

Report for: Haringey and Islington Health and Wellbeing Board Joint Sub Committee

Title: **Update on a joint approach to tackling obesity in Islington and Haringey**

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1. Describe the issue under consideration

Haringey and Islington face similar challenges with over 1 in 3 children aged 10-11 classed as overweight or obese. Tackling obesity through the Wellbeing Partnership emerged as a priority area following the scoping of the CVD/diabetes, children's and prevention work streams of the Haringey and Islington partnership. In response a joint approach to creating healthier environments and reducing sugar consumption was approved by the joint Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2017.

This report provides an overview of our joint work to date, including a summary of the key findings from a recent review of food provision across Haringey and Islington Council commissioned services, owned and leased properties and makes suggestions and recommendations for the next steps.

2. Background information

2.1 Approaches to tackling obesity

Tackling obesity is complex and evidence suggests that no single intervention is likely to be effective on its own, rather action is needed across a broad range of areas to increase physical activity and improve diets – and these will require persistent effort for sustained impact. Both Haringey and Islington have programmes in place to tackle obesity through a number of key interventions. For the purpose of developing a joint approach, as part of the Wellbeing Partnership, we are initially focusing on efforts to create a healthier food environment and in particular on reducing sugar consumption.

2.2 Food environment

Guidelines on sugar consumption were issued in July 2015 by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN). They recommend that sugar should account for a maximum of 5% of energy intake for adults and children. However it's estimated that sugar currently accounts for three times this

proportion of children's energy intake with sugar sweetened soft drinks being the largest single source of sugar for children¹.

An important reason for this is because of the profound changes to the food environment over the last three decades. Food is now more readily available and heavily promoted, marketed and advertised. Combined with increasing consumption of meals from the out of home sector (coffee shops, cafes, fast food outlets) people have been pushed towards overconsumption through a food environment which normalises the provision of unhealthy food and drink in everyday life and settings.

There is a broad consensus that action to tackle obesity needs to go beyond health messaging and focus on addressing a number of drivers which influence the food environment². This includes action on marketing and advertising, price promotions and food availability.

A recent evidence review by Public Health England of sugar reduction interventions also outlined the significant changes to the food environment over the last thirty to forty years³. The report recommended a strong focus on the food environment and in particular:

- Strong controls on price promotions of unhealthy food and drink
- Tougher controls on marketing and advertising of unhealthy food and drink
- A centrally led reformulation programme to reduce sugar in food and drink
- A sugary drinks tax on full sugar soft drinks, in order to help change behaviour, with all proceeds targeted to help those children at greatest risk of obesity
- Improved education and information about diet
- Greater powers for local authorities to tackle the environment leading to obesity.

2.3 Local review of food provision – key findings

To help inform our local strategic response, Haringey and Islington public health teams undertook a review of food provision in a range of council owned properties and commissioned services. The aim was to understand the scale of the problem and use this evidence to inform action to improve the food environment across both boroughs.

2.3.1 Headline findings

¹ Public Health England, Public Health Matters blog, [Expert interview: New sugar recommendations](#), 17 July 2015 (accessed 30 May 2017).

² Tackling obesity: future choices. Foresight. Government Office for Science and Department of Health Published: 17 October 2007

