

## Briefing – Nutrition Information Posters policy proposal

Date: 19 January 2024

Audience: Welfare and Community Zone

Content Notice: Discussion of calorie labelling/ intake and eating disorders

### What is the current situation at UCL related to this proposal?

On 6 April 2022, new regulations around food and drink calorie labelling were introduced in England with the aim to reduce population levels of obesity. Restaurants, cafes and takeaways in England with over 250 employees had to add calorie labels to their menus.

As providers of catering on campus, both Students' Union UCL and [CH&Co](#) are legally bound to provide this information on food menus.<sup>1</sup>

At UCL, this impacted all outlets run by CH&Co, including but not limited to: the Wilkins Refectory, the Student Centre Café, Fold Pizza, the Engineering Café and coffee outlets. This also impacted food and drink outlets run by the SU. This includes outlets such as the Print Room Café, George Farha Café, Gordon's Café and Bloomsbury Café.

Many people struggle with these regulations around food and drink calorie labelling for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, the requirements of these regulations are legally binding and fixed.

Understanding the challenges in the recent change to regulation, UCL has organised a Lunch Hour Lecture to discuss the impact of England's calorie labelling policy on individuals with eating disorders.<sup>2</sup> The talk will focus on whether public health policies can be inclusive of both obesity prevention and eating disorder prevention.<sup>3</sup>

The [UCL webpage on calorie labelling](#) provides resources for support including [Beat](#). Beat is an eating disorder charity which runs a helpline to provide support and information about eating disorders.

### What would change if the policy was successful?

An information poster would be put up next to prominent calorie displays in SU outlets. This poster will define the relevance of calories, nutrients, and food variety and promote an intuitive approach to eating.

Intuitive eating is a non-dieting approach that focuses on healthy eating, encouraging body acceptance, and challenges restrictive diet culture<sup>4</sup>.

This change would instil a more welcoming and inclusive environment within SU outlets.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/news/2022/apr/calorie-labelling-some-ucl-food-and-drink-outlets>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/events/events/2024/jan/lunch-hour-lecture-impact-englands-calorie-labelling-policy>

<sup>3</sup> If interested in attending, more information can be found here: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/events/events/2024/jan/lunch-hour-lecture-impact-englands-calorie-labelling-policy>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition/weight/intuitive-eating>

## What is the relevant national / international context to this situation?

As mentioned above, the new legislation was introduced with the aim of reducing population levels of obesity in the UK. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the impact that obesity can have on people's health and health outcomes. It is estimated that overweight and obesity-related conditions across the UK cost the NHS £6.1 billion each year. Almost two-thirds (63%) of adults in England are overweight or living with obesity.<sup>5</sup> In a Public Health England survey on calorie reduction, 79% of respondents said they think that menus should include the number of calories in food and drinks.<sup>6</sup>

Public Health Minister at the time, Jo Churchill MP, said that the aim of the legislation is to make it as easy as possible for people to make healthier food choices for themselves and their families, both in restaurants and at home. This includes ensuring that everyone has access to accurate information about the food and drink we order.<sup>7</sup>

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, part of the Department of Health and Social Care, leads national efforts to improve public health policy and is responsible for health improvement and public health functions along with NHS England.<sup>8</sup>

## Are there any legal implications to this policy proposal?

The legislation places a legal obligation on many food businesses to display calorie information. This means calorie information must be prominently displayed in many places on campus, both on menus and next to food displayed on sale. The law states that calorific content must be provided for each food item in kcal, accompanied by the line 'an adult needs around 2000 calories a day'.

Any organisation who fails to comply with a notice could be guilty of an offence and fined £2,500. There are some exemptions to the legislation including food that is only on a menu for 30 days of the year or less and all alcoholic drinks above 1.2% ABV.

## Does this relate to any existing SU policy?

No.

## Are there any financial, resource or stakeholder / public relations issues with this policy proposal?

Developing accurate, informative and engaging content for the poster would need the input of nutrition experts or health professionals, which would require additional financial resource that is not currently budgeted for.

## Are there any sustainability implications to this item for discussion?

The initiative's success would contribute to the long-term sustainability of healthier eating habits among the student community. Promoting an intuitive approach to eating can lead to sustainable lifestyle changes.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-calorie-labelling-rules-come-into-force-to-improve-nations-health>

<sup>6</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f1ae09b3a6f407273a1bea6/Calorie\\_labelling\\_Equality\\_Assessment.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f1ae09b3a6f407273a1bea6/Calorie_labelling_Equality_Assessment.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/calorie-labelling-on-menus-to-be-introduced-in-cafes-restaurants-and-takeaways>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities/about>

The educational aspect of promoting an intuitive approach to eating fosters sustainable behaviour by encouraging individuals to make mindful and informed choices, potentially leading to reduced food waste and better resource utilization.

Ensuring that the content on the posters aligns with sustainable food practices, such as promoting plant-based options, can contribute to broader sustainability efforts within UCL.

### **Are there any equity and inclusion implications to this item for discussion?**

Encouraging an intuitive approach to eating can contribute to positive mental well-being by fostering a healthy relationship with food. This inclusivity is essential for students who may face mental health challenges related to body image or disordered eating.

### **What would the next steps be if the proposal passed?**

The SU commercial team would liaise with nutrition and health professionals to develop the content and later work with the SU marketing team on the design and printing.