Recommendation Extract

A ‘Watershed’ Moment: Why it’s Prime Time to Protect Children from Junk Food Adverts

- Research already shows us that there is a clear link between the food and drink adverts children see and their food choices and how much they eat.
- **Existing rules do not protect children** from seeing adverts for food and drink products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) during the TV programmes they watch most. **The rules still allow HFSS adverts to be shown during family viewing time** when the number of children watching TV is at its highest.

Key findings

1. The **majority (59%)** of food and drink adverts shown during family viewing time **would be banned from children’s TV**, yet hundreds of thousands of children are exposed to these ads every week.
2. In the worst case example, children **were bombarded with nine HFSS adverts** in just a 30-minute period.
3. Adverts for **fruit and vegetables** made up **just over 1%** of food and drink adverts shown during family viewing time.
4. Adverts for **fast food and takeaways** appeared **more than twice as often** as any other type of food and drink adverts – largely due to their tactic of sponsoring popular family shows.

Solutions

- Loopholes in regulations mean the most popular programmes with children, even ones marketed as ‘family programmes’, do not have the same safeguards on HFSS advertising as programmes watched only by children. This is despite significantly more children watching these programmes than even the most popular children’s TV programmes.
- To protect our children from adverts that we know can influence their food preferences, choices, and consumption, the Government should extend existing regulations to restrict HFSS advertising where children are exposed to the most HFSS advertising. The most effective way to do this would be with a 9pm watershed.
- Companies or brands that are ‘synonymous’ with (i.e. very closely associated with) HFSS products should not be allowed to sponsor prime time family TV shows.