



Scottish Obesity Alliance

Advocating for healthy weight

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The First Minister
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
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13th August 2019

Dear First Minister

Legislate this year on HFSS multi-buy price promotions

Urgent action is needed to restrict all promotions (price and non-monetary) on food and drink high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) in Scotland. Members of the Scottish Obesity Alliance are calling for these proposals to be put in legislation this year as part of your Programme for Government. This is a vital step in creating a Scotland where everyone can enjoy a healthy weight. To delay will undermine your Government's determination to tackle health inequalities and reduce childhood obesity by 50% by 2030.

Scotland has some of the highest incidences of obesity across OECD countriesⁱ. 29% of adults and 13% of children aged 2 to 15 years old are living with obesity, and even more are living with overweight and are at high of risk of being affected by obesity later in lifeⁱⁱ. Whilst the rate of childhood obesity levels has slowed down, it has not stopped or started to decline. This is a major public health crisis.

We are bombarded by promotions on food and drink products that contain excessive amounts of calories, fat, sugar and saltⁱⁱⁱ. Multi-buy, temporary price reductions and extra free promotions all alter price perceptions and encourage people to buy a greater number of unhealthy products^{ivv}. Displays at checkouts prompt further impulse buys^{vivii}.

Restriction is needed across all types of promotions on HFSS products, but regulation to restrict multi-buy price promotions should be prioritised as a first step in a multi-stage approach. There is strong public support for a ban on junk food price promotions^{viiiix}.

It is time to be bold, for the Scottish Government to introduce legislation this year to regulate HFSS multi-buy price promotions in this autumn's Programme for Government. You will have the overwhelming support of the public and public health professionals if you act without delay.

Yours sincerely,

ELMA MURRAY OBE
Chair, Scottish Obesity Alliance

THIS LETTER IS CO-SIGNED BY THE FOLLOWING SCOTTISH OBESITY ALLIANCE MEMBERS:

ACTION ON SUGAR
ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF OBESITY SCOTLAND NETWORK
BRITISH DENTAL ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND
BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND BOARD
CANCER RESEARCH UK
CHEST HEART STROKE SCOTLAND
DIABETES SCOTLAND
GLASGOW CENTRE FOR POPULATION HEALTH
OBESITY ACTION SCOTLAND
PATHS FOR ALL
ROYAL COLLEGE OF ANAESTHETISTS
ROYAL COLLEGE OF PAEDIATRICS & CHILD HEALTH SCOTLAND
ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS EDINBURGH
ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS GLASGOW
ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS IN SCOTLAND
ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING SCOTLAND
MRC/CSO SOCIAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES UNIT, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
THE BREASTFEEDING NETWORK SCOTLAND
THE BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SCOTTISH BRANCH
VOLUNTARY HEALTH SCOTLAND

ⁱ OECD (2017). Obesity Update 2017 <http://www.oecd.org/health/health-systems/Obesity-Update-2017.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ The Scottish Government. (2018) Obesity indicators, progress report - October.

ⁱⁱⁱ Food Standards Scotland (2018). Situation Report. The Scottish Diet: It needs to change. 2018 update.

^{iv} Sparks L and Burt S (2017). Identifying and Understanding the Factors that can Transform the Retail Environment to Enable Healthier Purchasing by Consumers.

^v PHE's Sugar Reduction Evidence for Action (2015) report Annex 4: An analysis of the role of price promotions on the household purchases of food and drinks high in sugar.

^{vi} Cohen DA & Babey SH (2012) Candy at the cash register – a risk factor for obesity and chronic disease. N Engl J Med 367, 1381–1383.

^{vii} CSPI (2015) Temptation at Checkout: The power of point-of-sale retail food marketing

^{viii} Food Standards Scotland (2018). Food in Scotland Consumer Tracking Survey: Wave 6. Summary Report.

^{ix} Cancer Research UK, UK Health Forum (2016). Short and sweet: Why the government should introduce a sugary drinks tax.