

## SECONDARY SCHOOLS

# 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 <sup>5</sup>. 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 <sup>6</sup>. 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 <sup>1</sup>. There have been associations found between consumption of sugary drinks in children and poor behaviour in children <sup>2</sup>. 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 <sup>3</sup>.

### Attendance

There is an increasing evidence base to suggest sugary drinks may also influence attendance and even academic performance and achievement in school children<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>.
- Children aged 4-6 should only be consuming 19g of sugar daily, 7-10 year olds 24g and 11 years and older 30g<sup>8</sup>.
- 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<sup>9</sup>.
- 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<sup>10</sup>.
- Consuming 2 cans of sugary drinks daily can increase your risk of type 2 diabetes by more than a quarter<sup>11</sup>.
- 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<sup>12</sup>.
- A poll of over 1,000 adults indicated that over 2/3 would support a ban on sugary drinks in schools<sup>13</sup>.
- Another study found that 72% agreed that stricter rules in primary schools are required to limit sugary drinks in lunch boxes<sup>14</sup>.
- 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<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>.

### 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.<sup>15</sup>

#### 2. Angmering School, West Sussex

Health conscious Year 11 and Sixth Form pupils at The Angmering School launched the Water for All scheme, which **bans all drinks other than water and milk** from the school premises. Pupils in possession of any other drinks will be confiscated and disposed of. The measures have been welcomed by Public Health England Officials and hopes to become a normality in the lives of their students at the school<sup>16</sup>.

### 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 restrict the consumption of sugary and energy drinks during school hours.
- To provide guidance and advice to pupils on how to make healthy choices in their beverage consumption.
- To increase consumption of healthier beverage alternatives in school, such as water or milk.
- To encourage advocacy within schools to set an example for pupils to make the right choices in their diet.

#### Implementation:

Banning a food item from schools is not always as simple as it seems. It can often cause resistance from parents and regulating the ban can produce more responsibilities for staff. In addition, young people have suggested that instead of banning soft drinks and saying 'no', placing the emphasis on education to provide pupils with the knowledge to make decisions themselves may be more effective<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, policies must be carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils and resources available to the school.

Hence, GULP have put together a tiered list of policies approaching sugary drink consumption in schools. Schools can choose the best suited measures for their school. Furthermore, introducing policies one by one and gradual changes may be the best way to reduce opposition from pupils or 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 both energy and sugary soft drinks** – all drinks must be disposed of before entering school premises and disposal bins will be situated at entrance points of the school. No sale of these drinks are permitted in vending machines or canteens. Reminders of the school's policy towards soft and energy drinks will be communicated through letters to parents and newsletters. It will be the duty of supervision staff (or the Healthy Drinks Council – see below) to confiscate and dispose of any drinks brought into school. This ban extends to teachers and staffrooms.
- **Go cashless** – Encourage parents to send children with lunch money for the week via a cheque so pupils cannot spend lunch money before and after school on sugary drinks or other unhealthy foods.
- **Community engagement** – work with local corner shops and off licenses to prohibit the sale of sugary drinks to children in uniform 15 minutes before school starts and after school finishes.

#### Moderate Level Intervention:

- **Sugary soft drinks and energy drinks allowed on premises** - but if caught drinking they will be confiscated until the end of the day – allowed to be collected at the end of the day in reception. Not inclusive of teachers and staff rooms – however, they must not be consumed in front of pupils. Not permitted to be sold in vending machines or canteens.
- **Increase free drinking water sources** – ensure that free drinking water fountains is increased so it is easy and accessible to consume water.
- **Provide free water bottles** to all pupils.

- **Create a 'Healthy Drinks Council'** – encouraging advocacy and peer education in schools, senior year groups to either patrol corridors or, use the group to produce new

posters/leaflets for healthy drink advice to be displayed in school, write blogs for the school website and news stories for the school newsletters.

- Sugary soft drinks and energy drinks are allowed to be sold within school, but at an **increased price** as a disincentive. Operating an 'in-school sugary drink tax' – rise prices by 20%.
- **Do not allow pupils out of school during break and lunch times** – This will help to prevent pupils from accessing sugary drinks in local corner shops and super markets.

#### Low Level Intervention:

- Sugary soft drinks and energy drinks are **allowed in school**, but pupils and parents are encouraged to consume water, low fat milk drinks and combination drinks instead through letters and school newsletters.
- **Emphasis on education** – introduce a mandatory lesson or assembly for each year group to provide pupils with the right knowledge to make informed, healthy choices about their beverage consumption.
- **GULP Posters displayed** around the school of the health harms of sugary drinks and energy drinks – also get pupils to design posters in food tech/PSHE lessons.
- **Social media engagement** – Set up a social media account for the Healthy Drinks Council and encourage children to take photos with their water bottles, weekly/monthly statistics of the number of SSBs confiscated and quick polls regarding attitudes towards sugary drinks.
- **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 3 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.

For further resources and information please go to:

[www.giveuplovingpop.org.uk](http://www.giveuplovingpop.org.uk)

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#### Further reading and references:

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