

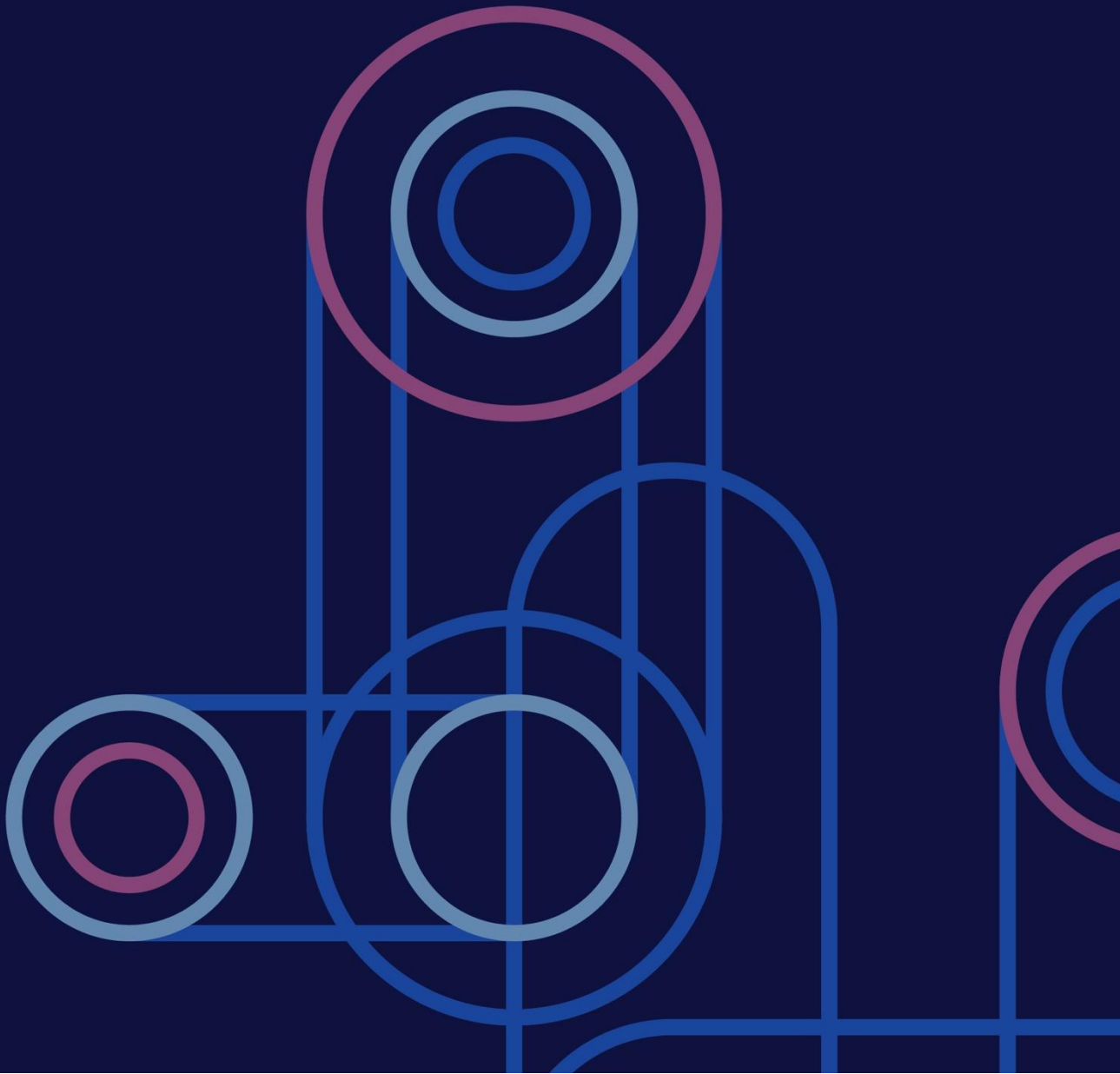


World Health
Organization

CASE STUDY

Transport for London – Restriction of Advertisement of High Fat, Salt, and Sugar Foods and Drinks

2026



Basic information

WHO Region	EURO
City or Country	London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Timeline	2019 – ongoing
Type of intervention	Policy
Primary level of implementation	City
Primary sectors involved	Transport; food; health; advertising
Primary health outcomes or challenges	Childhood obesity and overweight; healthy diets; health equity

Case description

London has long faced high and unequal rates of childhood overweight and obesity, with the greatest burden in more deprived areas. Growing concern about the effects of unhealthy food environments led to a coordinated citywide effort to improve children's health. This included the establishment in 2018 of London's Child Obesity Taskforce, and the Mayor's Advisory Group on Child Healthy Weight (MAGCHW) in 2022, to provide the Mayor of London with expert advice on action needed to support the health and weight of London's children.

In 2019, acting on these commitments, the Mayor of London, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Transport for London (TfL) introduced restrictions on advertising of foods and non-alcoholic drinks high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) across the TfL network. This network carries millions of passengers each day and constitutes one of the largest and most prominent outdoor advertising estates in Europe, substantially shaping people's daily exposure to food marketing.

