



NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS
GROWING UP IN A
MATERIAL WORLD
CHARTER ON
COMMERCIALISATION





**General
Secretary
Steve
Sinnott**

Preface

“I understand that to sell their products you have to be persuasive, but manipulative and basically mind controlling now that’s just wrong.”

These are the words of just one of the children and young people who contributed to a fascinating insight into the impact of advertising and commercialisation on childhood.

Undertaken by the National Union of Teachers, the consultation shows the extent to which young people recognise that what is portrayed in the media is often unrealistic and superficial. It supports strongly, and in context, the Union’s charter, “Growing up in a Material World”.

This charter is an important contribution to the current debate on commercialisation and childhood from the perspective of teachers and schools. It sets out key measures to protect children from the damaging effects of marketing and advertising.

Education is central to the personal development and health of young people in equipping them with the essential skills and motivation to lead fulfilling lives in today’s rapidly changing global society.

Schools and teachers play a vital role in encouraging children to choose healthy lifestyles. They provide opportunities to learn the importance of diet, healthy eating, food preparation and regular exercise. They encourage them to think critically and make informed decisions.

Of increasing concern to teachers is the increasing commercialisation of childhood and the lifestyle pressures exerted on children by the advertising and marketing industries.

Using ever more sophisticated methods, these industries encourage children to buy particular brands of clothing and food and conform to specific images. Parents, too, experience this, as children’s ‘pester-power’ is exploited by the advertising industry. Those on a low income can feel particularly affected.

The pressure to consume and conform can lead to excessive levels of materialism and competition among children leading to bullying. There are dangerous consequences for the physical and mental health of young people.

The rise in childhood obesity and illnesses such as the early onset of type 2 diabetes, for example, highlight the dangers of advertising unhealthy food to children.

The NUT believes that children should be protected from over-exposure to advertising. Teachers and parents now look to the advertising and marketing industries to become more socially responsible over their targeting of children and young people and for the Government to step in should they not live up to their responsibilities.

GROWING UP IN A MATERIAL WORLD

CHARTER ON COMMERCIALISATION

THE CONTEXT

1. There has been extensive debate concerning the conditions that create a good childhood and the influence of the pressures of modern life on young people. The following are examples of contributions to this debate.
 - The Children's Society's ongoing enquiry into childhood.
 - The NUT's journal, *Education Review*, Spring 2007 Edition, "New Directions Home? The challenges and opportunities of modern childhood".
 - Unicef's report on the wellbeing of children and adolescents, published in February 2007, which placed the UK at the bottom of the league of 21 economically advanced countries.
 - The Community Soundings interim report of the Primary Review, which showed that children were under pressure from the commercially-driven values of society.
2. Childhood is becoming increasingly commercialised through the impact of the advertising and marketing industry on young people's lives. The NUT believes that children should be protected from advertising aimed at enticing them or their parents to buy products of particular brands.
3. Children cannot be shielded totally from twenty first century society where advertising and branding are all pervasive. An important aspect of education, however, is to prepare pupils for adult life, developing their abilities to think critically and draw their own conclusions. The NUT is concerned that the advertising and marketing industry's infiltration of children's lives is undermining the ability of schools to carry out this important role.
4. Companies are unashamedly targeting their campaigns to exploit children's "pester power" on every level, from day to day purchases of food and drink, through treats, such as meals out, to clothes and toys, which can include expensive electronic equipment.
5. There are several levels of danger arising from advertising aimed at children. The most obvious is connected with food and drink which pushes them towards an unhealthy lifestyle. This is leading to a generation of children many of whom are overweight and under-active. They may be seriously lacking in the fats, vitamins and minerals that are essential for proper physical development and wellbeing. The advertising industry is constantly developing more and more sophisticated ways of influencing children: through the use of cartoon characters and celebrities, not just via the media but by the internet and mobile phones.

6. Parents are also victims of child commercialisation; advertising to buy goods of particular brands imposes huge financial and emotional pressures. This is particularly apparent at times of celebration such as Christmas when parents are under pressure to spend large sums of money on the latest toys and consumer goods. Excessive levels of advertising can lead to an excessive level of materialism and competition among children, including the encouragement to want inappropriate clothes and make-up, and to tease and even bully other children who do not have the latest brands or do not want to conform.
7. One of the most worrying aspects of commercialisation is the creation and reinforcement of a culture of “cool” amongst children and young people. Sometimes this can mean adopting a range of attributes and behaviours that are negative towards schools and teachers. All of these issues have implications for schools and for teachers.

