**JOINT STATEMENT OF THE SCOTTISH DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**ON ACTION TO REDUCE CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

“*Obesity is not only a serious and growing problem for individual children and the wider population; it is also a significant contributor to health inequality.”*

*(UK Parliament Health Committee, HC 465)*

The Scottish Directors of Public Health are united in expressing their view that the time has come for stronger action within Scotland and UK to tackle obesity and the obesogenic environment in which we live:

* We therefore welcome the publication of the report “*Childhood Obesity – Brave and Bold Action*”1 by the UK Parliament’s Health Committee.
* We also welcome that it identifies common themes with the findings of recent work undertaken by the Scottish Public Health Network on obesity2 and childhood obesity3 and that of Public Health England4 on the effectiveness of a tax on sugar as a means of reducing obesity and dental decay, in drawing up their recommended actions.
* We further welcome that these recommended actions are more broadly supported by the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges,5 professional bodies such as the BMA6 and BDA7, and General Practitioners8.

Effective prevention and management of the current and future obesity epidemic in the UK requires action on a wide range of issues.

* In this National Sugar Awareness Week, the Scottish Directors of Public Health support the call for a UK wide tax or levy on full sugar drinks and proposals to:
	+ label sugar content in a manner that is simple to understand;
	+ draw the attention of parents and children to the harm associated with excess sugar consumption; and
	+ increases availability of alternatives.
* We also recognise that taxation is not the only tool available. Action to put sugar in its place should include:
	+ addressing excess promotion through strict, clear controls on advertising, marketing, sponsorship, discounting and bulk buys;
	+ reducing availability to children e.g. removal of sweets, sugary soft drinks and biscuits from near checkouts;
	+ reducing portion sizes and changing recipes to remove hidden sugars; and
	+ ensuring that children and families can access low cost healthy nutritious food

***We encourage the UK Government to recognise these as actions necessary to protect the public’s health from obesity and its many consequences and reduce the levels of pain and distress from tooth decay that children experience.***

**Professor Alison McCallum.**

**Chair, Scottish Directors of Public Health, 3rd December 2015**

**References**

First Report of Session 2015–16

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**Notes for Editors**

Further information and comment on this statement, and on actions currently being taken to prevent and manage obesity in Scotland, can be sourced from:

* For the Scottish Directors of Public Health Group:

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* For the Faculty of Public Health:

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