

News story: £5 million investment for new obesity policy research unit

The Department of Health has announced £5 million of funding for a new obesity policy research unit at University College London.

One year on from the launch of the childhood obesity plan, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Obesity Policy Research Unit has been set up to provide resource for long term research into childhood obesity.

It will give independent advice to policy makers and analysts, and develop understanding on the causes of childhood obesity, looking at social inequalities, the early years of childhood, and marketing to children and families.

It will also help to evaluate action that has been taken so far, to make sure the plan works for those who need it most.

In addition, the government tasked Public Health England (PHE) to look at why children are eating too many calories.

Philip Dunne, Minister of State for Health, said:

Too many of our children are growing up obese, which can lead to serious health complications. We all have a responsibility to help people live healthier lives, but with a third of children leaving primary school obese we must take a comprehensive approach and now focus on excess calories.

This can only be done through strong guidance, grounded in evidence. That's why we have funded a new £5 million dedicated obesity policy research unit to understand the deeper causes of obesity.

Professor Russell Viner, Policy Research Unit Director and Professor of Adolescent Health, at UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, said:

Obesity is one of the greatest health concerns of our time and we welcome this considerable and very timely investment from the government.

We are delighted that the UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health will host the new obesity policy research unit (OPRU). Preventing obesity in early life is key to turning the tide on this modern epidemic.

Obesity levels among children and young people present a significant, long-term challenge for the NHS: reducing calorie consumption is critical to reversing the worrying obesity trend, which shows:

- 1 in 3 children are either overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school
 - children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be obese
 - more children in the UK than ever before are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, some as young as 7
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[Press release: Next stage of world-leading childhood obesity plan announced](#)

As set out in the plan, PHE will now consider the evidence on children's calorie consumption and set the ambition for the calorie reduction programme to remove excess calories from the foods children consume the most.

Ready meals, pizzas, burgers, savoury snacks and sandwiches are the kinds of foods likely to be included in the programme.

Over the past year, real progress has been made on reducing the level of sugar in many products.

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy has become law and will come into effect in April 2018 and PHE has formulated a comprehensive sugar reduction programme with the aim of a 20% reduction in sugar in key foods by 2020. Leading retailers and manufacturers have also announced they are, or already have, lowered the amount of sugar in their products as a result of these programmes.

Sugar reformulation was a vital first step under the childhood obesity programme, however overconsumption of calories will continue to have a detrimental effect on the health of our children without further action.

Adults currently consume on average between 200 to 300 calories too many each day and children are following suit, with food more readily available than ever before. Reducing calorie consumption from sources other than sugar is critical to reversing the worrying obesity trend, which shows:

- 1 in 3 children are either overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school
- more children in the UK than previously are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, some as young as 7
- children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be obese

Philip Dunne, Minister of State for Health said:

Too many of our children are growing up obese, which can lead to serious health complications. We all have a responsibility to help people live healthier lives, but with a third of children leaving primary school obese we must take a comprehensive approach and now focus on excess calories.

This can only be done through strong guidance, grounded in evidence – that’s why we have funded a new £5 million dedicated Obesity Research Policy Unit to understand the deeper causes of obesity.

Duncan Selbie, chief executive of PHE, said:

A third of children leave primary school overweight or obese and an excess of calories – not just excess sugar consumption – is the root cause of this.

We will work with the food companies and retailers to tackle this as the next critical step in combating our childhood obesity problem.

PHE will publish the evidence in early 2018. Following this it will then consult with the food industry, trade bodies and health non-governmental organisations to develop guidance and timelines for the calorie reduction programme.

The Department of Health has also funded a policy research unit – the £5 million National Institute for Health Obesity Research Policy Unit at University College London – which will look to develop a deeper understanding on the causes of childhood obesity, including marketing to children and families, social inequalities, and the early years of childhood.

Professor Russell Viner, Policy Research Unit Director and Professor of Adolescent Health, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, said:

Obesity is one of the greatest health concerns of our time and we welcome this considerable and very timely investment from the government. We are delighted that the UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health will host the new Obesity Policy Research Unit (OPRU). Preventing obesity in early life is key to turning the tide on this modern epidemic.

1. Since the childhood obesity plan was published, retailers and manufacturers like Nestle, General Mills, Lucozade Ribena Suntory, Tesco, Waitrose, Kellogg’s, Sainsbury’s, Marks and Spencer, Greggs, Starbucks and Breck’s Food have announced they are, or already have,

lowered the amount of sugar in their products.

2. The [sugar reduction programme](#) sees Public Health England working with the food and drink industry to remove 20% of the sugar children (up to 18 years of age) consume from the foods that contribute the most sugar to their diets by 2020. [Guidelines](#) that set out the approaches the food industry should take to achieve this target were published in March alongside baseline levels of sugar in products.
3. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy comes into effect in April 2018. Drinks with more than 8g of total sugar per 100ml will pay 24p per litre, with drinks between 5g and 8g sugar per 100ml paying 18p. Drink with less than 5g sugar per 100ml are exempt.
4. The free Change4Life Be Food Smart app helps families see the amount of sugar, salt and saturated fat in food and drinks. More information is on the [Be Food Smart website](#).
5. It is estimated 40,000 deaths per year in England are attributable to being overweight or obese (over 10% of all deaths). An estimated 70,000 premature deaths in the UK could be avoided each year if UK diets matched nutritional guidelines.

