

Present:	
Fionnuala Close	Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland
Jennifer McGonagle	Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland
Fiona Ward	Department of Health Ireland
Darren Moan	Department of Health Northern Ireland
Christine Dale	Department of Health Northern Ireland
Ciara Reynolds	Institute of Public Health
Fidelma Carter	Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke
Laura McGowan	Association for the Study of Obesity Northern Ireland Network (ASO NI)
Margaret Carr	Cancer Research UK
Aileen McGloin	safefood (chair)
Anne Parle	safefood
Niamh Cully	safefood
Janas Harrington	School of Public Health, University College Cork
Angela Carlin	Ulster University
Sophie Harrison	Sport Ireland
Aoife Hearne	South East Technological University
Vanessa McMinn	British Dietetic Association Northern Ireland
Esther Mary D'Arcy	Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists
Janis Morrissey	Irish Heart Foundation
Vanessa McMinn	British Dietetic Association Northern Ireland
Jennifer Feighan	Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute
Sarah Fitzgerald	Food Drink Ireland
Apologies:	
Denise McAnena	British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland
Shannon Montgomery	British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland
Sinead Powell	Diabetes Ireland
Colette Brolly	Public Health Agency
Sharon Gilmore	Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland
Catherine Curran	Department of Health Ireland
Michael Bell	Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association

1. Welcome

Aileen McGloin (safefood) welcomed members to the 29th Forum meeting.

2. Roundtable introductions

Members introduced themselves.

3. Minutes from previous meeting and any matters arising

- Minutes from the previous meeting were accepted.
- The Irish Coalition for People Living with Obesity (ICPO) have joined the forum.
- ASO NI are identifying public and patient involvement collaborators in Northern Ireland.
- The Association for the Study of Obesity on the Island of Ireland/ICPO will facilitate training to dietitians on the topic of weight stigma.

4. Policy updates from the Departments of Health

Department of Health Northern Ireland – update provided by Darren Moan

- In-person BMI measurements will return in the Health Survey Northern Ireland for 2023/2024.
- Work is continuing on calorie labelling, infant food labelling and marketing.
- Work continues on development a successor strategy for A Fitter Future for All, currently on final draft stage of the initial consultation.

Department of Health Ireland – update provided by Fiona Ward

- The Obesity Policy and Action Plan reviews were published in 2022.
- Healthy eating resources for over 65 years will be launched on the 29th of June.
- An information leaflet on increasing intake of plant-based food is being drafted.
- Resources on Vitamin D supplementation will be created for Autumn.
- All 19 Slaintecare Healthy Communities have been established. Recruitment of the food and nutrition workers is ongoing.

- The Department expects to meet with Coimisiún na Meán to discuss legislation relating to the restriction of marketing foods high in salt, fat and sugar.

5. Member updates

No clarification was sought on the written updates provided in advance of the meeting.

6. Topic for discussion

The following points were noted:

- Collaboration and continuous intervention across the lifecourse are important considerations for future research.
- A full effectiveness and cost effectiveness trial has been funded to evaluate the HENRY programme, it is hopeful that Northern Ireland will have regional funding to explore the impact in Northern Ireland.

Action 1: David Tumilty to follow up with Sophie Harrison to link with the Active Cities lead.

Action 2: Darren Moan to link with Laura McGowan to write a letter of support for a request of funding.

Action 3: Fidelma Carter to share information with Laura McGowan on Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke Research Grants programme.

7. Next forum meeting & workshop

The following suggestions were made:

- Obesity medications.
- Validity of BMI measurement and its relevance to ethnic minorities.
- Obesity and pre-conception.
- Weight stigma.

8. AOB

- A conversation has been had with the CEO of Sports NI to establish a new representative for the forum.

safefood – update provided by Niamh Cully

Building sustainability into national healthy eating guidelines

This 18-month project focused on building sustainability approaches into healthy eating guidelines. A mixed methods approach was utilised to identify best practice and practical approaches to building sustainability in healthy eating guidelines, along with the potential policy implication. The full report is available to view online <https://www.safefood.net/Professional/Research/Research-Reports/sustainability-eating-guidelines>

Fiscal and pricing policies related to food and non-alcoholic drinks

This report presents the findings from a review of the evidence on fiscal and pricing strategies for food and non-alcoholic drinks. The findings were based on two umbrella reviews and two empirical studies. The umbrella reviews examined whether and how fiscal and pricing policies may improve diet and prevent non-communicable diseases. The empirical studies examined the relationship between the taxation of sugar-sweetened beverages in Northern Ireland. The full report is available to view online <https://www.safefood.net/professional/research/research-reports/fiscal-food-drink>

Portion control tools - do they work in practice?

This project aimed to investigate the acceptability and usability of a 200ml portion cup within the family setting on the island of Ireland. This project explored the pattern use of a portion cup in family setting, behaviour changes regarding portion sizes and the attitudes towards the usability and acceptability of a portion cup for long-term use. The full report is available to view online <https://www.safefood.net/research-reports/portion-control-tools>

Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Settings - Ireland

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth published these Standards in May. The Standards that will apply to all Early learning and Care facilities in Ireland, were developed in collaboration with **safefood**, Healthy Ireland and the HSE. To support the implementation of the Standards, DCEDIY created a new hub with resources that include safefood's 101 Square Meals and Rufus materials.

Nutritional Standards for Health and Social Care - Northern Ireland

The recruitment process for the five regional implementation co-ordinators is progressing well with all the Trusts completing their applications for recruitment of the co-ordinators. Four posts were advertised and ongoing shortlisting and interviewing in three Trusts and with one of the Trusts appointing a successful candidate that will start in July.

Food basket research Ireland and Northern Ireland

The reports present the cost of a minimum essential food basket for various household types in Ireland and Northern Ireland, adjusted to reflect food costs in 2022. This research demonstrates the average weekly cost of a healthy food basket, and the level of household income that may be spent on achieving the minimum standard. The full reports are available to view online <https://www.safefood.net/Professional/Research/Research-Reports/Food-basket-Ire-report> (Ireland).

<https://www.safefood.net/Professional/Research/Research-Reports/food-basket-NI-report>
(Northern Ireland).

START – A healthy weight for children

The final phase of the campaign has aired with advertising messages focusing on the broad “one daily win” message. The full five-year campaign is now being evaluated among public and stakeholder audiences. Insights will help inform discussions about the next campaign in this area which is planned for launch in 2024.

On the 7th of February **safefood** partnered with Libraries Ireland and hosted a talk for parents in Tallaght library on how to make a start on healthy positive family changes. The talk was hosted by broadcaster Suzanne Kane, and featured leading Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist Dr Colman Noctor and **safefood**’s head of Nutrition Dr Aileen McGloin. Watch the recording here: <https://www.safefood.net/Professional/Events/Talk-healthy-changes>

Health@Play partnership with Special Olympics Ireland

safefood and Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) have partnered to develop a new programme called 'Health@Play' that will use fun, interactive games to help teach healthy, lifelong habits to younger athletes and their parents. The 'Health@Play' programme will bring health education through sport to children with intellectual disabilities aged 4-15 years within their community clubs and schools. Read more: <https://www.safefood.net/media-centre/news/2023/special-olympics-ireland-partnership>

On the 19th of May, Special Olympics Ireland presented **safefood** with a Golisano Health Leadership Award for their significant contribution to improving the health of people with intellectual disabilities and advancing the health of Special Olympics athletes through the Health@Play programme. Read more: <https://www.safefood.net/media-centre/news/2023/special-olympics-ireland-partnership>

Community Food Initiative Regional event

On the 22nd of March **safefood** hosted an event in Tullamore to showcase the work of the Community Food Initiative Programme and provide an opportunity to share learnings and provide training for those working in the community sector. The event included presentations from Julie White, Community Food Initiative Leader at the Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre and Claire Hall, Community Food Initiative Leader at Offaly Local Development Company. Julie and Claire shared their experience of delivering the Community Food Initiative Programme in 2022. This was followed by a presentation from Ray Burke, CEO and Co-founder of Active Connections, an adventure therapy company. Ray spoke about Active Connections and the methods they use to engage participants, measure impact and social return. The theme of the event was engaging reluctant participants and all speakers shared insights into how they recruited and engaged participants for their programmes.

Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland - update provided by Fionnuala Close

Eating Well Choosing Better consumer tracker 2022

The FSA published the most recent findings from our [Eating Well Choosing Better Consumer Tracker Survey 2022](#). The survey monitors consumer understanding and knowledge of a wide range of food-related topics from consumer perceptions of healthy eating, healthier options and reformulation; consumer use of traffic light labels; and consumer knowledge and understanding of the recommended daily calorie intake.

Making Food Better – programme name change

The Dietary Health team have recently updated the name of our food product improvement programme “Eating Well Choosing Better” to “Making Food Better”. The new aim of the programme is to support NI food businesses to make the food environment healthier through reducing calories, saturated fat, sugar, and salt in the food they produce, sell or serve, reducing portion size, providing nutritional information and delivering responsible promotions.

Nutritional Standards with District Councils

Following the successful completion of the co-creation exercise with the 11 local councils in Northern Ireland, a decision was made to focus on vending standards as a first step in the introduction of the council nutritional standards. Two steering group meetings have been held in March and June where the draft vending standards were discussed, amended and then approved. The next step is to secure support from the Chief Executive’s forum SOLACE and approval at specific council committees. To support the introduction of the new vending standards, an event on healthier and more sustainable vending will be held in early 2024.

Calorie Wise

Interest in calorie labelling among the food service sector is increasing, with many multinational businesses, with outlets in Northern Ireland, now displaying calories on their menu. The Dietary Health Team and EHOs from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council delivered a [Calorie Wise](#) workshop for staff from local food service businesses interested in putting calories on their menu. The workshop, which was well attended, included an introduction to the Calorie Wise scheme, benefits for businesses, tips on healthier catering and a practical exercise using the FSA’s calorie calculator and allergen management tool [MenuCal](#). A number of Calorie Wise businesses have also recently been re-audited and successfully retained their gold awards.

Summer Specials campaign – healthy recipes

The FSA has produced a collection of [healthy recipes](#) which are low in fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar. A selection of these recipes are being promoted on social media as part of the ‘Summer Specials’ campaign which is running throughout June. This campaign also coincides with British Nutrition Foundation’s Healthy Eating week.

What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2022

safefood and the FSA in NI have published a [report](#) presenting the cost of the minimum essential food basket for four household types, adjusted to reflect food costs in 2022, building on the data published thus far for 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020. This demonstrates the average weekly cost of healthy food, and the level of household income that may need to be spent on attaining this minimum standard. Some families on a low income need to spend between a quarter (23%) and almost half

(45%) of their take home income to afford a basic food basket that is acceptable and meets nutritional needs.

Food and You 2: Northern Ireland Wave 3-4 Key Findings

[Food and You 2](#) is the FSA's flagship survey of consumer's reported behaviour, attitudes and knowledge around food safety, dietary health and other food-related issues. The latest [Northern Ireland report](#) covers data from Wave 3 and Wave 4, where the fieldwork took place from April - June 2021 and October 2021 - January 2022 respectively. Key findings included:

- approximately 1 in 6 respondents were food insecure (i.e. had low or very low food security) in Northern Ireland (18%), England (18%), and Wales (17%).
- most (81%) respondents who had at least some knowledge of the FSA reported that they trusted the FSA to make sure 'food is safe and what it says it is'.
- the most common concerns about food related to food waste (55%), the amount of sugar in food (54%) and food prices (52%).

