



INSTITUTE OF
HEALTH PROMOTION
AND EDUCATION

The Health and Social Care Committee - Childhood obesity follow-up 2019 inquiry.

Terms of reference:

- 1) To assess Government's progress in tackling childhood obesity.
- 2) Views on the next steps that the Government should take.

Accepting written submissions. (Deadline Monday 14 October 2019).

Submission by the Institute of Health Promotion and Health Education.

The Institute of Health Promotion and Education strongly agrees with nutrition experts - "the ongoing battle to reduce childhood obesity must be fought on several fronts".(1) For this epidemic there are no "silver bullets" or quick fixes. A multifaceted positive healthy eating campaign is needed, supporting children and their families and at the same time, tackling obesogenic environments.(2,3)

Many healthcare professionals could help promote healthy eating, and doctors, especially GPs, could play crucial roles.(3,4) Importantly, as community leaders they could advocate for change. They could also use their many contacts with parents and their children to encourage healthy eating habits. However, these roles may not be easy to undertake in parts of the country with GP shortages. Capacity issues will need to be addressed.(5,6)

In schools, school nurses, teachers and catering staff could all help to establish healthy dietary habits. Health promoting schools need to be established: but it is essential that staff are trained and supported.(7,8)

We urge the Government to take the following 10 important steps to tackle the childhood obesity epidemic:

- I. Create a long term child healthy eating strategy that is matched to the scale of the problem.(9)
- II. Continue with reformulation of food including adjusting portion sizes.(9)
- III. Apply subsidies for healthier options and taxes on less healthy products.(3,9)
- IV. Improve food labelling. The traffic-light system should be compulsory.(3,10)

- V. Regulate marketing and promotion.(3)
- VI. Promote healthy food in key settings including hospitals and schools.(3,4,11)
- VII. Increase the promotion of breastfeeding.(4,12)
- VIII. Make PSHE compulsory in all schools.(8)
- IX. Ensure that doctors and nurses are trained and have sufficient time to act on this issue.(4,5)
- X. Give adequate resources to Directors of Public Health so that they can coordinate, train and galvanise key professional groups.(13,14)

Reductions in obesity will take a long time to achieve, however, we believe if these actions were to be undertaken, we would begin to tackle the obesity epidemic. As a society we should be promoting children's health and not allowing them to be prone to preventable diseases such as certain cancers, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and mental health issues.(4) Bold and powerful actions are needed to protect children from future ill health.

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