

10-Year Health Plan:

Progress on cancer prevention

March 2026

The Government's 10-Year Health Plan sets out a long-term ambition to shift from treatment to prevention and improve population health outcomes. World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) warmly welcomes this direction of travel. Given that up to 40% of cancers are preventable, it is imperative that implementation of the Plan translates into measurable reductions in obesity, alcohol harm, physical inactivity and poor diet - major drivers of cancer risk.



Priorities for parliamentary scrutiny

With the 10-Year Health Plan in the implementation phase, Parliamentarians should focus on:

1. **Ensuring prevention commitments are delivered at pace and with clear accountability**, particularly on the reporting of healthy food targets and standards, application of the 2018 Nutrient Profile Model (NPM) and mandatory alcohol labelling.
2. **Moving from voluntary to mandatory regulation**, especially in regard to the voluntary commercial baby food guidelines and reformulation.
3. **Strengthening alcohol policy** in recognition that mandatory labelling must be accompanied by other evidenced-based policies, particularly Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) and marketing restrictions on alcohol, introduced through a National Alcohol Strategy for England.
4. **Strengthening breastfeeding support** by calling for swift implementation of the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMAs) package of recommendations aimed at addressing excessively high infant formula prices and inappropriate marketing practices.
5. **Ensuring treatment for obesity and overweight (including use of GLP1s) and prevention are pursued together**, with sustained investment in healthier food environments and physical activity.
6. **Aligning delivery with the National Cancer Plan and forthcoming National Food**

Cross-cutting risks

- Heavy reliance on voluntary industry compliance, with immense pushback against mandatory regulation.
- Industry resistance to 2018 NPM.
- Lack of clear timelines, enforcement mechanisms and measurable outcomes on prevention.
- Need for clear alignment with the National Cancer Plan and forthcoming National Food Strategy.

Areas in need of improvement

- **Alcohol** - Insufficient policies to tackle alcohol harm, including cancer, with no National Alcohol Strategy for England.
- **Infant nutrition** - Insufficient policies to support breastfeeding and tackle excessive infant formula prices and inappropriate marketing practices.

Implementation Tracker: Key commitments on diet, alcohol & physical activity

Commitment	Status	Next Steps	WCRF Position/Notes
Healthy Food Standard & Mandatory Food Sales Reporting	In progress	Consultation expected late Spring 2026	Strong standards and transparent reporting are essential to shift the food environment.
Expanding and strengthening Soft Drinks Industry Levy	In progress	Consultation in 2025. Draft legislation in 2026; changes legislated via a future Finance Bill and take effect January 2028, allowing reformulation time	Cut from 5g to 4.5g sugar per 100ml (from Jan 2028), bringing more drinks into scope unless reformulated. Now includes sugary pre-packaged milk-based and plant-based drinks; unsweetened milk remains exempt.
Updated Nutrient Profile Model (2018 NPM)	In progress	Published in January 2026 with application to policies by 2029	New NPM receiving significant industry pushback despite being planned for many years. Robust implementation is critical to improve marketing restrictions and other food policies, which are currently based on the outdated 2004 NPM.
Junk Food Marketing Restrictions	Enforced on 5 January	No further action announced	The restrictions were significantly weakened by industry involvement; to be effective the sweeping brand exemption must be removed and more products must be included in scope.
Ban on Energy Drinks Sales to Under-16s	In progress	Awaiting consultation outcome	WCRF supports the ban of energy drinks sales, which are linked to childhood obesity, to under 16's.
Voluntary Commercial Baby Food Composition Guidelines	Published in August 2025	18-month implementation window (end in February 2027), further measures considered thereafter	WCRF calls for mandatory regulation due to insufficiency of voluntary measures, poor nutritional quality and misleading marketing which are detrimental to the first 1000 days of a child's life.
Expansion of NHS Digital Weight Management Programme	In progress	Awaiting further detail	Treatment and prevention must go hand in hand. Clinical support must compliment population-level prevention measures.

Mandatory Alcohol Labelling	In progress	Consultation expected in Autumn 2026	Labels must include a mandatory cancer-specific warning (rotating or static) as well as nutritional information.
No/Low Alcohol (No/Lo) Promotion	In progress	Awaiting further detail	Limited evidence of impact. Stronger measures such as Minimum Unit Pricing and marketing restrictions must be pursued instead.
New Physical Activity Strategy	Unclear	Awaiting further detail	Clarity needed on scope, funding and measurable targets.

Conclusion

The 10-Year Health Plan marks an important shift toward prevention. However, ambition must now be matched by clear delivery plans, strong regulation and cross-government accountability. Parliamentarians have a key role in ensuring implementation delivers measurable reductions in obesity and alcohol-related cancer risk - and that prevention becomes a sustained, system-wide priority.

We would be delighted to provide you with any support or further information on the above. Please contact policy@wcrf.org if that is of interest.

About WRCF

World Cancer Research Fund examines how diet, weight and physical activity impacts the risk of developing and surviving cancer. As part of an international network of charities, we have been funding life-saving research, influencing global public health policy and educating the public since 1982. While society continues searching for a cure, our prevention and survival work is helping people live longer, happier and healthier lives – free from the devastating effects of cancer.

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