

FSA Explores Unhealthy Food Promotion Restrictions in Northern Ireland

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has published research "[Mapping the food retail and out of home sector in Northern Ireland](#)" which explores the number of businesses that may be impacted if legislation to restrict the promotion of food high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS), which is currently in place in England, was applied in Northern Ireland.

Key findings of the research include:

- Almost two thirds (62.5%) of grocery retail premises would be in scope of volume restrictions.
- Almost half (45.7%) of grocery retail premises would be in scope of location restrictions.
- Over one third (37.3%) of non-grocery retail premises would be in scope of volume restrictions.
- Over one fifth (21.8%) of non-grocery retail premises would be in scope of location restrictions.
- One tenth (10.9%) of out of home (OOH) businesses would be in scope of restrictions on free refills of sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Only a small proportion of premises that would be in scope of restrictions (<10%) were located within 400m of a school (approximately a 5-minute walk).

[Interactive maps](#) have been developed to visualise the findings.

"Restrictions on the promotion of food high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) have already been introduced in England and are scheduled to come into force in Wales in March 2026, and Scotland in October 2026.

Within the Northern Ireland context, we were keen to get a clearer understanding of the number of businesses that would be captured if similar legislation was introduced, so we initiated a mapping process."

Freya Sharpe, Senior Dietary Health Policy Adviser, FSA

Freya continues:

"The findings above indicate that the policy could have wide-reaching implications for the retail sector in Northern Ireland, particularly in how HFSS products are promoted and displayed. The restrictions would also apply to businesses which operate under a franchise or symbol group arrangement.

This research contributes to the delivery of actions under the new '[Healthy Futures Obesity Strategic Framework](#)' for Northern Ireland, which was published by the Minister of Health in November 2025, where the FSA has committed to supporting Northern Ireland food businesses to make the food environment healthier.”

Industry engagement has a critical role to play in delivering against obesity strategy objectives:

“Any proposed policy around the restriction of HFSS food promotions needs to take onboard the views and feedback from stakeholders. The FSA has held a series of meetings with representatives from the retail sector to discuss the research findings and share learning that exists from other regions. This dialogue has proved to be very useful and will continue as we move forward into the next phase of this work.”

Katie McFarland, Nutrition Policy Adviser, FSA