

Mr Stewart Gandy
Product Placement Consultation
5th Floor
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Mr Gandy,

TV Product Placement

I am extremely concerned that once again the interests of business are being allowed to take precedence over those of the health and well being of the wider population, and particularly children. In the US, where product placement is permitted, Coca-Cola is the brand paying for the most product placement. Yet research from the US has suggested that sugary drinks such as Coca-Cola may be the single largest driver of the obesity epidemic. Product placement on UK-produced television programmes could lead to a similar situation in the UK, contributing to the already worrying increase in childhood obesity rates.

Product placement will expose children to increased marketing of unhealthy foods. This is because research by consumer group Which? in 2008 found that 16 of the 20 programmes on the commercial channels most popular with children were not classified as "children's programming" .

Product placement breaches a principle, enshrined in advertising rules, that advertising should be clearly recognised as such, and distinguishable from editorial content. It is important that people know when they are being advertised to, and that includes children.

Approval of such issues is very limited. A recent survey of 1,349 UK adults by Redshift Research found that 91% did not think it is right to influence children with product placement.

As the chair of a large community group in North London I am all too aware of the impact of government choices which favour business over community. We have had to put enormous and unpaid resources into fighting both a large supermarket (and associated development) and a gambling arcade. Both have been increasingly facilitated by government legislation which has been framed to please special interest lobbies, not the wider public. This is a point I and my fellow members will be thinking about when voting in the next general election. We will be looking for a government which can stand up to this kind of special pleading and see the bigger picture to support wider well-being.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Calvert