

## Obesity Health Alliance

### **Briefing on the Soft Drinks Industry Levy – Summary**

The Obesity Health Alliance (OHA) is a coalition of organisations committed to share expertise and support Government to tackle the issue of overweight and obesity in the UK. Obesity is a complex problem and there is no single silver bullet. A comprehensive range of population level policy interventions is required to tackle it.

### Summary of policy

***The Government should introduce an effective levy on sugar-sweetened beverages as soon as possible that results in a significant reduction in the consumption of free sugar from sugar-sweetened drinks. The impact of this tax should be monitored and evaluated annually with revenue raised reinvested in public health promotion.***

### **Key points**

- Children are eating too much sugar, salt and saturated fat.<sup>1,2</sup> We know that eating too much can lead to weight gain and obesity, putting them at risk of serious diseases and tooth decay in the future.
- We welcome the Government's levy to help children and adults cut down on their free sugars<sup>i</sup> intake from sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). The soft drinks industry levy is a vital measure in the fight against overweight and obesity in the UK.
- The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and World Health Organization (WHO) have recommended 'free sugars' should not make up more than 5% of daily energy intake for adults and children aged over 2.<sup>3,4</sup> However, caloric intake through free sugar remains high - 11-18 year-olds consume three times more free sugar than the new guidelines, and sugary drinks remain their number one source of sugar.<sup>5,6</sup>
- In addition to promoting reformulation, the evidence base is clear that a soft drinks industry levy is also likely to have a positive health impact by reducing consumption of sugary drinks.<sup>7,8</sup> It is important that it is evaluated so that it can be refined and adjusted to continually deliver public health gains.

### **Public support**

- A soft drinks industry levy has been backed by public health organisations including individual members of this coalition, the WHO, Public Health England, Food Standards Scotland, and the House of Commons Health Select Committee.<sup>9,10,11,12</sup>
- More than 155,000 people supported a petition to introduce a sugary drinks tax.<sup>13</sup> Polling from March 2016 found that 69% of the public support a tax on sugary drinks.<sup>14</sup> Also in March, polling published in The Grocer found 56% of Brits support the sugar levy - respondents in this poll indicated a 50% price increase from current retail price was the most popular change, with support for this increase highest among 16-24 year olds.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> This comprises all monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices. Under this definition lactose (the sugar in milk) when naturally present in milk and milk products and the sugars contained within the cellular structure of foods (particularly fruits and vegetables) are excluded.

## Contact

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health (2012). *National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Headline Results from Years 1, 2 and 3 (combined) of the Rolling Programme 2008/09 – 2010/11*.

<sup>2</sup> Public Health England (2014). *Sugar reduction: Responding to the challenge*. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/324043/Sugar\\_Reduction\\_Responding\\_to\\_the\\_Challenge\\_26\\_June.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/324043/Sugar_Reduction_Responding_to_the_Challenge_26_June.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. (2015). *Carbohydrates and Health*. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/445503/SACN\\_Carbohydrates\\_and\\_Health.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445503/SACN_Carbohydrates_and_Health.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation. (2015). *Sugars intake for adults and children. Guideline*. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/149782/1/9789241549028\\_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/149782/1/9789241549028_eng.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>5</sup> British Soft Drinks Association. (2016). *Response to the proposed soft drinks levy*. <http://www.britishtsoftdrinks.com/Press-releases-response-to-the-proposed-soft-drinks-levy>

<sup>6</sup> Public Health England. (2014). *National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Results from Years 1-4 (combined) of the Rolling Programme (2008/2009 – 2011/12)*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-results-from-years-1-to-4-combined-of-the-rolling-programme-for-2008-and-2009-to-2011-and-2012>

<sup>7</sup> Cornelson, L., and Carriedo, A. (2015). *Health-related taxes on foods and beverages*. Food Research Collaboration. <http://foodresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Food-and-beverages-taxes-final-amended.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organisation. (2016). *Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity*. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/204176/1/9789241510066\\_eng.pdf?ua=1&ua=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/204176/1/9789241510066_eng.pdf?ua=1&ua=1)

<sup>10</sup> Public Health England. (2015). *Sugar reduction: from evidence into action*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-from-evidence-into-action>

<sup>11</sup> Food Standards Scotland. (2016). *Food Standards Scotland agrees to radical measure to tackle Scotland's diet-related health problems*. <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/news/food-standards-scotland-agrees-radical-measures-tackle-scotland%E2%80%99s-diet-related-health-problems>

<sup>12</sup> House of Commons Health Committee. *Childhood obesity – brave and bold action*. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmhealth/465/465.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Petitions. *Introduce a tax on sugary drinks in the UK to improve our children's health*. <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/106651>

<sup>14</sup> Ipsos Mori. (2016). 'Political monitor'. <http://www.slideshare.net/IpsosMORI/ipsos-mori-political-monitor-march-2016>

<sup>15</sup> The Grocer. (2016). *More than half of Brits support sugar tax... but will it work*. <http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/reports/digital-features/soft-drinks-report-2016/more-than-half-of-brits-support-sugar-tax-but-will-it-work/533960.article>