

Obesity Health Alliance:

Manifesto for 2019 General Election

The Obesity Health Alliance (OHA) is a coalition of 44 leading charities, medical royal colleges and campaign groups working together to share their expertise and support the Government in reducing overweight and obesity in the UK. Together, we represent the views of hundreds of thousands of health professionals and public health experts who will wholly support the next government to address obesity and help everyone achieve a healthy weight

- Every child has the right to grow up healthy to ensure strong, thriving and productive future generations.
- One in three children have a weight classified as overweight or obese when they leave primary school, with the most disadvantaged children significantly more likely to be affected.ⁱ 64% of adults are classed as overweight or obese.ⁱⁱ
- Obesity increases the risk of developing serious diseases including Type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart and liver disease plus associated mental health problems. Without effective Government action, the UK-wide NHS costs attributable to overweight and obesity are projected to reach £9.7 billion by 2050, with wider costs to society estimated to reach £49.9 billion per year.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 86% of people are concerned about childhood obesity with 69% saying the next Prime Minister should continue to prioritise it.^{iv}
- We are calling on the next Government to commit to the minimum target of halving childhood obesity and significantly closing the inequality gap by 2030, alongside reducing adult obesity by introducing effective policies to help everyone be a healthy weight. This promise should be enshrined in party manifestos.

Listed below is a set of urgent policy interventions that we collectively believe will reduce rates of overweight and obesity, and address the wider environmental factors that lead to excess bodyweight, as well as the social inequality and cultural differences in overweight and obesity prevalence.

Protecting children

Every child has the right to a healthy start in life, protected from the tide of unhealthy food marketing. Research clearly shows that advertising of unhealthy food and drink can influence children's purchases, consumption and food preferences;^{v,vi} and advertising and marketing on the TV^{vii}, internet and in retail environments^{viii,ix} is skewed towards unhealthy products. Existing regulations from Ofcom and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) need strengthening and regulation needs extending to cover all types of marketing practices.

- **Children should be protected from exposure to advertising for food and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS). The next Government should fully implement a 9pm watershed on junk food adverts on TV and online, with similar restrictions introduced for radio, cinema and digital out of home. HFSS adverts should be restricted from display within 100 metres of schools, nurseries and children’s centres and HFSS branded sponsorship banned from schools. The use of brand equity and licensed characters should be banned from being associated with HFSS products.**
- **The soft drinks industry levy (SDIL) should be extended to milk based sugary drinks. To incentivise further reformulation the SDIL threshold should be lowered and levy rate increased above inflation rises with revenue raised reinvested in measures to improve public health. The Government should explore widening the levy to other product categories where sugar reduction is not in line with Public Health England targets.**

Making healthy choices easier

Our current environment is flooded with unhealthy food and drinks making it difficult for people to eat healthily. The retail environment is skewed to unhealthy choices,^{x,xi} everyday food is packed with more sugar, saturated fat and salt than we need and over-sized portions are the norm. Adults and children should be presented with easy to understand nutritional information about the products they are buying to help them make an informed healthy decision.

- **Everyday food and drinks should be made healthier with the food industry being held to account by the Government with ambitious targets to incrementally reduce sugar, saturated fat and salt as well as overall calories. The existing programme should be extended to include infant food as soon as possible. The Government should explore and set a timeline for sanctions for non-compliance including fines and inclusion of categories into an industry levy.**
- **Healthier retail environments should be created by introducing comprehensive restrictions on multi-buy and location based promotions on HFSS food and drinks in retail and out of home (OOH) outlets.^{xii} The Government should commission further research into the extent and impact of price reduction promotions in retail outlets and multi-buy promotions in out of home outlets.**
- **People should be supported to make healthier food choices. The Government can do this by fully delivering on plans to implement mandatory calorie labelling of food and drinks in all out of home outlets^{xiii} with full nutritional information available on request. Colour coded front of pack labelling should be mandatory on all processed food and drinks for all retailers and manufacturers. As part of this scheme, the Government should explore options on how to communicate free sugar content of foods.**