³ Public Health England (2015) Sugar reduction: from evidence into action

	Haringey	Islington
1. Price promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price promotions focus on unhealthy food e.g. hot / sugary soft drink and cake is cheaper than buying a slice on its own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No price promotions identified.
2. Sponsorship and advertisement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry representatives (such as Coca-Cola / Walkers / Walls) are contacting local leisure centres, community centres and park cafés at least once a month. • Community centres have resisted these requests but most park cafés have commercial relationships with Walls ice cream and Coca-Cola. • In cases where commercial relationships with industries exist, caterers report being visited at least once every 2 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure centres had a mix of sponsored drink fridges (Coca-Cola) alongside healthy vending machine (The Rude Food Co.). • Sponsored fridge (Coca-Cola) in one park.
3. Product placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caterers report that product placement and pricing is a key influencer on customer demand / choice. • Unhealthy options are typically placed at the point of sale or at eye level. • Healthy options and bottled water would be placed below eye level in park cafés. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottled water is placed on the bottom shelf in sponsored fridges • Leisure centres have Healthy and unhealthy vending machines in the same venue. • Cafés in leisure centres also sell high sugar snacks and drinks.
4. Healthy choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, a variety of healthier food options provided in leisure centres, however cakes placed at till points along with high sugar drinks. No energy drinks available. • There is a limited availability of fruit across all sectors and it is significantly more expensive where 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure centres have introduced 'healthy' vending machines • Fresh fruit was available at 75% park cafes • Cakes available at all park cafes and youth services. • Healthy alternatives were found in children's centres, offering fruit, tap water

	<p>available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthier alternatives are more typically found in community / health / children's centres than park cafes. • Children's centres have policies that ban parents from bringing in unhealthy food for their children. 	<p>and foods without added sugar.</p>
5. Availability of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community, leisure and youth services were particularly good at providing free water jugs in reception / communal area. • There is limited availability of free tap water in park cafés. • The price of bottled water compared to high sugar drinks varied across sectors and was heavily influenced by any commercial relationships with industries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free tap water was available in 92% of venues but often not promoted or advertised. • Children's centres provided free water in jugs. • There was no consistency on the price of bottled water compared to high sugar drinks (in some settings priced higher and in some lower).
6. Customer demand for healthier catering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer demand for healthier options was more widely reported in the West of Haringey (particularly high demand for organic products). • There are opportunities for Haringey to focus on getting park cafés to sign up to the Healthier Catering Commitment and work with CONEL College to improve their food offer and content in their vending machines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In park cafes, it was reported that customer demand for unhealthy options had influenced the range of options available. • Colleges were reluctant to participate in the audit. • There are opportunities for Islington to support park cafés to sign up to the Healthier Catering Commitment.

2.3.2 Common issues and themes

The food and drink sold in a number of Council facilities across both boroughs are high in sugar, fat and salt and in some circumstances there are no healthy options available. Specifically:

- There is a limited understanding of what constitutes healthy food.
- All sites that provided unhealthy options placed them at the entrance (ice cream fridges), point of sale (cake/pastry stands) or at eye level (fizzy

drinks). Healthier options would typically be behind the counter, below eye level or not present at all.

- Water was typically cheaper than coke but the pricing was heavily influenced by the type of establishment and whether there was a relationship with a particular industry partner/representative for the supply of stock.
- There is limited availability of free tap water in park cafés.

2.4. **Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food – potential pledges and actions**

The Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food is a new initiative developed and promoted by Sustain to help local authorities tackle the proliferation and marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks. Councils signing up to the Declaration are asked to take action on six key areas, although there is local flexibility regarding the actions pursued in each area in order to be responsive to local needs and issues.

The table below presents potential pledges and actions that could be taken in both boroughs, as part of our shared commitment to sugar reduction and promoting healthier food choices and environments. Those pledges and actions **highlighted in yellow** would place Haringey and Islington at the leading edge of action to tackle obesity, evidencing the use of a range of levers, and potentially lending significant profile to our shared commitment to address this important public health issue.

Further work is needed to develop and test out the feasibility of some of these policy options and actions, however the Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to discuss and indicate its appetite for further exploration of some of these levers and options, and to identify any other actions that we could take forward under each of the six areas of the declaration.