Department of Health (NI) - update provided by Darren Moan

A FITTER FUTURE FOR ALL 2012-2022

- First results from the Health Survey Northern Ireland 2021/22 have been published. Due to the move to telephone surveys during the pandemic, physical measurements to calculate BMI have not been made in either the 2020/21 or 2021/22 surveys. The last data available is from the 2019/20 survey, which showed that 65% of adults were living with overweight or obesity. 71% of adult males were living with overweight or obesity, with the figure for adult females sitting at 60%. The equivalent figures for children, again last reported in 2019/20 are 26% living with overweight or obesity – 25% boys and 27% girls. This has not significantly changed since the baseline figures reported in 2010/11.
- Three-fifths (60%) of respondents described their eating habits as very good or good, while 29% stated their eating habits were fair and 11% said their eating habits were bad or very bad. Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents reported that over the last twelve months that they had been eating the same as before, while 19% reported eating more healthily and 19% reported eating less healthily.
- More than two-fifths (44%) of respondents reported that they consumed 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day. This was unchanged from 2019/20. Females (48%) remained more likely than males (39%) to consume 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day. More than two-fifths (43%) of respondents reported that they had not consumed food purchased from a fast-food place in the past seven days. Almost two-fifths

(38%) had consumed fast food once in the last week, while 19% had consumed fast food two or more times.

- More than a third (37%) of respondents reported doing 30 minutes of physical activity (enough to make them out of breath) on five or more days per week. Males (42%) were more likely to do 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days per week than females (33%). Females (27%) were more likely to have no days of doing 30 minutes of physical activity than males (22%).
- These first results can be seen in more detail at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/hsni-first-results-21-22.pdf>

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Policy development work on a successor strategic framework for AFFFA 2012-2022 continues, with a co-designed draft consultation document, to seek public views on the vision, principles and themes, nearing completion. The draft consultation was developed by the Project Board following stakeholder engagement workshops. Input from stakeholders representing people with lived experience, academics, government departments, health, and the voluntary and community sector has been vital to the policy development work to date.
- Work continues on a 4-nations basis to develop consultations, policy and interventions on issues such as:
 - Calorie labelling in out-of-home sector
 - Alcohol calorie labelling on packaged and non-packaged alcohol
 - Infant food labelling and marketing
 - Advertising restrictions on HFSS foods
- Calorie labelling policy and powers are devolved in each of the 4 nations, whereas advertising restrictions are reserved to Westminster. The implementation of restrictions on advertising HFSS foods before the 9:00pm watershed and on a total ban on advertising HFSS foods online to children have now been delayed until January 2024, having earlier been announced to be taking effect from January 2023.
- The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have also delayed the planned ban in England on "buy one get one free" (Bogof) deals for food and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) as well as free refills for soft drinks, for 12 months, until October 2023, stating that

they need to understand its impact on consumers in light of an unprecedented global economic situation.

Institute of Public Health - update provided by Ciara Reynolds

In terms of obesity related memberships and roles:

- A member of the advisory group on a cancer awareness survey being operated by NCCP which may provide insight on the level of awareness of obesity as a risk factor.
- IPH is interim chair @of the Northern Ireland Breastfeeding Strategy Research Workstrand. IPH is supported the planning and organisation of the 6th Annual Spotlight on Breastfeeding Research Conference which took place on the 10th of March 2023.
- A member of the Northern Ireland Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group
- A member of the National Healthy Weight for Children Oversight Committee, operated by the HSE
- A member of the NI Obesity Prevention Strategy Project Board
- A member of the Growing up in Ireland policy advisory group

In terms of research, policy and evidence-based activities:

- IPH is supporting the Department of Health in the end of term review of 'Breastfeeding - A Great Start. A Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2023'. IPH facilitated a stakeholder engagement workshop on 6 June as part of the review.
- A report written by Aideen Sheehan and Prof Roger O'Sullivan titled 'Mind the Gap - Exploring knowledge about physical activity in Ireland and Northern Ireland' was launched in May of this year and is available at the following link: <https://publichealth.ie/sites/default/files/2023-02/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Mind-the-Gap-Exploring-knowledge-about-PA-in-Ireland-and-N-Ireland.pdf>
- Lauren Rodriguez will present the findings from the 2022 Ireland North and South Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents at the Health Promotion Conference on June 22nd
- A consultation on the new NI Obesity Prevention Strategy is expected before the end of year. The Institute have supported NI policy leads with the development of a paper on whole systems approaches (WSAs) to obesity prevention and has conducted a review of systematic reviews on a number of obesity prevention policy measures ('Obesity Policy Options Matrix' (OPOM)). The WSA paper was developed in collaboration with academic experts in UK universities - Dr Gavin Breslin, Ulster University; Dr Laura McGowan, Queen's University Belfast and Prof Wendy Wills, University of Hertfordshire. The WSA paper and the policy options matrix were presented to the Department of Health on the 27th of September and the Obesity Prevention Strategy Project Board on the 25th of October.
- The WSA paper was published on the Institute's website in January this year. Link to report: A whole systems approach to obesity prevention: a rapid synthesis of evidence to inform the Northern Ireland Obesity Prevention Strategy Policy Project Board | Institute of Public Health

