



# **Sugar Smart City:**

## **Report of the debate and action plan**

**Author**

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## THE DEBATE: A summary

### Aim and objectives

The aim of the Sugar Smart City Debate was to raise awareness of sugar in food and drink and to ask residents whether, and how, we should take action to reduce sugar intake in the city.

The objectives were to:

- Increase awareness of sugar, particularly hidden sugars in everyday food and drink, and ways people can modify their intake
- Engage local schools, food outlets, retailers and others on sugar reduction
- Obtain views on where, and how, action on sugar should be taken, exploring actions for the general population, schools and food outlets
- Engage residents and outlets in the conversation about a sugar levy

### Methods

Mixed methods were used to raise the debate, including an online survey, a shorter postcard survey, focus groups, targeted events and media and social media campaigns.

### Surveys

The city-wide survey received **1136** responses. The online survey link was promoted internally and by a range of partner organisations. **5000** copies of the postcard survey (Appendix 1) were mailed out to general practices, dental practices, Healthy Living Pharmacies, children's centres, libraries and food outlets across the city. Change4Life information materials (Appendix 2) were also included in the mail out to provide context.

A tailored survey was sent to food outlet owners. This included an extra question about a voluntary sugary drinks levy. **654** outlets including cafes, restaurants, takeaways and pubs were sent the postcard survey and campaign information via a targeted mail-out. A further **477** cafes, restaurants, takeaways and pubs were sent the information via email. In total, **53** outlets completed the survey and a further **78** outlets fed back in other ways such as via email or phone.

### Focus groups and events

Four events were held between 5<sup>th</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November. These included the press launch, a live youth debate, event for school teachers and a healthy catering training session for food outlets.



- **48** people attended the press launch including Public Health colleagues, health professionals, food outlet owners, teachers and representatives from partner organisations.
- **78** young people and parents attended the live youth debate, which was held in partnership with the Brighton & Hove Youth Council. The debate posed the question “Children and young people should be allowed to drink as many sugary drinks as they like. Do you agree?” Audience members were encouraged to ask questions and make comments to an expert panel that included food outlet owners, catering managers, head teachers, nutritionists and health professionals. [Watch](#) a summary film of the youth debate.
- **41** teachers from **19** primary schools attended an event to hear about food education support on offer to Brighton & Hove schools. Support includes the [Kitchen Garden Project](#), sugar smart assemblies and [challenges](#) and Healthy Choice Awards for [breakfast clubs](#).
- **8** independent food business owners attended a [Healthy Choice](#) training session which covered measures to reduce the fat, salt and sugar content of meals and ways to market healthier options to customers.

**Two** semi-structured focus groups were held and **5** participants of the Food Partnership [Shape Up](#) programme attended each. Sugar resources were displayed at **6** parent/child sessions across **3** different Children’s Centres; over **100** people were engaged by this activity of which **38** took part in semi-structured one-to-one discussions.

### *News and Media*

The debate achieved significant local, regional and national interest following a partnership with the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation and the promotion of Sustain and Jamie Oliver’s [Children’s Health Fund](#) and a voluntary sugary drinks levy.

News articles appeared in the Guardian, Independent, Argus, Latest and Brighton & Hove News. There were national TV interviews and segments on ITV’s Good Morning Britain and BBC’s The One Show. Regional coverage included pieces on BBC SE and ITV Meridian. The debate received national radio coverage, including interviews on Radio 2 and Radio 5 Live, and received regional coverage on Juice FM and Heart FM.

Three #hashtags (primarily #SugarSmartCity, but also #SugarSmart and #SugarSmartBrighton) were used by over **100** organisations and individuals and there were over **200** tweets during the debate. Those that tweeted about the debate had a combined following of over **1,000,000**. Facebook posts reached up to **3700** people and generated conversation.

The ‘Balfour Sugar Detectives’ [film](#) was made with pupils from Balfour Primary school, and Jamie Oliver put together a [short film pledging support for the initiative](#). Both films were utilised by the press and to enhance campaign reach on social media.

The media campaign generated a total of **2331** visits to the [Sugar Smart webpage](#) by **1790** users during the debate.

# SUGAR SMART CITY DEBATE 1 October – 30 November 2015

Aimed at residents, schools and outlets across Brighton & Hove



## What We Did

**1136** responses to online and postcard survey

**168** people attended focus groups and events

**131** food outlets Contributed

**20** schools contributed



The campaign achieved local, regional and national interest

News articles in the Guardian, Independent, Argus, Latest and Brighton & Hove News

National TV interviews and regional coverage on ITV & BBC

National & regional radio coverage

**ORGANISATIONS THAT tweeted about the campaign** had a combined following of over **1,000,000**

**200** tweets during the debate

**#sugarsmartcity** was used by over **100** different local, regional, national and international organisations and individuals

**Facebook posts** reached up to **3700** people

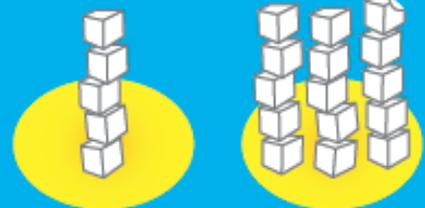
Media campaign and targeted promotion generated a total of **2331** website visits by **1790** users during the debate

## Sugar recommendations

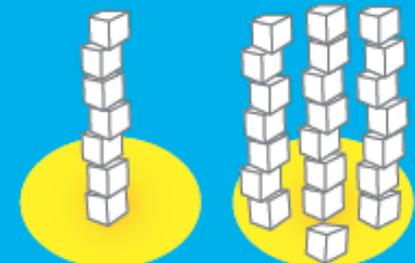
**Energy intake from sugar** (no more than 5% of our total energy intake should come from sugar)