The restrictions constitute a citywide policy that applies to all advertising spaces managed by TfL, grounded in the principle that children's health is strongly shaped by the environments in which they live, travel and learn. It was strongly informed by a 2018 Mayor's London Food Strategy consultation, in which many residents and stakeholders supported limiting advertising for products that contribute to poor diets among children. The Child Obesity Taskforce reinforced these aims, recommending actions that change the social and economic environment influencing children's food choices. The London Food Strategy, Health Inequalities Strategy and Health and Care Vision for



Advertising at Tottenham Court Road. London, United Kingdom: 2025.

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London subsequently embedded the restrictions within broader long-term efforts to create healthier public spaces.

Delivering the policy required extensive partnership working. The Mayor's office, GLA policy teams, TfL, London boroughs, local public health directors, paediatricians, academics, civil society organisations, community groups, advertising industry bodies and commercial actors all played roles in shaping or responding to the policy. Engagement processes enabled partners to understand the evidence underpinning healthy food advertising standards and to identify feasible approaches for implementation. An exceptions process was established to assess whether specific products classified as 'less healthy' could be advertised if they were shown not to contribute to HFSS diets among children. An expert panel, including nutrition specialists, advised on these assessments.

The initiative faced a number of challenges. For example, some advertisers and manufacturers expressed scepticism that the policy would be workable or effective, and commercial lobbying and revenue concerns necessitated careful management. Technical discussions were needed to ensure a clear, consistent and operational definition of HFSS products. Strong political leadership, broad consultation and sustained communication helped maintain momentum in the face of these barriers. Likewise, clear articulation of the childhood obesity challenge, endorsement from the health and public health sectors and support from civil society actors strengthened the policy's credibility.

Independent evaluation has documented substantial early impacts. Households purchased approximately 1000 fewer calories per week from HFSS products following implementation. Purchases of calories from chocolate and confectionery declined by about 20 percent. Modelling studies suggest that over the lifetime of London's current population, the restrictions could prevent around 95 000 cases of obesity, generate more than 16 000 additional quality-adjusted life-years and lead to health and social care savings of approximately £218 million. Reductions in unhealthy purchases were greatest in more deprived communities, indicating potential benefits for health equity.

The restrictions continue to shape the advertising environment across the transport network, and several London boroughs have adopted similar policies for their own advertising estates. As London advances wider efforts to promote healthier food environments, continued monitoring and collaboration across sectors will be essential to maintaining progress and ensuring that commercial, health and community priorities remain aligned.

Strategic Highlight

The introduction of healthier food advertising restrictions across London's transport system provides a model for how active engagement with diverse stakeholders strengthens the foundations for strategic action on urban health. The policy cut across sectors traditionally governed by different priorities: public transport agencies focused on operations and commercial revenue, food producers and advertisers concerned about clarity of standards and income, health authorities emphasising population outcomes, and community groups seeking supportive environments for children. Navigating these priorities required sustained participation, shared problem definition and mechanisms to enable partners to weigh evidence and negotiate workable solutions.

A consistent focus on participation facilitated coordinated action and uptake. The London Food Strategy consultation process enabled a wide range of residents, experts and commercial actors to review proposals and offer views on how restrictions should be applied. Engagement by the Child Obesity Taskforce strengthened attention to children's lived experiences and elevated the importance of equitable and supportive environments. These efforts consolidated a common understanding of why advertising environments matter and what actions might be feasible and reasonable.

The process of managing interests also shaped implementation design. The need for clear, actionable guidance for advertisers included the creation of an exceptions process supported by an expert panel. This mechanism enabled commercial actors to participate in policy design while ensuring that decisions remained grounded in children's nutritional needs. Technical discussions with TfL helped align the policy with operational realities, providing clarity for contractors and reducing uncertainty. Ongoing

communication with borough authorities and civil society organisations supported wider adoption of complementary policies and reinforced citywide coherence.

These experiences reflect principles of strategic action, particularly the value of inclusive governance, joint framing of challenges, and creation of interchanges where different forms of expertise can influence decision-making. By fostering participation and recognising the different incentives held across sectors, London was able to develop a policy with broad legitimacy, operational clarity and sustained political and social support. The initiative illustrates how participatory, multi-actor processes can generate collective ownership of solutions that address complex urban health challenges.

Further Information

- [London Food Strategy](#)
- [Every Child a Healthy Weight](#)
- [Health and Care Vision for London](#)
- [The health, cost and equity impacts of restrictions on the advertisement of high fat, salt and sugar products across the transport for London network: a health economic modelling study](#)
- [Mayor confirms ban on junk food advertising on transport network](#)
- [Transport for London's junk food advertising restrictions linked to reductions in high fat, salt and sugar product purchases](#)
- [Londoners buy less junk food due to ad restrictions on TfL network](#)
- [Taskforce calls for powerful action to end childhood obesity](#)