Area	Possible pledges and actions
1. Tackle advertising and sponsorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a policy on corporate partnerships or sponsorships, to avoid those that promote unhealthy foods and drinks and undermine breastfeeding.
2. Improve the food controlled or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, produce and implement a food standards policy and supporting toolkit to promote healthier

<p>influenced by the Council</p>	<p>food choices. This will allow both boroughs to influence contracts and leases as they come up for renewals food example requirements around product placement and sugar sweetened beverages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prevent any business operating on Council owned premises from selling sugar sweetened soft drinks</i> • <i>Introduction of a local sugar tax/levy.</i>
<p>3. Reduce the prominence of sugary drinks and promote free drinking water</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence local businesses and food outlets to provide free, accessible and visible drinking water. • Work with sports venues on improving vending machines and food offer in cafes.
<p>4. Support businesses and organisations to improve their food offer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and deliver voluntary schemes to local businesses such as the Healthier Catering Commitment and encourage more retailers including council markets to accept Healthy Start Vouchers for Fruit and vegetables. • Staff/vendor training on what constitutes a healthier food provision through the Healthier Catering Commitment Scheme. • <i>Rent relief / business rates relief for healthier retailers.</i> • <i>Prevent ice cream vans from parking outside schools and / or playgrounds.</i>
<p>5. Public events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives to food providers at events organised by the Council to replace unhealthy with healthier options or similar.
<p>6. Raise public awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up to the Sugar Smart Campaign. • Develop a network of champions (officers, elected members, and frontline staff) from different backgrounds and services to advocate the healthier food and sugar reduction agenda.

2.5 Sugar Smart Campaign

At a previous meeting of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board, it was agreed to sign up to London's Sugar Smart campaign, as one of a number of actions to reduce sugar consumption across the two boroughs. This will form part of our action plan when signing the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food, and will support work with local partners.

Members of the Board and other key partners across both boroughs will be asked to contribute to this local effort and make an ambitious pledge relating to sugar reduction. Pledges could include the following:

- Not selling sugar sweetened soft drinks
- Increasing the price of sugar sweetened soft drinks, with the proceeds donated towards children's health and wellbeing
- Removing all adverts for products high in sugar, salt and fat (including branded fridges, sun shades, shop signage etc)
- Ending meal deals / special offers which include sugar sweetened soft drinks
- Replacing vending machine contents with healthier alternatives
- Promoting healthier options and include them in price promotions
- Installing water fountains and / or make drinking water free, accessible and visible
- Removing food high in salt, sugar and fat from the area around the checkout
- Signing up to the Healthier Catering Commitment.

2.6 **Managing shared priorities**

We recognise that we need to balance our health priorities with other priorities across both councils. If we are to successfully reverse the obesity epidemic and the strain it is putting on our already stretched public services, it is vital that we increase the pace and intensity of our work. This includes making every effort to improve the food environment by getting the right mix of hard and soft measures such as restricting the sale of sugar sweetened beverages and our work with businesses to encourage sign up to schemes such as the Healthier Catering Commitment and driving creativity and innovation to make the healthy choice the easy choice e.g. Chicken Town.

2.7 **Recommendations**

To take forward our shared commitment to tackling obesity across Haringey and Islington, it is recommended that:-

1. The two Councils sign up to the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food at the next Joint Health and Wellbeing Board meeting in September, supported by further work between now and September to develop specific pledges and actions to be taken forward in each of the six areas of the Declaration.
2. That the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board consider and discuss the potential pledges and actions to be taken forward as part of signing up to the Declaration, in order to steer and inform this further work.
3. That all member organisations of the Health and Wellbeing Board sign up to the Sugar Smart Campaign and make an ambitious pledge relating to sugar reduction, in order to evidence visible and committed leadership on this agenda.

3. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 3.1 Tackling obesity together and the recommendations outlined in this report aligns to the Haringey and Islington Wellbeing Partnerships approach of; 'Shifting care upstream by supporting people to stay and be healthy, to reduce the level of ill health within our population'.

Our joint approach to tackling obesity also supports both Haringey and Islington's Health and Wellbeing Strategies and Corporate Priorities.

In Haringey it supports the Council's Corporate Plan, Building a Stronger Haringey Together 2015-18, in particular Priority 1 and 2 and cross-cutting themes, specifically: prevention and early intervention as outlined in Objective 1 'Become an organisation focused on prevention and early help'.

