



# Industry Action on Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR DIABETES

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The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Diabetes (APPG Diabetes) is a nonpartisan cross-party interest group of UK parliamentarians who have a shared interest in raising the profile of diabetes, its prevention and improving the quality of treatment and care for people living with diabetes.

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## Chair's Introduction

**Approximately 12 million people in the UK are at an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes<sup>1</sup>. Around 80 to 85 per cent of this risk results from the nation's expanding waistlines and increasing weight<sup>2</sup>. Two thirds of the population are now classified as overweight or obese<sup>3</sup>. Tackling the obesity crisis is vital if we want to drastically reduce the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes.**

While work is required to educate the public about their own risk and secure early identification for those at increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, prevention must start with addressing the obesogenic environment we now live in to become a place that supports and encourages people to make healthy informed decisions. To achieve this we need strong and ambitious actions from the Government and the food and drink industry.

There have been welcome initiatives by the Government including the Childhood Obesity Plan. Public Health England's voluntary sugar-reduction programme aims to reduce 20% of sugar from a range of everyday foods by 2020 via reformulation, reduction of portion size or marketing of healthier alternatives. While mandatory higher targets would be recommended<sup>4</sup>, if taken up by the industry, this programme can impact the full population.

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy will charge manufacturers for producing soft drinks that are high in added sugar (over 5g per 100ml).

Whilst the Levy incentivises reformulation, it is not mandatory.

Thus, much of the success of the Childhood Obesity Plan depends on the industry's willingness. In January 2017 the APPG heard evidence from Tesco, Coca Cola UK, Lucozade Ribena Suntory, PepsiCo and the Food and Drink Federation on their initiatives towards the strategy.

Unless we act now, the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes will continue to lead to devastating and costly complications, from a largely preventable condition. Healthier choices are smarter choices for us all and the food and drink industry must play its part in making these changes.

**Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP**  
*Chair of the APPG for Diabetes*



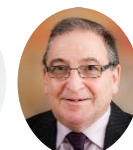
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John McNally MP  
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Baroness Ludford  
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<sup>1</sup> Type 2 Diabetes: Prevention and Early Identification. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Professionals/Position-statements-reports/Type-2-diabetes-prevention-early-identification/>

<sup>2</sup> Hauner H (2010). Obesity and diabetes, in Holt RIG, Cockram CS, Flyvbjerg A et al (ed.) Textbook of diabetes, 4th edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

<sup>3</sup> Type 2 Diabetes: Prevention and Early Identification. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Professionals/Position-statements-reports/Type-2-diabetes-prevention-early-identification/>

<sup>4</sup> Public Health England (2015). Sugar Reduction: The evidence for action.



## Key Statistics

- **Around 12 million** people in the UK are at an increased risk of developing **Type 2 diabetes**<sup>5</sup>
- **Two thirds** of the British population are classed as overweight or obese<sup>6</sup>
- **A third** of 10-11 year olds and **over a fifth** of 4-5 year olds were overweight or obese<sup>7</sup>
- A surveillance programme of children under 17 in the UK found that 95% of those diagnosed with type 2 diabetes were overweight and 83% obese<sup>7</sup>
- Only **10%** of adolescents currently reach their **5 a day**<sup>8</sup>
- 30% of the sugar in children's diets comes from **sugary drinks**<sup>9</sup>
- In 2015 **13,253 million litres of soft drinks** were consumed in the UK<sup>8</sup>
- UK soft drinks manufacturers have **reduced sugar intake** from their products by **16.2%** since 2012<sup>8</sup>
- Almost **60%** of soft drinks now sold in the UK are **low or no calorie**<sup>8</sup>
- In 2015 the soft drinks industry became the only food and drink category a plan to **reduce calorie intake** from its products **by 20%** by 2020<sup>8</sup>
- The energy drinks market is worth over **£2 billion** - up nearly 8% from 2014<sup>8</sup>
- **Sugar intake** from still and juice drinks is **down 9.5%** since 2012<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Type 2 Diabetes: Prevention and Early Identification. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Professionals/Position-statements-reports/Type-2-diabetes-prevention-early-identification/>

<sup>6</sup> Type 2 Diabetes: Prevention and Early Identification. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Professionals/Position-statements-reports/Type-2-diabetes-prevention-early-identification/>

## The Evidence Session

The APPG for Diabetes held an evidence session at the House of Commons on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017 into industry initiatives to take action on sugar.

