

Which?

Commercial Baby Food and Drink

**Interim assessment of the voluntary
industry nutrition guidelines**

This publication reflects the view of Which?.

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Executive Summary

The UK has a problem with poor diets among babies and small children leading to health problems including high rates of childhood obesity and tooth decay. The latest data shows over a fifth of four-to-five-year-olds are overweight or obese¹ and over a fifth of five-year-olds have experienced tooth decay². Children's food preferences and habits are formed early in life and can affect their health outcomes in later life.

For many infants shop-bought baby food and drink makes up a considerable portion of their diet, but too often the nutritional quality of these products are low. Lower income families in particular are most reliant on shop-bought baby food. Concerningly, research by Threapleton et al. (2025)³ found that the baby food market was filled with products that were of low nutritional quality. They found a quarter of all products were high in sugar, many products were too watery (low in energy) and many products did not contain enough protein.

To address this, the UK government introduced voluntary guidelines for commercial baby food and drink in August 2025. There are four nutritional components to these guidelines: the amount of sugar in products, the presence of added sugars, the amount of sodium, and the presence of added salt. Businesses were given 18 months until February 2027 to implement these targets, at which point a progress report is expected and the government will consider additional or alternative measures if businesses fail to implement the guidelines.

Which? has undertaken an analysis of the commercial baby and young infant food market to make an interim assessment of the impact the voluntary guidelines have had. We have analysed the sugar, sodium, added sugars and added salt content of 798 baby food and drink products sold at Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrison's, Waitrose and Ocado. We assessed the nutritional content of these products every three months, starting 18 months before the guidelines were introduced in February 2024 and ending nine months after in May 2026, which is the halfway point of the 18 month transition period. We also collected data on 72 products sold at Aldi and Lidl in May 2026 only.

As of May 2026, almost one in five products (18%) failed the sugar guidelines, which means Which? has identified no improvement since the introduction of the guidelines in August 2025. This was largely driven by the high sugar content in finger food and snacks for infants over 12 months and dessert and breakfast products.

¹ NHS England (2023). *National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2022/23 School Year*. Available at:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2022-23-school-year>

² Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2025). *Oral health survey of 5 year old schoolchildren 2024*. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/oral-health-survey-of-5-year-old-schoolchildren-2024>

³ Threapleton, D., Morpeth, A., & Cade, J. (2025). *Commercial Baby Foods In Crisis: Addressing Health, Marketing and Inequalities*. University of Leeds. Available at:

<https://environment.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/5079/commercial-baby-foods-in-crisis---summary-report>

Rates of noncompliance with the sodium, added sugars and added salt guidelines have not fallen since the introduction of the guidelines in August 2025. As of May 2026, 12% of products failed the added sugars guidelines, 5% failed the sodium guidelines, and 1.6% failed the no added salt guidelines.

Our review finds little evidence of products being reformulated to meet the guidelines or of non-compliant products being replaced by healthier, compliant ones. Since the guidelines were introduced, only three products have been reformulated with the effect of becoming compliant with the guidelines. Additionally, 14 products have been introduced that fail at least one guideline, which is just under 40% of all products introduced since August 2025.

There is wide variation in the level of compliance across brands. At the halfway point of the transition period (May 2026), we found that Kiddylicious had the highest percentage of products failing the sugar guidelines (52% of products failed the guidelines). HiPP had the lowest percentage of products failing the sugar guidelines (7%).

If levels of compliance do not markedly improve in the remaining months of the transition period then the government must take further action. This could include regularly reporting business performance against the voluntary guidelines or replacing the voluntary guidelines with mandatory requirements, although we recognise that the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU which is currently being negotiated could mean changes to baby food legislation will likely need to be developed at EU level.

1. Introduction

A healthy, nutritious diet is essential for infant growth and development. What children eat in the first few years of their lives impacts their tastes and their health throughout their life⁴. Yet, the evidence suggests that many infants in the UK frequently consume too much sugar and salt. The most recent data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS; 2025)⁵ found that around three-quarters of infants between 18 months and three years consumed more than the government's recommended intake of free sugars.⁶ Similarly, data from the NDNS (2025) shows overconsumption of salt among babies and toddlers.

Such poor diets have serious health impacts. Overconsumption of sugar and calories in childhood has been linked to a range of adverse health outcomes in childhood and beyond. More than a fifth of five year olds have experienced tooth decay⁷, which is the leading cause of hospitalisation in children⁸. Additionally, the latest data shows that more than a fifth of children aged four to five are overweight or obese currently⁹. With regard to salt, an infant's kidneys are too immature to handle excess salt¹⁰ and too much salt at an early age can lead to future health problems. Salt intake raises the risk of high blood pressure, which in turn increases the risk of stroke and death from cardiovascular diseases (The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, 2023¹¹).

Parents and carers rely on a combination of homemade food and shop bought food for their infants' diets. Whilst two thirds of parents/carers introduce weaning through homemade food¹², by 10 months old 63% of infants have commercial baby meals at least weekly and 17% have them daily. Consumption of commercial baby snacks is even more common with 74% having them at least weekly and 20% eating them daily. Parents from more deprived

⁴ World Health Organisation (WHO) (2016). *Report on commission on ending childhood obesity*, Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241510066>

⁵ Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2025). *National Diet and Nutrition Survey 2019 to 2023: report*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-2019-to-2023/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-2019-to-2023-report#nutrient-intakes>

⁶ [Free sugars](#) are defined as any sugars in drinks (except dairy-based drinks), all sugars naturally present in fruit and vegetable juices, purées and pastes, and lactose and galactose as ingredients. The government recommends that [infants between the ages of 18 months and 3 years olds consume no more than 5% of their total energy from free sugars](#), but on average, 8% of energy among infants came from free sugars.

⁷ See footnote 2

⁸ Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2025). *Short statistical commentary for hospital tooth extractions in 0 to 19 year olds 2024*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hospital-tooth-extractions-in-0-to-19-year-olds-2024/short-statistical-commentary-for-hospital-tooth-extractions-in-0-to-19-year-olds-2024>

⁹ See footnote 1

¹⁰ NHS website. *Salt in your diet*. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-types/salt-in-your-diet/>

¹¹ Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (2003). *Salt and Health*. The Stationery Office. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74983de5274a44083b7ef6/SACN_Salt_and_Health_report.pdf

¹² Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2026). *Infant feeding survey 2024: Summary of main findings*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/infant-feeding-survey-in-england-2024/infant-feeding-survey-2024-summary-of-main-findings#early-feeding-experience>

areas are more likely to use these products regularly compared to parents from less deprived areas.¹³

1.1 Commercial baby food and drink regulations

Commercial baby food and drink products fall outside the remit of high fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) regulations, which restrict the placement, promotions and advertising of products that are less healthy. Existing regulations for the composition of baby food and drink were established over 20 years ago in 2003 and have been described as “outdated and no longer fit for purpose”¹⁴. Since 2003, the baby food market has expanded to include a wide variety of finger foods and snacks which can be high in salt and sugar. The existing regulatory framework does not go far enough to prevent these products, and other categories of baby food and drink, from being produced and marketed as healthy choices.

