

## Press release



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## Obesity: junk food advertising ban to protect kids

At a major conference on obesity called by the National Audit Office today, *Sustain* will announce that more than 50 national public interest organisations (see attached list) have confirmed their support for *Sustain's* campaign calling for legislation to protect children from the advertising and promotion of unhealthy foods. *Sustain* will also explain how current voluntary codes of advertising practice fail to protect children from commercial messages which promote fatty, sugary and salty foods, directly to children.

Support continues to grow from professional organisations representing medical and health interests and from organisations concerned about the affect of unhealthy food promotions on children's current and longer term health. At a time when rates of childhood obesity are rising at unprecedented levels, medical opinion is clear that children should be encouraged to eat fewer high fat snacks such as crisps and snacks, biscuits and confectionery. However, *Sustain's* 'TV Dinners' research, found that up to 99% of food advertisements on children's television are for high fat, high sugar or high salt foods, creating a conflict with dietary recommendations and undermining efforts of parents and professionals to encourage healthier patterns of eating.

Charlie Powell, Project Officer at *Sustain*, commented, "*The weight of professional opinion, taken together with the strong parental support for controls on food advertising aimed at children, represents a powerful force for change. The campaign for legislation to protect children from commercial pressures to choose fatty, sugary or salty foods is gaining momentum*".

### Editorial notes

1. *Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming* advocates food and agricultural policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity.
2. The 'Protecting children from unhealthy food advertising' campaign document and policy statement is accessible from [www.sustainweb.org/adcampaign](http://www.sustainweb.org/adcampaign).
3. 'Joining forces to tackle obesity' is a National Audit Office conference for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers from the public and voluntary sectors and industry, taking place on 21-22 January 2002 at the Hilton Metropole, London. For more details: [www.chamberlaindunn.com](http://www.chamberlaindunn.com)

4. *TV Dinners – what’s being served up by the advertisers*, published by *Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming* (Price £25.00; £7.50 to voluntary and public interest organisations). Nearly 40 hours of commercial TV programming, incorporating 272 food advertisements, were monitored.
5. Surveys conducted by the independent market research companies NOP and MORI show strong parental support for controls on food advertising aimed at children. The NOP research found that more than three in four (of 1,216 adults) wanted to see a ban on the advertising of sugary / fatty foods during children’s TV programmes. Findings of the NOP survey (February 2000) are presented in ‘*Blackmail*’, published by the Co-op, copies of which are available from tel: 0800 068 6727.

The MORI study found that nearly two thirds (of 633 parents) thought that there should be tougher restrictions on the advertising of foods and soft drinks to children. Findings of the MORI survey (June 1994), ‘*Parents’ attitudes towards children’s food advertising*’ are available from *Sustain*, price £5.

6. Support has been confirmed from the following public interest organisations (as at 21 January 2002):

Action Against Allergy	Health Education Trust
Allergy Alliance	Human Scale Education
Arid Lands Initiative	Hyperactive Children’s Support Group
Autism Unravelled	The Food Commission
Baby Milk Action	Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome Help (HUSH)
Biodynamic Agricultural Association	International Society for Food Ecology and Culture
British Allergy Foundation	Land Heritage
British Association for Community Child Health	McCarrison Society for Nutrition and Health
British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry	National Children’s Bureau
British Dental Association	National Council of Women
British Dietetic Association	National Federation of Consumer Groups
British Heart Foundation	National Heart Forum
British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group	National Oral Health Promotion Group
British Hypertension Society	Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association
Centre for Food Policy	Royal College of General Practitioners
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	Royal College of Physicians
Child Growth Foundation	Scottish Heart and Arterial Disease Risk Prevention
Child Poverty Action Group	Soroptimist International of Great Britain
The Children’s Society	The Stroke Association
Co-operative Group (CWS) Ltd	UK Public Health Association
Community Nutrition Group	UNISON
Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH)	Vega Research
Elm Farm Research Centre	Welsh Food Alliance
Faculty of Public Health Medicine	World Cancer Research Fund
Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens	Young Minds
Foundation for Local Food Initiatives	

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