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## EVENT REPORT: The Marketing of Junk Food to Children

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HEALTH  
EQUALITIES  
GROUP



## Food Active Event: The Marketing of Junk Food to Children

On July 15<sup>th</sup> Food Active and Lancashire County Council held an event 'The marketing of junk food to children' at County Hall, Preston. The event was supported by The Association of Directors of Public Health (North West) and the Association for the Study of Obesity (North West).

### Objectives

The objectives for the event were as follows:

- To provide an update of food and health in the current climate – post Brexit
- To learn about current priorities for Food Active
- To provide an opportunity for learning and discussion on the topic of junk food marketing to children
- To assist in forming the Food Active response to the CAP Consultation: food and soft drink advertising to children.

A programme and full list of attendees can be found in appendices 1 and 2.

### Speakers and presentations

The event was opened by **Cllr Lorraine Beavers, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Lancashire County Council**. Cllr Beavers took the opportunity to welcome the delegates and to provide an overview of the importance of tighter controls on junk food marketing to children, Cllr Beavers talked about her own challenges as a mother and a grandmother in world where unhealthy choices are everywhere.

**Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health, Lancashire County Council** chaired the event. Sakthi gave an overview of the work Lancashire are doing around overweight and obesity, including the preparation to adopt the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight.



**Robin Ireland, Director of Food Active and Chief Executive of Health Equalities Group** gave a presentation on 'The National Food Context'. Robin focused on the potential effects of the Brexit vote, in particular concerns surrounding the implementation of the levy on sugar-sweetened beverages, an expected continued delay in the publication of the Government's Childhood Obesity Strategy, and local / devolved decision-making. However, with many of the UK's food and farming policies and subsidies being defined at EU level, Robin commented that the UK government could now have an opportunity to reshape these to ensure that there is closer link made between food production and public health.

We were honoured to have two fantastic guest presentations on the day, both from experts in the fields of child psychology, consumer behaviour and junk food marketing.



**Dr Emma Boyland, Lecturer in Appetite and Obesity at the University of Liverpool,** Trustee at The Association for the Study of Obesity presented on **“The impact of food and beverage advertising on children’s eating behaviour”**. In this talk, Dr Boyland presented data from a series of experimental studies in order to explore: 1) the exposure of children to food advertising within the context of a changing regulatory landscape (using the UK as an example), 2) the persuasive power of that advertising (e.g. the use of marketing techniques), and 3) the impact on food preferences, choices and consumption. The implications for policy were then discussed.

Dr Emma Boyland's presentation can be found [here](#).

Dr **Mimi Tatlow-Golden, Child Psychologist & Researcher, University College Dublin** presented was entitled **“Who’s Feeding the Kids Online?’ Digital advertising of junk food to children”**. Dr Tatlow-Golden's presentation data from a number of studies and sources around online marketing to children to explore: 1) Children's 'advertised diet' – the marketing children are actually exposed to and how industry bypass children's rights, 2) where children are going online; the use of analytics and exploiting emotions in digital marketing, 3) the importance of safeguarding teenagers as well as younger children and 4) parents' perceptions of marketing on the internet. Recommendations for regulations and information sharing were then discussed.

Dr Mimi Tatlow-Golden's presentation can be found [here](#).



## Group Sessions

Following a short break there were roundtable discussions. Robin Ireland presented a summary paragraph from the Children's Food Campaign (CFC) CAP Consultation response and asked delegates to discuss and feedback whether they felt it was appropriate for Food Active to endorse the statement, Robin also asked the groups to think about what steps we could take locally to tackle junk food marketing to children.

The groups agreed that the CFC response was fit for purpose and were happy for Food Active to endorse their statement. At a local level delegates felt that more authority should be given to local authorities and that there should be more joined-up practice with voluntary and community organisations.

A copy of the Food Active consultation response (submitted via Heart of Mersey) can be found [here](#).

## Evaluation

A total of 42 people attended the event of which 19 returned evaluation forms. Organisational representation included local authorities, public health professionals, university lecturers, students and research associates.

