



10 DOWNING STREET
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13 February 2012

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Mr. Powell,

Thank you for the letter of 13 January which you and your co-signatories sent to me regarding practical cookery in schools and your concern over the high childhood obesity rates in England.

I share your aim of helping our young people to develop healthy lifestyles. Tackling the high level of obesity amongst children is a clear priority for this Government and I am very grateful to you for taking the time to write to me on this important issue. Obesity is a leading cause of many serious diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer, placing an annual burden of £5 billion on the NHS.

I agree with you that the Government, and society more widely, must take responsibility for addressing this issue. That is why we published *A Call to Action on Obesity in England*, in October 2011, which outlines our approach to tackling obesity in the new public health and NHS systems. It is, of course, up to individuals to change their behaviour, however, we believe that other organisations, including Government and businesses, have a responsibility to help individuals where they can. Our approach in *A Call to Action* focuses on both adults and children, and prevention and treatment, and sets out our overall goal to reduce the nation's calorie intake by five billion calories a day, with a challenge to businesses to play a key part.

Schools are crucial to promoting healthier lifestyles and preventing obesity early on. But I believe we need to allow them to determine how to do this as they will know their pupils best. The Government's role should be to support schools to tackle obesity and other lifestyle issues by helping them to access the best evidence, and through professional development.

I appreciate you are concerned that the review of the National Curriculum is causing uncertainty about the future position of practical food skills, but I can reassure you that Michael Gove has not yet made any decision about this and is

still considering which subjects beyond English, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education, if any, should be part of the National Curriculum in future. As you know, he intends to announce proposals later this year and there will then be a further public statutory consultation before final decisions are made. I fully encourage you and your colleagues to continue to make your views known and to take the opportunity to contribute to that consultation in due course.

Tom Sibley
D. Sibley

Mr Charlie Powell