

Change in the number of new takeaway food outlets associated with adoption of management zones around schools: a natural experimental evaluation in England

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By the end of 2017, 35 local authorities (LAs) across England had adopted takeaway management zones around schools, within which planning permission was to be denied to new takeaways. In this nationwide, natural experimental study, we evaluated the impact of management zones on takeaway retail, including displacement to areas immediately beyond management zones. We used uncontrolled interrupted time series analyses to estimate changes from up to six years pre- and post-adoption of management zones. We evaluated two outcomes: mean number of new takeaways within management zones (and by three identified sub-types: full, town centre exempt and time management zones) and mean number on the periphery of management zones (i.e. within an additional 100 m of the edge of zones). For 26 LAs, we observed an overall decrease in the number of new takeaways opening within management zones. Six years post-intervention, we observed 0.83 (95% CI -0.30, -1.03) fewer new outlets opening per LA per quarter than would have been expected in absence of the intervention, equivalent to an 81.0% (95% CI -29.1, -100) reduction in the number of new outlets. Cumulatively, 12 (54%) fewer new takeaways opened than would have been expected over the six-year post-intervention period. When stratified by policy type, effects were largest for full and town centre exempt zones. There was no evidence of a change in new takeaways on the periphery of management zones. Our findings suggest that management zone curb the proliferation of new takeaways and may therefore benefit population health.

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