



'Sponsorship normalising unhealthy food'

Nick O'Donoghue

Sponsorship of school sporting events by producers of foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt is normalising unhealthy eating, according to the **Irish Heart Foundation**.

The Foundation's Health Promotion Manager Ms Maureen Mulvihill told *IMN* sponsorship of school events by companies such as Nestlé, Cadbury's, and McDonald's was a concern.

"It's a big area of concern. As part of our initial research into this area we found a very extensive level of sponsorship by these companies, the Nestlé's, the Cadbury's, the McDonald's. I think the educational environment should be just that, free from pressures of advertising, persuasion and manipulation.

"What it's doing is normalising the association with fastfood and for the child it's sending out a message that they're good, they're positive, they're associated with health, so

that enjoying a McDonald's is not bad for you, and their ads play into that," she said.

Ms Mulvihill called for a ban on TV advertising for foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, between 6am and 9pm to fight the growing problem of obesity in Ireland.

Speaking to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, she said one-in-five children between the ages of 13 and 17 are obese in Ireland compared with an EU average of one-in-six.

A statement by the Committee Chair Deputy MJ Nolan supported the call for a ban on TV advertising saying, "there is clear evidence that promotion of unhealthy foods to young people has a strong influence on their purchasing and consumption habits, therefore, there must be some form of supervision and restriction on the nature of this advertising.

"There was a strong feeling among the Committee that the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland needs to prepare robust guidelines in this area," he added.