Further Information

8. Further information and guidance on the issues raised in the charter can be found in the “Further information” section. References to websites made in the text of this document can be found in full.

THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

9. The NUT believed that in developing a charter on commercialisation, it was crucial to take into account the views of young people. During May and June 2007, therefore, the NUT consulted young people on issues relating to commercialisation.
10. The consultation covered a broad range of issues with questions on areas such as advertising, marketing, self image, healthy eating and the availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugar. Two hundred and sixty eight responses were received, providing an authentic snap-shot of the views of young people “growing up in a material world”.
11. The NUT’s Charter incorporates the views of young people. An analysis of the responses to the consultation is attached as an appendix.

THE ISSUES

Healthy Lifestyles

12. Schools have an important role to play in encouraging children to make healthy life choices and the NUT has provided detailed guidance on the steps they can take to improve children's health and wellbeing. "Healthy Schools – A resource for teachers" is designed to help schools promote the benefits of following a healthy lifestyle to pupils. It describes how the adoption of whole school policies can enable schools to review and monitor how they promote food and nutrition education and physical education. The guidance can be downloaded from the Commercialisation section of the NUT's website.
13. The NUT published its Charter, "Every Child at School a Healthy Child" in October 2006. While welcoming the Government's commitment to improving child health, the Charter set out the key targets that the NUT believed need to be achieved in order to encourage children to make healthy life choices. It included as a target, the provision for every child, a healthy mid-day meal, freshly cooked on the school premises, with fresh locally produced ingredients. The NUT is supporting the School Food Trust's campaign to have a million more children eating school lunches by the end of 2010.
14. In responding to the NUT consultation, young people expressed concern about the food choices available. Two thirds said that food such as crisps, sweets and burgers should not be sold in schools. One girl, aged 12, commented: "there should be healthier alternatives in schools ... because I hate fast food."
15. Whilst schools and teachers are working extremely hard to encourage children to follow a healthy lifestyle, their work is undermined by businesses keen to market fast food and convenience foods to children.
16. This concern was echoed in the survey, with almost 74 per cent of young people stating that fast food businesses should not be allowed to set up websites that tried to encourage children to eat unhealthy food. Over 53 per cent thought that adverts for foods like crisps, burgers and sweets should not be shown on television.
17. Comments included:

"I think TV adverts such as those advertising junk food should be banned. Money should be pumped into schools to offer better education to both children and parents."

"I don't think that companies should show sugary products on telly because that encourages children to eat unhealthily. Some children sit inside watching telly too much so they don't get exercise."

"[Unhealthy food] gets advertised excessively and although they are nice and good in moderation, some people get obsessed, and essentially live on them."

18. Other young people were keen to emphasise that they were able to make their own decisions regarding healthy food.

"I think some things are unacceptable, but the way people treat kids is horrendous. They think because people are under a certain age, that makes them incapable to make their own decisions about food, television and exercise."

Commercial Pressures

19. The NUT recognises that many schools and teachers have established constructive links with companies, local and national, and have benefited from their involvement, for example, through volunteer reading schemes, work experience placements and the provision of teaching materials. Many businesses have strong records of providing valuable teaching resources and aids.
20. The NUT is alarmed, however, at the targeting of schools by those businesses which seek simply to market their products and exploit schools, pupils and parents rather than to build an education partnership.
21. Manufacturers of crisps, soft drinks and sweets particularly initiate marketing aimed at schools. In 2004 children as young as seven were targeted in a multimillion pound campaign by Cadbury to encourage them to buy 160m chocolate bars, containing nearly 2m kg of fat, in exchange for school sports equipment.
22. The NUT has issued guidance on the use of commercial materials in schools, including sponsored resources, such as teaching packs and materials; and collector schemes, such as *Cadbury Get Active* and Walkers "*Free*" *Books for Schools* promotion.
23. The targeting of schools in this way by companies actively undermines teachers' efforts to educate children about the dangers of exploitation. The use of commercial materials can send confusing messages to pupils and parents about healthy eating. In its report, "*Tackling Obesity in England*", the Audit Commission stated that schemes such as Walkers Books for Schools "may encourage children and their families to buy more snack foods with high fat, salt and sugar content".
24. The importance of concerted action on the issue of child obesity has been highlighted by the Government's Health Profile for England published in October 2007. This showed that the proportion of children under 11 classed as clinically obese had risen by 50 per cent in a decade. Almost 17 per cent, 900,000 children, fell into this category.

