

CHiLD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

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Child Poverty Action Group calls on government to reinstate healthy food in schools

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has called on the government to reconsider its decision to allow schools to sell junk food.

"The government must think carefully about the signal it is sending young people about eating decent, nutritious food," says CPAG spokesperson, Dr Nikki Turner. "Obesity is disproportionately a burden of low-income families and children, and the school environment is an important part of the influence on children."

CPAG agrees that parental responsibility is important, however without community and environmental support parents alone cannot bring about reductions in childhood obesity.

"Families need community support to combat the obesity epidemic and the school environment is one important part of that. When fattening foods are so cheap, widely available and attractive to children we need a greater input than that from parents alone. If a child has a choice of cheap fattening foods at school it is very difficult to bring about change. There is plenty of evidence showing that changing the school environment does assist children and families to make healthier food choices."

Dr Turner urged the government to put children's interests ahead of those of junk food vendors: "We know children study better when they have eaten decent food, and are less disruptive in class. This is a real contribution to the quality learning environment."

The group notes research linking the availability of quality food at school with reduced rates of obesity in teenage girls and improved learning for students.