

# REDUCING SUGAR CONSUMPTION

## The allegation

According to Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, the Department of Health (DH) delayed the publication of an evidence review by Public Health England (PHE) looking at ways to reduce sugar consumption.<sup>10</sup>

## Timeline

- Mar 2015 Public Health Minister Jane Ellison MP wrote to PHE asking them to complete research that would “provide draft recommendations to inform the government’s future thinking on sugar in the diet.” PHE had made a commitment to reviewing this evidence in its 2014 report *Sugar reduction: responding to the challenge*.<sup>11</sup>
- Sep - Oct 2015 House of Commons health select committee chair Dr Wollaston asked DH to publish the report. DH refused on the ground that the evidence is “currently informing future government policy” (sic). Dr Wollaston then called on PHE to publish it independently or at least make it available to her committee’s inquiry on tackling childhood obesity. PHE declined, saying that “it is appropriate that the government has time to consider the report in the usual way” so it will be published alongside the government’s obesity strategy.<sup>12</sup>
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2015 PHE published its report.<sup>13</sup>
- Nov 2015 House of Commons health select committee published the report on its inquiry into action on childhood obesity.<sup>14</sup>

At the time of writing the present report, the government is yet to publish its obesity strategy.

## How were government policy and public debate affected?

A high-profile campaign led by TV chef Jamie Oliver had called for a tax on sugary drinks to reduce obesity. The health select committee inquiry into tackling obesity, and the public debate on the merits of a sugar tax, were better-informed once the PHE research was published. By then the delay had caused a very public disagreement over how research should inform policy and public scrutiny.

<sup>10</sup> Wollaston, S (2015)

<sup>11</sup> Public Health England (2014)

<sup>12</sup> House of Commons health select committee (2015a)

<sup>13</sup> Public Health England (2015)

<sup>14</sup> House of Commons health select committee (2015b)