Marketing Through Technology

25. Outside school, children have access to an increasing range of technology such as television, the internet, online forums, mobile phones and computer games. Whilst technology is an integral part of children's lives and enriches and expands children's social and educational experiences, it can also be used by companies to communicate messages contrary to the positive message being promoted in schools.
26. The NUT's consultation found that some had reported receiving adverts to their mobile phones with information from a variety of sources advertising fast food outlets, dating services, Viagra, phone rings and soft drinks. As one young person stated:

"I have received some information about Viagra but this is common and is done by 'bots' so I guess it doesn't count."
27. Young people also expressed concerns about pop-up advertising on the internet.

"Lots of pressure is used when someone is advertising something and on the computer, if you go a website an advert always comes up."
28. The Food Commission has highlighted the damaging practice of viral marketing. Viral marketing seeks to spread commercial messages in the same way that a virus spreads from one individual to another. Viral commercials take the form of funny video clips, interactive games, images or jokes which children will find entertaining enough to pass to their friends. When Kellogg's launched their Real Fruit Winders in the UK they used viral marketing to reach nearly 60 per cent of UK children, who responded with comments such as "it's cool!" and "It is more secret than text messaging – my mum wouldn't know what was going on."
29. Research has confirmed that there is a link between television advertising and children's food choices. Many of the advertisements broadcast during children's viewing times are for unhealthy food and drink. According to the television regulator Ofcom, products high in sugar, salt and fat account for 82-92 per cent of all food and drink advertising before 9 p.m. or in children's airtime.
30. Whilst Ofcom has recommended a ban on the advertising of high fat, salt and sugar products during "children's television" the NUT believes that this action will not be sufficient to protect children from the influence of advertising. The NUT along with the National Heart Forum and Sustain, together with hundreds of health, consumer and citizens' interest organisations, have consistently argued that if children's diet and health are to be improved, restrictions are needed to cover the advertising of foods high

in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) during the times when children are most likely to be watching, not just during “children’s television”. Research by Which? has shown that more younger children watch television during evening schedules, such as Coronation Street and Emmerdale, than during specific children’s programmes. The NUT believes that a pre-9.00 p.m. restriction on all HFSS advertising is a necessary and proportionate measure to protect children from exposure to the advertising of unhealthy foods.

Vulnerable Children

31. The advertising and marketing industry can have a damaging impact not only on young people’s physical health, but on their mental health and wellbeing. It can influence how they see themselves and how they interact with others such as friends and family.
32. The NHS reports rising incidence of mental illness among the young, with anxiety and depression linked to the pressure to buy, to own, and to consume. The data claims that today’s children are unhappier than any generation of the post-war era; a claim borne out by Unicef’s recent survey of children’s well-being.
33. Research by advertising agencies has confirmed that children’s personal preferences can be targeted and changed by TV advertising. Family dynamics are thus influenced by advertisements that create demands and provide children with arguments why they should want a particular product; this can make life very difficult for parents to resist such pressures.
34. Teachers know that these commercial pressures are apparent in schools and can be a focus for the bullying and exclusion of pupils who do not have the latest products by their peers. The message given to children is that their status and happiness is linked to what they buy and what they wear.
35. This was confirmed by the NUT’s consultation. One boy, aged eight, commented:

“Some families can’t afford these items and this causes problems. Clothes you end up buying [are] imitation and people call you names for it.”
36. Another nine year old girl said:

“TV and the internet push you to buy the purchases they promote. People call me names because I don’t look how they want me to and I feel this is because of some adverts.”
37. The National Consumer Council has reported that children from poor backgrounds are the most vulnerable. Children in socio-economic groups C2, D and E were found to be most aware of branding. The NCC found that all the children surveyed liked clothes with recognisable labels, but that this

desire was strongest among those children whose families could least afford them. These issues can be addressed by schools when drawing up school uniform policies.

38. In addition to these commercial pressures, the survey showed that young people were aware of the dangers of internet safety and chat room use: "It is not good to go on the internet like msn because you might be talking to a stranger and something could happen." The NUT welcomes the recent review commissioned by the Government to explore the benefits and risks for young people posed by the use of the internet.