- The policy option matrix was submitted to the Department of Health for mapping to the Northern Ireland context in September and is confidential at this time.
- Both the Obesity Policy Options Matrix and the WSA were presented at the following events:
 - HSE event titled 'Applying a Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Prevention' - WSA presented by Dr Gavin Breslin, OPOM presented by Dr Jenny Mack
 - European Congress on Obesity (ECO) 2023 - WSA presented by Dr Jenny Mack, OPOM presented by Dr Ciara Reynolds
 - OPOM will be presented at a Public Health Agency ran Learning at Lunch on the 13th of June by Dr Jenny Mack and Dr Ciara Reynolds
- The report "Managing a Healthy Weight – Understanding motives, intentions, and behaviours in Northern Ireland" by Laura Mc Quade and Prof Roger O'Sullivan is being prepared for publication. It uses psycho-behavioural segmentation analysis to understand healthy weight management behaviours. We will share with the group when the report is published

Irish Heart Foundation - update provided by Janis Morrissey

Food taxes

The Government has officially announced its evaluation of sugar sweetened drink taxes in response to our lobbying efforts. We are exploring further research options in the area.

Sugar sweetened drinks (SSD) tax

We received national media coverage for our call at an Oireachtas Committee for an increase in the tax rate at the higher band of sugar content in SSDs of over 8g per 100ml following another increase in tax revenue. Prior to the introduction of the tax most SSDs were in the lower 5-8g per 100ml tax band. Due to reformulation of these products to avoid being subject to the tax, revenue from them was just €600,000 in 2022. However, two of the big three producers of beverages with higher levels of sugar, such as energy drinks with up to 18 spoons worth in a 500ml bottle, declined to reformulate. Tax revenue from these drinks increased to €31.4 million last year, demonstrating that the incentive to reformulate needs to be stronger.

Sustainable diets report

The Climate and Health Alliance of Ireland, of which the Irish Heart Foundation is a founding member launched '[Fixing Food Together](#): Transitioning Ireland to a healthy and sustainable food system'. We subsequently wrote to the Oireachtas Health Committee and the chairwoman of the Climate Change Advisory Council Marie Donnelly, along with the health and environmental spokespeople of each of the major parties, seeking meetings following the launch of the report.

WHO Schools Health Literacy Demonstration Project

Work continues on this flagship Irish Heart Foundation project which aims to create and prove the effectiveness of a unique and innovative intervention that improves health literacy levels in adolescents, sits within the Wellbeing curriculum and supports positive health behaviours that can be carried into adulthood. The project featured as a case study in the major four volume WHO report on Health Literacy Development for the Prevention and Control of NCDs available [here](#)

High Risk Prevention Project

The Irish Heart Foundation's High-Risk Prevention Project in General Practice has concluded with the final report just submitted to the HSE. This two year pilot project ran in six practices in underserved communities supported patients at high risk of cardiovascular disease to actively manage their risk factors. Findings were very positive both for the patients and the practices. A public facing report will be published shortly. For more information see [our website](#).

Blood Pressure Campaign

In partnership with the ICGP and Irish Pharmacy Union we launched a major blood pressure awareness campaign targeting over 50's undiagnosed with high blood pressure. The theme is 'Before Damage is Done' and the call to action is to get checked at your GP or local pharmacy. For more see [here](#)

Sport Ireland - Update provided by Sophie Harrison

Sport Ireland and **safefood** met on the 15th of December to discuss potential partnership/collaboration opportunities.

