

A guide for TV+ platforms: Understanding how the LHF online ad ban impacts you

What is the LHF ad ban?

From 5 January 2026, there will be statutory restrictions on advertising 'less healthy food and drink' (LHF) products in the UK. This will apply to online advertising at any time and to advertising on Ofcom-regulated TV and on-demand services before 9pm. However, the Government has asked that advertisers commit to comply with the ban from 1 October 2025 – you can find more details on why [here](#).

LHF products are a subset of products that are high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS), which have been subject to restrictions in the [Advertising Codes](#) since 2007. Details of how to identify whether a product is classed as LHF, and therefore subject to the advertising restrictions, can be found in the [LHF advertising regulations](#) and on [our website](#). The regulations, in conjunction with the [Communications Act](#), also set out a short list of ad types that are exempt from the restrictions - including ads placed online by SMEs and audio-only digital ads.

It's important to note that the restrictions only impact ads that are for LHF products. The Government intends to introduce legislation to [explicitly exempt brand ads](#) that do not depict any LHF products from the ban.

Broadcast vs online rules

The restrictions will impact broadcast, on-demand programme services (ODPS) and online ads – so where do ads on TV+ platforms fall? To help you understand the split, we've broken down the details of the different rules below. A service will only be subject to one set of restrictions – it cannot be subject to both simultaneously.

Broadcast restrictions – 9pm watershed	Online restrictions – total ban
• Ads for LHF products will be banned between 5.30am-9pm (i.e. a 9pm watershed will apply) • The watershed applies to: ◦ All Ofcom-licensed TV channels ◦ All on-demand programme services (ODPS) regulated by Ofcom • Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) that are not Ofcom-licensed but are identical simulcasts of Ofcom-licensed TV services • The ASA will regulate the ban on a day-to-day basis. Ofcom is the statutory 'backstop' regulator • The broadcaster or on-demand service is liable for breaches of the watershed restrictions. Ofcom has powers to fine broadcasters and ODPS that break the rules	• Paid-for online ads for LHF products are prohibited, with some very limited exceptions • The online restrictions apply to ads on: ◦ Video-on-demand services not regulated by Ofcom ◦ All IPTV services not regulated by Ofcom • The ASA will regulate the ban on a day-to-day basis. Ofcom is the statutory 'backstop' regulator • The advertiser is liable for breaches of the prohibition and Ofcom has powers to fine advertisers that break the rules

How do you identify which restrictions apply to you?

To identify whether your channel/s fall under the broadcast or online restrictions, you need to know whether the service is Ofcom-regulated. The table below explains how to identify whether Ofcom regulates a particular service - if in doubt then Ofcom can advise.

Ofcom regulated?	Yes	No
The service is an Ofcom-licensed TV service or on-demand programme services (ODPS) under Ofcom jurisdiction Examples: Sky, Virgin Media, ITVX	X Broadcast	
The service is not a licensed TV service or ODPS service under Ofcom jurisdiction Examples: most CTV apps, FAST channels, and international streaming services like Netflix		X Online

Services that are Ofcom-regulated (including ODPS) are subject to the broadcast rules, which means LHF product ads can run on these channels after 9pm from 1 October onwards (when the industry has committed to comply with the ban from) and from 5 January 2026, when the ban comes into effect on a statutory basis.

Services that are not Ofcom-regulated are subject to the online ban, which means that LHF product ads will be totally prohibited on these channels from 5 January 2026, but should not run after 1 October 2025 when the industry-led compliance period comes into effect.

Who's responsible for complying with the ban?

- If the ad runs on an Ofcom-regulated service, the broadcaster or ODPS is liable for breaches of the watershed
- If the ad runs online the advertiser is liable for breaches

What do you need to do now to prepare?

1. Conduct a mapping exercise to understand which of your channels will be subject to the broadcast restrictions vs the online restrictions
2. Familiarise yourself with the specifics of the restrictions – a good place to start is [our LHF FAQs](#) for more context and [cross-industry guidance](#) to understand what's in scope / how to prepare
3. Engage with your key clients as soon as possible to ensure they understand what content can be run across different sections of your portfolio and when restrictions are coming into effect

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact policy@iabuk.com

This document should be used as a guide and is not a substitute for legal advice. It may be subject to change based on further developments.