1 cube = 4g of sugar

**Children aged 4 - 10 years**



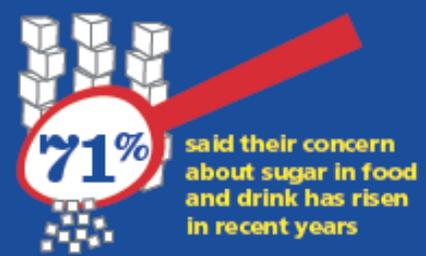
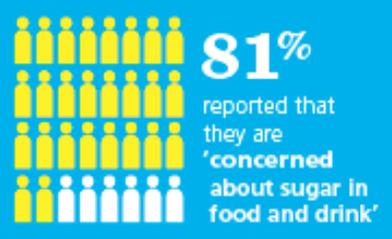
**Adults & children over 11 years**



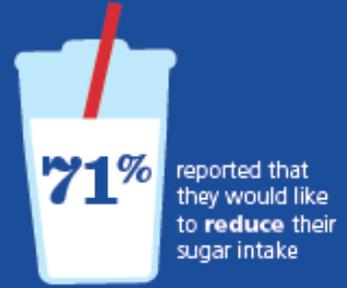
Source: SACN 2015. Carbohydrates and Health. London: FSA

## Headline Results

### Concern about sugar



### Taking action on sugar



Contribution of sugary drinks to added sugar intake of young people

Teenagers 11-18years  
Children 4-10years  
Children 1.5-3years



**21%** secondary school age pupils in Brighton & Hove reported drinking sports/energy drinks at least once a week. Among some population groups this figure rises to 46%.

**29%** primary school age pupils reported drinking fizzy drinks at least once a week; (13% reported drinking fizzy drinks at least once a day)

Source: Brighton & Hove Safe and Well at School Survey (2015)



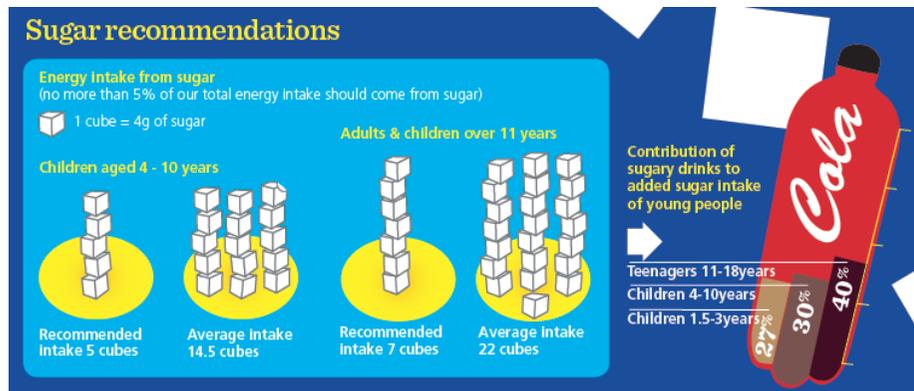
## BACKGROUND

One in four children are already overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school in Brighton and Hove<sup>1</sup> and just under half of the population of the city are above a healthy weight<sup>2</sup>. Individuals in the most deprived areas are more likely to be obese than those in the most affluent and there is a significant cost of obesity to the NHS in the city (estimated to be £78.1 million annually<sup>3</sup>). Improving diet remains a key public health priority; our Healthy Weight Programme Board oversees the delivery of an action plan for the improvement of health and wellbeing and this includes activities to transform local environments to make it easier for residents to make healthier food and drink choices every day.

### Why sugar?

Sugar has a role to play in weight management as, on average, we're consuming too much. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition [SACN] published new recommendations on carbohydrates, including sugars and fibre, in 2015.<sup>4</sup> A new definition for the term 'free sugars' was adopted; 'free sugars' includes all sugar added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices. SACN recommended that the average population intake of free sugars should not exceed 5% of total dietary energy for age groups from 2 years upwards, and that the consumption of sugars-sweetened beverages should be minimised in children and adults.

All groups consume more free sugar than is now recommended, most notably children and young people aged four to 18 years who consume around three times the amount they should. Soft drinks are a significant source of free sugars for children aged 11 to 18 years.<sup>5</sup> In Brighton & Hove, a recent survey found that 21% of secondary age pupils report drinking sports/energy drinks at least once a week and this figure rises to 46% among some groups. 29% primary school age pupils report drinking fizzy drinks at least once a week with 13% saying they drink them once a day.<sup>6</sup>



SACN refers to evidence that rising sugar intake increases overall energy intake. There is some evidence that sugar-sweetened beverages are linked to weight gain and there is consistent evidence that the consumption of sugar is associated with increased risk of dental caries. A high intake of sugary drinks is also associated with an increased risk of Type 2 diabetes.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) 2016 update

<sup>2</sup> BHCC, 2012. Health Counts in Brighton & Hove. <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/Health%20Counts%20Report%201992-2012%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> BHCC, 2013. Brighton & Hove JSNA <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/jsna2013.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> SACN, 2015. Carbohydrates and Health Report, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/445503/SACN\\_Carbohydrates\\_and\\_Health.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445503/SACN_Carbohydrates_and_Health.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> PHE, 2014. National Diet and Nutrition Survey: results from Years 1 to 4 (combined) of the rolling programme for 2008 and 2009 to 2011 and 2012,

