

Proposals to consult on restriction of food and drink advertising across Transport for London advertising estate to help reduce child obesity

1 Background

- 1.1 The National Child Measurement Programme shows that London has one of the highest child overweight and obesity rates in Europe. By ages 10 and 11 (school year six) almost 40 per cent of children are classed as overweight or obese. Across England, 34 per cent of year six children are overweight or obese¹.
- 1.2 Children living in the most deprived areas of London are twice as likely to be overweight and obese. For example, Barking and Dagenham has the highest level of overweight or obese year six children (44 per cent) and the lowest in London is Richmond (25 per cent).
- 1.3 Public Health England have concluded that marketing and branding is effective in encouraging purchasing and consumption of unhealthy food and drink but that the impact of advertising specifically needs further research. A focus-group study by the National Centre for Social Research and Cancer Research UK showed that advertising did impact children's food choices and resulted in pressure being put on parents to buy unhealthy foods.
- 1.4 Transport for London's advertising estate makes up 40 per cent of London's out of home advertising by revenue. Making changes to how this estate is used provides an opportunity to reduce children and young people's exposure to unhealthy food advertising. The Mayor is therefore consulting Londoners and London's businesses on proposals to restrict food and drink advertising across the TfL estate, alongside a range of other measures as outlined in the London Food Strategy.

2 The Proposals

- 2.1 Tackling child obesity is a priority for the Mayor. That is why the Mayor is proposing to ban all unhealthy food and drink advertising on the Transport for London network to support the fight against child obesity.
- 2.2 This means that advertisements for food and drink defined as unhealthy by the Government's Nutrient Profiling Model would be banned, as well as advertisements for food and drink companies that just advertise the company's brand or restaurant name. So, for example, an advert for a fast food chain that simply carries their name and/or logo or directs people to the nearest restaurant would be banned under these proposals.
- 2.3 The Transport for London advertising estate includes traditional and digital advertising across London and on all Transport for London modes. This ranges from large format digital screens at major Tube stations and at roadside locations, to traditional metal roundabout advertising signs. The majority of advertising on the Transport for London estate is traditional posters, be they on the sides of buses, on station platforms or on bus shelters. On the Tube, at bus shelters and at roadside locations, posters are now increasingly being replaced by digital advertising screens.

¹ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme>

- 2.4 The Transport for London Advertising Policy applies to all advertising on the Transport for London estate and on vehicles managed or regulated by Transport for London, for example buses and taxis.

Views are sought on whether a full ban should take place or whether the Mayor should do nothing. These options are outlined in more detail below.

- 2.5 Option 1 – A ban on all food and drink advertising across Transport for London’s advertising estate unless it is healthy

The Mayor is proposing a ban of all food and drinks² advertisements across the Transport for London network unless they are advertising healthy food and drink.³ This means that advertisements for food and drink defined as unhealthy would be banned, as well as advertisements for food and drink companies that just advertise the company’s brand or restaurant name. So, for example, an advert for a fast food chain that simply carries their name and/or logo or directs people to the nearest restaurant would be banned under these proposals.

London would not be the first city to introduce such measures, but because of the size of TfL’s advertising estate, it would be the biggest. On 1 January 2018 a ban was introduced on advertising unhealthy foods on the Amsterdam Metro. The ban formed part of a wider ‘Healthy Weight for All Children’ policy that since 2012 has cut child obesity in that city by 12 per cent overall and by 18 per cent amongst the most deprived children.

- 2.6 Option 2 – Do Nothing

We are keen to seek views from individuals or organisations that do not think the Mayor should introduce restrictions to advertising on the Transport for London advertising estate or have other suggestions of how to use the Transport for London estate as part of bold action against child obesity.

3. **More information**

To have your say please visit www.london.gov.uk/food and complete the survey.

Alternatively email comments to londonfood@london.gov.uk or send written comments to:

Draft London Food Strategy
GLA Food Team
Post Point 19A
City Hall
London SE1 2AA

² This ban would exclude alcohol

³ ‘Healthy’ as defined under the Food Standards Agency Nutrient Profiling Model - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nutrient-profiling-model>