

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Maggie Throup MP
Minister of State for Public Health
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

6 April 2022

Dear Secretary of State Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP and Minister of State Maggie Throup MP

PROGRESS ON INDUSTRY SUGAR REDUCTION

Today 6 April 2022 marks exactly four years since the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) came into force. Since it was first announced by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, it has been successful in removing over 44 million kilograms of sugar from soft drinks, resulting in an average decline in household sugar consumption equivalent to 30g per week¹.

It has also delivered a total of £878 million in industry levy revenues from 2018/19 to 2020/21, enabling investment in healthy school capital projects, the National School Breakfast Programme and the doubling of the primary school Sports & PE Premium funding.

However, we are writing today as leading health and food policy organisations to express our deep concern that this pace of progress on reformulation is not being matched in many other product categories. The final report of the voluntary Sugar Reduction Programme has not yet even been made public, 18 months after the final data was collected.

Commercial sales data and public polling shows increasing consumption of snacks and sugary products during the Coronavirus pandemic. The most recent National Child Measurement Programme data indicates a worrying increase in obesity prevalence amongst primary school children, especially amongst those living in the most deprived areas².

¹ Changes in soft drinks purchased by British households associated with the UK soft drinks industry levy: controlled interrupted time series analysis BMJ 2021;372:n254 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n254>
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33692200/>

² According to the National Child Measurement Programme obesity prevalence has risen from 9.9% to 14.4% for reception age children (age 4/5) and from 21% to 25.5% for Year 6 (10/11) <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2020-21-school-year/age>

Covid-19 has also had a significant effect on health services, leading to a backlog of care and millions of people living with undiagnosed or unmanaged conditions, including tooth decay and preventable disease exacerbated by poor diet. It is now all the more vital that the Government takes further action to prevent these diseases and their associated cost burden to the NHS.

We acknowledge that the restructure of Public Health England and establishment of the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) were taking place during Autumn 2021, when the Sugar Reduction Report was originally scheduled to be published. However, Government still promised that the report would be published in “early 2022”, and this was confirmed by the Minister of State on 10 January 2022 in response to a parliamentary question³. We believe that all the data and analysis has now been conducted, and that the report has been made ready for publication.

The Government is currently preparing a white paper on food in response to the National Food Strategy, which called for further extension of industry levy mechanisms to incentivise salt and sugar reduction across a wider range of product categories. The recent Levelling Up White Paper also acknowledged the urgent need to address health disparities, including by improving access to nutritious food and tackling obesity, and announced a forthcoming Health Disparities White Paper. The final results of the Government’s sugar reduction programme provide important evidence and analysis on the role of the food and drink industry in removing excess sugar, salt and saturated fats from processed food and drink, and should inform these ongoing policy processes and any future healthy weight strategy.

We, the undersigned, call on the Government to:

- **Publish the final Sugar Reduction Report immediately and without further delay**
- **Set out a clear plan to move beyond voluntary sugar reduction programmes and to mandate further healthy food and drink reformulation, including exploration of future fiscal incentives and levers, as well as expansion of the existing SDIL banding and rates.**
- **Ensure that the Soft Drinks Industry Levy income is used in support of measures to increase children’s access to healthy, affordable food.**

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

³ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-22/79256>

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Anna Taylor OBE, Executive Director, Food Foundation

Ben Reynolds, Deputy Chief Executive, Sustain

John Maingay, British Heart Foundation

Barbara Crowther, Children's Food Campaign

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Rebecca Sunter, Childhood Obesity Programme Director, Impact on Urban Health

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Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive, Oral Health Foundation

James Toop, Chief Executive, Bite Back 2030

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Tam Fry, Chair, National Obesity Forum

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Dr David Strain, Chair of the BMA Board of Science

Nigel Shattock, Director of Communications & Engagement, World Cancer Research Fund

John Wass, Endocrinologist, Oxford University

Alison Morton, Institute of Health Visiting

Pamela Healy, CEO, British Liver Trust

Cc: Rt Hon Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer

Helen Whately MP, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury