



Obesity Health Alliance Secretariat
Wells Lawrence House
126 Back Church Lane
London
E1 1FH

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair of Women and Equalities Committee
Committee Office
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
SW1A 0AA

Sent by email: womeqcom@parliament.uk

11th May 2021

Dear Ms Nokes

We are writing to you on behalf of the **Obesity Health Alliance** (OHA), a coalition of more than 40 leading health organisations, including Cancer Research UK, British Heart Foundation, Diabetes UK and medical royal colleges. We work together to influence government policies that create a healthier environment for everyone. We do this by campaigning for structural population level policies that address the social, commercial and environmental factors that influence excess weight.

We welcome the Committee's recent report 'Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image' and strongly support the recommendations made about addressing the serious issue of weight stigma. We know the impact that stigma has on the health outcomes and wellbeing of people living with excess weight and obesity. We are committed to help eradicate stigma in all settings and published a [statement](#) about this in 2018.

We are, however, concerned at the Committee's strong criticism of the Government's July 2020 'Tackling Obesity' strategy. The strategy included commitments to several evidence-based structural policies that, if implemented fully, will help shape an environment that supports healthier futures.

As you will be aware, obesity is one of the country's major public health challenges. Around two-thirds of adults have a weight classed as overweight or obese, and concerning inequalities exist in the experience of obesity across different social groups. While the appearance of having excess weight or obesity is not and should not be used to gauge an individual's health, the evidence that obesity is a risk factor for type-2 diabetes, heart and circulatory diseases and several types of cancer, amongst other conditions at a population level is clear, and the impact across our society cannot be underestimated.

We agree with the importance of ensuring that policies to address obesity do not have inadvertently detrimental effects on an individual's mental health. However, we cannot lose, or delay aspects of the obesity strategy designed to tackle our harmful environment. We must implement these alongside the interventions needed to prevent poor body image and eating disorders in a joined-up, thoughtful way.

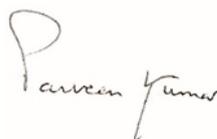
We would welcome the opportunity for representatives from our alliance to meet with you and discuss our shared agenda to improve people's health and well-being in a non-harmful way. This can be arranged by contacting Caroline Cerny at caroline.cerny@obesityhealthalliance.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the wider coalition:
The Obesity Health Alliance Steering Group



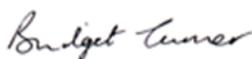
John Maingay
**Director of Policy
and Influencing
British Heart
Foundation**



Professor Dame Parveen Kumar
**Board of Science Chair
British Medical Association**



Emlyn Samuel
**Director of Policy
Cancer Research UK**



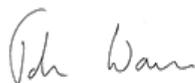
Bridget Turner
**Director of Policy,
Campaigns and
Improvement
Diabetes UK**



Professor Simon Capewell
**Fellow
Faculty of Public Health**



Dr Max Davie
**Officer for Health Improvement
Royal College of Paediatrics and
Child Health**



Professor John Wass
**Consultant Endocrinologist
and Special Advisor to
OHA**



Ben Reynolds
**Deputy Chief Executive
Sustain**



Professor Rachel Batterham
**Special Advisor on Obesity
Royal College of Physicians**