



**Obesity Action
Scotland**

Healthy weight for all

ORDERING FOOD ONLINE (OUT OF HOME)

Food purchased 'Out of Home' (OOH) refers to any food or drink purchased outside of the home intended for immediate consumption, for example in cafes or restaurants.

In Scotland, before the coronavirus pandemic, we purchased around a quarter of our calories out of home. Evidence suggests the pandemic has caused a surge in the use of online food delivery platforms.

Out of home food also includes takeaways and home deliveries, which can be ordered online, through apps or food delivery services. Ordering food online for delivery has increased in recent years, with the introduction of novel food delivery service apps. There is little research exploring the implications of this shift.

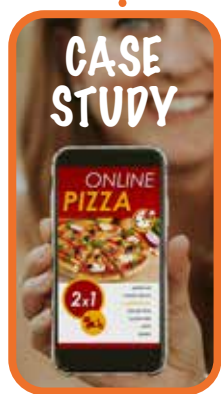
We must ensure measures that enable healthier choices such as calorie-labelling, portion size improvements and healthier options apply to online out of home.



FOOD DELIVERY SERVICES

In 2006, the launch of food delivery platforms connecting restaurants to customers, such as Just Eat, marked the start of evolution in the food delivery market.¹ Following the success of Just Eat, competing services such as Deliveroo and Uber Eats (Box 1) were launched, introducing platforms that also deal with processing and delivering orders. The UK food delivery market has continued to expand over recent years² and it has been one of the few industries that has grown throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.³

- » In 2020 food delivery made up 16% of the UK's total foodservice spending, compared to 9% in 2019.³
- » In the period January to October 2020, there were 804 million visits to food delivery outlets in the UK - an increase of 14% from 2019. This was matched by an increase in spending which grew by 40% to £5.7bn over the same period.³
- » JustEat, Deliveroo, and UberEats are the most widely used third-party delivery platforms in the UK. Together they received 320m visits between January and October 2020 - an increase of 20% from 2019.³
- » Nearly 70% of all food delivery orders in Scotland are now facilitated by some form of digital delivery platform, compared with 30% of orders taken by phone call.⁴
- » These platform visits are expected to occur alongside the rise in in-home entertainment services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, causing people to stay indoors and 'order-in'.⁵ It is therefore predicted that we will see more food delivery services partnering with in-home entertainment providers.
- » In 2020 the CEO of delivery app Deliveroo stated that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had accelerated consumer behaviour trends in the food delivery market by up to 3 years.⁶
- » Deliveroo is due to float as a public company in the UK in 2021⁷ meaning it will receive large investment and grow its profile further, which reflects expectations of the market's potential. Pizza delivery company, Domino's, is also aiming to expand with plans to open 200 new outlets in the UK following the pandemic along with a new online delivery app.⁸



Popularity of Online Delivery Apps Continues to Grow

- » JustEat is one of the biggest food delivery companies in Europe and it is the most popular delivery platform used by people in Scotland.⁴ From October to December 2020 JustEat received 14m delivery orders in the UK – an increase of 387% from the same period in 2019.⁹
- » Food delivery app Deliveroo saw 1400 new restaurants join up with its service in November 2020 alone.¹⁰ In 2021 the company plans to expand into 100 new towns and cities in the UK, reaching 4m potential new customers.¹¹
- » UberEats is another popular delivery app in the UK and it saw deliveries increase by 150% between June and September 2020 compared to the same period in the previous year.¹⁰ In 2021, UberEats has a service coverage allowing it to reach 75% of the UK population.¹⁰

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- » The majority of takeaway food is high in calories, salt and saturated fat¹² and nutrition labelling is optional for OOH food outlets.¹³
- » 66% of people in Scotland believe it is difficult to eat healthily when ordering takeaways, with 60% saying there are not enough healthy options at takeaway food outlets.¹⁴
- » In 2019, the top 5 food delivery and collection outlets in Scotland were McDonald's, Subway, Greggs, KFC, and Dominos.⁴
- » Research has shown that consumers significantly underestimate the calorie content of takeaway meals.^{15,16}
- » Consumers might therefore be unknowingly overconsuming calories from food ordered online.

- » In the UK, people who are most likely to order food online include men, those in younger age groups, as well as people with lower levels of education¹⁷ which may result in widening health-related inequalities.

A 2019 unpublished research project from the University of Glasgow showed that convenience, wanting to treat oneself and lack of time were the main reasons for university students to order food online.¹⁸ It was found that in this group of students, calorie and nutritional labelling and apps signposting healthier options, would likely help them make healthier choices.¹⁸ This is in agreement with the 'Healthier Fast Food' report by Shift, which suggests that introducing such interventions to online platforms such as Just Eat would be easy to scale and have greater impact if "embedded into the architecture of online platforms".¹⁵ However, a healthy delivery food outlet trialled by Shift throughout 2020 revealed how difficult it is for healthier outlets to get noticed on online delivery apps where unhealthy big brands dominate the main user pages.¹⁹

POLICY



- » **Food Standards Scotland** consulted on measures to improve the out of home environment in Scotland.²⁰ Analysis of consultation responses found that the majority of respondents believed that online food delivery services should be included in an out of home strategy, that small or half portions should be available, full nutrition information should be provided online, and calorie labelling should be mandatory in order to support informed choice and create a level playing field.²¹
- » **The UK Government** consulted on calorie labelling in the out of home sector in 2018. In July 2019, the UK Government announced in their prevention green paper that they would set details of their policy in a consultation response.²² The government's New Obesity Strategy includes plans to impose mandatory calorie labelling on OOH businesses with more than 250 employees.²³
- » **Public Health England's** Calorie Reduction Programme was changed in 2020 to exclusively challenge the out of home sector to reduce the calories in their products by 20% by 2024.²⁴ The sector has been encouraged to focus on calorie reduction through either meal reformulation or reduction of portion sizes.²⁴ The sector has been encouraged to focus on calorie reduction through either meal reformulation or reduction of portion sizes.²⁴

KEY RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- » Introduce mandatory calorie labelling on online menus to help consumers make an informed choice
- » Improvement in portion size options, ensuring an option for smaller portions is always available
- » Standardise nutrition labelling on menus
- » Develop health literacy initiatives to ensure widescale understanding of food label information
- » Introduce regulation for online delivery companies to encourage platforms to guide consumers towards healthier options
- » Research is needed to explore the implications of the recent and growing phenomenon of ordering takeaway food online



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