A consequence of this regulatory failure is that some commercial baby food is less healthy than it should be. Threapleton et al. (2025)¹⁵ found that a quarter of the 623 commercial baby food and drink products they analysed were so high in sugar they would require a front of packet sugar warning label according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Nutrient and Promotion Profile Model (NPPM)¹⁶ (see [Annex](#) for more details on the NPPM). This included two in five main meals, which should be savoury in flavour rather than sweet. Other major issues identified in the report were products being too watery, not having enough protein and having slightly too much sodium.

Parents rely on clear supermarket labelling to make informed decisions for their infants¹⁷, but the “health halo” around baby food makes navigating this market challenging for parents. Almost all of the 142 products examined in the 2026 Broken Plate report¹⁸ contained front-of-pack health, nutrition, or marketing claims (eg “perfectly balanced to support growth”). The prevalence of this marketing can make it harder for parents to identify products with poor nutritional quality and can mislead them into purchasing less healthy products for their infants.

Product marketing also encourages feeding behaviours that contradict NHS recommendations. For example, packaging often prompts parents to wean their infants at four months old instead of the recommended six months¹⁹. Additionally, infants are not supposed to suck directly from food pouches as it can cause toothy decay, yet despite the many claims on products, a warning against sucking directly from the pouch is frequently missing.

¹³ See footnote 3

¹⁴ See footnote 3

¹⁵ See footnote 3

¹⁶ World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe (2022). *Nutrient and promotion profile model: supporting appropriate promotion of food products for infants and young children 6–36 months in the WHO European Region*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2022-6681-46447-67287>

¹⁷ See footnote 3

¹⁸ The Food Foundation (2026). *The Broken Plate*. Available at: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/publication/broken-plate-2026>

¹⁹ NHS website. *Help your baby enjoy new foods*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/help-your-baby-enjoy-new-foods/>

1.2 Introduction of voluntary guidelines

In response to the problems in this market, the UK government introduced voluntary guidelines for commercial baby food and drink products aimed at infants under three years old²⁰ in August 2025. Informed by the WHO's Nutrient and Promotion Profile Model, the guidelines cover both nutritional composition and marketing. Businesses have been given 18 months (ie until February 2027) to implement the voluntary guidelines, at which point a progress report is expected and the government will consider additional or alternative measures if businesses fail to implement the guidelines.

The nutrition guidelines vary depending on the type of product (eg fruit purées, main meals) but generally focus on reducing the amount of sugar and salt in products, as well as banning added salt and sugars. Added sugars are permissible for finger foods and snacks aimed at infants over 12 months, but no other product category. Added salt is never allowed. For some product categories (eg main meals), there is a limit on the fruit content in the product rather than the sugar content.

The marketing guidelines focus on bringing the health claims and advice on a product's packaging more in line with scientific and government advice. This includes ensuring the product is marketed for infants who are at least six months old, making sure pouches have clear feeding instructions (eg to use a spoon rather than to suck), and making sure that health claims on the packet are based on scientific evidence.

This report focuses on the nutrition guidelines contained in the government's voluntary guidelines for commercial baby food. It provides an analysis of the impact of the introduction of the guidelines to date by analysing the nutritional composition of all commercial baby foods available at the leading UK supermarkets up to May 2026, which is the midpoint of the 18-month transition period for businesses to comply with the guidelines.

²⁰ Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2025). *Commercial baby food and drink: voluntary industry guidelines*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commercial-baby-food-and-drink-voluntary-industry-guidelines/commercial-baby-food-and-drink-voluntary-industry-guidelines>

2. Methodology

We collected nutrition data from an independent comparison company for all baby food products sold at Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, Waitrose and Ocado. Data was collected at ten different waves. The first wave was February 2024 (18 months before the guidelines were introduced) and subsequent waves were every three months until May 2026 (which is the midpoint of the transition period). Across the ten waves there were a total of **798 products**, with the number per wave varying between 566 (May 2026) and 621 (August 2025), see the [Annex](#) for more details.

Figure 1: Nutrition data waves



Table 1: Counts of products across different retailers

Retailer	Average number of products per wave
Tesco	336
Sainsbury's	327
Asda	342
Morrisons	315
Waitrose	146
Ocado	386

In our analysis we used information on the product name, broad category type (baby drink, wet baby food, dry baby food, finger foods and snacks), brand (including own-label products), energy (kilocalories [kcal] per 100g of product) salt (g per 100g), sugars (g per 100g), and the ingredients list. Salt (g) was converted into sodium (mg) (see the [Annex](#) for the exact formulas used).

To supplement the data, we also conducted a physical audit of Lidl and Aldi baby food and drink products, buying all products in one Aldi store (42 products) and one Lidl store (30 products) at the end of May 2026 (**wave 10 only**). The same information as the main six retailers was collected. Data from Lidl and Aldi was only used to compare to other brands and retailers in wave 10. All Lidl and Aldi products were considered own-label products.

2.1 Product categorisation

The nutritional guidelines vary depending on the type of baby food and drink product. Products are split into three main categories: baby meals, baby finger foods and snacks, and baby drinks. Baby drinks do not have any subcategories.

Baby meals are further categorised into six subcategories:

1. fruit and vegetable foods (eg purée's),
2. main meals (eg spaghetti bolognese),
3. dry cereals (eg fruit porridge mix),
4. desserts and breakfasts (eg rice pudding),
5. soups, stocks and cooking sauces (eg stir-in tomato sauce), and
6. other baby meals (eg pasta).

Baby finger foods and snacks are further categorised into:

1. savoury finger food and snacks (eg carrot puffs),
2. sweet finger food and snacks (eg strawberry puffs), and
3. fruit or vegetable-based finger food and snacks (eg apple crisps).

To be classified as a fruit or vegetable-based finger food or snack, the product has to contain at least 25% fruit and vegetables, otherwise it is a sweet/savoury finger food and snack. As there is no difference in terms of the nutritional guidelines for sweet finger foods and snacks

compared to savoury finger foods and snacks, the two subcategories were grouped together in our analysis.

The finger food and snacks subcategories are then further categorised depending on whether the product is intended for infants under 12 months old or infants over 12 months old.

We used a step-by-step sorting process to categorise the baby food and drink products into the guideline categories. Products were assigned to a guideline category based on the first wave of data that contained the product name, broad category type, and ingredients list (see the [Annex](#) for more details). Table 2 shows the number of products within each guideline category.

