

[News story: Country stores merger referred for in-depth investigation](#)

On 21 February the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) announced that it would [refer the merger for a phase 2 investigation](#) unless Mole Valley offered acceptable proposals to address these concerns.

As the parties have not offered satisfactory undertakings, the CMA will now refer the merger.

A decision on the merger will be made by a group of independent panel members supported by a case team of CMA staff. The deadline for the final report is 20 August 2018.

Information relating to the investigation is available on the [case page](#).

[News story: Plans to cut excess calorie consumption unveiled](#)

Major steps to cut people's excessive calorie intake have been unveiled by Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), as part of the government's strategy to cut childhood and adult obesity.

The package includes:

- new evidence highlighting overweight or obese boys and girls consume up to 500 and 290 calories too many each day respectively
- a challenge to the food industry to reduce calories in products consumed by families by 20% by 2024
- the launch of the latest One You campaign, encouraging adults to consume 400 calories at breakfast, and 600 for lunch and dinner. This comes as adults consume 200 to 300 calories in excess each day

Too many children and most adults are overweight or obese, suffering consequences from bullying and low self-esteem in childhood, to type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers as adults. An obese parent is more likely to have an obese child, who in turn is more likely to grow up into an obese adult.

Obesity affects us all, as it is a burden on the NHS and local authorities. The NHS spends around £6 billion a year treating obesity-related conditions. Obesity-related health problems also keep people out of work, stifling their

earnings and wider economic productivity.

The government's challenge to the food industry is set out in Calorie reduction: the scope and ambition for action, published today, Tuesday 6 March 2018, by PHE. As with the [sugar reduction programme](#), the industry has 3 ways to reduce calories:

- change the recipe of products
- reduce portion size
- encourage consumers to purchase lower calorie products

Categories of food covered by the programme include pizzas, ready meals, ready-made sandwiches, meat products and savoury snacks.

If the 20% target is met within 5 years, more than 35,000 premature deaths could be prevented and around £9 billion in NHS healthcare and social care costs could be saved over a 25 year period.

The report also includes new data on children's daily calorie consumption. Depending on their age, overweight and obese boys consume between 140 to 500 calories too many each day and for girls, it is 160 to 290 when compared to those with healthy body weights. Adults consume on average 200 to 300 calories too many each day.

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of PHE, said:

The simple truth is on average we need to eat less. Children and adults routinely eat too many calories and it's why so many are overweight or obese.

Industry can help families by finding innovative ways to lower the calories in the food we all enjoy and promoting UK business leadership on the world stage in tackling obesity.

Steve Brine MP, Public Health and Social Care Minister, said:

There can be no doubt that obesity is now one of our greatest challenges – one that is fuelling an epidemic of preventable illnesses like type 2 diabetes and cancer. These not only shorten lives but put unsustainable pressure on our health service.

We have a responsibility to act, which is why we are supporting families to make the healthy choice. Our calorie reduction programme – the first of its kind from any country in the world – will continue to build on the progress of our world-leading childhood obesity plan, which has led to positive steps by industry.

The latest One You campaign aims to support people to be more calorie-aware when they are out and about with its simple tip 400-600-600. Aim for 400 calories at breakfast, and 600 for lunch and dinner. Major high street brands are partnering with PHE on the campaign, signposting to meals that meet the 400-600-600 tip. Total daily calorie intake recommendations remain at 2,000 for women and 2,500 for men.

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at PHE, said:

It's hard for people to make healthy food choices, whether for themselves or their families. That's why we are challenging the food industry to take 20% of the calories out of everyday foods, building on their good work on salt and promising announcements on sugar.

We are also working through our campaign and its partners, to give the public the information they need to help make those choices easier.

The 20% reduction target is the result of analysis of the new calorie consumption data, experience of sugar and salt reduction programmes, and more than 20 meetings with the food industry and stakeholders.

The next step in the programme involves engagement with the whole food industry such as retailers, manufacturers, major restaurant, café, takeaway, and delivery companies, and health and charity sectors, to develop category guidelines. These will be published in mid-2019.

Background

For further information on the calorie reduction programme and One You nutrition campaign please contact:

[Razeeb Ahasan](#) 020 3682 0093 [Jamie Mills](#) 020 7654 8039

[Press release: International Development Secretary calls on the global community to 'end the cycle of crisis' in Somalia](#)

Mothers tend to their children at a UNICEF health clinic in Somalia supported

by UK aid. Photo credit: UNICEF

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt will tell an audience of global donors today that while swift action last year saved thousands of lives and held-off famine in Somalia, “the job is not yet done”.