For further information on the calorie reduction programme, contact:

For more information on the new Obesity Research Policy Unit, contact:

[Press release: New emergency UK aid for Sierra Leone landslide victims](#)

The UK is stepping up with new emergency support that will provide clean water, food and medicines to assist people in the communities worst affected by the devastating floods and mudslide in Sierra Leone, International Development Secretary Priti Patel announced today.

UK aid is already ensuring vital humanitarian assistance is getting to people caught up in the crisis through pre-positioned supplies following the Ebola outbreak. Today's £5 million package – new money specifically for the humanitarian crisis in Freetown – includes support to:

- UNICEF to provide clean water and essential medicines for 5,000 people. UNICEF will also provide food, water and counselling for 1,500 children;

- A group of NGOs, led by Oxfam, to provide clean water and sanitation facilities for 3,000 people, vital to stopping the spread of deadly diseases such as cholera;
- UK charity Street Child to provide clothing and bedding for 3,000 children; and
- Emergency funding to meet needs on the ground as they continue to evolve.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

This tragedy comes shortly after the Ebola crisis which Sierra Leone has worked so hard to recover from. Britain was at the forefront in tackling that deadly disease and we remain shoulder to shoulder with Sierra Leone today after these devastating events.

The UK was among the first to respond to this emergency, with personnel at the scene within just hours of the landslide to help co-ordinate the emergency response.

Our new support will provide basic life-saving supplies like food, water, shelter and clothing to people who have lost everything. The international community must follow our lead and step up to the plate.

Two world-leading British humanitarian experts will arrive in Freetown today (18 August) to provide specialist advice and expertise to help with response efforts.

Through our existing programmes in Sierra Leone, we are making sure hospitals are stocked with critical drugs. UK aid is also supporting disaster response experts from the World Health Organisation to reduce the risk of the spread of disease.

The Start Fund, a network of NGOs which is supported by the UK, has also been mobilised. The network has made £400,000 available for NGOs to provide urgent help to people affected by the mudslides.

Notes to Editors

- The £5m announced today is new money specifically for the humanitarian crisis in Freetown, Sierra Leone following this week's flooding and mudslides.
- By pre-positioning critical supplies such as food and medicine, as well as providing training on emergency operations, we have enabled the Government of Sierra Leone to respond quickly.
- The Ministry of Health and Sanitation has also activated the emergency 117 number, originally supported by the UK and used to report suspicious deaths during the Ebola epidemic, to ensure all those that need community support can access it.
- We have offered the Government of Sierra Leone vital humanitarian supplies, including generators and tents, to help those affected and

stop the potential spread of disease.

- The UK's leadership in responding to this disaster goes beyond the support provided by the British Government – once again, British NGOs and businesses have been quick to step forward to offer vital help.
- This is an ongoing and evolving situation of which details are still emerging – we remain open to doing more as a clearer picture is established.

Press release: Barcelona attack: PM statement

The Prime Minister's statement on the attack in Barcelona.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I am sickened by the senseless loss of life in Barcelona today. The Foreign Office is working to establish if any British nationals were involved in this appalling incident and we are in close contact with the authorities in Spain, who have our full support.

Following the attacks in Manchester and London, Spain stood alongside the British people. Tonight, Britain stands with Spain against the evil of terrorism.

Speech: "The UK has consistently welcomed the creation of a G5 Sahel joint force"

Mr President, I want to begin by offering my condolences to all of those affected by the attacks in Burkina Faso and Mali in recent days. The UK condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent actions of those intent on undermining stability in the region. They will not succeed. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his briefing today.

The UK has consistently welcomed the creation of a G5 Sahel joint force and its objectives to tackle terrorism, organised crime, people smuggling and human trafficking. And we are encouraged by the early progress that has been made since the adoption of resolution 2359 and look forward to the joint

force mobilising and implementing its operations.

We echo the importance spelt out in resolution 2359 of the protection of civilians, respect for human rights and integration of a gender perspective. In his briefing, ASG Wane described the resource challenges faced by the G5 joint force. It is important that its needs are clearly set out so that the international community can explore supporting its operations and finances, including through the donor conference that we heard about today. The UK is offering training support, including through the European Union and we continue to explore what more we can do.

We welcome the recent announcement by France and Germany of the new Sahel Alliance and fully support this initiative. We urge all Council members to examine how they can further provide assistance as we ourselves are doing.

Mr President, we were reminded again in recent days of the security challenges facing the region. The international community is committed to confronting these problems and the UK believes that the joint force is an important regional component of these efforts.

In addition to military efforts, however, we need to tackle the political challenges. We welcome the progress that has been made, but we urge all Malian parties to speed up the implementation of the peace agreement and to continue their dialogue. Important steps have been taken in recent months, and we hope and believe these will continue.

Mr President, may I conclude on a personal note by thanking you and colleagues around the table for your welcome to me here today and to say how much I'm looking forward to working with you all.

Thank you.