Table 2: Guideline categories and product counts

Guideline category	Number of products (main dataset)	Number of products (Lidl and Aldi)
Fruit and Vegetable Food	131	23
Main Meals	247	15
Dry Cereals	60	0
Desserts and Breakfasts	131	12
Soup, Stocks, and Cooking Sauces	1	0
Other Baby Meals	12	0
Sweet and Savoury Finger Foods and Snacks (Over 12m)	32	6
Sweet and Savoury Finger Foods and Snacks (Under 12m)	101	12
Fruit and Vegetable-based Finger Foods and Snacks (Over 12m)	66	2
Fruit and Vegetable-based Finger Foods and Snacks (Under 12m)	8	2
Baby Drinks	9	0
Total	798	72

2.2 Assessment of the guidelines

Nutritional guidelines vary across the categories (see the [Annex](#) for more details), with a maximum of four nutritional guidelines to meet:

1. sugar guidelines (ie amount of sugar in the product),
2. sodium guidelines (ie amount of sodium in the product),
3. added sugars guidelines (eg added honey, sugar, juice), and
4. added salt guidelines.

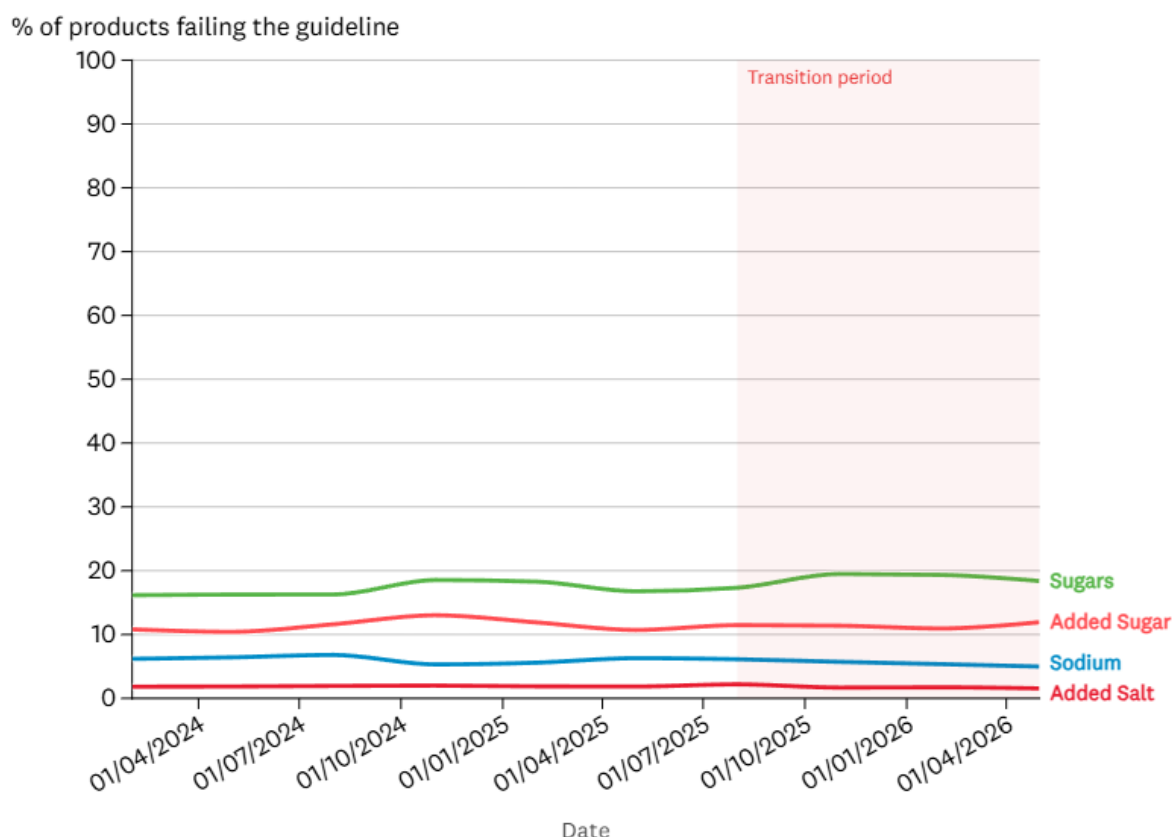
The percentage of products failing the sugars, sodium, added sugars and added salt guidelines was calculated for each wave. Then, the percentage of products failing to meet the guidelines was calculated for each category, brand and retailer (including Aldi and Lidl).

3. Findings

3.1 Overall compliance

The proportion of products meeting the nutritional standards set out in the guidelines has remained fairly constant since February 2024, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of products failing the sugars, sodium, added sugars and added salt guidelines at each wave



Note: Data is shown for Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, Waitrose and Ocado. The average number of products assessed for the sugar guidelines was 472, sodium was 466, added sugars was 478 and added salt was 535.

The lowest compliance rates are with the sugar guidelines. During the past three years the proportion of baby food and drink products from Tesco's, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrison's, Waitrose, and Ocado that have failed to meet the sugars guidelines has been between 16% and 19%. Non-compliance peaked in November 2025 but fell a little to 18% in May 2026, which is the halfway point of the transition period given by the government.

In May 2026, 12% of products failed the added sugars guidelines, 5% failed the sodium guidelines, and 1.6% failed the added salt guidelines.

Businesses can increase the proportion of products that meet the guidelines in two ways. First, they can reformulate existing products, reducing the sugar or sodium content or

removing added sugars and added salt. Second, they can stop manufacturing/selling products that do not meet the guidelines and introduce new products that do meet the guidelines.

We found only three products that have been reformulated and changed from failing to passing a guideline since August 2025 when the guidelines were introduced. Two were Ella's Kitchen breakfast products that would have failed the sugar guidelines before August 2025. The sugar content in these products have since been reduced to less than 10g per 100g of product. Changes to the ingredients list suggest that this has been done by reducing the quantity of fruit purée in the product and increasing the quantity of yoghurt and milk. The third product was a Sainsbury's own-label main meal, which failed the sodium guidelines before August 2025 but has passed since November 2025.

Figure 3: Products that have reformulated and now pass the guidelines



Left: Ella's Kitchen Banana Baby Brekkie. As a dessert and breakfast product, since the introduction of the guidelines in August 2025 sugar (g) per 100g of product has decreased from 14g to 8g (the guideline is less than 10g per 100g of product).

Middle: Sainsbury's own-label Organic Cheesy Butternut Pasta. As a main meal, since the introduction of the guidelines in August 2025 sodium (mg) per 100 kcal has decreased from 114mg to 92mg (the guideline is less than 100mg per 100 kcal for products with "cheese" in the front of pack name).

Right: Ella's Kitchen Mango Baby Brekkie. As a dessert and breakfast product, since the introduction of the guidelines in August 2025 sugar (g) per 100g of product has decreased from 11g to 7g (the guideline is less than 10g per 100g of product).

