



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Maggie Throup MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Vaccines and Public Health

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The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

1 June 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 May to Sajid Javid on behalf of your constituent, _____, about obesity.

I am grateful to you for raising _____ concerns.

Obesity is a complex problem caused by many different factors, and there is no single solution. It is a leading cause of serious diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers, and it is associated with poorer mental health. It also increases the risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19. This represents a huge cost to the health and wellbeing of the individual, the NHS and the wider economy.

As a country, we consume too many calories, as well as too much sugar, saturated fat and salt. We know it can be difficult to eat a healthy balanced diet when less healthy options are all around us. We therefore need to support people to make healthier choices and build these into their everyday lives.

In July 2020, we published *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives* at www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives. The strategy focuses on tackling the causes of obesity, improving diets and preventing ill health. It demonstrates an overarching campaign to reduce obesity and takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan, including our ambition to halve the number of children living with obesity by 2030. It also sets out measures to get the nation fit and healthy, protect against COVID-19 and protect the NHS.

In delivering on the strategy, we have introduced:

- new legislation on mandatory out-of-home calorie labelling for large restaurants, cafes and takeaways;
- regulations to restrict the promotion of less healthy foods in store and online; and
- restrictions on the advertising of less healthy foods on TV before 9pm and online.

We have also invested £100million in healthy weight programmes, including the expansion of weight management services and incentives to help people to eat better and move more.

We have seen some important successes since the publication of the first chapter of the childhood obesity plan in 2016. This includes the average sugar content of drinks subject to the soft drinks industry levy decreasing by 43.7 per cent between 2015 and 2019. There has also been around a 13 per cent reduction of sugar in breakfast cereals, yogurts and fromage frais.

Helping people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight is one of the most important things we can do to improve our nation's health. However, the Government cannot reduce obesity alone; businesses, health professionals, schools, local authorities, families and individuals all have a role to play.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maggie Throup', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive.

MAGGIE THROUP MP