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/310995/NDNS\\_Y1\\_to\\_4\\_UK\\_report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/310995/NDNS_Y1_to_4_UK_report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> BHCC, 2016. Brighton & Hove Safe and Well at School Survey. Link TBC

<sup>7</sup> SACN, 2015. Carbohydrates and Health Report, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/445503/SACN\\_Carbohydrates\\_and\\_Health.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445503/SACN_Carbohydrates_and_Health.pdf)

## Taking action on sugar

Public Health England [PHE] published *Sugar Reduction: the evidence for action*<sup>8</sup> in 2015. The report highlighted the change in our relationship with food over the last 30 years including how we shop, where we eat and how food and drink is produced. The review drew conclusions about actions that could be implemented to change our sugar intake. Actions included: transforming the environment that influences our food choices including pricing, promotions and marketing; a gradual sugar reduction in everyday food and drink products; and continued awareness raising.<sup>9</sup> The report emphasised that no single action will be effective in reducing sugar intakes but that any progress would yield benefits. It was recommended that programmes use a range of levers.

### Taxes

The introduction of a price increase of 10-20% on high sugar drinks and snacks, through the use of a tax or levy, was one of the eight key recommendations made by PHE. This was based on the emerging evidence of the impact of such measures in other countries such as Mexico. Following the introduction of a 10% tax on sugar sweetened drinks, the country saw an overall average 6% reduction in purchases of such drinks in 2014.<sup>10</sup> The case for a focus on sugary drinks is clear given the evidence linking consumption to weight gain<sup>11</sup> and as sugary drinks are the primary source of free sugars among children and young people<sup>12</sup> this measure could be effectively targeted at reducing overall sugar intake among young people.

In recent months, calls for a 'sugar tax' have grown. The [Children's Health Fund](#) was set up by Jamie Oliver and Sustain in August 2015. In the absence of legislation at the time of the launch, the aim was to encourage restaurants to voluntarily add a 10p levy on non-alcoholic soft drinks that contain added sugar. This money is paid into the independent Children's Health Fund to support programmes aimed at improving children's health and food education. The Faculty of Public Health<sup>13</sup> and British Medical Association<sup>14</sup> have been among those suggesting a sugar tax should be included in any plan to reduce sugar consumption. However, industry representatives tend to favour a reduction in portion size and reformulation over a tax. We wanted to utilise the opportunity of a local debate on sugar to find out what residents and food outlets think about a sugar tax.

Since the debate, the UK government unveiled plans for a sugar tax on the soft drinks industry in the Budget. The levy is aimed at high-sugar drinks, particularly fizzy drinks and it will be imposed on companies according to the volume of the drinks they produce or import. There will be two bands – one for total sugar content above 5g per 100 millilitres and a second, higher band for the most sugary drinks with more than 8g per 100 millilitres. It is suggested that they will be levied at 18p and 24p per litre.

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<sup>8</sup> PHE, 2015. Sugar Reduction: the evidence for action. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/470179/Sugar\\_reduction\\_The\\_evidence\\_for\\_action.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470179/Sugar_reduction_The_evidence_for_action.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> PHE, 2015. *Ibid*

<sup>10</sup> Cornelson, L and Carriedo, A., 2015. Health related taxes on food beverages. Available at: <http://foodresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Food-and-beverages-taxes-final-amended.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> SACN, 2015. Carbohydrates and Health Report. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/445503/SACN\\_Carbohydrates\\_and\\_Health.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445503/SACN_Carbohydrates_and_Health.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> PHE, 2014. National Diet and Nutrition Survey: results from Years 1 to 4 (combined) of the rolling programme for 2008 and 2009 to 2011 and 2012, Available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/310995/NDNS\\_Y1\\_to\\_4\\_UK\\_report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/310995/NDNS_Y1_to_4_UK_report.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Position statement: <http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/Position%20statement%20-%20SSBs.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Position statement: [http://bmaopac.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/exlibris/aleph/a21\\_1/apache\\_media/7CY7PA145G9D95CXKXVPKYPYBP7JS6I.pdf](http://bmaopac.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/exlibris/aleph/a21_1/apache_media/7CY7PA145G9D95CXKXVPKYPYBP7JS6I.pdf)

## RESULTS

### Are residents concerned about sugar?

81% of people that replied to the survey said they are 'concerned about sugar in food and drink' and for the majority (71%) their concern has risen in recent years. Asked 'Are you particularly concerned about the amount of sugar in any of the following foods and drinks' the top three ranked options were cereal (27.1%), processed foods and ingredients (25.6%) and soft drinks (15.2%).

Few people that attended focus groups or took part in discussions at parent groups were aware of the new sugar recommendations, though nearly all were clear about the impact of sugar on health including weight gain and tooth decay. Several parents said that they had become more aware of sugar since they began weaning their child(ren) and this often prompted them to reduce their own intake.

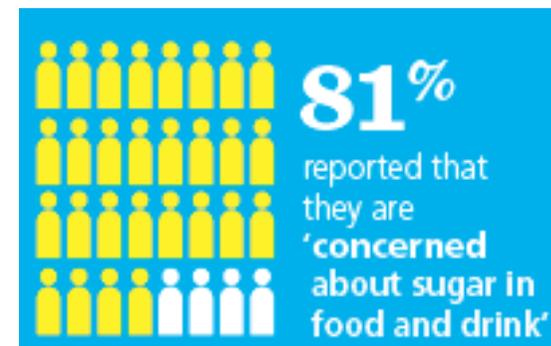
There was much debate about the justification for targeting sugar in the commentary underneath media articles and social media posts. Some commented that, in the past, people ate whatever they wanted without fear, however others argued that changes in food industry and our environment mean we are consuming more sugar and more often, sometimes without realising. Others refuted the role of food and nutrition in tackling overweight and obesity at all.

