

PRESS RELEASE: £35m cost of Mayor's ad ban would fund healthy living breakfast club in every London school for next 5 years

[25 February 2019]

- True cost of ban would be up to £35m, which would fund a daily healthy breakfast club in every London school for over five years
- YouGov polling shows that 62% of Londoners do not support a ban if it may have a knock-on effect on transport
- Same survey shows that Londoners do not believe that outdoor adverts are targeted at children
- And that Londoners do not view outdoor advertising as a significant contributor to childhood obesity

As the Mayor of London's ban on advertising of HFSS food on the Transport for London (TfL) network comes into force, industry data shows that the money which may be lost in revenue to the city's transport system could instead fund a variety of evidence-based solutions to its childhood obesity crisis.

The outdoor advertising industry estimates that up to £35m of advertising revenue could be at risk from the ban. As £152m of TfL's budget is funded through advertising, this is likely to have a major knock on effect to a public service body already under intense budgetary pressures.

When asked, in a November 2018 YouGov poll, if they would support a ban if there was a possibility that fares may rise as a result, 62% of Londoners said they would oppose it, with just 21% in support – a ratio of almost 3:1 against the ban. Similarly, 49% opposed the ban (against 31% who supported it) if it slowed down the rollout of live bus timetables on shelters. And 46% oppose it (33% support) if it leads to less improvement in the public realm around bus stops.

Illustrative of the scale of potential loss, in London £35m of advertising revenue would fund:

- A breakfast club, every morning, in every school in London for over 5 years
- A PE teacher for around one in three of all London schools
- Over 11,000,000 NHS [Healthy Start](#) vouchers

Despite being hailed by the Mayor of London as a major step towards solving the childhood obesity problem, evidence shows that only a very small proportion of TfL users are under-16.¹

The same YouGov survey also showed that Londoners do not believe that outdoor advertising has any significant effect on children's food choices. Asked what they believed

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to be the key contributors to childhood obesity, 60% of Londoners blamed lack of parental discipline, 57% blamed widespread availability of high calorie foods and 34% blamed a reduction of physical education in schools.

These results support large body of evidence advocates a whole systems approach, such as that successfully implemented in Amsterdam without an advertising ban.

Tim Lumb, Director, Outsmart, said:

“We regret that the Mayor of London has bluntly applied measures which may remove a significant amount of revenue for TfL. It seems that this decision has been rooted in political gain, not fact, and will likely take money away from the London transport system at a time when it can ill-afford it. As an industry we remain committed to developing proactive solutions which mirror the body of evidence on childhood obesity, supporting a whole systems approach and demonstrating that the outdoor advertising industry can be very much part of the solution, not the problem.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

¹ In 2018, the number of children travelling to and from school on the Underground in London during that year was estimated at 1-3% of total footfall on the network. Polling by YouGov showed that Londoners recognise, by a significant margin, that outdoor advertising is aimed primarily at adults (47%) rather than children (5%).

² Evidence cited by the Mayor of London about the city’s successful programme (which recorded a 12% drop in the total number of overweight children between 2012-2015), was actually taken from a period where there was no advertising ban in place but a multi-faceted healthy weight programme, focused on nutritional and physical education and active lifestyle initiatives.

About Outsmart

Outsmart is the national body representing the out-of-home (OOH) advertising media owners in the UK, employing around 4500 people. Our members work in partnership with TfL, local authorities and landlords across the UK to display advertisements on, and invest, their estates.