

**‘We are eating too much sugar and it is bad for our health’**

– Public Health England 2015

### **Sugar Smart Exeter Overview and Vision**

Our vision is to shape our environment, local communities and leaders to put health first. We want to empower our residents and make the healthy choice the easy choice.

We want Exeter to become a **Sugar Smart City** and create a food environment which encourages healthy choices and reduces the promotion of foods high in free sugars.

This initiative will take a public health place based approach to change the food environment within Exeter. It will use the power of the community to shift behaviour, primarily of those organisations that influence the food environment within Exeter and particularly those that serve the most deprived communities. This could include food businesses, sports clubs and public organisations.

This initiative will work towards the Exeter Food Network priority and high level outcome of *More People in Exeter Have a Healthier Diet*. Sugar is the initial focus as it is current, but the initiative aims to be promoting of healthier, well balanced diets in general.

The overall aims of the initiative are to:

- 1) Raise awareness of sugar consumption and hidden sugars in food within the public.
- 2) Improve the food environment so that it does not encourage high sugar intake or health inequalities.
- 3) Challenge the norms around eating habits to reduce sugar intake.

### **Objectives**

We will contribute to these aims by meeting the following objectives:

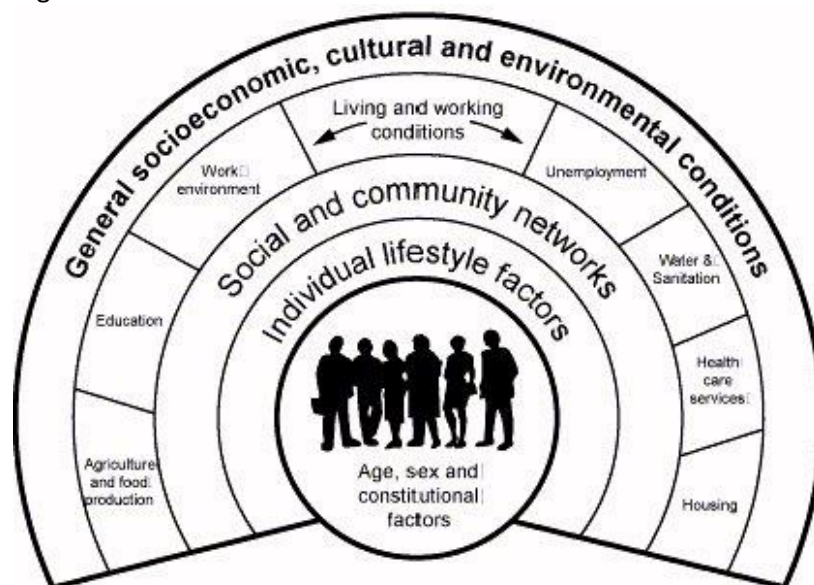
- 50 organisations across Exeter sign up to the Sugar Smart initiative by January 2018 and pledge to raise awareness and encourage action to reduce sugar intake. These can be any organisation which influences the diet of Exeter’s citizens and could include leisure centres, sports clubs, schools and food or catering businesses etc. We are aiming for a spread across the city, with a significant focus on those reaching marginalised communities.
- 15 organisations sign up to the Children’s Health Fund and introduce a voluntary sugary drinks levy.
- 1000 people from the public respond to the Sugar Smart Exeter survey by April to give their opinion on sugar and where action is needed. This will raise awareness of the initiative amongst the public, as well as sugar intake itself and can be used to demonstrate to stakeholders that there is demand for changed food environments.

Our Action Plan sets out our aims and objectives in further detail and maps the steps we will take to achieve this vision. We will be influenced by the public survey and will support individuals and communities that want to be involved in making change happen through Sugar Smart.

## Sugar Smart Exeter Rationale

Consuming too much sugar can lead to poor health, including overweight and obesity and related health conditions, as well as tooth decay. Across the nation sugar intakes are too high, with the average adult consuming more than twice the maximum amount recommended daily, and children consuming two to three times more on average<sup>i</sup>.

Despite these alarming figures, we continue to see significant amounts of high sugar products consumed on a daily basis. It is not always obvious when products contain added sugar and we are constantly bombarded with the advertising of unhealthy food. This poses an unfair disadvantage to individuals who may not be aware of the amount of sugar they are consuming, or to those who feel unable to make the healthy lifestyle changes they would like to, as their environment does not encourage them to do so. The environment and wider factors need to enable individual behaviour change by making the healthy choice the easy choice (see Dalgren and Whitehead's model of the wider determinants of health below<sup>ii</sup>).



Challenging the norms around sugar through organisations which influence the food environment will enable people to make more informed and healthier food decisions. This is of particular concern when considering health inequalities, as both excess weight and tooth decay are clearly associated with deprivation in England; children living in the most deprived communities are twice as likely to be overweight as those in the least deprived communities<sup>iii</sup>.

## What's Happening in Exeter?

- 33% of children are classified as overweight<sup>iv</sup>
- 25.3% of children have had experience of tooth decay<sup>v</sup>
- 40% of the adult population are not meeting the recommended minimum of five fruit or vegetables per day<sup>vi</sup>
- Prevalence of diagnosed diabetes is 5.7% and rising<sup>vii</sup>
- Exeter has the second highest number of fast food outlets of all the districts – 70 outlets per 100,000 of the population<sup>viii</sup>
- These indicators are correlated with levels of deprivation.