*"I've eaten shed loads of sugar for 20 years. I only put on weight when I stopped cycling everywhere. [#cyclesmartcity](#) beats [#sugarsmartcity](#)." [Comment on media article]*

There was discussion about the cost of taking action versus taking no action (i.e. the cost of an initiative to tackle sugar versus the cost of ill-health and diet-related disease). Some stressed that other local issues were more important and should be targeted first, including bike racks, litter, recycling, alcohol and drugs, gambling and stress.

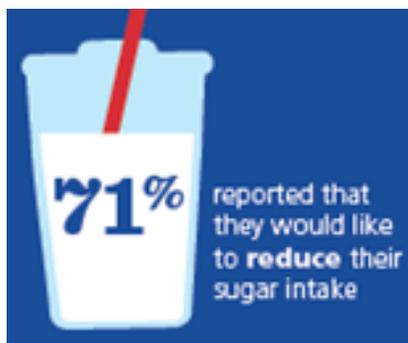
The debate survey results suggest that the availability of healthier food and drink, and practical information about how to spot these options, would be more helpful in reducing sugar consumption than knowledge about the health impacts of high sugar intake. More than three quarter of respondents (77%) said 'more information to help me spot the healthier food and drink options' was one of their top three preferences for helping them to reduce their sugar intake; more than double than the percentage that said 'knowing more about the impact of sugar on the health of my teeth (28%) and nearly double than those that said 'knowing more about the impact of sugar on my weight' (40%). Three out of five (60%) also said that 'knowing that healthier food and drink options are available' was one of their top three preferences.

Comments underneath media articles and social media posts, and a discussion during the youth debate, suggested that education and awareness should focus on making it easier for people to find out how much sugar is in everyday food and drink products and to find healthier options. It was



frequently commented that we need to increase residents' understanding of food labels, raise awareness about the recommendations for sugar intake and promote ways people can avoid hidden sugars.

## What contributes towards sugar intake in the city?



71% survey respondents stated they would like to reduce their own intake of sugar. We asked “Which foods or drinks do you think contribute most to your own sugar intake?” The majority (60%) felt that one of the three biggest contributors to their sugar intake is ‘confectionary and biscuits’. Over a third of all respondents felt that alcohol was in their top three, and this was more common among adults aged 25-34 (47%) and 35-44 (46%). ‘Soft drinks’ appeared to be a much more significant contributor among younger people than other age groups; 37% of those aged 16-24 said it’s in their top three with only between 7-17% of respondents in other age groups choosing this option. ‘Processed foods and ingredients’ also appeared to be a significant contributor with over a third (37%) of all respondents choosing this. We asked those with children under the age of 16 “Which foods or drinks do you think contributes most to your children’s sugar intake?” Over two thirds (72%) said ‘confectionary and biscuits’ with ‘cereal’ and ‘fruit drinks’ being the next most popular choices (51% and 41% respectively). Respondents from BME groups were less likely to select ‘cereal’ as a top contributor (18% compared with 23% of all respondents) and ‘energy drinks’ (18% compared with 3% of all respondents).

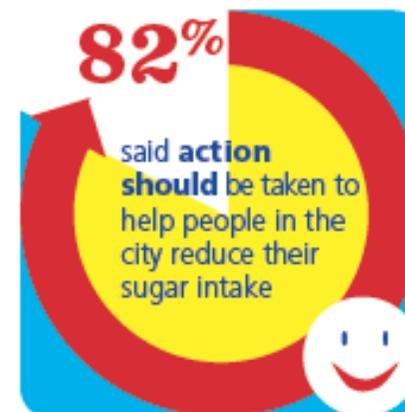
respondents selected this compared with 23% of all respondents) and ‘energy drinks’ (18% compared with 3% of all respondents).

We know from the aforementioned survey that pupil-reported sports/energy and sugar sweetened fizzy drink consumption is higher than the figures above suggest.

## Should we take action on sugar?

82% said action **should** be taken to help people in the city reduce their sugar intake. More people agreed that action should target the sugar intake of young children (92.4%) and teenagers (85.1%) than adults (66.8%) and older people (43.3%). (NB respondents could select multiple options).

Respondents were asked about different types of action that could be taken. There was strong agreement across all areas; 87% agreed that food outlets should make healthier options more available and more attractive and 77% agreed that fewer sugary drinks and snacks should be available in facilities like leisure and shopping centres. 80% agreed that secondary schools and academies should act to reduce sugary drink intake among pupils and 72% agreed that there should be stricter rules in primary schools to limit sugary items in lunch boxes and snacks. Fewer people – though still over half of respondents – agreed that they need more information about how sugar affects their health (53%).



## Children and young people

A recurrent theme throughout the debate was responsibility; whether it's solely the parents' responsibility to influence their child(ren)'s diet or whether we, schools or others have a role to play.

*"The parents of children who need hospitalising for sugar-related dental surgery should be fined."* [Comment on media article]

*"People are keen to place the blame with drinks companies and not the parents who feed their kids sugary drinks."* [Comment on media article]

## Schools influence

An attendee of the youth debate commented:

*"I don't really think they [schools] should be teaching it, I think parents should be teaching their children [about diet/sugar]..."*

Sarah Clayton, Head Teacher at St Marys Catholic Primary School and one of the members of the panel of experts at the youth debate, pointed out that schools and teachers work in partnership with parents, with some parents finding school "a useful back up" as they can use the school rules at home. Meanwhile several parents that took part in the one-to-one discussions at Children's Centres agreed that schools can support parents and families with fewer resources or less knowledge.