Evidence was heard from Mark Saxon, Head of Public Affairs at Coca Cola UK, Will Blomefield, Head of UK Government Relationships at Tesco, Tim Rycroft, Corporate Affairs Director at the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) and Michelle Norman, Head of External Affairs and Dr Caroline Saunders, Head of Nutrition at Lucozade Ribena Suntory. Written evidence was also submitted to this inquiry by PepsiCo.

The meeting was attended by the Chair of the APPG for Diabetes, the Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP, the Group's Co-Secretary Liz McInnes MP and Andrew Bingham MP as well as members of the diabetes community including clinicians, dieticians, Public Health England and CCG diabetes leads.



*Panel (left to right): Mark Saxon, Coca Cola UK; Will Blomefield, Tesco; Tim Rycroft, the Food and Drink Federation; Michelle Norman and Dr Caroline Saunders, Lucozade Ribena Suntory.*

<sup>7</sup> Public Health England Risks of Childhood Obesity. Retrieved from: [http://www.noo.org.uk/NOO\\_about\\_obesity/obesity\\_and\\_health/health\\_risk\\_child](http://www.noo.org.uk/NOO_about_obesity/obesity_and_health/health_risk_child)

<sup>8</sup> British Soft Drinks Association annual Report 2016. Retrieved from: [http://www.britishsoftdrinks.com/write/MediaUploads/Publications/BSDA\\_Annual\\_report\\_2016.pdf](http://www.britishsoftdrinks.com/write/MediaUploads/Publications/BSDA_Annual_report_2016.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Change4Life Sugar Smart <https://www.nhs.uk/sugar-smart/sugar-facts>



## Consumer-led change

The perception within the food and drink industry is that the Government's Childhood Obesity Plan demonstrated a mistrust of the industry and failed to recognise and give credit for the voluntary efforts already being accomplished years before the Plan.

Witnesses said that it was the consumers' requests for healthier options and desire to live a healthier life that motivated the industry to create more choice by reformulating, introducing alternative products, reducing pack sizes and increasing marketing investment in sugarless options.

**“We, [food and drink manufacturers], take seriously our responsibility in helping people achieve healthier lives and are committed to working in partnership in Government and others to tackle the complex, multi-faceted issues of obesity and diet-related diseases.”**

**Tim Rycroft, Food and Drinks Federation**

The main concern of the industry has been to manufacture products that are healthier, but still desirable to consumers. While reformulation is possible and can meet the consumers' expectations, the long and arduous process requires rigorous testing and great investment to attempt to match the right taste profile and texture.

## Holistic approach to calories

Obesity is perceived within the industry as a complex and systemic condition that requires an equally complex and systemic strategy, with a focus on reducing the average calories consumed. While reducing the amount of sugar in your diet can be important, it was an expressed belief within the industry that

targeting only sugar is an ineffective way to tackle obesity.

Thus, the Soft Drinks Levy has been criticised by industry members for its exclusive focus on sugar and for its singling out the soft drinks industry, even though calories from sugary soft drinks can only originate from sugar. Moreover, the McKinsey Global Institute's obesity report is mentioned as evidence that reformulation and reducing portions are the key interventions to reduce obesity, not taxes.

However, while positive, there is a concern that if extensive reformulation is carried out, revenues from the Levy will be lower than initially anticipated. The Government originally intended to invest this revenue in programmes to support physical activity and balanced diets in school aged children. While the retailers and manufacturers consulted by the APPG for Diabetes claimed to invest in sports programmes of their own, there is a need for a sustainable Government funding for sport in schools.

