

Wes Streeting, MP
Secretary of State
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

Lisa Nandy, MP
Secretary of State
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

Thursday 15th May 2025

Dear Secretaries of State,

Re: Implementation of the High in Fat, Salt and Sugar (HFSS) legislation

We are writing to you on behalf of the creative industries. Having not been engaged with the implementation of the Government's restrictions to the advertising of HFSS, we are regrettably late to the discussion surrounding the advertising changes that will come into effect on the 1st October 2025.

Delegates from organisations including those representing broadcasting, advertising and performers recently met to discuss the implications of these advertising restrictions on actors and the broadcasting industry as a whole. At this meeting it became apparent that these restrictions will have a profound and potentially irreversible impact on our sector at a time when the Government is looking to the creative industries to be key to their Industrial Strategy and therefore a significant part of their economic growth plans.

The ecosystem of the performing arts intersects with the advertising world at the point of casting and advertisement production, and it is clear that this crucial overlap has been neglected by those looking at the implementation of the legislation. Only now, a short while before the legislation comes into effect, are we as an industry learning, largely through our own self-discovery, what the implications of these changes will mean for the arts. The findings are alarming and the fact they were self-discovered is extremely disappointing. We would like to ensure that, going forward, our sector is included in discussions that have an impact on the cultural ecology, no matter how insignificant it may appear. This will ensure we can engage in a timely manner on issues and avoid issues such as this being lost until it is too late to protect from unseen circumstances. We would welcome a conversation as to how we can make this happen going forward.

At present, advertisers are looking to book Christmas slots with broadcasters. Booking a national commercial campaign for any actor will significantly improve their ability to financially weather the fluctuations in engagements and even allow them to develop their own interests and skills through less lucrative engagements. This is of great importance to the ecology of the sector, ensuring that the UK's acting talent remains the gold standard for the world and ensures foreign investment in our sector for major productions. In addition, commissions charged for advertising engagements are vital for the survival of small to mid-sized talent agencies, some of

whom are struggling to sustain their work having barely survived the impact of Covid on the sector. It must be recognised that the commercials industry also supports thousands of freelance casting professionals, independent studio businesses, camera operators, audio engineers, photographers, and many more who operate at the end of the supply chain of advertising.

It is estimated that 48% of all commercials shown in 2022 by our main commercial free to air broadcasters would now be subjected to a ban. If that revenue is lost, that has a direct impact on the budgets of drama commissioners. This frustratingly comes at a time when the UK is just reporting signs of recovery, with a 31% increase in drama commissions in 2024. Those drama productions are vital for the financial survival of actors, and also for broadcasters because of their ability to sell them abroad which then generates further revenue.

Finally, this situation has been exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding the rules for this change to advertising with the lack of OFCOM Guidance. Without an understanding of how the rules will practically apply, our industry is in limbo and unable to plan.

We are therefore requesting a meeting about these issues as soon as possible to discuss what can be done to mitigate the impact on our industry and preserve the vital contribution our sector makes to the UK economy. With the delay to the Guidance being issued we would argue that there is a case to be made for a delay in implementation while freelancers and small to medium enterprises who are sustained at the tail-end of the advertising supply chain can prepare for these changes and potential irreversible damage to their careers and livelihoods. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

CC: Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds, Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade
Dame Melanie Dawes, Chief Executive, OFCOM

Signatories:

Association of Voice Agents
Agents of Young Performers Association
Casting Directors Association
Casting Directors' Guild
Co-operative Personal Managers Association
Personal Managers' Association
Spotlight



Personal
Managers'
Association