At an event co-hosted by the Department for International Development (DFID), the Federal Republic of Somalia and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Development Secretary will praise the efforts of the international community in 2017 – but call for continued global support for the 5.4 million people in need living in Somalia.

Six years ago Somalia was ravaged by a deadly famine which killed 260,000 people – half of those who died were children.

With extreme weathers and an unprecedented fourth consecutive year of poor rain forecast for the country, Ms Mordaunt will today deliver the stark warning that half the population is still hungry and at risk of disease – and will call on global partners to generate innovative ideas for building long-term resilience to drought.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Last year the UK stood up and called for international action at a landmark conference to agree critical help for the people of Somalia. Together, we helped avert a famine and saved thousands of lives.

But drought continues to haunt Somalia, where today half the population is hungry and at risk of disease. The job is not yet done.

Drought and famine do not have to go hand-in-hand. We must harness the potential of new ideas to build future-proof resilience against drought – and end the cycle of crisis.

We cannot let the world forget Somalia. It’s not just the right thing to do – we are all less safe when hunger and poverty are free to feed extremism and mass irregular migration.

The International Development Secretary will today announce a further emergency package to get urgently needed medical, nutritional, health and livelihood support to the country, including to 54,000 children who will be treated for Severe Acute Malnutrition.

The package will be distributed before the end of March 2018, to ensure urgent delivery of these life-saving services.

UN humanitarian chief and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said:

Last year, more than US\$90 million from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Somalia Humanitarian Fund were released to mitigate against the worsening food security situation in Somalia.

Thanks to generous and timely contributions from the UK and other donors, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund is this year already programming \$22 million for life-saving support. The CERF is also stepping up quickly with complementary, time-critical and life-saving funding which will help minimize further displacement of people in Somalia and other risks caused by the drought.

Notes to Editors:

Today's event, which is taking place at the Department for International Development, will be opened by International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt and Gamal Hassan, the Minister of Planning, Investment and Economic Development of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Harriett Baldwin, the Minister for Africa, will also be in attendance, as will Mark Lowcock, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Today's £24.6million funding package will be allocated as follows and will be spent before the end of March 2018, to ensure urgent delivery:

- 54,000 children will be treated for severe acute malnutrition;
- 157,480 people will receive emergency water and sanitation;
- 400,000 people will be treated by emergency health services, including cholera prevention, measles vaccination and life-saving primary health care services;
- 212,315 children and 53,333 pregnant and nursing mothers will receive treatment for moderate acute malnutrition;
- Multi-purpose cash transfers will be collected by 676,920 people;
- And 9,850 households will be able to support a harvest thanks to agricultural and pastoral livelihood support packages, including delivery of 300 water bladders and 500,000 animals in 25,000 households.

This £24.6million package from the Crisis Reserve Fund will be delivered through The United Nations World Food Programme, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Norwegian Refugee Council – this package announced today brings the total UK contribution to the 2018 Humanitarian Response to £85.65million.

This includes the £21million announced by the Secretary of State in January, £40million already allocated within the DFID Somalia Country Programme, and an additional £24.6million made available today from the UK Government Crisis Reserve.

The Crisis Reserve was designed to enable the UK to scale up support in humanitarian crises such as this one.

The £21million announced in December and the emergency £25million from the

Crisis Reserve will be released before the end of March – ensuring that funds are already available in the system to support early intervention.

All of these funds will be managed and disbursed through DFID's existing Somalia Humanitarian and Resilience Programme (SHARP).

[Press release: Actions to tackle exploitation and abuse agreed with UK charities](#)

A number of actions were today agreed to drive up standards in the aid sector at a Safeguarding Summit co-hosted by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Charity Commission.

This follows a challenge to UK-based international development charities by the International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, to come up with ideas and initiatives to ensure we protect the people we are here to serve.

Major UK charities, the Charity Commission and DFID have agreed upon initiatives to be taken forward to improve safeguarding standards.

This shortlist of actions includes immediate short term measures, and longer term initiatives to be developed in the coming weeks and months.

These include:

Creating an independent body to promote external scrutiny and ensure the highest possible standards across the aid sector

- The summit agreed to explore an international safeguarding centre to support organisations to implement best practice on safeguarding and maximise transparency in the sector.
- This could include conducting safeguarding reviews, offering guidance and support to organisations, and a deployable team of experts on sexual exploitation and abuse who can advise organisations on the ground.

Introducing new standards for vetting and referencing across the sector

- All organisations agreed the importance of an urgent review of referencing in the sector.
- The summit agreed that vetting and referencing standards are required for: UK-based staff; international staff; locally-employed staff – to ensure no offender can fall through the cracks.

