

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**Fifth plenary meeting of the Public Health Commission****09.00 Friday 17 April 2009****100 Victoria Embankment, London (Unilever House)****Attendees:**Chairman
CommissionDave Lewis
Baroness Peta Buscombe, Helen McCallum, Professor David Coggon, Mark Leverton, Fred Turok, Jeremy Beadles, Michael Livingston, Lucy Neville-Rolfe CMG, Professor Judy Buttriss, Dr Nick Sheron, Paul KellyGuests
Apologies
SecretariatMelanie Leech (FDF), David Poley (The Portman Group), John Dyson (BHA), Rachel Hackett (IGD)
Professor Simon Capewell
Unilever: George Gordon, Tom Denyard, Leanne Gorin, Danielle Hayward-Bradley, Emma Bertenshaw; Open Road: Martin Le

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	Item	Minutes	Actions/Recommendations
1	Chairman's Welcome		
2	Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The subject and format of the meeting were discussed Guests speakers were introduced 	
3	Working methods	<p>The Chairman outlined the three key sections to the meeting, focusing on where there was scope for useful progress:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Portion sizes: Presentation by Rachel Hackett Nutrition Manager, Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) Food Labelling: Presentation by George Gordon, Communications Director, Unilever UK & Ireland Food, diet and alcohol, in and out of home: Expert panel (John Dyson, BHA, Melanie Leech, FDF, David Poley, The Portman Group) responded to questions from the Commission 	

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<p>4</p> <p>Portion sizes: Presentation by guest speaker, Rachel Hackett, IGD</p>	<p>Rachel Hackett shared with the Commission the latest research being carried out by the IGD on Consumer Attitudes to Portion Size. Key points mentioned by Rachel included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers tended to view portion size in terms of meals or components of a meal • Portion size was generally not considered as an issue for snack foods or treats • The intake of drink was not considered at all • Imperial measures were widely used and preferred by many consumers • There was consumer acknowledgement that plate size affected intake • Many consumers believed they knew the right amount to serve through experience • Children exerted considerable control over the food type and portion size • Consumer research revealed that the clearest communication for portion size to be reflected on pack was per unit/item, with a dislike of per fraction measures. • Nutritional information per 100g/ml was considered useful for some, but not if the pack contained less than this • Consumers looked to eat larger portions when eating out in restaurants to secure value and there were some who compensated by eating less in between • Much inherited wisdom about appropriate portion sizes had gone. <p>In discussion, the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed people need to be re-educated about nutrition • There was a desire to review evidence how the role of dieticians/nutritionists help • Agreed that perhaps there could be testing on different size plates for different age groups and a desire to review any research available on whether plate sizes affected how much people eat 	
<p>5</p> <p>Labelling: Presentation by PHC secretariat member, George Gordon</p>	<p>George Gordon presented on Nutrient Profiling and Labelling in the UK, outlining the confusion that exists due to the variety of different labelling systems in operation.</p> <p>The main points from his presentation were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final decision on a labelling system would come from Europe • There were clear differences between the traffic light and GDA approach in terms of breadth, intellectual basis, and likely responses • There was a baffling diversity of initiatives from government which was unhelpful to consumers • Confusion also extends to the Out-of-Home sphere, where two further systems operated, namely The FSA Early Adopters scheme and the Department of Health Healthy Food Mark. • He outlined the differences between the two main food labelling systems: traffic lights and GDAs and the anomalies that surface when using traffic light labelling, exemplified through the per 100g as opposed to per portion problem 	

