

# 2019 Manifesto

## Health for All



## The need for action

- **The UK's health is in crisis**, with the current unhealthy food environment being one of the biggest threats to the health and wellbeing of the UK population
- Each Party has prioritised health, specifically NHS spending and improving patient treatment, but **no party has prioritised prevention**
- The escalating costs to the NHS of **hypertension** (£2.1 billion<sup>1</sup>), **obesity** (£6.1 billion<sup>2</sup>) and **diabetes** (£14 billion<sup>3</sup>) are unsustainable, but **many cases are entirely preventable**.
- Spending a **relatively small amount on prevention would result in huge cost savings for the NHS** which no Party is currently highlighting

## A seven-point evidence based plan

### 1. Preventing obesity and type 2 diabetes – calorie and sugar reduction

#### a. Sugar reduction

Public Health England's current voluntary sugar reduction programme is weak, with loopholes for companies to avoid reformulation, including reducing portion size or shifting sales to low sugar alternatives. Due to the voluntary nature of the programme, there has been a pitiful 2.9% reduction in sugar content between 2015 and 2018 against an expected 20% total reduction by 2020. The programme must be strengthened and progress must be transparently monitored and enforced. If the food industry does not comply, limits should be mandated.

#### b. Calorie reduction

We all know that reducing calorie intake will be one of the most effective methods to prevent obesity and although the current government announced a calorie reduction programme in 2016, they have failed to implement it. Their proposed plans only cover savoury products, despite the contribution of sweet products to calorie intake. The next government must immediately launch the calorie reduction programme, with ambitious targets which hold companies to account for producing products with excessive calories.

### 2. Preventing hypertension - salt reduction

The UK once had a world-leading salt reduction plan, with strict targets for industry and transparent progress monitoring. While the Prevention Green Paper announced new salt targets will be released in 2020 to be met by 2023, the lack of leadership on salt over the past few years has meant thousands of people are dying unnecessarily from stroke and heart disease. The next government must resuscitate the UK's salt reduction programme, and mandatory targets or fiscal measures such as levies on industry should be applied to the main contributors of salt to the UK diet, including categories such as processed meat, cheese and bread.

### 3. Escalate and Extend the Soft Drinks Industry Levy and Implement an Energy Density Levy

#### a. SDIL

HM Treasury implemented the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) in April 2018, in the form of a tax paid by the producers and importers of soft drinks containing added sugar. Despite the current Prime Minister's concerns, the unique tax has been successful, leading to a 28.8% reduction in sugar content since its implementation. The tax must be extended to sugary-milk based drinks and escalated year-on-year. The sugar thresholds should be gradually decreased to encourage further reformulation of both sugar and sweetness.

#### b. Energy Density

Chocolate and sweet confectionery are among the highest contributors of sugar in the British diet. The government should introduce an energy density levy on confectionery to reduce saturated fat and sugar intake, and should introduce a similar levy for other energy-dense products.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-figures-show-high-blood-pressure-costs-nhs-billions-each-year>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment--2>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.diabetes.co.uk/cost-of-diabetes.html>

#### **4. Ban the marketing, promotion and advertising of products high in salt, sugar and fat**

The food industry spends very large amounts promoting, marketing and advertising their unhealthy products, which dwarfs the annual £5.2 million spent on the Government's healthy eating 'education' campaign. Cigarette advertising has been banned in the UK for many years yet HFSS foods and drinks, which are now a bigger cause of death and disability than smoking, can be advertised without strong restrictions to children. Only healthy (non-HFSS) products should be marketed across all platforms, including TV, digital and print marketing.

#### **5. All products sold and provided in the public sector must meet strict nutritional guidelines**

The public sector spends around £2.4bn each year procuring food and catering services for the public sector, including schools, hospitals, armed forces, government agencies, prisons and courts. Current government policy does not set mandatory guidelines across public sector food to ensure that they are lower in fat, salt and sugar. The next government must ensure that the public sector leads by example, particularly in schools and in the NHS.

#### **6. Uniform colour-coded nutrition labelling on front of pack should be made mandatory on all products sold in retail and out-of-home**

Current guidelines on front-of-pack nutrition labelling are voluntary, meaning they are only used on around two-thirds of products in supermarkets, and almost not at all in the out of the home sector. Front-of-pack labelling formats also vary considerably, which is confusing for customers. Colour-coded front-of-pack nutrition labelling must be made mandatory across all products sold in all outlets and must be publicly available on menus in restaurants, cafes and other out-of-home outlets.

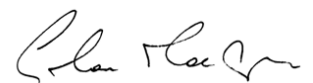
#### **7. Increase access to fruit and vegetables**

Evidence shows there are significant health benefits associated with eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, but average intake in the UK is 3.8 portions. The next government must make the consumption of fruit and vegetables easier and more affordable. The food industry should be required to increase the vegetable content of their products and the out of home sector should commit to increasing the portions of fruit and vegetables they provide with their meals.

**Graham MacGregor, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Queen Mary University of London and Chair of Action on Sugar and Action on Salt, says:**

*"All political parties must state clearly their plans for dealing with (a) with the crisis the UK faces with obesity and type 2 diabetes and (b) the failure to prevent strokes and heart disease, which are still the most common cause of premature death in the UK. Previous governments have allowed the food industry to overwhelm our children with products stuffed with sugar, fat and salt, which have almost been designed to cause obesity and type 2 diabetes.*

*"We need the next government to bring to an end the food industry's completely irresponsible behaviour with mandatory reformulation and punitive measures to ensure a level playing field for retail and out of home. The next government should also extend the SDIL to other products, including an energy density tax, as well as severe marketing restrictions, plain packaging and mandatory colour coded labelling. Our children and our lives depend on real action, not hot air."*



Full details of Action on Sugar and Action on Salt's seven-point evidenced based plan can be found at [actiononsugar.org](http://actiononsugar.org)