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THE NEW CHILDHOOD OBESITY PLAN: PUNCHING BELOW ITS WEIGHT

Today the government launched its childhood obesity plan. A strategy was first expected last December and has been repeatedly delayed since. Now a brief plan has been released, during parliamentary recess, on the eve of the "A" level results and during the GB's success at the Olympics.

The plan includes three strong commitments, but little more to prevent unhealthy eating which is driving the childhood obesity crisis.

- The first, the sugar levy was announced earlier in the year by George Osborne.
- The second, a set of reformulation targets for sugar. Learning the lessons from the Coalition government's weak Responsibility Deal, the proposal includes a clear set of targets and an independent monitoring process. The salt reduction programme used a similar approach in 2003/2004 and had a significant impact on consumption.
- The third includes a set of measures to drive up school food standards in primary schools.

Anna Taylor, Executive Director of the Food Foundation said:

"This represents a gear change, but is nowhere near the "game-change" promised by Jeremy Hunt. It's good to see better commitments on reformulation but there is so much missing! Children and their parents are being systematically targeted with adverts, promotions and brand awareness of unhealthy foods – they can't escape. Any parent waking up this morning in the hope that the government would help them protect their child from obesity will be bitterly disappointed."

There are no new commitments on promotions of unhealthy foods even though the government's own research shows these cause us to buy 20% more than we otherwise would. There are no new commitments on advertising to children or sponsorship – steps which have been recommended by Public Health England.

The strategy also falls short of the finish line by agreeing to 're-commit' to Healthy Start Vouchers, which tackles both inequalities and focuses on early years, but fails to mention increasing coverage or the value of the voucher.

"We have got to put a halt to this growing obesity time bomb with kids now becoming diabetic in their teens. In any other part of policy children becoming chronically ill would be stopped immediately. From seat belts to toy safety we keep our children safe but we have a blind spot when it comes to food and let it get away with outcomes that we wouldn't allow from any other business sector." said Laura Sandys Chair of the Food Foundation and former Conservative MP.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

1. [Childhood Obesity Strategy](#)
2. The Food Foundation's rapid analysis of the plan can be found [here](#)
3. Contact: Anna Taylor (07791249567) or Alex Ward (07780451377)



4. [Health Start Vouchers](#)