Body Image

39. Society's obsession with body image and celebrity culture has meant that children are bombarded with unrealistic and unachievable images of what they should look like. This has led to an increase in illnesses such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorders. Figures published by the charity YoungMinds show that teenage girls aged between 13 and 19 account for 50 per cent of all anorexia and bulimia cases.
40. The NUT's consultation of young people confirmed these points:
 - "I think that today's...media applies a lot of pressure on young people. In the last year or so I started worrying a lot more about my weight and body image. This could be caused by the amount of magazines that I read in a week."
 - "I think they should show people how they really look and not use air brushed super skinny models."
41. The obsession with body image has also led to the increased use of sun beds. Prolonged exposure to sun beds damages skin cells leading, in some cases, to cancer. One girl, aged 14, pointed out that "... for a 50 plus sunblock, they will use a really tanned family on screen, but it will be the ... whitest people that use it."
42. Boys and young men are also affected by body image pressures. Pressure from peers and the media for boys to fit physical ideals can lead to body image dissatisfaction, eating disorders and steroid use. One example of this came from a boy, aged 14, who commented, "I think I look fat. I am. I've wanted to lose weight for a year and have made no progress." When asked whether he worried about his looks, another 14 year old boy commented: "I wouldn't mind better muscles."
43. Anabolic steroids were once only to be found around body builders – now they are seen by teenage boys and young men as an instant fix for a designer body. The NHS in Merseyside has said that boys as young as 14 are using steroids to grow faster and bigger. Steroids are the most commonly used drug among boys after cannabis and amphetamines.

44. Companies routinely hire child and consumer psychologists to conduct research to help them target children effectively. Children's vulnerabilities are played on as advertisers sell images of perfection and increase the pressure to have the latest "in vogue" fashion and gadgets. According to a study in the March 2005 British Journal of Developmental Psychology, nearly three-quarters of seven-year-old girls want to be slimmer and the pressure to "look good" is a constant.
45. The importance of body image and looking good is also promoted through children's toys. Bratz dolls are very popular amongst young girls and account for some 40 per cent of the doll market. They are marketed as having "a passion for fashion." The dolls help reinforce the notion that image and fashion are everything. The Bratz product range for children includes hair products, clothes and make-up.
46. In the NUT's consultation, many young people commented on the pressure they felt to "look good". One young person said that they "would like whiter teeth as people on the adverts always have gleaming white teeth." Another commented, "People get too obsessed with fashion because if they are not wearing something fashionable then people tease you but all the fashionable clothes are expensive."
47. A disturbing aspect of children's awareness of their body image is the trend for pre-teenage girls in particular to wear inappropriate and sexually provocative clothes and make-up. This can send out dangerous messages and illustrates the pressure on children to be "grown up", which it can be argued could lead to pressure to participate in activities such as smoking and drinking alcohol.
48. Many companies have identified the profits to be made by sexualising young women. Tesco hit the headlines for marketing a pole-dancing kit from the toys and games section of its website. The pole dance kit was the latest item to fuel allegations that major retailers increasingly sell products which "sexualise" young children such as T-shirts with suggestive messages. The NUT hopes that the adverse reactions by the public to these products have made companies much more aware of their responsibilities towards young people.
49. A recent NUT survey on sexist language and sexual bullying entitled: "A Serious Business: An NUT survey of teachers' experience of sexism and harassment in schools and colleges" revealed that discussing the sexual behaviour of teenage girls is one way in which male and female teenagers bully each other.

Gender Stereotyping

50. Advertising can build on and encourage gender stereotypes about how boys and girls should behave, the clothes they should wear and the choices they make. This can be seen in the advertising of toys, which is at its most prominent in the pre-Christmas period when TV is dominated by advertisements almost exclusively aimed at either boys or girls.
51. This gender stereotyping is also apparent in food advertising. A Burger King television advertisement for burgers in November 2006 asked viewers "Are you man enough?" to tackle their new burger. As Sustain has pointed out in its letter to the Advertising Standards Authority the advert seems to question the masculinity of boys who do not consume food excessively high in fat, and suggests that excessive consumption is "manly".
52. Barnardo's report, "Burger Boy and Sporty Girl", published in 2004, revealed that children had very fixed attitudes to foods and strong stereotypes of the type of children who ate them. Boys in particular were associated with a love of burgers. They could be stigmatised and even bullied for eating "uncool" food. One child was known as "chicken boy" because he ate poultry every day.
53. When children were shown a photograph of a healthy meal they found it hard, if not impossible, to imagine anyone their age choosing to eat the contents for lunch. When prompted, all but one group said that it would definitely be a girl choosing to eat the healthy lunch. They thought that the girl was likely to be both "posh" and "a teacher's pet". These findings show how difficult it is for the Government and schools to promote healthy eating.
54. The NUT believes that advertisers need to be more socially responsible and aware of the potential impact of the messages and values behind their advertisements. This should apply to all advertising not only those broadcast when children are most likely to be watching. Companies such as Nike, Adidas and Reebok use the endorsement of young aspirational media personalities to promote their clothing. One Reebok campaign using the hip hop music star, 50 Cent, caused controversy for appearing to endorse gun culture. The advert was subsequently banned after a number of complaints from viewers.