Sport Ireland is now working with **safefood** on a nutrition resource. This simple resource will look around eating for sports, hydration, and supplementation. The idea is the content would be developed for coaches and parents as the key influencers.

Sophie attended the 30th European Congress on Obesity that took place on the 17 – 20th May 2023 in the Dublin Convention Centre.

South East Technological University Waterford – update provided by Aoife Hearne

Dr Lorna Doyle SETU will be hosting this one day event Friday 16th June <https://www.setu.ie/events/food-first-innovations-for-performance-nutrition>

School of Sport, Ulster University - Update provided by Dr Angela Carlin

Ulster University's Magee campus has hosted a conference exploring physical activity in schools with over 60 delegates, including teachers, researchers, physical activity co-ordinators as well as commissioners, from north and south of the border. The event included an opening address from the Chief Executive of the Western Health and Social Care Trust, Neil Guckian, and a panel discussion, with representatives from the Public Health Agency, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), local schools and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

Dr Angela Carlin and Prof Marie Murphy (Ulster University), alongside the Institute of Public Health in Ireland, led the development and production of the Ireland 2022 North and South Physical Activity Report Card for Children and Adolescents. This is an international project involving 57 countries and provides a grade for the proportion of children and adolescents meeting the benchmark across a range of indicators related to physical activity. For the first time, the report card presented a separate set of grades specifically looking at physical activity in children and adolescents with disabilities. Further detail on the project, including copies of the report, can be accessed via <https://activehealthykidsireland.org/>

Cancer Research UK - Update provided by Margaret Carr

UK-wide advocacy

- Worked with Obesity Health Alliance in late 2022 to try to persuade UK Government not to delay implementation of HFSS advertising restrictions on TV and online. Sadly efforts were not successful, and measures have been delayed until Oct 2025.
- CRUK published a [blog](#) on the junk food marketing policy journey.
- Submitted response to DHSC technical consultation on HFSS advertising restrictions (April).
- Obesity policy asks featured as part of CRUK submissions to Health and Social Care Select Committee prevention inquiry, and to UK Labour Party's National Policy Forum.
- CRUK helped develop and supports [Obesity Health Alliance's manifesto](#).
- CRUK is developing a [Manifesto for Cancer Research and Care](#) - a series of actionable policy recommendations that will be published at the end of the year to inform the work of an incoming government after the next UK General Election. The prevention chapter seeks to bolster the political & economic case for taking action, and will include obesity policy asks.

Research

published

Trolley Trends report - shifting the nation towards healthier shopping

Published April 2023 www.cruk.org.uk/trolleytrends

- CRUK, BHF & DUK independently commissioned YouGov to conduct research to explore attitudes and behaviours around healthy eating and food shopping.
- As part of the health partnership, Tesco provided a sample of customer Clubcard data which also allowed YouGov to explore actual purchasing behaviours.
- This research delivered insights that underpinned a policy discussion authored by the three charities, with recommendations for how supermarkets and government can positively impact the supermarket environment to make a healthy diet more available, affordable, appealing and accessible to all.

Key findings:

- Overall consumption of HFSS foods – foods which are high in fat, salt and/or sugar – is high.
- There are clear trends by life phase, with older customers more likely to purchase healthy items, and young families (with children under 10) the least likely to do so.

- Respondents have a good understanding of what a healthy diet is
- Price and taste are the key factors influencing food choice and the willingness to try new foods.
- Special offers have major influence on purchasing behaviours.
- Swapping behaviours across all social grades are driven by special offers and promotions.
- Accessibility to a wide variety of different types of food has the potential to impact people's ability to make healthier choices.

Recommendations:

Supermarkets, manufacturers and Governments need to take actions that will:

1. increase range of healthier products
2. place healthier products in competitive positions in-store, on shelf and online
3. rebalance promotions in favour of healthier options
4. focus marketing of healthier products on flavour as well as health benefits
5. make easy-to-read front-of-pack labelling mandatory and uniform
6. explore how to create consistency in how recommended portion sizes are calculated and displayed
7. introduce more transparent regulations on nutritional and health claims

CRUK blog <https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2023/04/20/routes-to-a-healthier-shopping-journey/>

Future research:

CRUK is conducting cross-risk factor research into young people and marketing on social media; looking at HFSS, tobacco and alcohol, as well as additionally into e-cigs too. This project has just started and will not be published till mid 2024.