*"Where parents may not have the knowledge to do the best thing, schools have a role."* [Participant of a one-to-one discussion at a children's centre]

The survey asked **"There should be stricter rules in primary schools to limit sugary items in lunch boxes and snacks. Do you agree?"** and 72% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Female respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree (77%) than male respondents (53%). The debate found a call for greater control on the amount of sugary food allowed in to schools. Some said that schools should ban sugary drinks (including fruit juice) and unhealthy snacks provided by parents for snack time and lunchtime.

*"At school my daughter has a lunch box, and [the school doesn't allow] chocolate and I don't put crisps in either even though those are allowed."* [Participant of a one-to-one discussion at a children's centre]

## School meals

There were many references about the sugar content of primary school meals, and in particular the provision of a dessert:

*"My concern is school food & there should be strict sugar guidelines for school meals." AND "...taking the added and processed sugar out of the school meals sauces..."* [Open text responses on survey]

*“Most people don’t eat dessert with every meal, certainly not lunch. Is there a need for school dinners to include a pudding every day for lunch?”* [Audience comment at the youth debate] AND *“No need for it and it is setting children up to get in the habit of having desserts”* [Open text response on survey]

Others commented on the positive benefit of school meals; one parent said that school meals provided a ‘comfort’ when their child was settling in to primary school, and others mentioned that the variation of the meals help children ‘broaden their repertoire’.

The school meal contract caterers for Brighton & Hove – Eden Food Service – recently engaged in a sugar reduction project. From October 2015 all primary schools in Brighton & Hove are compliant with the School Food Standards Healthy Drinks List<sup>15</sup> which limits sugar through portion control, and all schools are compliant with the measure that states that confectionery is not permitted in schools. Furthermore:

- All desserts meet the School Food Plan recommended portion sizes<sup>16</sup> for primary schoolchildren
- All flour based desserts will be 25% wholemeal
- There will be no use of any icing or drizzles on cakes and desserts
- All desserts will be ‘low’ or ‘medium’ sugar content, with the exception of some fruit based desserts

### *Out-of-home food supply*

Respondents suggested that people know what they **should** be doing and just need to act on it. However, as they are faced with constant temptation as well as unclear information and confusing messages, ‘acting on it’ is not always easy.

*“Outlets and manufacturers should label food and drink more clearly”.* [Participant of a one-to-one discussion at a children’s centre]

Some commented that when it comes to choosing products for their children, they assume that companies are responsible and don’t add salt and sugar which means they don’t need to check the labels. However, others said they are more likely to look at the labels when shopping for their child(ren) than when shopping for themselves as they are more concerned about their intake.

A common theme displayed by parents that took part in discussions, particularly working parents, was that time constraints sometimes mean relying on convenience foods but that these pose a concern in terms of sugar – and salt and fat – content. Parents, and others that attended the youth debate, also mentioned that online grocery shopping makes it more difficult and time consuming to read food labels and compare the nutritional content.

Some suggested that shops and outlets should ban or restrict certain products, such as energy drinks. However, a strong theme emerged from the youth debate event that we should refrain from banning and saying ‘no’, but rather emphasise education and information so that young people understand the impact of their diet on their healthy and can make more informed choices.

The survey asked **“Secondary schools and academies should act to reduce sugary drink intake among pupils. Do you agree?”** and 79% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Those under the age of 16 were significantly less likely to agree (49%) than other groups such as those aged

<sup>15</sup> DfE, 2014. School Food Standards. Available at: <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/School-Food-Standards-Guidance-FINAL-V3.pdf>. Accessed 10 May 2016

<sup>16</sup> DfE, 2014. Portion sizes and food groups. Available at: <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Portion-Tables-1406161.pdf> Accessed 10 May 2016

25-34 (85%). Female respondents were more likely to agree (88%) than male respondents (59%). This suggests that pupils themselves, and particularly male pupils may be less likely to be concerned about their sugary drink intake, posing a greater challenge to behaviour change.

## The food environment

Most of us know what we need to eat to have a healthy, balanced diet. However, on average people still consume too much saturated fat, added sugars and salt and not enough fruit, vegetables, oily fish and fibre<sup>17</sup>. This is because our food choices – what and how much we eat – are under a range of other influences including cost, availability, our family and peers, advertising and other point of sale information.

Sugar Reduction work in the ‘out of home’ sector has largely focused on reducing portion size of pre-packaged products (such as confectionary), or by reformulating products to reduce the amount of sugar whilst often maintaining sweetness through the use of low/no calorie sweeteners. Despite some improvement, average sugar intakes remain high<sup>18</sup>. Some debate respondents presented strong views about stepping up reformulation efforts with calls made for the government to set stronger sugar reduction targets for industry. There were discussions about the role of sweeteners too; that we need to adjust our taste for sweetness rather than simply switching sugar for sweeteners. Although sweeteners are certified as safe<sup>19</sup> some respondents remain concerned about their use and about the potential health impact. While we have little influence over reformulation locally, we can take action on the food environment in other ways. We can encourage cafes, restaurants and takeaways to make commitments such as removing unlimited soft drinks refills, removing high sugar drinks from children’s menus, offering and promoting free drinking water, limiting the portion size of higher sugar foods and drinks, promoting healthier ‘meal deals’ and buying in prepared foods and ingredients that are low or lower in sugar content.

