



Knowsley Council

1st September 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

SACN Draft Carbohydrates and Health Report: Comments

As Director of Public Health for Knowsley, I welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the SACN Draft Carbohydrates and Health Report. This is an extensive review of the evidence which highlights that view that eating a diet high in sugar is harmful to health and that drinking sugar-sweetened drinks should be minimised.

This is a significant issue for Knowsley, where 37% of resident's overweight and 22% obese. In addition, the rate of childhood obesity in year 6 students is 23.2%, much higher than both North West (19.6%) and National rates (18.9%)¹.

I therefore strongly support the recommendations made in the report, in particular those relating to recommended intake and a duty on sugar sweetened beverages for the reasons set out below.

Recommended intake

I welcome the bold and ambitious recommendations which include guidance to reduce free sugar intake to 5% of total calories per day, in line with WHO recommendation on sugars. If an average woman were to consume only 5% of her daily energy (based on 2,000 calories) from free sugars, then this would equate to 5-6 teaspoons of table sugar which is far less than the amount of sugar contained in a standard 300ml serving of sugar-sweetened beverage.

A duty on SSBs

I believe that a comprehensive package of policy measures is necessary to challenge the current high consumption of sugar. Research by Heart of Mersey has shown that a 20p per litre duty on sugar-sweetened beverages would lead to a reduction in the number of cases of obesity across the North West of England by over 19,5003. The research also indicates that this measure would lead to a concomitant reduction in the number of cases of type 2 diabetes, stroke, coronary heart disease and cancer².

Whilst approaches to reduce sugar that utilise public information campaigns, voluntary guidelines and warning labels on products are of value, it is considered that only approaches that have a direct impact upon availability and supply, such as a duty on sugary drinks that will have a truly transformative impact upon public health outcomes.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Ashton
Director of Public Health
Knowsley Council

References:

1. Health and Social Care Information Centre (2013). National Child Measurement Programme: England, 2012/13 school year.
<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB13115/nati-chil-meas-prog-eng-2012-2013-rep.pdf>
2. Collins, B. North West of England Sugar Sweetened Beverage Duty Model. 2014

