HFSS Food and Non-Alcoholic Drink Targeted At Children

Application

This policy applies to:

- (a) Council owned outside advertising sites
- (b) Advertisements at Council premises open to the public (e.g. libraries, leisure centres, schools)
- (c) Advertisements in Council leased premises (subject to lease issues)

Purpose of Policy

This policy has been developed to reduce childhood obesity by restricting the advertising of food and drink high in salt, sugar and fat (HFSS) targeted at children. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has found substantial evidence that the promotion and availability of food, which is high in fat, salt and sugar, is a key contributor to rising obesity (WHO, 2019). Exposure to HFSS food substantially increases energy intake, especially in obese children and increases brand recognition which fosters positive attitudes towards brands, the majority of which are unhealthy.

There is evidence that restrictions on overt and subliminal advertising of HFSS food may influence behaviour in respect of the consumption of unhealthy food and beverages and the Council aims to improve the population's health by the restrictions set out in this Policy, which are considered proportionate to the legitimate aims of this Policy.

1. General Principles

1.1 The UK Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) is widely used and has been subject to rigorous scientific scrutiny, extensive consultation, and review. Furthermore, the scoring system it uses balances the contribution made by beneficial nutrients that are particularly important in children's¹ diets with components in the food that children should eat less of. It has therefore been concluded that the NPM model is the best way of identifying food that contributes to child obesity. Such food and non-alcoholic drink is not only purchased directly by children but is bought for them by others.

1.2 Guidance on how to identify whether a product is considered HFSS under the NPM is available [here](#).

1.3 The outcome of any reviews or revisions of the NPM will be taken into consideration.

¹ Children/child means a person/s below the age of 18. This is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child's definition: https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Guiding_Principles.pdf.

2. Advertisements featuring only non-HFSS products

2.1 These would need to comply with other sections of Merton Council's Advertising Policy.

3. Advertisements featuring only HFSS products

3.1 Where a proposed advertisement features only food and/or non-alcoholic drink which is rated HFSS, such copy would be rejected.

4. Advertisements where there is a range of food/non-alcoholic drink featured, some of which is HFSS

4.1 It is the responsibility of advertisers and their agents to verify the status of the products featured using the NPM.

5. Advertisements where no food or non-alcoholic drink is featured directly but the advertisement is from or features a food and/or non-alcoholic drink brand

5.1 This may include:

- Advertisements where the brand's logo is included but no products, e.g. a brand values campaign.
- Directional signage to a store, app or website;
- promotional advertising which is price led but features no products e.g. '50% off everything' or similar;
- Advertising about a business or its performance; and
- Sponsorship of an event or attraction by a food or non-alcoholic drink brand.

5.2 Food and non-alcoholic drink brands (including food and drink service companies or ordering services) will only be able to place such advertisements if the advertisement promotes healthier options (i.e. non-HFSS products) as the basis of the copy.

5.3 Where a logo from a food or non-alcoholic drink brand is featured incidentally it can be included in copy if the image does not promote HFSS food and/or non-alcoholic drink.

6. Advertisements where food and non-alcoholic drink is shown 'incidentally' i.e. it is not the subject of the advertisement but is included (or implied) by visual or copy:

6.1 HFSS products should not be promoted by being featured in advertisements for other products. It is the responsibility of advertisers and their agents to verify the HFSS status of the products featured using the NPM.

7. Advertisements where food and non-alcoholic drink is referenced in text, through graphical representations or other visual representation.

8.1 HFSS products targeted at children should not be promoted through references in text, graphical images or other visual representations of food and non-alcoholic drink.

8. Indirect promotion of HFSS food and/or drink

9.1 Where a product is non-HFSS and is targeted at children but falls within a category covered by PHE's recommendations for sugar or calorie reduction, the product should always carry a prominent product descriptor to help differentiate it from non-compliant products (e.g. where an advertisement features a non-HFSS pizza or burger, the image should be accompanied by prominent text that names the specific product and retailer).

9.2 Children should not usually be shown in advertisements for products which are compliant in a category which is covered by PHE's recommendations for sugar or calorie reduction.

10. Portion sizes

10.1 The NPM model is based on nutrients per 100g of a product, rather than recommended portion size. Advertisers should always ensure that they promote products in portion sizes which encourage healthy eating. For products that are non-HFSS but fall within a category covered by PHE's recommendations for sugar or calorie reduction, the product should be displayed as a single portion.

END

References

WHO (2019) www.who.int [accessed 22nd December 2019]

Based *TfL Ad Policy: Approval Guidance Food and Non-Alcoholic Drink Advertising*, 2019.