Association for the Study of Obesity NI Network - Update provided by Laura McGowan

Planning for the UK Congress on Obesity been prioritised – taking place in Belfast 14th and 15th September 2023 at Riddel Hall, Queen's University Belfast. <https://aso.org.uk/ukco>

Early Career Researcher Event

When: Wednesday, 13th September 09:00 - 15:30

Oversubscribed – had 20 places and received 32 applications.

Media pieces - **ASO Response to announcement of new drug pilot to tackle obesity and cut NHS waiting lists**

Explore Obesity – Expert learning and online resources available <https://www.exploreobesity.co.uk/>

British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland – Update provided by Shannon Montgomery

BHF NI continues to coordinate the work of the Northern Ireland Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Prevention group – a group of nine local health organisations dedicated to addressing NCDs and their risk factors in Northern Ireland. (www.bhf.org.uk/NCDPreventionNI)

In May 2023, the group published new economic analysis that estimates the overall annual cost to society of smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity in Northern Ireland is around £1.9 billion – equivalent to 4.5% of the Northern Ireland economy. An estimated £500 million of this relates to healthcare expenditure in Northern Ireland, including GP visits, prescription costs, outpatient visits and hospital admissions.

The research was commissioned by BHF NI and compiled by economist Richard Johnston (prior to taking up his new position as Director of the Economic Policy Unit in the Executive Office at NICS). It looks at the impact of smoking, obesity and alcohol consumption on individuals, businesses, the wider economy, the health care system and the environment. The key figures relating to obesity are below:

- The estimated annual cost to society of obesity in Northern Ireland is around £500 million.
- The annual NI Department of Health expenditure due to obesity is estimated to be £100 million – equivalent to 1.3% of its annual budget.

Following publication of the research, BHF NI and other members of the NI NCD Prevention group met with Permanent Secretary Peter May and DoH officials (June 2023), to discuss policy recommendations to address rising obesity rates, smoking and alcohol harm, including progress on the development of the next obesity strategy for NI.



Visual summary -
Cost to society figur

School of Public Health, University College Cork – update provided by Janas Harrington

Healthy Food for a Healthy Future – Best ReMaP

The School of Public Health, University College Cork is a leading partner of the European project entitled “Best-ReMaP Joint Action”. Best-ReMaP is funded by the European Union and is dedicated to promoting the well-being and health of children through an evidence-based approach that addresses crucial issues in their food choices and food environments. The project aims to develop

and implement policies in three significant nutrition areas which can help create healthier food choices for children. The policies are as follows:

- Food reformulation activities
- Reducing harmful food marketing to children.
- Quality based food public procurements.

Since the commencement of Best-ReMaP in September 2020 and until September 2023, the School of Public Health has worked with 12 country partners to share best practices in implementing codes of practice to protect children from harmful food marketing. In March 2022, with the support from the European Commission's science hub, the Joint Research Centre, the team developed technical guidance for marketing codes and, as part of the consultation process, organised a workshop on 16 March. Three Irish advertising authorities (BAI, FSAI, ASAI) shared their experiences with 12 delegates from European countries. The School of Public Health has also organised three meetings with a group of European experts on reducing food marketing to children from August 2022 to June 2023, to discuss progress of the project and to liaise with the country partners and implementers of the marketing codes. In addition, the team at the School of Public Health is performing a systematic review of the implementation process of legislation or regulation of food marketing to children.

FEAST – Food systems that support transitions to healthy and sustainable diets

The FEAST project aims to support European food systems to move away from systems that consist of large food corporations 'winning' at the expense of negative consequences for the environment, public sector, and health. FEAST has introduced 'living labs' in European areas which distribute knowledge about sustainable diets, provide nutritious meals to schools and community caterings and promote food culture.

