GULP SUGARY DRINKS POLICY TOOLKIT

Introduction

Sugary drinks are non-alcoholic beverages to which sugar has been added, examples include colas, juice drinks, milkshakes and sports/energy drinks. There are varying quantities of sugar in the drinks available on the market and given the recently revised maximum recommended intake for sugar across the ages, a reduction or removal of sugary drinks from our diets will only prove beneficial.

Why address sugary drinks in schools?

Health

Basically, sugary drinks are bad for our health. They contain unnecessary amounts of added sugars which cause tooth decay and can result in excessive calorie intake, which in turn may lead to weight gain and other undesirable health conditions. Regardless of weight, too much sugar in the diet - especially in the form of sugary drinks – can cause cardiac and metabolic problems later in life.

Over 1/3 of children in the UK are currently overweight or obese, with the prevalence of unhealthy weight in reception aged children doubling by the time they leave primary school [5]. A major contributing factor to these concerning figures is the consumption of sugary drinks. Children aged 4-10 and young people aged 11-18 are consuming three times their recommended maximum daily amount of sugar, 30% and 40% of which is consumed in the form of sugary drinks [6] Hence, reducing this dietary trend may be an effective way of tackling this public health issue.

Behaviour

The negative consequences of sugary drinks go beyond children's physical health [1]. There have been associations found between consumption of sugary drinks in children and poor behaviour in children [2]. Many schools have noted the erratic, violent and unacceptable behaviour of pupils consuming large quantities of sugary drinks, particularly energy drinks. Evidence suggest 18% of children under the age of 10 drink highly caffeinated energy drinks[3].

Attendance
There is an increasing evidence base to suggest sugary drinks may also influence attendance and even academic performance and achievement in school children [4].

Furthermore, the school environment can act as a major influence on children's dietary habits, hence why many target it at an intervention level. Restricting and reducing the consumption of sugary drinks and creating a healthy school environment can help to convey a strong message to pupils.

Aim
To create a healthier school environment and better behaviour by reducing the consumption and access to sugary drinks for school pupils.

Rationale
- Sugary drinks have no place in children's diets [7].
- Children aged 4-6 should only be consuming 19g of sugar daily, 7-10 year olds 24g and 11 years and older 30g [8].
- Just one can of regular Coca Cola (330ml) can take children above their recommended intake, containing 36g of sugar in one serving.
- Positive associations between sugary drinks consumption and weight gain have regularly been found [9].
- The risk of tooth erosion in 12 and 14 year olds is 59% and 220% greater in those children who regularly consumed sugary drinks compared to those who do not [10].
- Consuming 2 cans of sugary drinks daily can increase your risk of type 2 diabetes by more than a quarter [11].
- Cutting down sugary drinks and replacing them with healthier alternatives, such as water or milk, can be an easy way to reduce sugar intake.
- Banning sugary drinks from schools helps to encourage young people to make healthy choices and influence food habits for later on in life [12].
- A poll of over 1,000 adults indicated that over 2/3 would support a ban on sugary drinks in schools [13].
- Another study found that 72% agreed that stricter rules in primary schools are required to limit sugary drinks in lunch boxes [14].
- Schools have a duty to provide a healthy school environment for their pupils which promotes healthy lifestyle and diet choices.
- Frequent consumption of sugary and energy drinks in school pupils can negatively influence behaviour, attendance and educational achievement [1, 2, 3].

Case Studies
Case studies across the UK have shown schools can successfully ban sugary drinks from the school premises to benefit the health of their pupils.

1. Haydock Secondary School, St Helens
Haydock Secondary School in St Helens banned energy drinks from school and created a student-led pledge to try and replace all sugary drinks consumed with water. Over 95% of pupils signed up and were given a free school water bottle – indicating that students were engaged and enthusiastic about making healthier choices. As a result, in just two terms staff claimed standards within the school were transformed. The number of detentions decreased by a third, and improvements in academic performance and general behaviour were observed, which the Head Teacher put solely down to the policies enforced. [15]

2. Wateringbury Primary School, Kent
The Head Teacher announced that children were no longer permitted to bring in sugary drinks, including fruit juices, with their packed lunches. The policy aimed to bring packed lunches in line with school meals, which only sells water and fresh milk to pupils, and improve the health, diets and fitness of school pupils. Pupils and parents have responded extremely positively to the policy. [16]
We all want the best for the future generations, hence providing a healthy school environment and setting a clear example to pupils is key to unlocking their optimal development and academic

achievement. Therefore, creating a sugary drinks policy within schools which reflects this is of great importance to teachers, parents and pupils.

