

Letter from Westminster



**Winchester MP:
Steve Brine**

IT'S tough being a parent these days. We all want our children to be healthy, happy and active but it's hard in a world filled with temptation.

When it comes to food and drink, the sheer range and volume of marketing can make limiting our kids' exposure feel

like a losing battle, but it's a battle we must win.

One in three children are now overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school.

Overconsumption, combined with reduced activity, is having a catastrophic effect on their health. We estimate that obesity related conditions are costing the NHS £6.1 billion each year.

As the country's Public Health Minister I am clear that obesity is indeed the new smoking and it is set to overtake smoking as the biggest cause of cancer.

Of course, childhood obesity is complex. And while we parents are responsible for protecting our children from obesity, we in Government are committed to playing our part.

That is why last month I published the long-awaited Chapter Two of our childhood obesity plan and our aim is to halve childhood obesity by 2030.

We're asking every primary school - and I've seen many do it well here in the constituency - to encourage their pupils to run or jog for at least 15 minutes every day as part of the 'golden mile'. We've been inspired by the brilliant active mile campaign which is now in 36 countries.

But exercise is only part of it. Our plan includes consultations on mandatory calorie labelling on menus and the banning of energy drink sales to children. We also want to consult on a 9pm watershed for TV adverts featuring products high in sugars, salts and fats - a particular bug bear of mine. I draw the line at marketing that deliberately targets inappropriate food choices at children.

All these actions will help but only concerted effort across society will ultimately help us get a grip. Let's get our children off their screens starting this summer - put aside their fizzy drinks and sugary foods - and point them towards a healthier and happier future.

Finally, I am acutely aware of the interest locally in Brexit and to be honest I share the anxiety. Although a remainer myself, I am working positively to make a success of it with a measured tone that respects both sides of the referendum.

Chequers agreements are only part of the story; it takes two to tango and the EU must make the next move and compromise as well. What I want, and I think my constituents agree, is the best possible deal that hours the referendum result while putting the economy - not ideology - at the heart of our Brexit negotiations.

You can see much more of my work at www.stevebrine.com, follow me on Facebook at [fb.com/SteveBrineMP](https://www.facebook.com/SteveBrineMP) or Twitter @BrineMP.

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