Since the introduction of the guidelines in August 2025, we identified 37 new products that have since been sold in supermarkets for the first time. Of these, 14 (38%) fail at least one guideline. Most of these were first introduced in November 2025 and the product launches were no doubt well advanced when the guidelines were published, but two products were introduced in May 2026. Most of these products failed the sugar guidelines, one failed the sodium guidelines and two failed the added sugars guidelines.

Figure 4: Examples of products that have been introduced since the introduction of the guidelines and fail the guidelines



Left: Ella's Kitchen Nutty Blends Mangoes, Pears and Almonds. As a dessert and breakfast product it fails the sugar guidelines. It contains 12g of sugar per 100g (the guideline is less than 10g per 100g of product).
Right: Little Freddie Organic Dairy Free Strawberry Coconut Yoghurt. As a dessert and breakfast product it fails the added sugars guidelines as it contains coconut water, which is considered an added sugar.

Figure 5. Examples of products that have been introduced since the introduction of the guidelines that pass all of the guidelines



Left: Organix Rice Cakes Original. Introduced in May 2026, this is a sweet and savoury snack for infants under 12 months old and passes all the guidelines. It has 0.5% of energy from sugar per 100g (the guideline is less than 10% of energy from sugar per 100g) it has 10mg of sodium per 100 kcal (the guideline is 60mg of sodium per 100 kcal). It contains no added sugars or salt.

Middle: Heinz Banana Porridge. Introduced in November 2025, this is a dry cereal and passes all the guidelines. It contains 5% fruit (the guideline is less than or equal to 10% limit on fruit content by weight) and it contains 26mg of sodium per 100 kcal (the guideline is 60mg of sodium per 100 kcal). It does not contain any added sugars or salt.

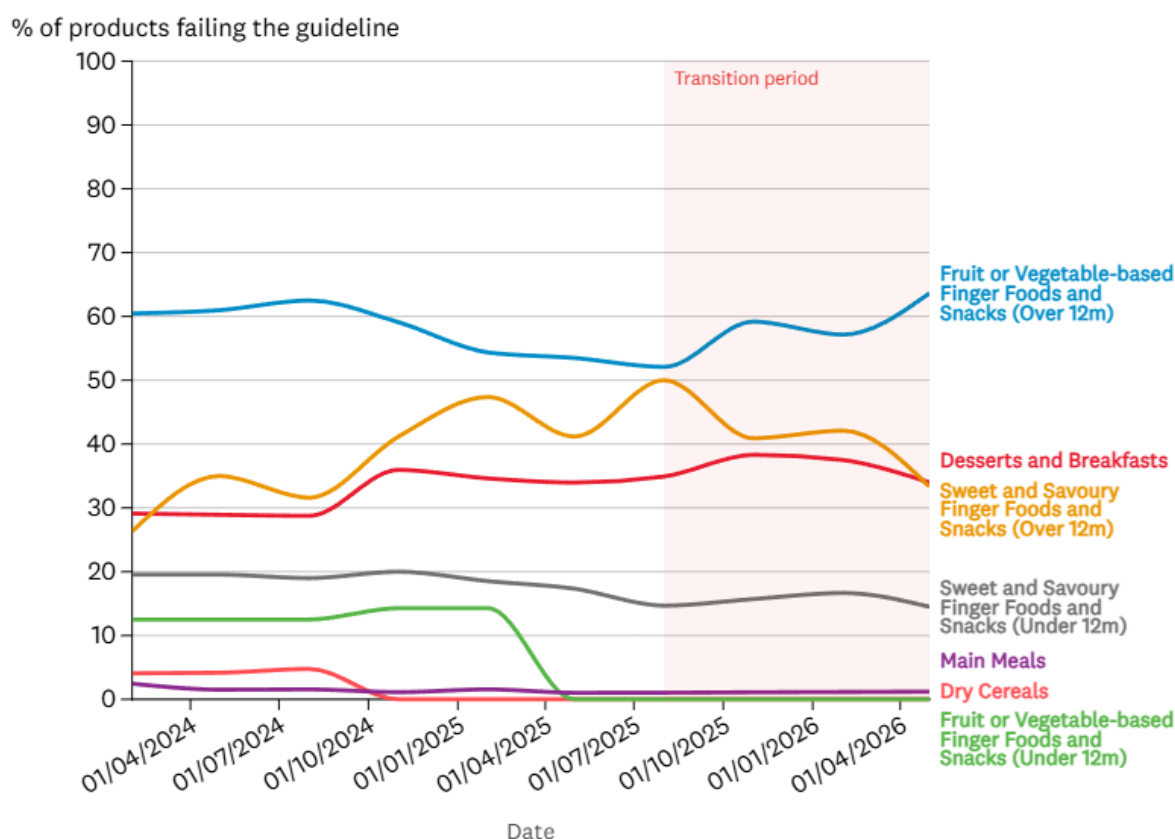
Right: Sainsbury's own-label vegetable mac & cheese. Introduced in February 2026, this is a main meal that passes all the guidelines. It has 0% fruit (the guideline is less than or equal to 5% limit on fruit content by weight) and it contains 63mg of sodium per 100 kcal (the guideline is 100mg of sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name). It does not contain any added sugars or salt.

3.2 Compliance by product category

The likelihood of a product failing to meet a guideline varies substantially across product categories. Focusing first on the sugar guidelines, Figure 6 shows that finger foods and snacks for infants over 12 months were most likely to fail. Nine months into the transition period, more than half of the fruit or vegetable-based finger foods and snacks for infants over 12 months failed the guidelines. A third of the sweet and savoury finger foods and snacks for infants over 12 months also failed the guidelines. A third of the sweet and savoury finger foods and snacks for infants over 12 months also failed the guidelines.

The percentage of sweet and savoury finger foods and snacks for infants under 12 months failing the guidelines has decreased from 20% in February 2024 to 14% in May 2026. Fruit or vegetable-based finger foods and snacks for infants under 12 months old had lower rates of products failing the guidelines, especially since May 2025. At least one in three desserts and breakfast products have consistently failed the sugar guidelines since November 2024.

Figure 6: Percentage of products failing the sugar guidelines by product category



Note. There were no sugar guidelines for fruit and vegetable foods, baby drinks or other baby meals. The average number of main meals products assessed was 188, dry cereals was 40, desserts and breakfasts assessed was 96, sweet and savoury finger foods and snacks (over 12m) was 19, sweet and savoury finger foods and snacks (under 12m) was 77, fruit and vegetable finger foods and snacks (over 12m) was 45 and fruit and vegetable finger foods and snacks (under 12m) was 7.