**“LRS is investing £30 million over the next three years to help get the nation moving more. Part of the investment will support disadvantaged groups to access sport through its charity partners, and it will also extend to all employees of LRS.”**

**Michelle Norman, LRS**

Nevertheless, while reformulation projects have created and will continue to create many low or no sugar soft drink options that will not be subject to the Levy, it is worrying that there will still be original flavours available with high sugar content.

None of the witnesses heard by the APPG for Diabetes from the industry committed to say, at this time, if the cost of Levy will be passed on to consumers.



## Free choice

During the evidence session the relationship between retailer and supplier was described as one of partnership and encouragement, but not enforcement.

From the retailer's perspective, in January 2015, Tesco became the first British retailer to remove sweets from checkouts in all store. Tesco state that this action was taken in response to customer concerns on pester power and the retailer's desire to help customers to make healthier choices.

However, when asked, Tesco stated that it will not reduce the display of unhealthy food and drinks across the entire store, nor replace it with healthy products, neither by including incentives or penalties.

**“We are not in the position to tell suppliers what to do with their products or brand.”**

**Will Blomefield, Tesco**

When it comes to personal choice, retailers and manufacturers argue that it is not their role to proactively encourage healthy choices over unhealthy ones as they believe consumers should have options available and be allowed to choose for themselves.

However, this is not a viewpoint shared by all industry members. Some manufacturers have made interventions with retailers to promote healthier choices for customers. PepsiCo, for example, has a seven year deal with Subway to encourage the retailer to slash the calories people consume on premise by switching from regular cola to Pepsi MAX, Diet Pepsi or similar drinks, in the hopes of cutting over two billion calories from the UK diet in the first year alone.

Coca Cola UK stated that it has no plans to stop producing or promoting the original flavour together with its other brands. However, the company claims that the sales for the Zero Sugar are increasing at a much faster rate, despite overall still being lower than other Coca Cola brands.

The contradictory and mixed messages demonstrated by industry members regarding the promotion of healthier choices need to be resolved. Whilst a variety of high and low sugar products should continue to be sold by retailers in the UK, the promotion of healthier choices would be of huge benefit in tackling the obesity and Type 2 diabetes crises.



## The APPG's response

'Added sugar' is being consumed in excess by adults and children in the UK, and 29 per cent of the sugar in children's diets comes from sugary drinks<sup>10</sup>. While not the only cause, sugar is a significant factor contributing to the rise of obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

While many retailers and manufacturers - including Tesco, Waitrose, Nestle, Honey Monster Puffs, Coca Cola and Lucozade Ribena Suntory -, have made some moves towards healthier options, Government regulation can play an important part in ensuring that this happens universally and without competitive disadvantage.

PHE's voluntary sugar reduction programme could be promising, but right now its targets settle between ambitious and achievable, at a time when initiative is needed.

1. As occurred under the successful FSA salt reduction programme, government should commit to review and strengthen PHE's targets downwards regularly.

Moreover, the Soft Drinks Levy was not meant to act in isolation. It was introduced in conjunction with the Childhood Obesity Plan and its main role is to instigate reformulation within the food and drink industry. Thus, complementary initiatives are indispensable and investments should pursue.

2. To reduce the impulse purchasing of unhealthy products, all retailers should remove confectionary and high sugar products from the displays next to their kiosks. This should be done across all types of stores, including M&S and train stations.
3. Investment in sport and education is key to tackling the obesity and Type 2 diabetes crises. This should specifically target schools in order to educate

children about making healthier choices and leading more active lifestyles.

4. Investment and access to NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme Healthier You should be drastically increased.

As much of the success of the Childhood Obesity Plan depends on the industry's initiatives, witnesses were clear that there are big limits to what they would be able to do unilaterally. How this will impact the accomplishment of the plan remains to be seen.

5. The APPG for Diabetes will continue to monitor and comment on this very important area of policy.

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<sup>10</sup> Public Health England (2015). Sugar Reduction: The evidence for action.

## **Past publications:**

Levelling up: Tackling Variation in Diabetes Care (2016)

Taking Control: Supporting People to Self-Manage their Diabetes (2015)



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