**Text 126 WALES TO CLAMP DOWN ON JUNK FOOD MEAL DEALS TO TACKLE OBESITY**

Clampdowns on unhealthy meal deals and supermarket temporary price reductions for foods high in fat, sugar or salt are to be introduced in Wales to help tackle the obesity crisis. With almost two-thirds of adults in Wales overweight or obese, the Labour-led government announced it would go further than England in framing laws designed to tackle the promotion of ultra-processed foods.

The government said it intended to match the UK government’s plans to curb volume promotions such as buy one get one free in England. It also revealed proposals to tackle meal deals and temporary price reductions, arguing it needed to do more because of the scale of the crisis.

The Welsh deputy minister for mental health and wellbeing, Lynne Neagle, said: “Rising levels of obesity are creating the serious burden of preventable ill health in Wales. The situation is urgent and we have to act now”.

“We’re not banning meal deals but we want to shift the focus of meal deals towards healthier, more nutritionally balanced food. Lots of them come with large bags of crisps and the snacks are often high in fat and sugar. We want to make sure we can still have meal deals available at an affordable price but which are not so high in calories, fat and sugar.”

Research from Public Health Wales found that three-quarters of lunchtime meal deals exceed the recommended level of calories and salt for lunch. The least healthy lunchtime options contain two-thirds of daily calorie intake, more than 120% of daily fat intake, 150% of sugar and 110% of salt. The majority of dinnertime meal combinations exceed average energy requirements.

The researchers concluded that if someone bought an average meal deal for lunch five days a week, they would gain more than 3 kgs in a year. If they bought a high-calorie meal deal for lunch five days a week, they could gain 20 kgs in a year.

Neagle said the government would not ban temporary price reductions either but added: “Our aim is to rebalance our food environments so that the healthy choice becomes the easy choice.”

Last week, the UK government put off by two years its planned ban on buy one get one free junk food deals, citing the cost of living crisis. The Welsh government is planning to bring in its restrictions by 2025 and said it would press ahead even if the UK government did not.

She denied this was an example of the nanny state. “Tackling obesity is not just about personal responsibility. It’s about the food environment in which we live, which is full of processed, unhealthy food.” The Welsh government said over 60% of people in Wales aged 16 and over were overweight or obese.

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