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<p>6</p> <p>Expert Panel Question and Answer Session: David Poley, Melanie Leech & John Dyson</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A second issue with traffic lights was the concern that some healthy foods such as dairy products, would be consumed less even where nutritionally sensible • Using Unilever as an example, he demonstrated the benefits of implementing a single set of criteria to define foods, against a standard set of agreed codes, using one profile to drive all production • That would clearly be an ideal approach in general terms, even if the detail was specific to Unilever <p>Members of the Commission then questioned the expert witnesses and discussed the issues. The following principal points were made:</p> <p>Food labelling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement that there have been beneficial shifts made since the implementation of labelling schemes, but that overall impact on the key obesity numbers was limited and disappointing • Neither exhortation ('nudging') or regulation would work in isolation – and the quick fix was a delusion • Less intervention but better targeted intervention by Government might help • There was a feeling that Government is focussing too much on foods being either good or bad, rather than focussing on the broader message of what constituted a healthy diet • Highlighted the fact that there is national evidence that weight gain among children is decreasing, demonstrating that Government initiatives were having some effect • Agreement that ideally a single labelling initiative across all food and alcohol wherever consumed would be ideal: but labelling itself was no a panacea and too much emphasis had been placed on it • There was a consensus that the EU proposals to put solely calories on front of pack would be a retrograde step – the UK has gone past that stage with 5 components now on the front • Concern was expressed over purely numerical information being expressed on labels which would not necessarily be understood by all consumers: some consumers preferred visual information • Agreed there were advantages for both the traffic light and GDA systems of food labelling and that the most important thing was to provide consumers with a model which would allow them to make the right choice • Rather then concentrate on labelling, the idea of 'healthy ranges' which achieved a minimum acceptable standard should be explored. <p>Alcohol Labelling:</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was confusion in the public mind surrounding what constitutes responsible drinking • Alcohol labelling was a complex matter due to the fact that in the UK, a unit of alcohol was not the same as in other countries. The alcohol industry was very far from reaching a European wide solution for alcohol labelling • UK Government had been asked to argue for standardisation of unit strength in EU, but that had not attracted Government support • Research had been conducted into the effectiveness of alcohol labelling in countries that had implemented it and it had been found to have a limited effect • Agreed that labelling has a role to play in influencing consumer choice, but that it was not everything and that a multi-faceted approach was required • There was discussion of the possibility of putting calorific values on drinks. It was agreed that this idea needed to be approached with caution as people should be basing their drinking decisions on alcohol content, not calorie content, otherwise there was a risk that people would be drinking low calorie drinks, but consuming too much alcohol. • There was consensus that people need to be encouraged to eat when drinking, rather than making it an either/or situation due to increased awareness of calorie intake. • There was consensus that surveys should be carried out on consumer response to just having the unit info on alcohol labelling • The Commission agreed that the most sensible approach was to abandon units altogether and seek a UK and EU system based around pure alcohol per ml <p>Out-of-Home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers who ate out a lot were expressing a greater desire to know more about the ingredients of the food they were eating and were opting for the healthier choice more often • There was work to be done by contract caterers as many businesses did not work on recipes, portion sizes or particular amounts • The Out-Of-Home sector was highly significant because of the rise in eating out but this would represent a great challenge to the numerous small businesses in the sector that simply had neither the technical skill nor the consistency of product to make nutritional information easy. • The hospitality sector was looking at introducing a system that promoted healthy options to the consumer • Agreed that caterers needed to be educated that healthy options can be produced cheaply – the perception that cheap produce led automatically had to be challenged. 	
7 General discussion	<p>In discussion, the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed that education around selecting the healthy choice was needed for schools and the workplace. • Consensus that doctors can help to reinforce the healthy lifestyle message 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solutions were needed to get people exercising and that GPs could play an important role in this • On the topic of reformulation, the Commission agreed that positive steps had been taken but further progress was both possible and desirable • The Commission felt that reformulation should be carried out in the hospitality sector as well as otherwise; this would present unfair competition if supermarkets continued with reformulation. There needed to be consistency across all sectors for reformulation to be effective • Agreed labelling should be introduced per portion to give consumers more of an indication as to how much they are eating. There was also a suggestion of introducing pricing per portion size as a way of bringing down the size of certain meals • Agreement that action must be taken to reduce the increased number of junk food ads to children (via other media) and steps to be taken to incentivise foods that were healthy • Agreed that the final report should make a strong plea for genuine partnership rather than government alternating wildly between stick and carrot • The key was to raise awareness and encourage demand by consumers for healthy options • Reforming the whole OOH sector was going to be both costly and difficult: it could not be considered a priority • If there was no clinching evidence that one labelling system was much better than any other it was a mistake for the Government to promote one • The attractions of calorie labelling were clear, given the scale of the obesity problem • The importance of nutritional teaching in schools was basic to this debate • It might be possible to grab attention by recommendations requiring, for example, that every food advertiser should set aside 5% of its advertising budget for healthy eating • Responsible drinking was also a message to be developed in schools 	
8	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>In conclusion, the following points for further work were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Commission members felt that more work had to be done to get to clear recommendations. In particular Douglas Smallwood asked for a coherent list of recommendations to be presented to Commission members. He suggested that in those circumstances, it would be acceptable to proceed on the basis that members broadly supported the overall thrust of the recommendations, rather than agreeing specifically with every one • Other members said that if necessary a majority decision should be sufficient in the case of an individual recommendation, but it would greatly be preferred if consensus could be reached • The Chairman asked that members should send within one week suggestions for specific responses to the responsibility Deal, as well as key recommendations that they would want to 	

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	see. It was then the intention that these would be reviewed in detail in the next two meetings	
9 AOB	Commission members were invited to join the lunches with Tim Smith (FSA) and Andrew Lansley.	