

TIME FOR BRITAIN TO STOP BEING SO FAT



To Stop Obesity we Must STOP Big Sugar

When Theresa May first became Prime Minister, she pledged that she would look after the sick and poor and yet within three weeks, along with her previous advisors, she had slashed David Cameron's evidence-based obesity plan from 37 to 13 pages, cutting out many vital policies. The plan was released during the summer recess, with the hope that it would receive limited publicity, unfortunately for her; the public health community were vocally disappointed.

Furthermore, during the Prime Minister's stripped down Queen's Speech, there was not a single mention given to strengthening the Government's plan to curb childhood obesity - the biggest public health crisis that we face.

As Parliament returns next month, we now call on the Prime Minister to strengthen the weak obesity plan and start saving the lives of those who are socially deprived whilst helping rescue the NHS from bankruptcy.

Action on Sugar is now calling on the Prime Minister to prioritise four main policy areas:

1. Reformulation of sugar, saturated fat and salt in foods and drinks

We now have a government-led Sugar Reduction Programme whereby companies have been asked to remove 20% of sugar in the nine food categories most commonly consumed by children by 2020. However, there are get-out clauses for the food industry and no penalties for not complying. There are no plans to set further sugar reduction targets (assuming that they are achieved by 2020), and these must be reset in two or three years' time. The programme needs to be transparently monitored, and if the industry does not comply, the targets mandated.

Fat is a bigger contributor to calories in the diet than sugar. The government must launch a fat and calorie reduction programme to remove 20% of the calories in food by 2020, focusing on saturated fat (particularly palm oil), as this will have the additional benefit of reducing cholesterol levels as well as overall calories.

The salt reduction programme must also be reinvigorated, with new targets set immediately.

2. Stop marketing and promotions of unhealthy food & drink

The current obesity plan has given the food and drink industry free rein to market and put price promotions on food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS). It is vital that only non-HFSS are allowed to be marketed and promoted to children, including instore price promotions and meal deals. Cigarette advertising is banned in the UK, yet unhealthy food and drinks are now a bigger cause of death and disability.

3. Duty on all sugar-sweetened soft drinks and confectionary

Parliament approved the soft drinks industry levy just before the election and it is now vital that this is fully monitored and enforced. The drinks industry should be strongly encouraged to reformulate all of their drinks. There is concern that those brands, who refuse to reduce sugar in their products, will pass the cost of the levy onto their customers and distribute it evenly

across their high and low sugar products. This will create little or no incentive to choose the healthier option. Therefore, it seems only right that at the same time for companies that refuse to reformulate, the sugar levy should escalate over time similar to tobacco. The levy should also be extended to sugary milk-based drinks, which are currently excluded, and also to confectionary, as they are contributors of sugar to the diets of children.

4. Colour-coded front of pack labelling on all food and drink

The obesity plan acknowledged the need for better nutrition labelling. In the meantime, the government must ensure manufacturers adopt the Department of Health recommended colour-coded labelling across food and drinks, which is vital for consumers to make more informed, healthier choices. The criteria should also be reviewed and updated with stricter and clearer criteria for high salt, sugars, saturated fat and calories, ideally separating 'added sugars' from the 'total sugars' Reference Intake, as this includes an allowance for sugars naturally occurring in milk-based products, fruit and vegetables. This labelling must be introduced across all products, and must be publically available on their websites, as well as on packaging or menus for foods and drinks available in restaurants, coffee shops and other out-of-home eateries and catering companies. Ideally this should be mandatory.

This recommendation coincides with new research by Action on Sugar which exposed many perceived 'healthy' cereal brands who have failed to include the colour-coded labelling - despite some products containing high levels of sugar which would equate to a red label.

The Prime Minister has a unique opportunity to fight childhood obesity once and for all, and has the support of Action on Sugar, as well as parents across the UK hoping for a better future for their children.



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