3. Trelawney Stores, Plymouth
Trelawney Stores in Plymouth banned the sale of energy drinks to children following requests from worried parents. Owner Paul Gentle said: "We're in a highly residential area and following a number of requests from parents not to sell energy drinks to their children, we decided to impose a blanket ban…It's responsible retailing – if the parents don't want their children to buy these drinks then we are happy to help impose those rules…Some schools don't allow certain drinks to be taken in so we're helping with that by not allowing children to buy them."

Objectives:
- To reduce the consumption of sugary and energy drinks during school hours.
- To educate pupils on the benefits of drinking water.
- To promote the consumption of healthier alternatives, such as water and milk

Implementation:
Banning a food item from schools is not always as simple as it seems. It can often cause resistance from parents and regulating a full ban can produce more responsibilities for staff. Therefore, policies must be carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils and the resources available to schools.

Hence, GULP have put together a tiered list of policies approaching sugary drink consumption in schools. Schools can chose the best suited measures for their setting. Furthermore, introducing policies one by one and gradual changes may be an effective way to sensitise pupils and parents. Here is some guidance on the type of policies and interventions you may want to enforce in your school.

High Level Intervention:
- **Total ban of sugary soft drinks** – Sugary drinks are not allowed on school premises and must be confiscated and disposed of if found. Reminders of the school's policy on sugary drinks will be frequently communicated through letters to parents and newsletters to emphasise the message.
- **GULP after school sessions** – invite parents and children to after school GULP lessons/assemblies to educate both groups on the sugar content and health effects of sugary drinks, whilst also emphasising the benefits of water and hydration.
- **Community engagement** – work with local corner shops to prohibit the sale of sugary drinks to children in uniform.

Moderate Level Intervention:
- **Soft drinks allowed on premises** - but if caught drinking they will be confiscated and asked to be placed back in their school bags to take back home with them at the end of the day.
- **Send home information leaflets** – educate parents and pupils by sending home information on the harms of consuming sugary drinks and benefits of consuming water, so informed choices can then be made.
- **Increase free drinking water sources** and create 'Water Stations' across the school premises to ensure access to drinking water is easy for pupils.
- **Make water a more attractive choice for children** – create a positive image around drinking water by displaying positive infographics about the health benefits at Water Stations.
- **Provide free water bottles** to all children and encourage to bring into school daily and fill up at Water Stations when empty.

Low Level Intervention:

- Sugary soft drinks and energy drinks are **allowed in school**, but parents are encouraged to send their children to school with water, low fat milk drinks and combination drinks instead by communicating through letters, assemblies and school newsletters.
- **Use teachers as role models** – encourage all teaching staff to regularly consume water in front of pupils and prohibit the consumption of sugary drinks in front of children.
- **GULP posters displayed** around the school to display the sugar content of popular drinks (both bad and good to show the difference) – also get pupils to design posters in suitable lessons to display within the school.
- **Jugs of water and cups** provided on each dining table in canteen and regularly refilled by duty staff.

Communications

There are a variety of different communication methods which can be used when considering implementing a sugary drinks policy:

1. **Task and finish group –** utilise members of the PTA to create a specific group to look at the implementation of a sugary drinks policy
2. **Consultation –** use a survey to gather thoughts from parents, teachers and students on a sugary drinks policy, including the measures to be included
3. **Education –** use the GULP assembly to inform students about the health harms of overconsumption of sugary drinks
4. **Embed in the curriculum** – use the Key Stage 2 PSHE resource to engage the students and expand on the work through additional activities
5. **Newsletter –** let parents know where the school is up to with the sugary drinks policy, report any positive feedback such as improved behaviour.

gulp. *give up loving pop*

For further resources and information please go to:
www.giveuplovingpop.org.uk

Prepared by Beth Bradshaw and Alex Holt, Food Active
Last updated August 2019
Email: info@foodactive.org.uk

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