Ethical and Global Issues

55. The advertising industry encourages children to have an arms-length relationship with the goods they purchase and consume. Many children, and indeed adults, are unaware of the conditions experienced by workers producing trainers and other clothing products in the developing world, for instance.

56. Similarly advertisers often ignore food production methods and issues such as compassionate farming and animal welfare. A survey by the Royal Highland Education Trust of eight and nine year olds at four inner city schools in Scotland revealed a shocking ignorance of farming and food production. More than half of the children surveyed believed that oranges were grown in Scotland while 30 per cent did not know that eggs came from chickens.
57. Issues such as fair trade, the global economy and sustainable development are areas where schools have an important role to play in educating children to look beyond the advertisements and the supermarket shelves.
58. The NUT welcomes the Government's "Food and farming – reconnecting a new generation" initiative designed to reconnect school children with farming and the food production cycle.

The Other Side of the Picture

59. While this charter focuses on the commercial pressures on children and a growth of materialism, this could be seen as a one sided picture. There is an enormous amount of valuable activity carried out by pupils and their teachers on fundraising for charities both at home and abroad. There are very many examples of schools helping vulnerable people in their local communities through volunteering activities.
60. Volunteering by students is also very common within charities and non-governmental organisations and covers areas such as poverty, ill-health and exploitation in developing countries and awareness of the challenges of global environmental issues, such as climate change.
61. Education in schools is about encouraging young people to think independently and about giving them the skills, knowledge and understanding to make choices in their future lives. Excessive commercial pressure distracts and skews learning, although understanding commercial life and activity in the wider world is vital. The NUT's charter seeks to restore the central role of education in instilling confidence, independence and a critical relationship with that wider world.
62. The NUT's consultation shows that young people are well aware of the need to look at advertisements with a critical eye. As one ten year old boy said: "I feel my age (group) are influenced but can discuss the meaning and decide more for ourselves what we choose."
63. A girl, aged 13, suggested exactly this when she stated that, "I understand that to sell their products you have to be persuasive, but manipulative and basically mind controlling ... now that's just wrong."

Further Information

64. The NUT's website includes a section on commercialisation and child health. Schools may find it useful to consult the NUT's guidance on using commercial materials in schools. The guidance stresses the importance of ensuring that teachers are not pressurised into using commercial materials that undermine their role in encouraging children to follow a healthy lifestyle. The guidance can be found on the Commercialisation section of the NUT's website http://www.teachers.org.uk./resources/pdf/combating_comm.pdf.
65. The NUT's *Education Review* "New Directions Home? The Challenges and Opportunities of Modern Childhood" (Volume 20, number 1, Spring 2007) explored issues around modern childhood and emphasised the importance of giving young people a voice.
66. The Children's charity Barnardo's has examined the issue of food related gender and class stereotypes. Barnardo's report, "Burger Boy and Sporty Girl", published in 2004, revealed that children had very fixed attitudes to foods and strong stereotypes of the type of children who ate them. http://www.barnardos.org.uk/burger_boy_report_1.pdf
67. Baby Milk Action and Reading International Solidarity Centre have produced valuable curriculum guidance on public relations. "Seeing Through the Spin" helps pupils deconstruct public relations messages and question whether commercial sponsorship of education is justified. The Baby Milk Action website address is: www.babymilkaction.org.
68. The British Heart Foundation has designed two websites for young people designed to help them learn about staying fit and eating the right foods. http://www.bhf.org.uk/youngpeople/index_home.asp?SecID=59
69. The Children's Society is conducting a two-year independent investigation of modern childhood, "The Good Childhood Inquiry" and is aiming to approach well-being from the perspective of children. <http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what+we+do/The+good+childhood+inquiry/>
70. Compass is a pressure group. It published a report on the commercialisation of childhood in December 2006. <http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/compass/documents/thecommercialisationofchildhood.pdf>
71. Guidelines on commercial activities in schools have been produced by the Consumers' Association, the Department for Education and Skills and the Incorporated Society for British Advertisers (ISBA). <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=854>
72. "The Fair Trade Foundation" has produced both primary and secondary school education packs. These aim to introduce and develop the concept of fair trade as an alternative to conventional trade. Its website address is: www.fairtrade.org.uk.