Creating a healthy environment

The wider environment plays an important role in supporting healthy living. Schools and early years settings are well placed to ensure children both eat and learn about healthy foods and local authorities have a key role to play in shaping a healthy environment. In order to ensure that our environments facilitate and encourage healthier behaviours and address the inequalities that drive obesity prevalence among our most deprived communities:

- **Schools and early years settings should promote and facilitate healthy behaviour. The Government can facilitate this by updating school food standards and ensuring they apply to all state-funded schools and early years settings. Implementation of school food standards and provision of cooking education should be included in the Healthy Schools Rating Scheme, which should be mandatory for all state-funded schools and early years settings and monitored by Ofsted.**
- **The Government should commit to truly sustainable funding for public health, so local authorities have the resources needed to take action on obesity in their area and ensure there are no gaps in access to obesity prevention and treatment services. The Government should clearly prioritise healthy and active environments as part of the planning process giving local authorities and communities the flexibility to respond to obesity challenges through licensing, planning, advertising and shaping the local environment.**
- **All food served, sold and promoted to patients, staff and visitors in hospitals and other NHS premises should promote a healthy balanced diet in line with the Eatwell Guide or tailored to a patient's dietary requirements. This should be achieved via updating the standards as detailed in the NHS long-term plan and mandating the standards with regular monitoring and sanctions for non-compliance.**

Training and support

It is vital that medical professionals are equipped with the time, skills and resources to identify and support patients. In addition there needs to be sustained and significant investment from Central Government to ensure vital services that monitor and support people are available. In order to support more people to lose weight and maintain a healthy weight:

- **All healthcare and early years professionals should be adequately supported to make every contact count to discuss obesity and provide support to families. This should be achieved by leading a joined-up approach across all parts of Government and public bodies to ensure that: every clinical and health discipline includes evidence-based training on having action-focused conversations about obesity, weight management, nutrition, physical activity, breastfeeding and behaviour change.**

For more information please contact:

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This manifesto is supported by all members of the Obesity Health Alliance:



Steering Group

British Heart Foundation, British Medical Association, Cancer Research UK, Children's Food Campaign, Diabetes UK, Faculty of Public Health, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Royal College of Physicians

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- ⁱ 2019. NHS Digital. National Child Measurement Programme England, 2018/19 school year.
- ⁱⁱ 2018. NHS Digital. Health Survey England.
- ⁱⁱⁱ 2007. Foresight. Tackling Obesities: Future Choices – Project Report. Government Office for Science.
- ^{iv} ComRes interviewed 2,058 adults in Great Britain aged 18+ online between 19th and 20th June 2019. Data were weighted to be demographically representative of all adults in Great Britain by key demographics, including age, gender, region and social grade.
- ^v 2015. Public Health England. Sugar Reduction: the evidence for action.
- ^{vi} 2016. Boyland E, Nolan S, Kelly B. Advertising as a cue to consume: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of acute exposure to unhealthy food and nonalcoholic beverage advertising on intake in children and adults *Am J Clin Nutr*.
- ^{vii} 2017. Obesity Health Alliance. A Watershed Moment: Why it's Prime-Time to Reduce Children's Exposure to Junk Food Advertising.
- ^{viii} 2016. Public Health England. Sugar Reduction: The evidence for action. Annexe 4: An analysis of the role of price promotions on the household purchases of food and drinks high in sugar.
- ^{ix} 2018. Obesity Health Alliance. Out of place: The extent of unhealthy foods in prime locations in Supermarkets.
- ^x 2016. Public Health England. Sugar Reduction: The evidence for action. Annexe 4: An analysis of the role of price promotions on the household purchases of food and drinks high in sugar.
- ^{xi} 2013. Thornton L, Cameron, A, McNaughton S et al. Does the availability of snack foods in supermarkets vary internationally? *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity*. 10:56.
- ^{xii} 2019. Department of Health and Social Care. Consultation on restricting promotions of products high in fat, sugar and salt by location and by price.
- ^{xiii} 2018. Department of Health and Social Care. Calorie labelling for food and drink served outside of the home.