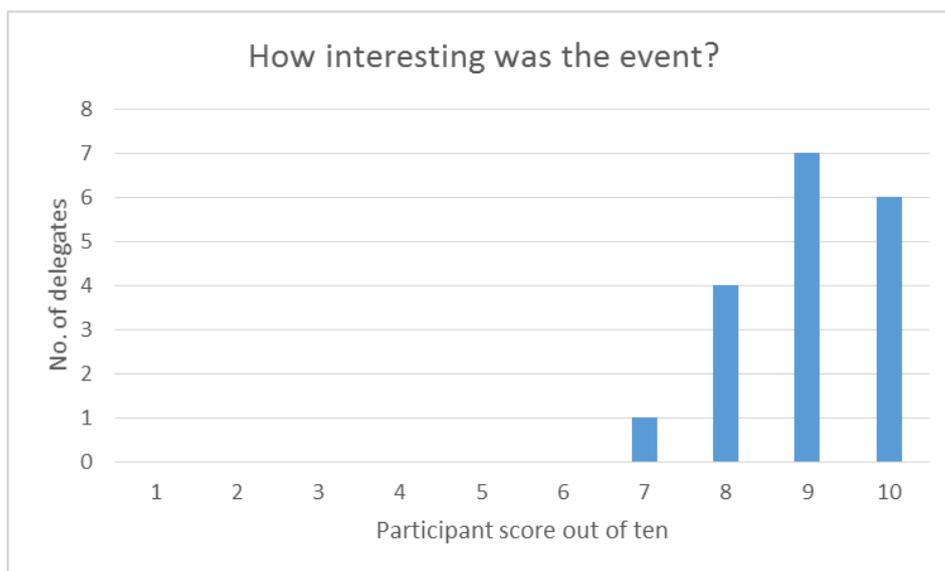
Outcomes from the conference were determined using a short quantitative and qualitative 11 item questionnaire. A 10 point Likert scale was used for quantitative assessment (1 – signifying not at all, and 10 – definitely). Outcomes were achieved as follows:

## 1. Overall how do you rate the event: The Marketing of Junk Food to Children?



**78% of the participants gave the overall rating of the conference a score of 8 or more**

## 2. How interesting was the event?



**94% of the participants gave the overall rating of the conference a score of 8 or more**

"Presentations were very enlightening"; "Presentations were excellent"; "great and interesting presentations, very informative and thought provoking"

"Networking opportunities"; "meeting other public health professionals and networking"

"Hearing about the research into the digital marketing to kids"

"Meeting the speakers"

"The way in which large corporations have deceived us into believing we are in control"

"The 'hidden' marketing angle"

“Implications of the ‘new world’ of advertising becoming personalised and held in our hands, rather than a distant medium”

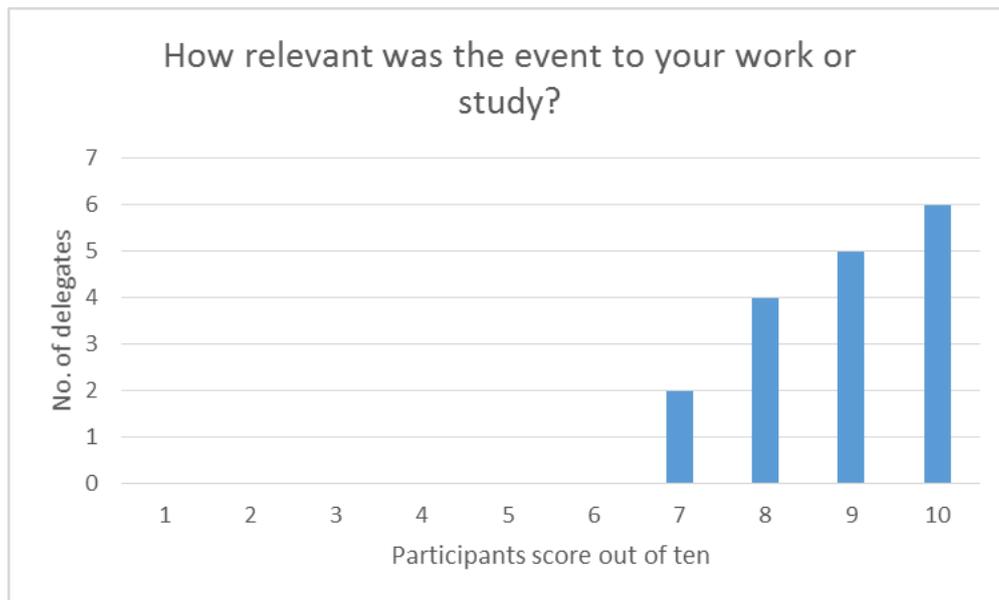
“The impact of advertising on consumer behaviour. Although we think we can control this and not be affected, we are hugely influenced. Loved the powerful quote “we don’t have much choice living in the obesogenic environment”.

“Access to the evidence behind suggestions on effect of junk food marketing”

“The impact of digital media on food consumption”

“The power of social media in influencing food choices and impulses”.