73. The Food Commission is an independent body which acts as a watchdog on food issues. It can be found at www.foodcomm.org.uk.
74. The National Consumer Council is an independent body which aims to represent consumers in matters of health, safety and legal concerns. Its website includes a section on consumer education. It can be found at www.ncc.org.uk.
75. Oxfam's "Cool Planet for teachers" website is designed to help teachers bring global issues into the classroom. It has a range of curriculum materials which cover issues such as food, trade and globalisation. The website address is: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/>.
76. Sue Palmer's book "Toxic Childhood" (Orion Publishers, 2006) discusses how technological and cultural changes have impacted upon modern childhood. <http://www.suepalmer.co.uk/toxic.php>
77. The Primary Review Interim Report 1, Community Soundings, provides the responses of 87 witness sessions held in 2007. The sessions, which took place between January and March 2007, consulted those involved in the primary school environment, including teachers, support staff, senior management and heads, along with parents, governors, and people from the wider community. http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Downloads/Int_Reps/1.Com_Sdg/Primary_Review_Community_Soundings_briefing_final.pdf
78. Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, has campaigned actively against commercialisation. Its Children's Food Campaign aims to improve young people's health and well-being through better food – and food teaching – in schools and by protecting children from junk food marketing. Sustain's website address is: www.sustainweb.org
79. The Unicef report, "Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries" provided a league table of child well-being in industrialised countries. The United Kingdom was bottom of the league. The report can be found at http://www.unicef.org.uk/press/news_detail_full_story.asp?news_id=890
80. The consumer organisation Which? have published a report "Food Fables – Exploding industry myths on responsible food marketing to kids" that looks at the disparity between the policies food companies have on the promotion of food to children and their actions https://www.which.co.uk/reports_and_campaigns/food_and_drink/campaigns/kids_food/Food%20Fables%20report/Food_fables_campaign_560_100488.jsp
81. YoungMinds is a national charity committed to improving the mental health of all babies, children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk/.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON COMMERCIALISATION

1. "Growing Up in a Material World", the National Union of Teachers' consultative charter on commercialisation, was launched at its Annual Conference at Easter 2007. The charter was published in response to the growing and damaging impact of advertising and marketing on children and young people. It was welcomed by a range of other organisations and individuals who shared these concerns. The charter was, however, a work to be completed. The NUT believed it was vital to hear the voices of those most affected by the issues raised in the charter: children and young people themselves.
2. During May and June 2007, the NUT conducted a survey of young people's views on issues relating to commercialisation. The survey covered a broad range of issues with questions on areas such as advertising, marketing, self image, healthy eating and the availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugar. The survey also included questions on young people's use of time, for instance, how much time young people spent undertaking exercise, watching TV and playing on the computer. These questions were included to establish not only how young people spent their time but also to give an insight into how they experienced advertising and marketing, for example, through the internet and through watching TV.
3. The survey was aimed at young people aged 8-15 and was first trialled by children of NUT staff members in that age range. The final survey was made accessible to young people through the websites of Schools Council UK and the English Secondary Students' Association. The Schools Council is an independent charity which promotes and facilitates effective structures for pupil participation in every school. The English Secondary Students' Association is a national organisation run by and for students aged 11 – 19. The survey was also placed on the NUT's website so that teachers could distribute it to young people.
4. The survey received 268 responses: 133 from boys; 135 from girls. The attitudes and opinions of young people come through strongly in their comments. They provide an authentic snap-shot of the views of young people "growing up in a material world".