The School of Public Health will work on mapping and monitoring the factors that shape food environments. Two main areas will be explored:

1. **Company assessments and recommendations using the Business Impact Assessment on Obesity and Population Nutrition (BIA-Obesity) and the Business Impact Assessment on Sustainability (BIA-Sustainability)**- This project aims to contribute to the efforts to improve the healthiness and sustainability of food by assessing, benchmarking and comparing the impacts of food business on the environments in Belgium, Ireland, and Portugal.
2. **Understanding the role of governments in shaping healthy/sustainable food environments** – This project aims to map in detail government policies (including food-based dietary guidelines) for healthy diets from sustainable food systems at local level and where appropriate at, national and EU levels using established templates. Additionally, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with government officials in at least two EU countries (Belgium and Ireland) at different levels of jurisdiction (EU, national and local), to assess the barriers and facilitators to implementation of healthy diets from sustainable food systems. For each jurisdiction (EU, national, local) an overview on policy implementation, policy gaps and

best practices, alignment with other jurisdictions, as well as concrete policy priorities will be identified, together with the main barriers and facilitators for policy implementation.

Food based dietary guidelines for sustainable and healthy lifestyles (SuHEGuide)

To meet the core objective of developing food-based dietary guidelines for healthy and sustainable lifestyles (SuHeGuide), this project will incorporate the dual priorities of health and sustainability within a comprehensive, integrated framework. The findings from this project will be translated to evidence for development of public policy. The project is funded through the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM), Republic of Ireland and Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Northern Ireland.

The School of Public Health are working under task 3 – *to undertake a critical and cultural analysis of nutrient intake and food consumption data to identify and profile nutritional and environmental outcomes across the life-stages from junior to senior years.*

This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Outlining the carbon footprint of Irish children's diets, the food group contributions to impacts and the association with health outcomes.
- Outlining the carbon and water footprint of older Irish adult's diets, the food group contributions to impacts, and the association with health outcomes.
- Identifying the impacts of modifying existing patterns with alternative dietary approaches proposed for population and planetary health.
- Determining the financial cost and affordability of adherence to dietary patterns proposed for population and planetary health.
- Undertaking a systematic literature review on diet quality, dietary-related environmental impacts, NCD risk factors, and financial cost.

Building sustainability into Food Based dietary guidelines.

This safefood-funded research report which was lead by the team in the School of Public Health UCC was launched on June 7th. Components of the report were presented at the European Congress on Obesity. The research has also been accepted as a guided poster at the EUPHA conference which will take place in Dublin in November. The scoping review from this research has been published in Nutrition Reviews.

Future work at the school of public health

The school of public health continues to work with the Cork food policy council.

Department of Health – update provided by Fiona Ward

- The Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP) reviews were completed in November 2022 by the Department of Health and UCC Department of Public Health. It can be accessed here

<https://assets.gov.ie/242355/87aef312-f629-430e-bc5e-51b84e2c0fd1.pdf>

- The launch of the healthy eating resources for over 65 years, based on the scientific recommendations published by FSAI in 2021 is planned for 29th June in DoH.
- A plan to provide resources on Vitamin D will start during the summer, with a view that they will be ready before Vitamin D supplementation is required at Halloween.(based on the published FSAI recommendations in March.
<https://www.fsai.ie/news-and-alerts/latest-news/fsai-publishes-scientific-report-on-vitamin-d-nutr>
- The information leaflet on increasing your plant based intake is in draft and the Technical nutrition sub group of OPIOG hope to make it available by the end of the year.
- Most of the new lactations posts with funding announced by Minister Donnelly in May 2021 are recruited/ in process and only 1.5 posts need to be recruited.
- A review of the Sugar sweetened beverage tax (SSBT) is expected by the end of this year (implemented in 2018)
- All 19 Healthy Communities have been established and Minister Naughton launched the final one in Finglas in May 2023. Recruitment of the 19 food and nutrition workers is ongoing.
- The DoH expects to meet with Comiusian na Mean to discuss new online media and safety codes once the team is established.
- The healthy workplace website was launched in May 2023.