

Hot Food Takeaways: Planning a route to healthier communities – Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming Report

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts UK wide

Key Issues

The purpose of this briefing is to provide information on the recent report produced by child health campaigners Sustain which is calling on the next Government to require planning policies to restrict new hot food takeaways near schools.

Please [click here](#) to visit the Sustain website and access a full copy of the report.

1.0 Introduction

Child health campaigners Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, have recently produced a report on the need for new planning policies to restrict new hot food takeaways near schools, following evidence from a number of authorities across England which highlights existing limited powers are coming under attack. The report also contains local authority Supplementary Planning Document case studies which highlight what can and is being done to tackle obesity and the negative health impacts on communities.

The report comes at the same time as fast food outlets McDonalds and KFC are considering opening up 800 new sites across the UK and childhood obesity levels remain at an all-time high, with one third of all children in the UK obese or overweight by the time they begin secondary school.

2.0 Background

The report highlights some of the reasons and research behind why it has chosen to explore planning as a way to improve the access to healthier food including: -

- The increased messaging through advertising promoting fast food and convenience items.
- The importance of a young person's environment in influencing their decisions as many use these outlets to socialise.
- The growing public interest in addressing the issue of unhealthy hot food takeaways.
- Research indicates that increased access to unhealthy food retail outlets is associated with increased weight and obesity among children living in low income areas.
- The scale and complex nature of obesity.
- The importance of Central and Local government working together along with residents to jointly tackle this issue.

3.0 Local authority case studies

The report includes a number of local authority case studies from: -

- Barking and Dagenham (London Borough)
- Blackburn with Darwen Council
- Gateshead Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Salford City Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- St Helens Council

These case studies provide information on how each is using their planning policies and specific guidance of these policies to promote the health and wellbeing of their local residents.

Table one below, which has been taken from the report, provides information on the mechanisms which the above local authorities have used in order to control hot food takeaways through the use of their Supplementary Planning Documents.

The report notes that "control of hot food takeaways through the planning system is too blunt a tool for councils to use alone to impact poor health, but in association with other measures a council can make a better claim for the role that such a policy can plan towards creating healthier communities".

All case studies again highlight the complexity of the issue and note that although hot food takeaways do not directly cause obesity, there are many offering nutritionally poor meals which can contribute to obesity. The case studies therefore highlight the importance of local evidence for example the use of public health data in order to strengthen the case for these policies.

For full information on the case studies please visit page 35 of the [report](#).

TABLE 1 SPD CRITERIA FOR LOCATION OF HOT FOOD TAKEAWAY (HFT) CONSENTS

	Barking and Dagenham	Blackburn with Darwin	Gateshead	Newcastle	St Helens	Salford	Sandwell
Exclusion Zone (EZ)							
Wards with high levels child obesity			✓				
400m EZ (Secondary schools)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
400m EZ (Primary schools)	✓	✓			✓		
400m EZ (Sixth form colleges)		✓			✓		✓
400m EZ (youth/ leisure/ parks)		✓	✓				
Travel Time-based EZ (secondary schools)				✓			
Town centre exclusion zone exemption	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Times of opening		✓				✓	
Other measures							
Fixed fee	✓						
Promoting healthier HFTs	✓	✓				✓	
Cluster criteria (for health)	✓	✓					✓

4.0 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes this report and the work already being undertaken within many of our member authorities to tackle this complex issue. At the International Conference on Obesity which took place in January this year, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock addressed delegates of the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) highlighting “for the first time, obesity is thought to be a bigger problem, globally, than hunger” and that in order to tackle obesity this means “tackling social, environmental, physical and psychological pressures, and giving people the capability they need to eat healthily”. This report recommends some important and simple tools, which if local authorities were able to implement, would help to strengthen their current work to reduce some of the alarming statistics regarding obesity in relation to our young people.

From local authority caterers, to planning and licencing to public health departments, local authorities continue to have a willingness and drive to play their part in dealing with this key policy issue. This has been acknowledged within other Government reports including the [Childhood Obesity Plan – Part Two](#), with local authorities leading on the pilot for the Trailblazer Programme. Group discussions between local authorities take place on this and many other important issues at our regular APSE advisory group meetings which are free to attend for APSE members. For more information on future meeting dates and agendas, please [click here](#).

Louise Melville
Principal Advisor