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5. There was a high level of support from those responding on banning the sale of foods high in fat, sugar and salt in schools. Over two thirds said that food such as crisps, sweets and burgers should not be sold in schools. It revealed young people's concerns about the online marketing of unhealthy products to children and young people.
6. Almost 74 per cent said that fast food businesses should not be allowed to set up websites that tried to encourage children to eat unhealthy food. Over 53 per cent thought that adverts for foods like crisps, burgers and sweets should not be shown on television.
7. One of the consultation's most disturbing findings was the impact that the advertising and marketing industry has on the way young people see themselves, particularly in terms of appearance and body image. Around 70 per cent of those responding said that there was too much pressure to look perfect and wear the latest goods. Nearly 33 per cent said that how they looked made them unhappy.
8. The survey revealed the shocking link between the bullying of children who did not have the latest consumer products. Over 55 per cent of those responding had either been bullied or knew someone who had been bullied because they did not have the latest products.
9. The survey showed that the majority of respondents spent the same amount of time (1-10 hours a week) watching TV/DVDs/videos as they did using the computer. Using the internet came through as being an extremely popular activity with young people who used it not only for research and homework but also as a communication tool for creating and maintaining friendships. A number of young people, however, raised concerns over internet safety particularly regarding chat-room use. They also expressed frustration about advertising, particularly pop-up advertising, on internet sites.
10. On a positive note, the survey showed that virtually all those who responded undertook some form of exercise a week: Over 40 per cent spent 1-10 hours a week on some form of sport or exercise; over 30 per cent spent 11-20 hours a week and less than 4 per cent spent no time on sport or exercise.

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

11. A fuller analysis of the results of the survey follows. The questions in the survey and details of the breakdown of responses are available on the Union's website: www.teachers.org.uk

Young People's Views on the Sale and Marketing of Foods High in Fat, Salt and Sugar

12. Young people were asked a number of questions on this topic. These related to the sale of high fat, salt and sugar foods in schools, the marketing of these foods and the reasons for purchasing and eating unhealthy foods.

- Over 92 per cent of those responding thought that eating foods such as crisps, sweets and burgers was unhealthy. Over two thirds said that such foods should not be sold in schools.
- Over 53 per cent thought that adverts for foods like crisps, burgers and sweets should not be shown on television.
- Almost 74 per cent said that fast food businesses should not be allowed to set up websites that encouraged children to eat their food.

13. Many young people voiced hostility towards TV advertising:

"TV adverts try to make you buy things you really don't want so when you buy them they are a waste of space. There shouldn't be any adverts on TV."

"I think that TV adverts such as those advertising junk food should be banned. Money should be pumped into schools to offer better education to both children and parents."

"I don't think that companies should show sugary products on telly because that encourages children to eat unhealthily. Some children sit inside watching telly too much so they don't get enough exercise."

14. When asked why they thought people still ate unhealthy foods, most pointed to issues of taste, the impact of marketing and their easier availability and lower cost.

"People eat unhealthy food as they are quick to serve and although it is stereotyped that they aren't cheaper, I believe they are cheaper. If you went to a fruit shop and brought some grapes it would cost £1 whereas if you went to the newsagents you could get a mars bar for 40p."

"They get advertised excessively and although they are nice and good in moderation, some people get obsessed, and essentially live on them."

"I think people still eat unhealthy food because it tastes nice and they use it as comfort food to comfort themselves when they are feeling unhappy."

"On adverts it tells us about the new burgers that are coming out in Burger King persuading us to buy them this also goes for crisps and sometimes sweets. If you go to a shop the main thing that you see is sweets and crisps."

15. While the majority thought that adverts for unhealthy food should not be shown on television, some emphasised the need for people to be able to make up their own minds:

"I think that companies should definitely be able to promote their products – it isn't fair otherwise and if people do not wish to buy the products because of the effects they have on you then they should have the will power and common sense not to."

"It's the person's choice whether or not they exercise/eat healthily, whenever I see an advert trying to get me to eat healthily/exercise I think "there they go again..." and it gets quite annoying at times."

"I think some things are unacceptable but the way people treat kids is horrendous. They think because people are under a certain age, that makes them incapable to make their own decisions about food, television and exercise."

The Impact of the Advertising and Marketing Industry on the Way Young People See Themselves and Others

16. Young people were asked to give their views on the impact of advertising and whether they thought it was important to have the latest products. They were also asked if they thought advertising used realistic images, whether they and their friends worried about their appearance and if they thought that young people were encouraged to act like grown ups too quickly.
- Despite the fact that over 67 per cent of those responding said that it was not important to have the latest products, over 72 per cent said that adverts made them want lots of new things.
 - Around 70 per cent thought that too much pressure was put on people to look perfect and wear the latest clothes.
 - Over 55 per cent had either been bullied or knew someone who had been bullied because they did not have the latest products.

