

Obesity Health Alliance:

Joint Policy Position on Obesity and Healthy Weight

The Obesity Health Alliance (OHA) is a coalition of over 40 leading charities, medical royal colleges and campaign groups working together to advocate for evidence based, population level policy and practice to address excess weight related ill-health.

The coronavirus pandemic has left us in no doubt of the urgent need to ensure that we have a healthy and resilient population, and we have an opportunity to make steps towards this as we get back on our feet. An increase in population level healthy weight will help reduce preventable diseases associated with obesity including Type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart disease and associated mental health conditions as well as build resilience to infectious disease.

OHA members have agreed set of ten policy interventions that we believe will help address the wider environmental factors that lead to excess bodyweight, as well as the social inequality and cultural differences in overweight and obesity prevalence.

Full Delivery of the Childhood Obesity Plan

The Government should immediately introduce the comprehensive policies outlined in chapters 1,2 and 3 of the Childhood Obesity Plan. These policies are based on strong evidence and will help shape a healthier food environment for both children and adults.

- 1. Hold the food industry to account for meeting targets to reduce sugar and overall calories from everyday foods by setting a clear timeline for measures for companies and categories failing to make progress, including fines and the introduction of an industry levy. The programme should be extended to introduce a bold package of measures to reformulate infant food.**
- 2. Create healthier retail environments by removing multi-buy and location-based promotions of high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) food and drinks in all kinds of retail outlets. As a next step, 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.**
- 3. Introduce a comprehensive 9pm watershed so only adverts for non-HFSS products can be shown before 9pm. The watershed should apply to all media including TV, radio, online, cinema and digital out of home, with no exemptions. As a next step, HFSS adverts should not be placed within 100 metres of schools, nurseries and children's centres and HFSS branded sponsorship banned from schools. HFSS products should not be associated with brand equity and licensed characters.**
- 4. Extend the soft drinks industry levy to include sugar-sweetened dairy drinks. To incentivise further reformulation the threshold should be lowered and levy rate increased above inflation with revenue used to support measures to improve public health. The Government should explore widening the levy to other product categories where sugar reduction is not in line with targets.**
- 5. Introduce calorie labelling of all food and drinks in all out of home outlets, with full nutritional information available on request, and a full package of support for all outlets to support implementation. Colour coded front of pack labelling should be mandatory on all processed food and drinks for retailers and manufacturers. As part of this scheme, the Government should explore options on how to communicate the free sugar content of foods.**

A Life Course Approach to Support Healthy Weight at All Ages

There is a need to support people to reach and maintain a healthier weight at every stage of their lives with a comprehensive and sustained approach to prevention, treatment and support at every age. This must include addressing the inequalities that drive obesity prevalence among our most deprived communities, and in Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities:

- 6. Ensure schools and early years settings promote and facilitate healthy behaviour. The Government should do this by updating the school food standards for both primary and secondary schools, and by making the current voluntary food and drink guidelines for early years settings mandatory. All schools should provide food education and practical cookery lessons. These measures should be monitored by Ofsted via the Healthy Schools Rating Scheme.**
- 7. All health, social care 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 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.**
- 8. The Government should use the Spending Review to deliver 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.**
- 9. The Government should ensure that all food served, sold and promoted to staff and visitors in hospitals and other NHS premises promotes a healthy balanced diet in line with the Eatwell Guide. Food served to patients should be appetising, nourishing and tailored to their recovery needs. 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.**
- 10. The Government should commit to reducing obesity and supporting everyone to be a healthy weight. The target to halve levels of obesity in children and significantly closing the inequality gap by 2030 should remain a cross-Government priority with consideration given to how obesity can be reduced in adults. All obesity reduction efforts should focus on both prevention and treatment.**

The Government should fully utilise all the policy tools at its disposal to effectively address obesity, including regulation. Progress must be routinely measured and evaluated to hold all those responsible to account for their progress.

We are committed to working with the Government to create an environment that makes it easier for everyone to be a healthier weight.