The percentage and number of products in each product category that fail to meet each of the four guidelines are presented in Table 3. The data is for May 2026 and includes Lidl and Aldi products. In brief:

- Most of the products failing the **sodium guidelines** were main meals. In total, 24 main meals, which represent 14% of these products, did not meet the guidelines.
- Finger foods and snacks were most likely to fail the **added sugars guidelines**. 29 products in the sweet and savoury finger foods and snacks for infants under 12 months category failed the added sugars guidelines. A further six fruit and vegetable finger foods and snacks for infants under 12 months failed the added sugars guidelines, which was 86% of this small product category. One in eight breakfast and dessert products, a total of 13 products, failed the added sugars guidelines.
- Only a very small number of products failed the **added salt guidelines** and these were all in the sweet and savoury finger food and snacks categories. Specifically, seven of products for infants under 12 months and one product for infants over 12 months failed the guidelines.

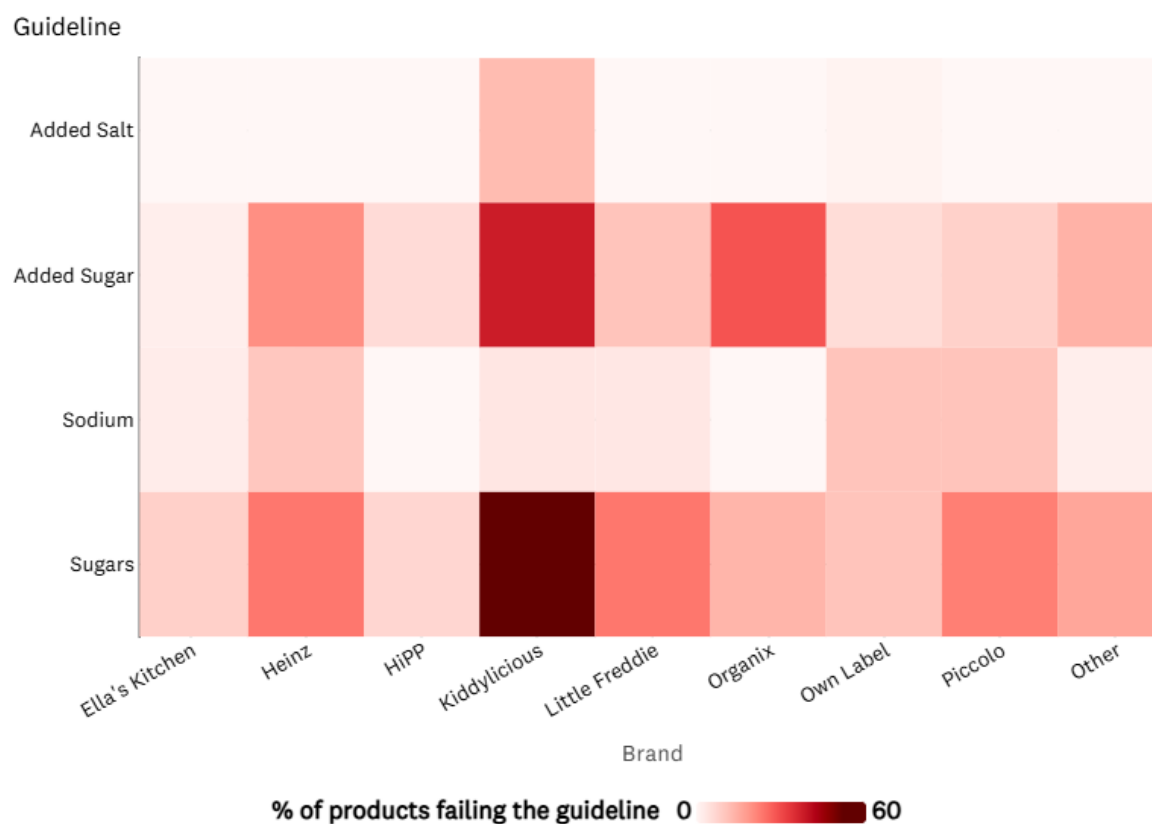
Table 3: Percentage of products failing the guidelines in May 2026 for each guideline category

Guideline category	Average number of products*	% (n) failing the guidelines			
		Sugar	Sodium	Added sugars	Added salt
Fruit and Vegetable Food	47	No guideline	No guideline	1% (1)	0% (0)
Main Meals	163	2% (3)	14% (24)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Dry Cereals	29	0% (0)	0% (0)	16% (4)	0% (0)
Desserts and Breakfasts	111	32% (37)	0% (0)	12% (13)	0% (0)
Soup, Stocks, and Cooking Sauces	1	No guideline	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Other Baby Meals	4	No guideline	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Sweet and Savoury Finger Foods and Snacks (Over 12m)	20	30% (8)	4% (1)	No guideline	4% (1)
Sweet and Savoury Finger Foods and Snacks (Under 12m)	77	16% (13)	0% (0)	40% (29)	10% (7)
Fruit and Vegetable-based Finger Foods and Snacks (Over 12m)	33	65% (30)	0% (0)	No guideline	0% (0)
Fruit and Vegetable-based Finger Foods and Snacks (Under 12m)	8	13% (1)	25% (2)	86% (6)	0% (0)
Baby Drinks	0	No guideline	No guideline	-	No guideline

*The exact number of products depends on which guideline is being assessed.

3.3 Compliance by brand

Figure 7: Percentage of products failing the guidelines in May 2026 for each brand



Note. Data is from May 2026 only. There were 118 Ella's Kitchen products, 84 Heinz products, 31 HiPP products, 59 Kiddylicious products, 32 Little Freddie products, 38 Organix products, 145 own-label products, 33 Piccolo products, and 98 other products.

As shown in Figure 7, there is wide variation in the level of compliance across brands. At the halfway point of the transition period (May 2026), we found that Kiddylicious had the highest percentage of its products failing the sugar guidelines (52%, 28 products). Comparatively, HiPP had the lowest rates of products failing the sugar guidelines, with 7% of products (2 products) failing the guidelines.

Figure 8: Examples of products that fail the sugar guidelines

Left: Heinz Fruity Banana Custard. As a dessert and breakfast product, this product fails the sugar guidelines as it has 15g of sugar per 100g (the guideline is less than 10g per 100g of product).

Middle: Kiddylicious Apple Fruit Wiggles. As a fruit and vegetable-based finger food and snack for infants over 12 months old, this product fails the sugar guidelines as it has 86% of energy coming from sugar (the guideline is less than 25% of energy from sugar per 100g).

Right: Piccolo Fruit Sticks Strawberry, Apple & Date. As a fruit and vegetable-based finger food and snack for infants over 12 months, this product fails the sugar guidelines as it has 85% of energy coming from sugar (the guideline is less than 25% of energy from sugar per 100g).

