Just when you would expect everyone to be concerned about the growing problem of obesity in the UK events take an unpredictable turn. British Telecom (BT) are entering the retail arena by selling confectionery and fizzy drinks from – wait for it – their telephone kiosks!

With the explosion in mobile phone use and the loss of its telephone monopoly BT has approximately 40,000 loss-making kiosks. An initial 20 of these in the West Midlands are being turned into vending machines. The traditional phone-box will remain but the interior will be gutted to install the coin-operated machines. Telephones (if they are needed) will now be affixed to the exterior of the box.

As around 60 per cent of BT’s 70,000 kiosks are running at a loss we can expect to see more of these bright red sweet-boxes (candy boxes) across the countryside. A few may be converted into walk-in ‘jukeboxes’ with downloadable tracks. BT have not said what happens to the customer who gets a cross-line or whether you can press button B and get your money back.

The spread of sweet-boxes is in marked contrast to an initiative in Walsall where child obesity clinics have been opened and from where, it is hoped, such clinics can be replicated in other regions of the country. Walsall was chosen as it is reckoned to be 'the fat capital of Europe'.

Leeds Metropolitan University rose to the challenge presented by the designation by devising a walk-in clinic programme where children come regularly for monthly meetings during the course of a year. Already success has been notched up for the children through a mixture of education and physical activities.

Reporter Katie Coyne says, 'Six months into the course, around half of the children had lost weight while the rest remained the same weight. It is important to note that, as the children are still growing, those whose weight stayed the same are in effect "growing out" of their weight problem.'

Whilst it is good to see the progress made in the clinics it would be much better to see the education and activities being carried out in the home by involving parents in the process of decreasing the risk of obesity.

Still, it is good to know that help is at hand for those who need it. However, if the children need an obesity hot-line it might be best to avoid BT's red sweet-boxes, or it might just become a self-defeating exercise!