### 3. How relevant was the event to your work or study?



**88% of participants rated the event relevant to their work of study (score of 8 or more).**

### 4. What was most useful about the event?

“The three talks given by Robin, Mimi and Emma”; “the presentations”

“Information gathering”; “listening and engaging”

“Speakers sharing knowledge in their expert field. A good mix of representative at the event”

“Listening to the great speakers and the research in the area. Being able to share ideas and views with others. The round-table discussions”

“Increased knowledge around advertising and mechanisms to target children and young people”

“Networking and speakers”

“Meeting other, receiving the submission policy position”

“All of it”

## **5. What could have been done differently at the event?**

The following comments were recorded for improvements to the event:

“A greater focus on encouraging attendees to agree on action – what are they going to do individually or collectively to challenge the marketing of junk food to children?”

“More opportunities to network”

“Presentation screens were too far away”

“More time for the speakers”

## **6. Conclusions and recommendations**

Overall the event proved to be extremely useful for updating on evidence and practice around junk food marketing, sharing good practice, learning, improving knowledge and equipping delegates with relevant knowledge to include within their roles and inform others. Recommendations include the following:

1. Lengthen the time allocated for presentations
2. More time for networking
3. More consultation with delegates during the event

# FOOD ACT!VE

# THE MARKETING OF JUNK FOOD TO CHILDREN

**FRIDAY 15th JULY 9.30 - 12.30**  
**COUNTY HALL, LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**PRESTON**

## EVENT PROGRAMME

This event has been organised by Food Active and Lancashire County Council with the support of The Association for the Study of Obesity (North West) and The Association of Directors of Public Health (North West).

- 9.30 am Registration and networking
- 10.00 am Welcome on behalf of Lancashire County Council and Food Active**  
Cllr Lorraine Beavers, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Lancashire County Council
- 10.10 am Welcome from the Chair**  
Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health, Lancashire County Council
- 10.20 am The national food context**  
Robin Ireland, Chief Executive, Health Equalities Group and Director, Food Active
- 10.25 am PRESENTATION: "The impact of food and beverage advertising on children's eating behaviour"**  
Dr Emma Boyland, Lecturer in Appetite and Obesity at the University of Liverpool, Trustee at The Association for the Study of Obesity
- 10:50 am PRESENTATION: "'Who's Feeding the Kids Online?' Digital advertising of junk food to children"**  
Dr Mimi Tatlow-Golden, Child Psychologist & Researcher, University College Dublin
- 11.15 am Panel questions**  
Chaired by Dr Sakthi Karunanithi
- 11.30 am Comfort and refreshment break
- 11.40 am Introduction to the roundtable discussions**  
Robin Ireland
- 11.45 am Roundtable discussions**  
Group work
- 12.10 pm Feedback from the roundtable discussions**  
Robin Ireland
- 12.20 pm Summary of the day**  
Dr Sakthi Karunanithi
- 12.30 pm Event close

## Appendix 2. Delegate List

Vivienne	Ashurst	Fareshare
Ruth	Bardsley	Rochdale Council
Lorraine (Cllr)	Beavers	Lancashire County Council
Anne	Betty	AB Food Nutrition
Lisa	Birtwistle	Fylde Coast YMCA
Emma	Boyland	University of Liverpool
Nicola	Calder	Health Equalities Group
Krishma	Caleyachetty	UCLAN
Paula	Cooper	Lancashire County Council
Kerry	Cross	Preston City Council
Kirsty	Cumbo	NHS
Nicola	Dennison	Blackpool Council
Lynn	Donkin	Blackpool Council
Amanda	Donnelly	Soil Association Food for Life
Elaine	Eldson	Brighter Living Partnership
Amandine	Garde	University of Liverpool
Wayne	Gibson	Lancashire County Council
Lee	Girvin	Lancashire County Council
Laura	Gornall	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Steve	Gowland	Sefton Council
Amy	Greenhalgh	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Gareth	Hill	Wirral Borough Council
Alex	Holt	Health Equalities Group
Caroline	Holtom	PHE
Caroline	Houldcroft	University of Chester
Ansa	Hussain	Healthier Futures
Robin	Ireland	Health Equalities Group
Kay	Johnson	Food Larder
Liz	Johnston	Bolton Council
Sakthi	Karunanithi	Lancashire County Council
Lisa	Kimpson	Rochdale Council
Tamasin	Knight	Blackpool Council
Anne-Marie	Morrison	Sefton CVS
Steve	Morton	PHE
Rachel	Myerscough	YMCA Fyle Coast
Nicola	O'Neil	Stockport NHS
Magdalena	Przybylka	Health Equalities Group
Arif	Rajpura	Blackpool Council
Anjana	Sahu	Freelance
Sumitra	Shrestha	UCLAN
Matty	Smith	Brighter Living Partnership

Lisa	Suddes	Lancashire County Council
Mimi	Tatlow-Golden	University College Dublin
Rachel	Tyrell-Smith	NSPCC
Louise	Walmsley	Addaction
Charlotte	Wetton	Cancer Research UK
Beth	Wolfenden	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council