Compared to the rest of the brands, Kiddylicious also had the highest proportion of its products failing the added sugars guidelines (38%). Organix had 29% of its products failing the guidelines, Heinz had 20% and Little Freddie had 11%. The rest of the brands had around or fewer than 10% of products failing the guidelines.

With regards to the sodium guidelines, we found 2-11% of products failed for each brand, with the exception of Organix and HiPP products which all passed.

Only Kiddylicious products and own-label products failed to meet the added salt guidelines. There were 12% of Kiddylicious products (7 products) that failed the added salt guidelines, and we found one own-label product that failed.

We compared product failure rates across retailers and found very little difference between them.

4. Conclusions

Overall, our analysis indicates that the introduction of the voluntary nutrition guidelines in August 2025 has had no meaningful impact so far on the overall healthiness of commercial baby food. The proportion of products that do not satisfy the sugar, sodium, added sugars and added salt guidelines is largely unchanged since February 2024.

Since the voluntary guidelines were introduced, we could only find three products that have been reformulated such that they now meet the guidelines when they previously did not. Further, there is no evidence that new products are more likely to meet the guidelines.

Parents find it difficult to tell which products are best for their children and a failure to adequately regulate this market lets down children and parents, and contributes to long term health problems. The wide disparity in performance across brands also indicates that it fails businesses who provide compliant products, potentially placing them at a competitive disadvantage to those who offer non-compliant foods.

It may be that businesses will take action during the remainder of the transition period to provide reformulated products or to replace non-compliant products with healthier ones. However, it is disappointing that there had not been a more significant shift since the government published the guidelines.

If levels of compliance do not markedly improve in the remaining months of the transition period, then the government must take further action. This could include regularly reporting business performance against the voluntary guidelines or replacing the voluntary guidelines with mandatory requirements, although we recognise that the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU which is currently being negotiated could mean changes to baby food legislation will likely to need to be developed at EU level.

5. Annex

5.1 Summary of the WHO Nutrient and Promotion Profile Model (NPPM)

The WHO NPPM²¹ was developed in 2022 and informed the development of the UK voluntary guidelines for commercial baby food and drink²².

The NPPM applies to commercial baby food and drink aimed at 6 to 36 month olds and consists of two parts. Part A describes the nutritional guidelines, and part B describes the marketing and packaging guidelines.

5.1.1 Part A: Nutritional guidelines

- Fruit drinks and confectionery should not be marketed to children under 36 months
- There should be no added sugars and sweetening agents in products
- No high fat or high salt products
- Snacks should be savoury (low in total sugar) and portion sizes should be small
- Cereals and purées should not be watery (low in energy)
- Meals should have a minimum protein level, should be savoury in flavour and should contain limited fruit content (low in total sugar)

5.1.2 Part B: Marketing and packaging guidelines

- Products should be marketed for infants at least six months old
- Puréed foods should not be marketed at infants over 12 months old
- There should be front of pack indicators for high total sugar content, which is more than 30% energy for fruit or vegetable purées, desserts and dry fruit snacks and more than 40% energy in dairy foods
- There should be clear warnings that products with a spout should not be directly sucked
- No nutritional, health and marketing claims
- Include statements to promote breastfeeding
- Product name should reflect contents with the highest proportion of ingredients (so sweet/fruit contents are not hidden)
- Proportions of key ingredients should be listed on pack

5.2 Product counts

Initially 983 products were downloaded from our data provider. 46 products were excluded as they were out of stock at the beginning and the end of the month(s) they were included in. One product was removed because it was “Baby Focaccina” and therefore it was not baby food or drink. A further 67 products were excluded from the data as they did not contain any ingredient information, which was needed to classify them into a guideline category. After looking at the age that finger food and snack products were marketed to, another 71 products were removed as they were for 3+ year olds. The final analysis contained 798 products (plus 72 products from Lidl and Aldi from wave 10 only).

²¹ See footnote 16

²² See footnote 20

Table A1: Counts of products across waves

Wave	Number of products
February 2024	610
May 2024	604
August 2024	585
November 2024	574
February 2025	611
May 2025	617
August 2025	621
November 2025	613
February 2026	585
May 2026	566 (plus 72 Lidl and Aldi products)

5.3 Formulas

Note: All formulas have been taken from the voluntary guidelines guidance.

Sodium (mg per 100g) = salt (g per 100g) * 400

Sodium (mg per 100 Kcal) = $100 \times (\text{sodium (mg per 100g)} \div \text{energy (Kcal per 100g)})$

Energy (Kcal) provided by sugar (g per 100g) = sugar (g per 100g) * 4

Percentage (%) energy provided by sugar = $100 \times (\text{energy (Kcal) provided by sugar (g per 100g)} \div \text{energy (Kcal per 100g)})$

5.4 Data cleaning

To account for missing or erroneous data, data was collected weekly on Mondays throughout the month, and the most common value was selected for the final dataset.

Nutritional values would occasionally be reported as less than a specific number (eg <0.1). In these instances, the maximum number was used (eg 0.1).

For six cases, there was information on sodium (mg per 100g) but not salt (g per 100g). In these cases sodium (mg) was used.

There was an error with the data for 123 cases where nutritional values were all 100g per 100g. These were all sold by one specific retailer at one wave and were changed to missing.

If multiple retailers sold the same baby food/drink product, a two step process was used to decide which data would be used for the analysis. Firstly, if the nutritional value was exactly the same across all retailers, or if there was a clear mode, then the mode value was used. If

there was no clear mode, then the data from the retailer with the highest market share was used. The market share order was: Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, Waitrose, Ocado. For 6% of products, the market share order was used for at least one nutritional value in at least one wave.

5.4.1 Step-by-Step sorting process

Step 1: Separate products into overarching categories. Categories from our data provider labelled the product as either a baby drink, finger foods and snack, wet baby food or dry baby food. Baby drinks needed no further sorting.

Step 2: Categorise finger foods and snacks. Finger foods and snacks were initially categorised into products intended for infants “under 12 months olds” or “over 12 month olds” based on the product name (eg Organix Melty Carrot Organic Puffs, 6 Mths+). If no specific age was mentioned in the product name then we searched for the product on the retailer's site and recorded the age of the product from the packaging. Snacks aimed for 3+ year olds were removed from the dataset.

Finger foods and snacks for over 12 months old and under 12 months old were then each categorised into either “sweet and savoury finger foods or snacks” or “fruit and vegetable-based finger foods and snacks”, based on the percentage of fruits and vegetables in the product. Using the ingredients list, products that contained more than 25% fruit and vegetables were assigned to “fruit and vegetable-based finger foods and snacks”. The rest of the products were assigned to “sweet and savoury finger foods and snacks”.

