



# The Association of Directors of Public Health

## Response to the Government's Childhood Obesity Plan for Action

**The Childhood Obesity Plan for Action is just a starting point for the further action required to tackle childhood obesity**

The [Childhood Obesity Plan for Action](#) includes plans to implement the sugary drinks industry levy and to target physical activity. ADPH welcomed the ambitious soft drinks levy<sup>1</sup>, and recognises the positive aims of the Plan for Action, including the intention of delivering at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity for every primary school pupil. However, the evidence is clear that physical activity alone will not make the far-reaching change that is needed.

The PHE 2015 Sugar Reduction evidence review found that all forms of marketing consistently influence food preference, choice and purchasing in children and adults<sup>2</sup>, and it recommends action in order to significantly reduce opportunities to market and advertise high sugar food and drink products to children and adults across all media<sup>3</sup>. Today's Childhood Obesity Plan for Action misses an opportunity to implement this recommendation, by omitting curbs on the advertising of unhealthy food and drink to children.

ADPH notes that the measures implemented by the government focus on voluntary targets for the food industry to reduce the amount of sugar in popular children's products. The Children's Food Campaign concluded that the Responsibility Deal approach was fundamentally flawed in its expectation that industry will take voluntary actions that prioritise public health interests above its own commercial interests. The food industry itself is calling for compulsory targets, so that they are not waiting for each other to be the first to act. ADPH hopes that if the industry does not respond comprehensively and swiftly to voluntary sugar reduction targets then regulatory action will quickly follow.<sup>4</sup>

Public health needs action by Government in association with the health profession<sup>5</sup> as well as local and individual activity. ADPH sincerely hope that the Government fulfils their promise to 'take further action where it is needed', and provide the leadership to truly address this vital health and economic issue.

ADPH President, Dr Andrew Furber, said:

"The UK has very high levels of childhood obesity by any international or historical comparison and this is already having a major impact on health and wellbeing. Diabetes and other obesity-related diseases have risen significantly over recent years. The government's new Childhood Obesity Plan for Action contains some important measures to tackle this including consulting on a soft drinks industry levy.

However, Directors of Public Health would have liked to see more powers to control the

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<sup>1</sup> ADPH, 2016, [Statement on Chancellor of Exchequer's announced soft drinks industry levy](#)

<sup>2</sup> PHE, (2015) [Sugar Reduction; The evidence for action](#)

<sup>3</sup> PHE, (2015) [Sugar Reduction; The evidence for action](#)

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons Health Committee (2015), [Childhood obesity—brave and bold action; First Report of Session 2015–16](#)

<sup>5</sup> Children's Food Campaign, (2016), [Who sets the Agenda; Learning the lessons from the Responsibility Deal's failure to tackle junk food marketing and promotion](#)



irresponsible promotion of unhealthy foods to children. The Association of Directors of Public Health will work with government over the coming years to build on this first step in ensuring future generations are not burdened by obesity in the way the current generation already is.”

ADPH CEO, Nicola Close, said:

"This Plan for Action is a good start but we need stronger government action to back up all the good local work being undertaken by Directors of Public Health and their teams. The industry levy is important as are the other reformulation measures, but it is very disappointing that marketing and advertising curbs will not be put in place."

**ENDS**

**18 August 2016**

#### **Further information**

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is a Company Limited by guarantee with charity status registered in England and Wales and is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the UK. The Association is hosted by the UK Health Forum.

It seeks to improve and protect the health of the population through collating and presenting the views of DsPH; advising on public health policy and legislation at a local, regional, national and international level; facilitating a support network for DsPH; and providing opportunities for DsPH to develop professional practice.

The Association has a rich heritage, its origins dating back more than 150 years. It is a collaborative organisation working in partnership with others to maximise the voice for public health.

[www.adph.org.uk](http://www.adph.org.uk)

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