## **Public Energy for Change and Previous Campaigns in Exeter**

Data from the PHE campaign 'One You' has shown that the top health priority of adults who responded in Exeter is "having more energy" (70.8% of respondents). Being a healthy weight also scored highly, with 36% of adults stating this as one of their top health priorities. This increased in the two most deprived deciles of Exeter, with 47% of adults stating it as a priority. Both of these outcomes can be influenced by sugar intake. For example many sugary products have a high glycaemic index, which means sugar is released quickly into the blood stream, contributing to energy levels, appetite control and therefore weight management<sup>ix</sup>.

This data demonstrates that not only is there health need for Sugar Smart Exeter, but there is also motivation within the public to make lifestyle changes and a need for the environment to support this.

The Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign which ran in January 2016 aimed at children and families has shown that Exeter's residents can be engaged with the sugar smart message, with 13.6% of individuals opening received Sugar Smart emails and 5.1% of these clicking on a link within that email. Although these numbers show that a small number of residents are already actively interested in the sugar smart message, the Sugar Smart Exeter initiative needs to use more engaging promotion to increase participation if we are to receive a useful number of responses to an online public survey.

In particular, the Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign demonstrated that more needs to be done to reach the most deprived communities. Only 3.4% of individuals living in the two most deprived deciles in Exeter received Change4Life Sugar Smart emails, of which 6.9% were opened and almost none of these followed a link to the webpage.

### **Key Messages**

- Too much sugar is a major health concern and children currently consume triple the recommended amount.
- Small changes to the way that food is provided, presented and advertised can make a big difference to consumer health.
- Consumers are aware of healthy eating messages and there is increasing media attention.
- Consumers want to change their behaviour to improve their diet, but need the environment to support them to do so. We need to make healthy food and drink more accessible and affordable.

## **Outcomes**

We have set clear objectives for Sugar Smart Exeter, set out in this Vision and in more detail in the Sugar Smart Exeter Action Plan.

Sugar Smart will also contribute towards the following public health outcomes:

- 1) **Reduced malnutrition in Exeter** - more of the population have a diet that meets nutritional needs
  - Within this, there will be a focus on reducing **child overweight and obesity** and associated health inequalities
- 2) **Reduced tooth decay**, particularly in children

By ensuring that we focus on more deprived communities within the Sugar Smart initiative, we aim to contribute to reducing inequalities in these outcomes.

Our evaluation of Sugar Smart will assess whether we have met our objectives, and will also measure progress for Exeter on relevant indicators in the Public Health Outcomes Framework. A key aim of the evaluation will also be to better understand the barriers and facilitators to improving the food environment using this approach. The evaluation will be a very valuable output, and we will use this learning and identified assets to inform future local and national Sugar Smart initiatives.

### **Co-ordinators and Supporters of Sugar Smart Exeter:**

Exeter Health and Wellbeing Board	Exeter City Football Club
Exeter Food Network	Exeter Chiefs Rugby Club
Exeter City Council	Westbank Healthy Living Centre
Public Health, Devon County Council	Life Dental and Wellbeing
University of Exeter	South West Association for Nutrition Registrants
Sustain	Jamie Oliver's Food Foundation

<sup>i</sup> Bates, B., Prentice, A., Bates, C., Page, P., Nicholson, S., Swan, G. (Eds) (2014) *National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Headline results from Years 1 to 4 (combined) of the rolling programme from 2008 and 2009 to 2011 and 2012* [Online]. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/nationaldiet-and-nutrition-survey-results-from-years-1-to-4-combined-of-the-rolling-programme-for-2008-and-2009-to-2011-and-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/nationaldiet-and-nutrition-survey-results-from-years-1-to-4-combined-of-the-rolling-programme-for-2008-and-2009-to-2011-and-2012)

<sup>ii</sup> Dahlgren, G. and Whitehead, M. (1991) *Policies and Strategies to Promote Social Equity in Health*. Stockholm: Institute for Futures Studies.

<sup>iii</sup> PHE (2015) *Sugar Reduction: The evidence for action*. London: PHE. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/470179/Sugar\\_reduction\\_The\\_evidence\\_for\\_action.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470179/Sugar_reduction_The_evidence_for_action.pdf) [Accessed 22 November 2016].

<sup>iv</sup> PHE (2015) *Public Health Outcomes Framework* [online]. Available from: [www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework](http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework) [Accessed 23 November 2016].

<sup>v</sup> PHE (2015) *Public Health Outcomes Framework* [online]. Available from: [www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework](http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework) [Accessed 23 November 2016].

<sup>vi</sup> PHE (2015) *Public Health Outcomes Framework* [online]. Available from: [www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework](http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework) [Accessed 23 November 2016].

<sup>vii</sup> PHE (2015) *Public Health Outcomes Framework* [online]. Available from: [www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework](http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework) [Accessed 23 November 2016].

<sup>viii</sup> PHE (2016) *Obesity Date and Tools* [online]. Available from: [www.noo.org.uk/visualisation](http://www.noo.org.uk/visualisation) [Accessed 20 February 2017].

<sup>ix</sup> University of Sydney (2016) *About Glycaemic Index* [online]. Available from: [www.glycemicindex.com](http://www.glycemicindex.com) [Accessed 23 November 2016].