Survey respondents were more supportive of measures to promote and encourage healthier choices than to restrict availability of high sugar products. We asked “**Food outlets should make healthier options more available and more attractive. Do you agree?**” and 87% agreed or strongly agreed. Despite support still being strong, fewer respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “**fewer sugary drinks and snacks should be available in facilities like leisure and shopping centres**” (77%). Food outlets were asked to respond to these same statements and presented similar views. This view was supported by comment and debate generated by media articles and social media posts. Many were adamant that the government should subsidise healthier products (rewarding healthier choices) and that both retailers and outlets should rebalance the type of food they offer – increasing the amount of healthy products and reducing the number of unhealthy choices. There were also suggestions that retailers should offer more promotions on healthier products, such as fruit and vegetables, rather than high sugar products such as biscuits and cakes.

Throughout the debate, outlets were asked for their views about the viability of various ‘sugar smart’ actions. In regard to taxes, outlets were concerned about the impact of this on their sales but also about the impact on their customers - “*people round here are already pushed to the limit*”. Asked about reducing the price of healthier options or offering promotions on healthier options, outlets were less worried but still concerned about the impact of this on their profits.

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<sup>17</sup> PHE, 2014. National Diet and Nutrition Survey: results from Years 1 to 4 (combined) of the rolling programme for 2008 and 2009 to 2011 and 2012, Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/310995/NDNS\\_Y1\\_to\\_4\\_UK\\_report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/310995/NDNS_Y1_to_4_UK_report.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> PHE, 2014. *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> Website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-truth-about-artificial-sweeteners.aspx>

Other barriers to action included management structures, such as franchises or a chain tied in to national menus.

*“I will say it sounds like a great idea, however we are tied into national menus under the...franchise so to swap items out I believe wouldn't be possible.”* [Food business owner]

Outlets were also concerned about competition and felt that customers will go elsewhere if they stop selling certain products.

*“They can just go next door if they can't get it here”.* [Food business owner]

Some mentioned that they tend to stock items people want or expect. *“It's not my place; I don't want to tell people what they should do”.* Finally, the measures which were considered to be easier to implement (low effort) were also thought to have a lower impact.

The steps most commonly taken by outlets include:

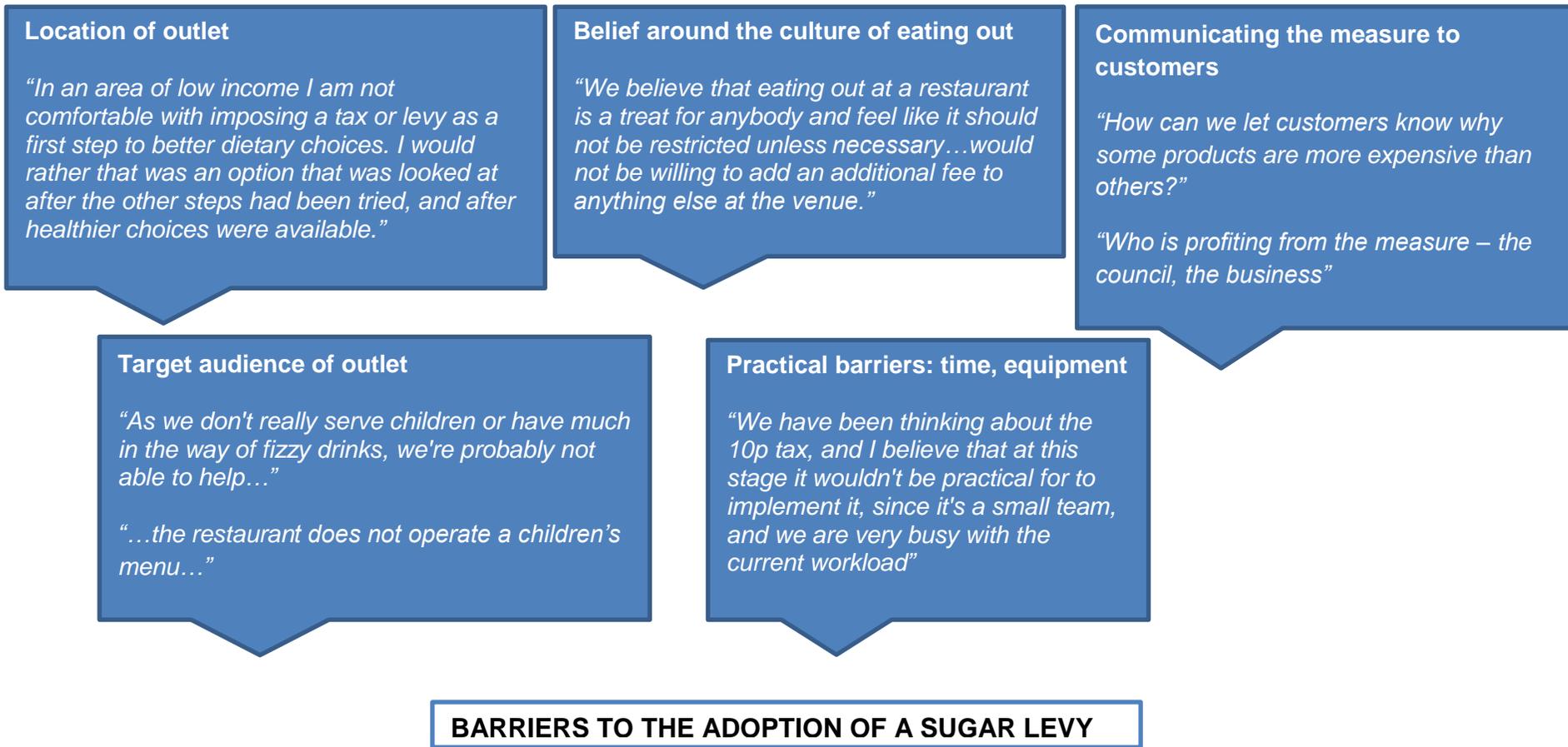
- Promoting healthier options such as whole fruit and water (for example including these in 'meal deals')
- Tap water being freely available (however, not often actively or prominently promoted)
- Providing information (posters about healthy eating, and in some limited cases, nutritional information on menus)
- Choosing not to stock certain products (such as energy drinks)
- Not offering fizzy drinks with children's set menus, (including juice, juice drinks or no-added sugar squash for a set price instead)
- Using ingredients perceived as 'alternatives' to sugar (e.g. Agave or honey) in recipes or drinks or offering sweeteners as alternative to sugar

