

Julia Richards
Content and Standards
Ofcom
Floor 5
Riverside House
2a Southward Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

21st December 2006

Dear Ms Richards,

Cancer Research UK response to the Ofcom consultation- Television advertising of food and drink products to children: options for new restrictions

Cancer Research UK¹ is the world's largest independent organisation dedicated to cancer research, with an annual research spend of over £257 million. We believe that the prevention of obesity in children is an essential part of cancer and other chronic disease prevention and are supportive of appropriate initiatives to enable consumers to make healthy choices more easily.

We responded to the spring consultation on proposals to restrict food and drink promotions to children and have monitored subsequent developments closely. We welcome the decision by Ofcom to apply its recommendations to children under 16. Similarly, we are pleased that Ofcom will make use of the Nutrient Profiling model developed by the Food Standards Agency. We welcome the decision to restrict only the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) to children. We support the promotion of products of greater nutritional value and believe this provides an opportunity to encourage healthy eating.

However, we are disappointed that Ofcom does not currently plan to introduce a 9pm watershed. Over 2.5 million children are now overweight or obese. We know that obese children are more likely to become obese adults and face an increased risk of several cancers as a result. The marketing of HFSS foods is one of the most significant sources of information about food and diet available to children, and the link between the aggressive marketing of HFSS foods and children's consumption patterns has been accepted by Ofcom.

We remain convinced that the introduction of a 9pm watershed would be a proportionate measure, and the most effective way to restrict the advertising and promotion of HFSS foods to children. The reduction in advertising impacts for under 16s in modified package 1 is estimated to be 41%; less than half the restrictions a 9pm watershed would achieve.

¹ Registered charity no. 1089464.

Cancer Research UK is also concerned that the current proposals do not appear to include generic brand advertising. We believe this could offer a significant loophole if exploited.

We have written to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to make our views on this issue known. We hope that you will revise modified package 1 and bring forward proposals to restrict the marketing of HFSS foods before the 9pm watershed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Davidson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard Davidson
Director of Policy and Public Affairs
Cancer Research UK