In Islington, it supports the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2019, contributing towards the commitment "Making Islington a place where residents have a good quality of life", as well as being an important part of tackling some of the deep rooted and complex social challenges that are also the focus of the corporate plan. The underpinning principles of Islington's Corporate Plan, such as prevention and early intervention, making every contact count and building strong partnerships, are also key features of the proposed collaborative work on obesity.

4.1 Legal

The Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food initiatives falls within the Terms of Reference of the Committee to encourage joint consideration and co-ordination of health and care issues that are of common interest to the population of Haringey and Islington.

The Finance Act 2017 has established a new tax called the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (the Levy) and provides that HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) will be responsible for its collection and administration. The levy is intended to apply from April 2018 and is aimed at producers and importers of soft drinks containing added sugar. It is intended to tackle childhood obesity by encouraging the reformulation of drinks to reduce levels of added sugar, as well as portion size reduction and marketing of low sugar alternatives.

For the local authorities, there are potential difficulties with the lawfulness and enforcement of the pledges and actions relating to "Prevent any business operating on Council owned premises from selling sugar sweetened soft drinks" "Introduction of a local sugar tax/levy" and "Prevent ice cream vans from parking outside schools and / or playgrounds".

4.2 Finance

1. The budget for this programme is funded for via the Public Health Grant however the Medium Term Financial Strategy shows that funding for services is constantly under review and there is no guarantee that these sums will be available in future years.
2. The additional resourcing requirement for this project is not material.

4. Environmental Implications

5. Resident and Equalities Implications

This report sets out a summary of the progress that has jointly been made between Haringey and Islington in creating healthier environments with the aim of tackling obesity, specifically for children.

Both councils have undertaken analysis of which groups are more likely to experience health inequalities as a result of becoming obese.

Implementing these measures will have a positive impact for these groups as it will help reduce obesity and health inequalities.

6. Use of Appendices

Appendix One: What is the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food?

Appendix two: Steps to signing the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food.

Appendix three: Steps to signing up to the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food.

Appendix One: Review of food provision in council commissioned services and properties.

Methodology

During February – May 2017 a snapshot audit of the food provided in council owned / leased property and commissioned services was conducted by PH staff. An audit checklist was used to assess food options, product placement, promotional activity, price comparisons and industry representation. A representative sample of sites across both boroughs (outlined below) were identified as areas of high footfall (park cafes, leisure centres, community buildings) and were audited in order to understand the scale of the problem with the aim of providing a baseline to improve the food offer.

Sector	Haringey			Islington		
	Number of council owned / leased properties and commissioned services	Number of sites visited	Number of sites audited	Number of council owned / leased properties and commissioned services	Number of sites visited	Number of sites audited
Community centres	26	15	6	19	4	1
Leisure centres	3	2	2	7	6	5
Youth services	2	1	1	16	2	2
Parks / Open spaces	31	12	11*	27	4	4
Children's centres	9	2	2	16	2	2
Colleges / Universities	3	1	1	5	0	0
Health centres	4	2	1	4	0	0
Total	78	35	24	94	18	14

*Please note that some parks have more than one means of food provision (i.e. Finsbury Park had 2 park cafés as did Downhill's Park)

Appendix Two: What is the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food?

What is the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food?

The Declaration is a new initiative promoted by Sustain to help local authorities tackle the proliferation and marketing of unhealthy food and drinks.

To sign the declaration the local authority has to commit to take at least six different actions across all six key areas:

1. Tackle advertising and sponsorship
2. Improve the food controlled or influenced by the council
3. Reduce prominence of sugary drinks and promote free drinking water
4. Support businesses and organisations to improve their food offer
5. Public events
6. Raise public awareness

Alongside this systemic approach to tackling the drivers of unhealthy eating, sugar consumption and obesity, the Declaration also requires that each signatory monitors the implementation and impact of the pledges made, and contributes to the shift a food culture and environment which can stretch across borough boundaries.

Appendix three: Steps to signing the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food.

The steps to sign the declaration