*“...we are very conscious of the dangers of high consumption of sugar. As such we do not (stock) beverages containing sugar, only sweetened with agave nectar and natural fruit juices.”* [Food business owner]

### *Sugar tax*

Food outlets were asked **“I would support a voluntary 10p levy on sugar sweetened drinks. Do you agree?”** and 31% of those that replied agreed or strongly agreed, 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the remaining 19% neither agreed nor disagreed. Despite some sign up by independent food outlets in the city, businesses raise a range of barriers. One of the most significant was the practicalities involved in implementing and monitoring it, such as a lack of appropriate equipment (EPOS tills), a lack of time to set the scheme up, a high turnover of staff and concerns about how to communicate the measure to customers.

The fact that over 130 restaurants have signed up nationally, most of which are chains, suggests that it could be more straightforward for large operations to implement, roll out and monitor than for small independent and local outlets.



Residents displayed a range of views in response to the sugary drinks levy. Some felt the Children’s Health Fund presents a useful *“double whammy”* as it helps to raise awareness and provides ring-fenced funds to promote health and food education. Some felt it could be an *“easy”* step that will have some positive impact.

Some questioned whether the Children’s Health Fund levy focuses on the correct targets – sugary drinks, outlets and their customers. As people tend to know that sugary drinks contain a lot of sugar, should we use a tax to raise awareness about products containing hidden sugars? Should manufactures be targeted, taxing the raw ingredient rather than the end product? Views against the levy included scepticism about where the money

raised would go – that shops, outlets or Local Authority would profit from the scheme. Some mentioned the voluntary aspect could have an impact of competition:

*“Shop keepers who don’t add this will be looking forward to increased sales...”* [Comment on media article]

It was suggested that 10p isn’t enough and that it won’t change behaviour: *“people will still buy what they want”*. There was some comparison to the rise in price of tobacco and the view (by some) that this hasn’t worked to reduce smoking levels.

*“I live a healthy lifestyle and am aware of what I eat and drink. It’s down to people themselves. I drink Coke when I want and would pay whatever the price is regardless. It’s about healthy education.”* [Focus group participant]

Finally, some were concerned that a tax would unfairly impact on those with less money, and others were frustrated that they would be affected despite what they perceived as their own responsible consumption.

*“Don’t punish all consumers because some can’t manage own gluttony”* [Comment on media article]

*“Why should we pay tax on fizzy drinks, just because other people are being reckless?”* [Audience question from the youth debate]

It was emphasised by a panel member at the youth debate event, that a tax now could save us all in taxes in the future:

*“A tax on sugary drinks now, as your kids, may save you extra tax when your older and have to bolster a national health service which is absolutely dying on its feet”* [Andrew Kay, The Latest, panel member at the youth debate]

## DEBATE CONCLUSIONS

Sugar Smart City launched in October 2015 with a debate to raise awareness of sugar intake and to ask whether and how to take action to reduce intake. This aim and the associated objectives (page 3) were achieved. The debate received significant media coverage with support from Jamie Oliver and as a result of this partnership there was a clear focus on the idea of a 'sugar tax'.

The debate found high and recently increased levels of concern about dietary sugar intake with a significant number stating action should be taken to help residents reduce their intake. This provides a clear mandate for local action. Views on action for primary school sugary snacks and sugary drinks in secondary schools are instrumental in informing our Public Health Schools Programme. Improving the accessibility and attractiveness of healthy options in food outlets, leisure and sports facilities provides challenges but is central to the development of a Sugar smart action plan.

### Restriction and education

The debate found a need for continued awareness raising particularly about the recommendations and, practically, how people can reduce their intake or avoid 'hidden' sugar. Respondents were also more in favour of encouraging and supporting healthier choices than removing or restricting choice. Education and information will enable particularly young people as they grow and gain more freedom to make their own choices outside of the school and home setting.

### Responsibility and free choice

A clear theme throughout the debate was 'responsibility': individual responsibility versus the impact of our environment on our food and drink choices, and parental responsibility versus that of schools. Going forward, Sugar Smart City will aim to support **all** settings to take joint responsibility.

*"We all have responsibility for each other"* [Andy Winter, Youth Debate]

Linked to this was the view held by some that we, the council, should not intervene in such issues, that people should be entirely 'free' to make their own food and drink choices. The survey asked "**Customers should be free to choose and no action should be taken to restrict or influence food and drink choice. Do you agree?**" Almost a third of respondents agreed or strongly agreed and just over a half disagreed or strongly disagreed. It's clear that there is a myriad of influences over our food and drink choices – from cultural or religious practices, cost, availability, advertising and point of sale information to social considerations such as friends and family<sup>20</sup> – so it could be argued that we are never truly free from influence. As well as supporting changes that create a healthier food and drink environment, Sugar Smart City will aim to provide people and organisations with the information and skills they need to make more *informed* choices every day.