Ensuring whistle-blowers and survivors of exploitation and abuse get the counselling and support they need

- The Summit agreed to plan for a systematic audit of whistleblowing practices across the sector to ensure individuals feel able to report offences.
- It also identified the importance of developing and implementing mandatory standards which would make organisations accountable to beneficiaries – ensuring those receiving aid are able to identify and raise concerns.

Changing organisational culture to tackle power imbalances, encourage reporting, take allegations seriously and hold people to account

- The summit agreed annual reports would be made more transparent, with specific information published on safeguarding including the number of cases.
- Mandatory inductions on safeguarding for all staff should be introduced to ensure any issues are identified and acted upon.

Ensuring concerns are heard and acted upon

- The summit agreed the vital role of establishing clear guidelines for referring incidents, allegations and offenders to relevant authorities – including the National Crime Agency.

In addition to the actions agreed at today's summit, DFID will continue to ensure small charities are supported during this process.

Notes to editors

~ On 12 February, the International Development Secretary announced a series of actions to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector. The fourth of the five actions was "to co-host a safeguarding summit with the Charity Commission to agree a set of actions to strengthen safeguarding processes and mechanisms, including around staffing and recruitment.

~ The Charity Commission has announced a suite of measures to help ensure charities learn the wider lessons from recent safeguarding revelations involving Oxfam and other charities, and to strengthen public trust and confidence in charities. This includes a new Charity Commission taskforce to handle the recent increase in safeguarding incident reports.

~ Penny Mordaunt challenged UK-based international development charities, regulatory bodies and independent experts to drive up standards and to agree practical tools, processes and protocols to ensure the aid sector protects the people it serves. As part of this, Ms Mordaunt confirmed that:

- DFID will put in place new, enhanced and specific safeguarding standards for the organisations the department works with. These standards will include an assessment of codes of conduct, how organisations identify and respond to incidents, and how their risk management places safeguarding and beneficiaries at its very core. New funds to organisations will not be approved unless they pass the new standards.
- All 179 UK-based charities that work overseas and receive UK aid have responded to the letter from the International Development Secretary

giving DFID their statement of assurance on four key areas, including their safeguarding environment and policies, their organisational culture, their clarity and transparency, and their handling of allegations and incidents.

- DFID is following up with 37 organisations to gain further clarity on their assurance.
- Of the 179 charities that have provided returns, in response to assurances sought by DFID, 26 have made serious incident reports to the Charity Commission. In total, the 26 charities have reported 80 incidents broadly related to safeguarding issues; some of these reports relate to incidents that occurred prior to April 2017.

~ This summit builds upon the action already taken by DFID in response to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector, including:

- Establishing a new Safeguarding Unit in DFID to urgently review safeguarding across all parts of the aid sector and catalyse further action to ensure everything is being done to protect people from harm, including sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Appointing Sheila Drew Smith, a recent member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, to bring her expertise to support DFID's ambition on safeguarding. She will report to the Secretary of State directly and will Chair the Safeguarding Summit.
- Writing to every UK charity that receives UK aid insisting that they set out the steps they are taking to ensure their safeguarding policies are fully in place and confirm they have referred all concerns they have about specific cases and individuals to the relevant authorities, including prosecuting authorities. A similar request has been sent to non-UK charities and other DFID suppliers, including those in the private sector.
- Agreeing with Oxfam that they will withdraw from bidding for any new UK Government funding until DFID is satisfied that they can meet the high standards we expect of our partners.
- Continuing to work with UN Secretary-General António Guterres to stop abuses under the UN flag and we have introduced specific clauses in our funding agreements with a number of UN agencies to take every action possible to prevent all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and take robust and prompt action in response to any allegations.
- Concluding a review of allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct involving DFID staff

~ Speeches made at the Safeguarding Summit by International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt; Chair of the Charity Commission, Baroness Stowell; and DFID Permanent Secretary Matthew Rycroft, can all be viewed online.

Press release: Shorter hopes for a symbolic year for women in Lebanon



Ambassador Shorter meets Lebanese Forces leader Geagea

British Ambassador to Lebanon Hugo Shorter met with the leader of the Lebanese Forces Party Samir Geagea.

After the meeting Ambassador Shorter said:

I had a good meeting today with the head of the Lebanese Forces Party, Samir Geagea. Our discussions covered a range of issues including the upcoming parliamentary elections in May. I am hopeful that the Lebanese Forces are considering positively the inclusion of more female candidates on electoral lists.

It is a symbolic year for women in the UK with the celebration of 100 years of women suffrage. I hope it will be a symbolic year for women in Lebanon, with the elections representing an important opportunity to boost inclusion and representation of women.

Published 5 March 2018