- About 86 per cent thought that advertisements did not show what people really looked like.
 - Nearly 33 per cent said that how they looked made them unhappy.
 - Just over 70 per cent said that they did not think that children and young people were encouraged to act like grown ups too quickly.
17. Many young people highlighted the negative impact that advertising had on the way they and their friends saw themselves, with some identifying areas of their body that they would like to change.

"I would like whiter teeth as people on the adverts always have gleaming white teeth."

"I think it's ok to advertise things but I think they should show people how they really look and not use air brushed super skinny models."

"I think that people get too obsessed with fashion because if they are not wearing something fashionable then people start to tease you but all the fashionable clothes are expensive."

"I do worry about the way I look because people say I have big ears and it upsets me".

"I think the media has a huge influence on us teenagers. They make you look at yourself and think that you are not pretty (which everyone is in their own way."

"Until stars' photos stop being airbrushed and only good looking people put on TV, students are always going to have issues with their looks."

"I feel some adverts on TV and the internet give children a poor self image as they sell for them to look a certain way and be a certain way. Some families can't afford these items and sometimes ends in theft as they want their children to have the same as the others. Sadly, healthy food and clothes are not cheap!!"

18. On a more positive note, many young people were able to some extent to ignore the negative impact of advertising with responses emphasising that there was more to life than worrying about your appearance:

"I wish I was skinnier but hey I don't really care, I am who I am and there's more to life than being skinny."

"I don't really tend to worry about how I look, because I believe that if I feel good about myself, then that's all that matters."

"My friends say that you get what you get."

"I'm fine about the way I look and don't care about following fashion. I think people who do are just acting like sheep and should get a mind of their own."

Young People's Direct Experience of Advertising and Marketing

19. The survey asked for comments on any experiences of being targeted by advertisers and whether websites had tried to market unhealthy food.

- The majority of respondents (over 85 per cent) had not visited any websites that tried to encourage them to eat unhealthy food.
- Over 76 per cent had not received adverts or texts from companies to their mobile phone.

20. While this information seems to be encouraging, those who had reported receiving adverts to their mobile phone had received information on such products as dating services, Viagra, soft drinks, McDonalds and adverts for phone ring tones and magazines. Websites named as promoting unhealthy food included McDonalds, Burger King, KFC, Mars and Cadburys:

"I have received some information about Viagra but this is common and is done by 'bots' so I guess it doesn't count."

"Unwanted messages from dating companies."

21. Young people also commented on the use of pop-up advertising on the internet in general:

"Lots of pressure is used when someone is advertising something and on the computer, if you go on a website an advert always comes up."

"I think that on TV and computers there should be no adverts at all so that if a child's parents wanted their child to watch less TV or computers there would be no adverts or pop ups to get in the way and they could do their thing and turn it off."

Young People's Use of Time

26. Young people were asked to list how much time in a typical week they spent on a range of activities. These included watching TV/DVDs and videos, how much time they spent playing on the computer and how much time they spent doing sport or exercise.

- 51 per cent of respondents said they spent 1-10 hours a week watching TV/DVD/videos. Around 30 per cent spent 11-20 hours per week.

- Most respondents spent time on the computer (games consoles, Nintendo, Xboxes, searching the internet, chatrooms) every week. Over 48 per cent used the computer for 1-10 hours in a typical week. Around 20 per cent used the computer for 11-20 hours per week.
 - Virtually all respondents undertook some form of sport or exercise a week. Over 40 per cent spent 1-10 hours on sport or exercise with over 30 per cent spending 11-20 hours a week.
27. Despite the fact that 60 per cent thought that they spent too much time in front of the computer, most seemed keen to emphasise the positive aspects of that use:

"I think the internet is good because you can go on msn and speak to your friends and use the internet for homework."

"I think the fuss over children/teenagers spending a lot of time on the computer is silly. Computer is not a harmful activity and the internet is very educational, I don't think it is a bad thing."

"The internet is really good for me because I can do my revision, go on MSN, do research on anything and do lots of other things in my spare time. The only thing I don't like about the internet is when there are messages saying I've won free laptops or free holidays."

28. Some children did make reference to the dangers of the internet through for example chat room use:

"It is not good to go on the internet like msn because you might be talking to a stranger and something could happen."

"The internet is every exciting and interesting but it could be bad at the same time."



Our aim: one union for all teachers
NUT – the largest teachers' organisation in Europe
www.teachers.org.uk

