

OPENING STATEMENT

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I'm a Lecturer in Developmental Psychology and Childhood, and a Director of the *Centre for Children's Health and Well-being: Body Mind and Media* at the Open University in the UK. I was formerly based at UCD, and on issues regarding children, food and food marketing I continue to collaborate with colleagues there, and carry out research and consultancy for the Irish Heart Foundation as well as the World Health Organization. Thank you for your interest in our work.

Systematic evidence reviews have long since established that marketing exposure to unhealthy food and drinks contributes to children's overweight and obesity. International research shows that experimental ad exposure raises children's intake by 30-50 calories - and it only takes a 48-70 calorie imbalance daily to result in overweight or obesity. Our research shows that by 3 years of age, children in Ireland recognise over half of food brand logos associated with unhealthy or 'treat' foods - recognising almost all by the time they're 5.

Nearly a decade ago, in 2010, WHO recommended reductions in marketing of high fat salt and sugar food and drinks to children and this was adopted by the World Health Assembly that same year. A child rights perspective upholding children's best interests mandates State action in this area. But our forthcoming WHO report notes patchy progress, including in Ireland.

Here in Ireland, even very young children see upwards of 1000 unhealthy TV ads a year, sometimes even more than 6 hourly, due to loopholes in broadcast advertising regulations. The new non-broadcast Code is voluntary and has no articulated monitoring mechanism (so although something very radical has just happened here with the Data Protection Bill, it's not clear how the ban on profiling and targeting of children is going to be evidenced). Other forms of marketing affect children's eating but are not regulated. I've detailed recommendations in my written submission and I'd be delighted to discuss these further.

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