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<sup>20</sup> Food a Fact of Life, 2009. Factors affecting food choice. Available at <http://www.google.co.uk/url?url=http://www.foodafactoflife.org.uk/attachments/62029e59-7833-453add321bf8.ppt&rct=j&frm=1&q=&esrc=s&sa=U&ved=0ahUKewj5xuibps3MAhVoKsAKHdGZAJAQFggUMAA&usg=AFQjCNFG4I5b90-8bSchYE3uTml9oHBycg>. Accessed 09/05/16

## Actions on the local food environment

Actions we promote to independent food outlets and local retailers need to be viable for business. Outlets often view the responsibility as ultimately lying with the consumer:

*“They say they want healthier options but then they don’t sell and we have waste”.* [Food business owner, Healthy Choice workshop]

This debate goes a long way to demonstrate to outlets that there is customer demand for action, and we will need to engage a significant number of outlets to create a level playing field. A voluntary levy on sugary drinks is just one action in a whole range we’re advocating and is one that will suit some businesses more than others. As PHE’s evidence review states, no single action will be effective.

*“I don’t have a problem with [a sugar tax], but I do have a problem with a one dimensional approach to obesity.”* [Commentator to media article about the debate]

December 2015 –  
March 2016

## Primary schools



**30** held a sugar assembly and promoted the SUGAR SMART challenge



**7** have had cookery lessons for parents

**24** have achieved the **healthy choice AWARD** for their Breakfast Club

**26** primary schools have signed up to the **Jamie Oliver's kitchen garden project**

**Eden** have reduced sugar in school meals

**2** events have been held to help schools take a whole school approach to Food Education

## Food outlets and catering



**150** food outlets been in contact and **70** of these are making one or more SUGAR SMART Commitments, including:

**59** are promoting **free** drinking water

**13** are altering recipes to contain less sugar

**24** are using pricing and promotions to influence healthier choices, such as adopting the **CHILDREN'S HEALTH FUND** levy

**7** have trained catering staff to raise knowledge about healthier catering

**29** are offering healthier options

**14** are reducing soft drink portion sizes

**14** promoting SUGAR SMART to customers

We're also starting work across the city in venues, sport and leisure settings, hospitals, secondary schools, colleges and universities.



Keep up to date at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sugarsmart](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sugarsmart)

## Spotlight on action

## Sussex County Cricket Club



**Raising awareness:**  
Adding a 20p levy to the cost of sugary drinks with funds raised going to the Sussex Cricket Foundation

**Changing the food environment:**  
Introducing healthy and low sugar children's lunch packs

**Educating:**  
Promoting SUGAR SMART messages during school Match Visits

## SUGAR SMART ACTION PLAN

WHAT YOU SAID	HOW WE'RE HELPING
<p><b>Action on sugar</b></p> <p>More than 8 in 10 respondents agreed action should be taken to help people in the city reduce their sugar intake</p>	<p>We've developed a city-wide Sugar Smart action plan that aims to reduce sugar intake across all ages. We hope this will help improve the proportion of people in the city with a healthy weight, improve dental health and reduce diet-related ill health.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness</li> <li>• Increasing skills and knowledge</li> <li>• Changing our environment to support healthier choices</li> </ul>
<p><b>Schools and young people</b></p> <p>The majority said action should target the sugar intake of young children (92%) and teenagers (85%)</p> <p>8 in 10 people said that secondary schools should act to reduce pupils' sugary drink intake and more than 7 in 10 agreed that there should be stricter rules in primary schools to limit sugary items in lunch boxes and for snacks</p>	<p>We will continue to deliver the Healthy Choice Award in early years settings and offer Sugar Smart training to staff.</p> <p>Activities will be offered to all primary schools in the city, including assemblies, challenges and workshops for parents, and schools will be encouraged to adopt a Sugar Smart snack policy.</p> <p>Information events, focusing on sugary drinks, will be delivered in secondary schools, colleges and universities, and we will work with young people to develop age-appropriate and relevant information materials.</p>

<p><b>Food outlets and shops</b></p> <p>Almost 9 in 10 people agreed that food outlets should make healthier options more available and more attractive</p> <p>Almost 8 in 10 people agreed that fewer sugary drinks and snacks should be available in facilities like leisure and shopping centres</p>	<p>Outlets, such as cafes, restaurants, takeaways and those in leisure facilities and hospitals, will be encouraged to make Sugar Smart Commitments including promoting tap water, changing recipes, putting up sugary content information, promoting healthier options and adopting a sugar levy.</p> <p>We will develop and pilot activities, such as healthy food promotions and Sugar Smart checkouts, with at least one key retailer in the city</p>
<p><b>Information and support</b></p> <p>More than three quarter of respondents (77 per cent) said ‘more information to help me spot the healthier food and drink options’ was one of their top three preferences for helping them to reduce their sugar intake</p>	<p>Change4Life Sugar Smart materials for families and young children will be made available in a range of settings and at events. This includes sugar swap ideas and information about the Sugar Smart app to find out how much sugar food and drink products contain.</p> <p>A booklet aimed at adults will be developed by the Food Partnership and Sugar Smart messages will be included in all Food Partnership cookery and nutrition programmes. Booklets will be made available in a range of settings and at events.</p> <p>All resources will be available on the Sugar Smart City webpage: <a href="http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sugarsmart">www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sugarsmart</a></p>

