

FOOD ADVERTISING UNIT NEWS RELEASE

The Food Advertising Unit Conference 2009

LONDON, 27 NOVEMBER 2009 - The Advertising Association's Food Advertising Unit (FAU) debated all sides of the obesity issue at its 12th Conference, held at "Altitude", Millbank Tower in London yesterday, 26 November 2009.

The key message emerging from the day was that industry, advertisers and government had embraced, and made much progress, with the obesity debate, but there was still more to do. A sense of collaboration between all parties (political and commercial) was another key theme. There was agreement that obesity levels in the UK are still high, although the consensus was that it is levelling off.*

Several speakers championed "more information" with the Earl Howe, Shadow Health Spokesman in the Lords, Conservative Party encapsulating the mood: "You don't encourage a sense of responsibility by nannying or lecturing, you need to provide examples and role models to follow. This applies to children as well as adults".

Cilla Snowball, CBE, Chairman and Chief Executive of AMV Group gave the "practitioner's view", claiming "positive momentum in the right direction" as the advertising industry was already delivering against both the spirit, as well as the letter, of change in its approach to communicating through advertising and promotions: messages about less salt, sugar and fat content, and providing clearer information on labels.

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The speakers, panellists and audience all agreed that an evidence-based approach was needed. New preliminary research presented by Paul Ormerod, Director of Volterra Consulting Ltd introduced "peer acceptance" - which struck a chord with the audience - as a powerful factor in understanding child obesity, which to date was missing from studies or undervalued.

It emerged that US Government is investigating the Change4Life template as a possible model for the States. And there were plaudits for the ground-breaking Change4Life and the Advertising Association's business4Life initiative.

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Editor's Notes

*National Heart Forum 2020 forecasts suggest that the predicted proportion of overweight boys aged 2-11 years falls from 22% to 17% and of obese boys falls from 20% to 13%. The predicted proportion of overweight girls aged 2-11 years falls sharply from 34% to 17% and of obese girls falls from 14% to 10%. For young people aged 12-19 years the forecasts are also more positive. The predicted proportion of overweight boys in 2020 decreases from 25% to 18% and of obese boys decreases from 19% to 6%. The predicted proportion of overweight girls decreases from 35% to 29% and of obese girls decreases from 30% to 9%.

Source: National Heart Forum – 3 November 2009

The Advertising Association's Food Advertising Unit (FAU) was set up in 1995 by the Advertising Association, as a centre for information, communication and research on the issue of food and soft drink advertising to children. FAU membership comprises multi-national food companies, agencies and the media, offering a holistic representation of the food and soft drink advertising industry in the UK.

The Advertising Association is the only body representing all sides of the advertising and promotional marketing industries, worth £18.6 billion in 2008. Its membership represents advertisers, agencies, media and support services in the UK. Further information about the Advertising Association is available at <http://www.adassoc.org.uk/>