

Question and Response: FOI 0113 2026 – Northern Irish policies, strategies, frameworks, guidance, or formal statements that regulate or restrict the influence of commercial industries on health, specifically in relation to the alcohol, tobacco, gambling, highly processed food and infant formula sectors.

You requested the following information:

Please provide information from the period 1 February 2021 to the present on Northern Irish policies, strategies, frameworks, guidance, or formal statements that regulate or restrict the influence of commercial industries on health, specifically in relation to the alcohol, tobacco, gambling, highly processed food (e.g. foods high in fat, salt and sugar), and infant formula sectors.

This includes documents relating to the following policy areas (where applicable):

1. Advertising, promoting, marketing and sponsorship controls
2. Product regulation, reformulation and standards
3. Pricing regulation, taxation, and levies
4. Licensing and trading agreements
5. Planning and zoning powers
6. Details of how the government manages interactions with these industries or their representatives, including rules for meetings, consultations, transparency, and avoidance or management of conflicts of interest.

Please provide the information electronically where possible. If any part of this request exceeds the cost limit, please identify the affected elements and provide advice on how the request may be refined.

If any information is withheld, please cite the applicable exemption and explain why it applies.

RESPONSE

A response to each commercial industry on health is provided below:

Two documents in the Tobacco Control branch are relevant to the request:

- Ten-year tobacco control strategy for Northern Ireland (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/tobacco-control-10-year-strategy.pdf>)
- Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protocol-for-engagement-with-stakeholders-with-links-to-the-tobacco-industry/guidance-for-government-engagement-with-the-tobacco-industry>

Also, for your reference, please see the Tobacco and Vapes Act: [Minister Nesbitt welcomes 'landmark' Tobacco and Vapes Act | Department of Health](#). The UK-wide legislation will see a smoke-free generation by making it illegal to sell tobacco to anyone born on or after 1st January 2009, taking effect from next year. From 29th October 2026, it will also be illegal to sell non-nicotine vapes and other nicotine products to under 18s.

Although legislation is not listed in your request, there will be future regulations made under the Act in relation to products, such as contents, flavourings, features, packaging etc. In addition, there will be regulations (following public consultation) on the display of products and prices in retail settings.

Health Improvement Policy Branch have provided the link for information held regarding infant formula: [Joint UK Government response to the CMA infant formula market study | Department of Health](#)

Health Development Policy Branch, which has responsibility for public health arising from Alcohol use, has advised there was no information that met the criteria in the request – i.e. policies that regulate or restrict the influence of commercial industries on health.

The strategies within this area, including the Substance Use Strategy (SUS), are focused on prevention, treatment and service delivery rather than regulation, and while options like Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) for alcohol measures have been considered, they haven't been implemented in the period covered. The SUS focuses on public health, prevention, and treatment of addiction, rather than regulating how alcohol is produced or sold.

The Minister made a formal statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 24 March 2026 confirming that it had not been possible to secure Executive agreement for the introduction of MUP. Any future progression of Minimum Unit Pricing would therefore require consideration and agreement by a subsequent Executive and Minister. HFSS (High Fat, Salt & Sugar) food is a policy area being considered more broadly across the system, but there is no implemented policy.

Mental Health Directorate provided the following information: For points 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, the Department of Health does not hold primary policy or legislative responsibility. These areas in the context of gambling (including advertising, product regulation, licensing, planning, and broader industry engagement frameworks) fall primarily within the remit of the Department for Communities and/or UK Government (in the case of reserved matters such as advertising).

In relation to point 3 (pricing, taxation and levies), the Department of Health does not hold responsibility for taxation or pricing. However, internal policy work has identified a potential statutory levy as a key mechanism for funding research, prevention, and treatment of gambling-related harm. While the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 provides the legislative basis for such a levy, responsibility for its development and implementation rests with the Department for Communities.

The Department has commissioned a policy support paper examining potential models for treatment and support services in the event that funding (for example via a levy) becomes available. However, the introduction and operation of any levy itself would remain outside the Department's remit.

If you feel that the information we have provided does not fully meet your request, you have the right to request that the Department formally review this decision within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to do so, please write to FAO Internal Reviewer (foi@health-ni.gov.uk), Annexe 3, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3SQ.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.