Step 3: Categorise “desserts and breakfasts” and “soup, stock and cooking sauces”. We checked wet baby food product names for keywords. Product names that contained words such as “porridge”, “breakfast”, “yog(h)urt”, “custard”, “pudding”, “dessert”, “brekkie”, “oat”, “cereal(s)”, or “muesli” were assigned to the “desserts and breakfasts” category (exact wording in the [Keyword Searches](#) section of the Annex).

Product names that contained the words “pasta sauce” or “stir in” were assigned to the “soups, stocks and cooking sauces” category. Additionally, product names that contained the words “sauce”, “stock, or “soup” and did not contain any starchy components (eg pasta or rice) were assigned to this category.

Step 4: Categorise fruit and vegetable foods. Wet and dry baby food that contained 100% fruit and vegetables (as determined from the ingredients list) were assigned to the “fruit and vegetable foods” category. However, the guidelines state that functional ingredients such as ascorbic acid (vitamin C), water, or lemon/lime juice are allowed to be in the ingredients lists for products in this category. This meant that for some products the fruit and vegetable content in the ingredients list did not sum to 100. Therefore, to the “fruit and vegetable foods” category we added any remaining wet and dry products that met at least one of the following criteria:

- The product contained at least 95% fruit and vegetables, OR
- The product contained at least 50% fruit and vegetables and the ingredients list/product name did not contain any savoury words or ingredients (ie meat, fish, dairy, pasta, rice, beans)

Step 5: Categorise the remaining baby meals. The remaining dry foods were assigned to the “dry cereals” category. The remaining wet foods were assigned to main meals.

We assessed whether products were in the correct categories and made manual adjustments where necessary (see the [Quality assurance](#) section of the Annex for more details).

5.5 Assessment of the guidelines

Table A2: Nutritional guidelines by category

Guideline category	Type of guideline			
	Sugars guideline	Sodium guideline	Added sugars guideline	Added salt guideline
Fruit and Vegetable Food	No guideline	No guideline	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt
Main Meals	Less than or equal to 5% limit on fruit content by weight	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt
Dry Cereals	Less than or equal to 10% limit on fruit content per 100g dry weight (not as prepared)	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt
Desserts and Breakfasts	Less than 10g total sugar per 100g	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt
Soup, Stocks, and Cooking Sauces	No guideline	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt

Other Baby Meals	No guideline	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt
Sweet and Savoury Finger Foods and Snacks (Over 12m)	Less than 10% of energy per 100g from total sugar	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No guideline	No added salt
Sweet and Savoury Finger Foods and Snacks (Under 12m)	Less than 10% of energy per 100g from total sugar	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt
Fruit and Vegetable Finger Foods and Snacks (Over 12m)	Less than 25% of energy per 100g from total sugar	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No guideline	No added salt
Fruit and Vegetable Finger Foods and Snacks (Under 12m)	Less than 25% of energy per 100g from total sugar	Less than 60mg sodium per 100 kcal, or less than 100mg sodium per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in front of pack name	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No added salt
Baby Drinks	No guideline	No guideline	No added sugars or sweetening agents	No guideline

Added salt was measured by the presence of “salt” in the ingredients list. Added sugars were measured by the ingredients list containing sugar, honey, syrup, nectar, fructose, sucrose, glucose, juice or juice concentrate (except lemon or lime), galactose or lactose (except if the product contained whey). The threshold for sodium is 60mg per 100 kcal, or 100mg per 100 kcal if cheese is mentioned in the front of pack name. Consequently, to assess the sodium guidelines the product names were searched for the presence of the words “cheese” or “cheesy”.

The added sugars guideline for the “Dry Cereals” category specifies fruit content per 100g dry weight, as opposed to weight as prepared. We did not have information on whether the nutritional values are based on wet or dry weight, but made the assumption that the nutritional values were based on dry weight.

The percentage of fruit and vegetable (or purely fruit) in a product was calculated by summing the individual percentages of fruit and vegetable ingredients in the product. For 16 products the fruit and vegetable content listed in the ingredients list was over 100% so these were assumed to be 100% fruit and vegetable foods.

5.6 Keyword searches

5.6.1 Produce Identification Categories

Fruit Terms

"\b(apple|apples|banana|bananas|strawberry|strawberries|berry|berries|raspberry|raspberries|blueberry|blueberries|blackberry|blackberries|pear|pears|peach|peaches|plum|plums|mango|mangos|mangoes|apricot|apricots|cherry|cherries|orange|oranges|grape|grapes|raisin|raisins|sultana|sultanas|date|dates|fig|figs|prune|prunes|blackcurrant|blackcurrants|acerola|pineapple|pineapples|kiwi|kiwis|rhubarb|passion fruit|passionfruit|avocado|avocados|acai|nectarine|nectarines|papaya|papayas|pomegranate|redcurrant|redcurrants|fruit|fruits|raisins contains sunflower oil)\b"

Vegetable Terms

"\b(carrot|carrots|sweetcorn|tomato|tomatoes|pea|peas|parsnip|parsnips|beetroot|beetroots|pumpkin|pumpkins|squash|squashes|sweet potato|sweet potatoes|spinach|broccoli|courgette|courgettes|onion|onions|garlic|pepper|peppers|leek|leeks|swede|swedes|turnip|turnips|cauliflower|mushroom|mushrooms|celeriac|celery|aubergine|aubergines|kale|cabbage|zucchini|zucchinis|haricot bean|haricot beans|green bean|green beans|french bean|french beans)\b"

5.6.2 Added Sugars, Salt, and Exclusions

Added Sugars

"sugar|honey|syrup|nectar|\bfructose\b|sucrose|glucose|juice concentrate|juices concentrate|juice from concentrate|juices from concentrate|lactose|galactose|coconut water"

Added Salt

"\bsalt\b"

Lemon and Lime Juice

"lemon juice concentrate|lime juice concentrate|lemon juice|lime juice"

5.6.3 Meal Components and Specific Product Types

Savoury (by Product Name)

"chicken|beef|turkey|lamb|pork|meat|fish|salmon|tuna|pasta|spaghetti|rice|cheese|lentil|chick pea|bean|mash"

Savoury (by Ingredients List)

"chicken|beef|turkey|lamb|pork|meat|fish|salmon|tuna|pasta|spaghetti|rice|cheese|lentil|chick pea|bean|flour|oat|wheat|grain|semolina|cornflour|starch|milk|cream|yoghurt|yogurt|oil|butter|quinoa"

Breakfast and Dessert

"porridge|breakfast|yoghurt|yogurt|custard|pudding|dessert|brekkie|\\boat\\b|muesli|oaty|milk|yog|oats|crumble|coconut|superboost|cereal|cereals"

Pasta Sauces

"pasta sauce|stir in|stir-in"

Soups, Stocks, and Cooking Sauces

"sauce|stock|soup"

Starchy Components

"Pasta|spaghetti|macaroni|noodle|noodles|rice"

5.7 Quality assurance

To make sure there were not any fruits or vegetables missing from the fruit and vegetable terms, we examined the ingredients that appeared on the products' ingredients lists that were not included in the fruit and vegetable terms. From looking at this list we were confident that we had not missed any fruit or vegetables.

