

# Consultation on mandating calorie labelling in the out-of-home sector – submission by the Sport and Recreation Alliance

## The Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance believes that the power of sport and recreation can change lives and bring communities together. Together with our members and in partnership with the wider sector, we make the most of opportunities and tackle the areas that provide a challenge. We provide advice, support and guidance to our members and the sector, who represent traditional governing bodies of games and sport, county sports partnerships, outdoor recreation, water pursuits, and movement and dance exercise. As the voice of the sector, we work with Government, policy makers and the media to make sure grassroots sport and recreation grows and thrives. Having an active nation is important as it delivers huge benefits to society and the millions of participants, volunteers, staff and spectators.

## General comments

We have addressed some of the specific consultation questions below but we would first make the following key points:

- **The proposed requirements for calorie labelling should exclude not-for-profit grassroots sport clubs.** The vast majority of grassroots sports clubs are volunteer-run, not-for-profit organisations. Many grassroots sports clubs have club bars or shops which provide food and drink – either prepared on the premises or pre-packaged – to members and non-members and similarly clubs often host social events which involve the provision of food and drink to guests. In addition, many clubs and community sports organisations provide food alongside matches (for example cricket club teas) or run voluntary events at which individuals may sell home-produced food and drink, for example to raise funds. The income clubs generate from food and drink is ploughed back into providing more and better opportunities for local communities to benefit from sport. While we recognise the importance of providing transparency over calorie content in the out-of-home setting, we are firmly of the view that mandating calorie labelling for food and drink provided by not-for-profit grassroots sports clubs and community sports organisations (and by individuals at grassroots events) would be both disproportionate and unduly burdensome and should be excluded from the scope of the scheme. In this context we note there is already a recognition that microbusinesses (defined as having fewer than 10 employees) will find it harder to implement the requirements and as such might be excluded from the scheme. We would therefore encourage similar recognition and treatment of not-for-profit voluntary organisations which will face the same issues.

- **Many sports grounds and events already offer a range of healthy options and any requirements placed on the provision of food and drink at sports grounds and major events should be proportionate.** Good progress has been made in recent years by sports, working with their event catering providers, to ensure fans have a wide range of healthy food and drink options to choose from. In addition, it is clear from the consultation that the main concern from a public health perspective – and therefore the area likely to generate the largest potential ‘return’ from calorie labelling – is consumption from high-volume, repeat-custom outlets such as restaurants, cafés, pubs and bars as well as takeaway providers. By contrast, consumption of food at sports grounds and major events is likely to be more occasional or irregular, being incidental to the main purpose of attendance. In this context, the consumption of food at sports stadia is likely to be a relatively small proportion of the total out-of-home consumption. Further, some sports grounds have multiple catering providers onsite, a number of whom may be family/micro-businesses operating from facilities which are limited in terms of display space. On this basis, we believe that there should be a proportionate approach to calorie labelling of food and drink sold at sports grounds and events – perhaps requiring the provision of basic information for standard menu options at a single point of choice – and which would exclude micro-businesses from the requirements altogether.
- **The scope of the requirements on calorie information should be absolutely clear.** The consultation document indicates that the calorie labelling requirements will apply to all food or drink prepared for immediate consumption but also extend to ‘all ready-to-eat food and drink items that an establishment offers’. This could arguably include pre-packaged food and drink offered for sale which would already carry calorie information on the packaging. We do not believe it is sensible or indeed the intent of the proposals to apply the requirements to the sale of pre-packaged food and drink and for the avoidance of doubt would encourage explicit recognition that it falls outside the scope of the requirements.
- **Responsibility for compliance should be clear and unambiguous.** Food and drink outlets at sports grounds and major events are often operated by separate businesses under some form of commercial agreement with the venue owner or event organiser. In this context, it is important to ensure clarity over who is responsible for implementing calorie labelling requirements and the consequences for non-compliance.

## Comments on specific consultation questions

### ***Q1. Do you think that calorie labelling should be mandatory for all out-of-home businesses?***

No. We believe all food and drink provided by not-for-profit grassroots sport clubs and community organisations should be excluded from the requirements, as well as any food and drink provided by individuals at club events. We also believe micro-businesses providing food and drink at sports grounds and events should be similarly excluded.

Were grassroots sports clubs to be included in the scheme, the requirements would be extremely burdensome for volunteers to understand and implement with likely minimal impact on overall obesity. It may also end up being counter-productive by diverting scarce volunteer time and resource away from the frontline provision of sport and recreation (with all its attendant health benefits) towards compliance with additional labelling requirements.

***Q2. Do you think that the calorie labelling requirement should apply to all food and drink items an out-of-home business offers?***

No. See Q3 below – if micro-businesses are to be included in the scheme, we would encourage a light touch approach which could involve excluding them from some of the requirements relating to providing contextual information on calorie intake and labelling on certain offerings e.g. sides, toppings and self-service items.

***Q3. Micro-businesses (those with fewer than 10 employees) may find this requirement harder to implement. Which of the following approaches do you most agree with?***

- ***Micro-businesses are covered by the requirement in the same way as other businesses***
- ***Microbusinesses are excluded from the requirement altogether***
- ***Micro-businesses are covered by the requirement, but given a longer implementation period***
- ***Other***

We believe micro-business should be excluded from the requirements given that they will face greater constraints both in terms of staff time and resources but also (certainly in the sports context) in terms of physical display space. If micro-businesses are to be included, we would encourage a proportionate approach to the requirements placed on these businesses, for example by relaxing some of the obligations on labelling (see answer to Q2 above) and by providing an additional implementation period of at least 12 months i.e. minimum two years in total.

***Q11. We will provide businesses with written guidance to help them with calorie labelling. Do you think businesses will need any additional support?***

Whatever the final shape of the scheme, we would encourage the provision of comprehensive and easy-to-understand guidance for those businesses affected. Where possible the guidance should include specific examples of how the requirements are intended to work in a range of real-life settings – this could cover the sorts of catering arrangements which are found at sports and cultural events.

***Q12. Do you think calorie labelling would cause any practical issues for particular businesses?***

See answers to Q1-Q3. As noted above, applying calorie labelling requirements to not-for-profit grassroots clubs would be extremely burdensome for what are volunteer-run organisations and would direct scarce resource away from frontline delivery of sport and recreation. Likewise, applying the requirements to micro-businesses would be burdensome for the reasons outlined above.