



The impact of school exclusion zone planning guidance on the number and type of food outlets in an English local authority: A longitudinal analysis

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About the research

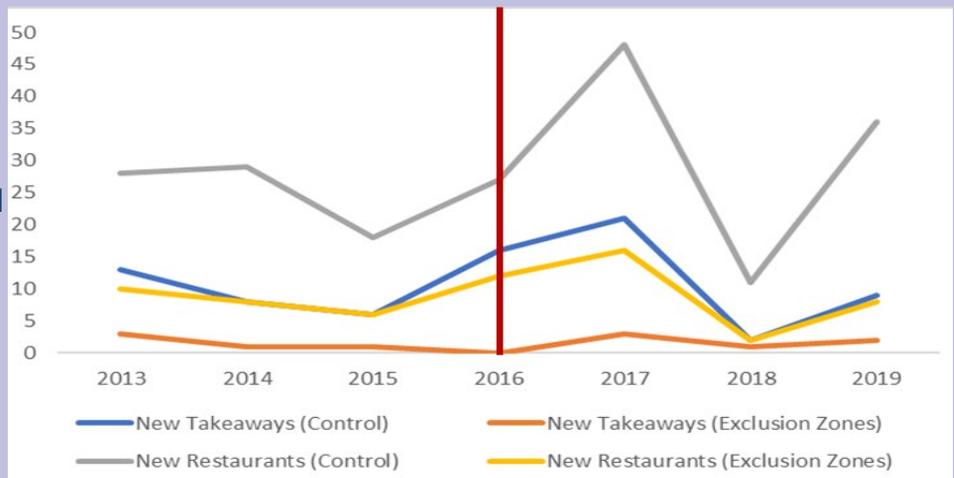
The environment in which we live and work influences the food we eat and subsequently our health. There is a large body of evidence showing a positive relationship between fast food consumption and increased risk of overweight and obesity. Local authorities have responsibility for tackling the causes of poor health including the built environment. To meet this objective approximately 50% of local authorities have amended their planning guidance to promote healthy weight environments by limiting planning permission for new fast food outlets (hot food takeaways). The most popular type of planning guidance used by local authorities restricts planning guidance within 400 metres of a secondary school. However, to date there has been no evaluation on if and how this type of planning guidance changes the food environment. The city of Newcastle Upon Tyne implemented this type of planning guidance in October 2016.

As part of this SPHR funded project, we validated a novel dataset, the Food Standards Agency Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Data for use to evaluate planning guidance in the North East. Next, we evaluated the impact of a school exclusion zone for new fast food outlets in Newcastle Upon Tyne on the food environment three years after implementation (2016-2019).

Policy implications

- Using planning to improve population health is a long-term policy plan to create a healthy food environment.
- In the long term, restrictions on new businesses may help to shift consumer spending away from fast-food outlets if different types of businesses fill the gap.
- If the central government wants to achieve its aims set out in a recent white paper on reducing obesity rates; it will need to be accompanied by additional funding to local authorities to support this long-term objective and help to reduce existing geographical inequalities in the built environment.
- Because of the long term nature of using planning policy to manage the food environment, local authorities need to have the resources available to proactively work with existing businesses to ensure they provide healthy food.
- Central government and local authorities may also want to consider more restrictive licensing requirements, where continuation of licenses are tied to health criteria as well as hygiene.

Number of new fast-food/sandwich shop or restaurant/café/cafe nteen in the control and exclusion zones. Policy introduction marked by red vertical line.



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Key findings

- Our study has shown that the implementation of planning guidance to restrict planning permission for fast-food outlets within a 10 minute walk (400 metre) exclusion zone of secondary schools did not lead to a statistically significant change in the number and type of food outlets in the exclusion zones compared to control zones within 3 years.
- We also explored potential spillover effects, i.e. whether businesses were tempted to open just outside the exclusion zone. Thus, it is possible that the postcodes immediately adjacent to the exclusion zone differ in the type and density of new and existing outlets post guidance. By comparing with a control zone further afield (between 250 to 500 metres) we could understand if and how business location is motivated by the planning guidance as well as acting as a robustness check on our findings. However, this did not change the statistically insignificant differences between the exclusion and control zones.
- Our findings may partially be explained by the fact that each year there are very few new outlets opening anywhere in Newcastle upon Tyne. Thus, the statistical approach we use may not be able to detect a statistically significant difference because of small numbers.

Further information

This work forms part of the [NIHR School for Public Health Research’s work on improved use of routine data to assess and evaluate the food environment](#).

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Contact the researchers

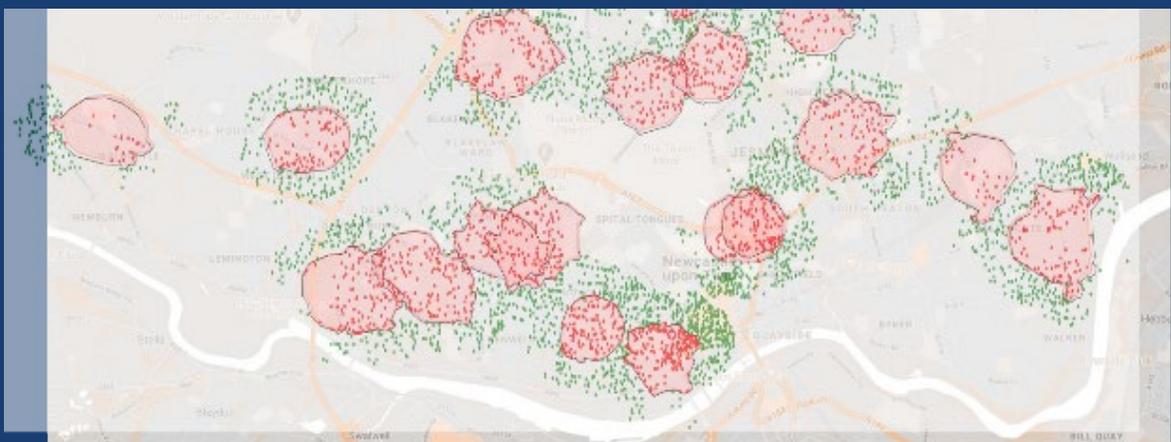
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About the School

The NIHR School for Public Health Research is a partnership between the Universities of Sheffield; Bristol; Cambridge; Imperial; and University College London; The London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM); LiLaC – a collaboration between the Universities of Liverpool and Lancaster; and Fuse - The Centre for Translational Research in Public Health a collaboration between Newcastle, Durham, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities.

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Location of restaurants and fast-food outlets in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Green: control zone; Red: exclusion zone over the period 2012-2015



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