To check the accuracy of the product categorisation, a random sample of 10% of the products (n = 85) were manually categorised. Five products (6%) were incorrectly classified. These are described below:

- One product was incorrectly classified as a finger food/snack because there was an error in the category-level data from our data provider. It should have been assigned to the fruit and vegetable food category.
- One product was incorrectly classified as a main meal instead of a dessert/breakfast, as "coconut" was not included in the keyword list for dessert and breakfast products. As coconut milk/cream is mostly used in baby food and drink as a dairy alternative, the word "coconut" was added to the dessert/breakfast keywords list.
- Three products were incorrectly classified as fruit and vegetable foods. Whilst they mostly contained fruit and vegetables, they also contained a small amount of flour or chicory fibre, so should be classified as dessert and breakfast products

Following this random sample, we decided to manually look through the entire dataset to check for incorrect categorisations and made changes where necessary. This included:

- Looking for products with the word "kids" in the product name and checking on the retailer's website whether they are intended for children aged over three years old
- Checking for main meals with the word "coconut" in the product name that might have been assigned to desserts and breakfasts
- Moving products that are a combination of fruit, dairy (or dairy alternatives) or starchy foods from main meals to fruit and vegetable foods
- Moving plain rice and plain pasta products from dry cereals to other baby meals

- We checked all the product names that contained the word “porridge” on the retailers website to check whether they are intended to be reconstituted or not. If they are meant to be reconstituted they were assigned to dry cereals, if not they were assigned to desserts and breakfasts
- Finger food and snacks that were 100% plain dried fruit (eg raisins, apples) were assigned to the fruit and vegetable food category
- Finger foods and snacks which had ingredients with missing proportions were searched online and assigned either as a fruit or vegetable-based finger food and snack or a sweet and savoury finger food and snack

5.8 Supplementary results

Table A3: Counts of products passing and failing the sugar guidelines for each wave

Date	Wave number	Guideline (n)			No guidelines (n)
		Pass	Fail	Data missing	
February 2024	1	410	79	4	117
May 2024	2	407	79	5	113
August 2024	3	386	75	8	116
November 2024	4	369	84	4	117
February 2025	5	398	89	6	118
May 2025	6	402	81	8	126
August 2025	7	401	84	5	131
November 2025	8	380	92	12	129
February 2026	9	367	88	10	120
May 2026	10	403	92	10	133

Note: May 2026 includes Lidl and Aldi data

Table A4: Counts of products passing and failing the sodium guidelines for each wave

Date	Wave number	Guideline (n)			No guidelines (n)
		Pass	Fail	Data missing	
February 2024	1	455	30	20	105
May 2024	2	452	31	19	102
August 2024	3	425	31	22	107
November 2024	4	428	24	14	108

February 2025	5	456	27	19	109
May 2025	6	447	30	24	116
August 2025	7	445	29	26	121
November 2025	8	429	26	38	120
February 2026	9	424	24	24	113
May 2026	10	464	27	20	127

Note: May 2026 includes Lidl and Aldi data

Table A5: Counts of products passing and failing the added sugars guidelines for each wave

Date	Wave number	Guideline (n)			No guidelines (n)
		Pass	Fail	Data missing	
February 2024	1	487	59	2	62
May 2024	2	482	56	5	61
August 2024	3	457	60	9	59
November 2024	4	434	65	14	61
February 2025	5	467	63	14	67
May 2025	6	484	58	13	62
August 2025	7	355	46	165	55
November 2025	8	366	47	137	63
February 2026	9	358	44	121	62
May 2026	10	405	53	115	65

Note: May 2026 includes Lidl and Aldi data

Table A6: Counts of products passing and failing the added salt guidelines for each wave

Date	Wave number	Guideline (n)			No guidelines (n)
		Pass	Fail	Data missing	
February 2024	1	591	11	2	6
May 2024	2	583	11	5	5
August 2024	3	557	11	9	8

November 2024	4	541	11	14	8
February 2025	5	578	11	14	8
May 2025	6	585	11	13	0
August 2025	7	446	10	165	0
November 2025	8	468	8	137	0
February 2026	9	456	8	121	0
May 2026	10	515	8	115	0

Note: May 2026 includes Lidl and Aldi data

Table A7: Percentages and counts of products failing the guidelines in May 2025, split by brand

Guideline category	Total number of products	% (n) failing the guidelines			
		Sugar	Sodium	Added sugars	Added salt
Ella's Kitchen	118	8% (7)	2% (2)*	2% (2)	0% (0)
Heinz	84	23% (17)	10% (7)	20% (15)	0% (0)
HiPP	31	7% (2)	0% (0)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Kiddylicious	59	52% (28)	4% (2)	38% (14)	12% (7)
Little Freddie	32	23% (7)	3% (1)	11% (3)	0% (0)
Organix	38	14%(5)	0% (0)	29% (4)	0% (0)
Own Label	145	11% (11)	11% (11)	6% (6)	1% (1)
Piccolo	33	22% (6)	11% (3)	8% (2)	0% (0)
Other	98	16% (9)	2% (1)	14% (6)	0% (0)

**As of August 2026 these products would pass the sodium guidelines as they have now have "cheese" in the product name, meaning the limit for sodium for these products is 100mg per 100 kcal*

5.9 Rights of reply from brands

We offered all brands listed in Table A7 a right of reply. Included below are the responses we received.

A spokesperson for Ella's Kitchen said: "We strongly support the new OHID guidelines and believe they should be made mandatory across the baby food category, in order to raise standards and ensure that parents and carers have access to products they know they can trust, regardless of which brand they're buying.

"Over the past year, we have worked closely with OHID to ensure that all products leaving our warehouse will be in full nutritional and marketing compliance by the February 2027 deadline. Over 95% of our range already meets these higher OHID nutritional standards, with the remaining undergoing reformulation or de-listing over the coming months. A number of these reformulations have already been rolled out since May 2026.

"Regarding the Nutty Mangoes, Pears and Almonds blend in particular, we have increased the pear content and reduced the mango content of the recipe in order to reduce sugar by 16%, bringing the product in line with the OHID recommendations. The reformulated blend, now labelled 'Nutty Pears, Mangoes and Almonds,' will be on shelves from January.

"We continue to welcome the increased focus on healthy eating for little ones, and regularly review our recipes to ensure we're providing safe, convenient, and nutritious options that support parents and carers when life gets busy."

A spokesperson for Heinz said: "We welcome the government's voluntary guidelines and are actively working to reduce sugar and salt where possible. We know these changes matter, and making them carefully helps us maintain the taste and quality parents and caregivers expect from our products."



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