

INTRODUCTION

The British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD) recognises the harm caused by sugar and the link between high consumption, high rates of tooth decay and social deprivation. In 2016 BASCD produced a position statement on free sugars comprising a sound body of knowledge and evidence to support members to improve oral health (1). BASCD are committed to supporting a broad range of actions that have been proposed by expert bodies, including:

- 1 • Lowering the amount of free sugars in food and drinks
- 2 • Restricting the marketing and promotion of sugar-containing products
- 3 • Reducing the amount of sugar-containing food and drinks sold
- 4 • Advising, educating and helping people to consume less sugar
- 5 • Reducing the amount of sugar produced

In 2018 the Soft Drinks Industry Levy was introduced and we await publication of the final report of the Sugar Reduction Programme (2), which challenged the food industry to reduce sugar by 20% by 2020 (3). It is now timely to evaluate the BASCD position statement to make recommendations for how to update, improve and implement activity.

METHODS

Objectives: To assess the profile and visibility of the position statement via a qualitative survey of key stakeholders. To consider its overall impact by determining whether recommendations have been implemented and collaborative action has resulted.

Methods: Purposive sampling was used to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with eight key stakeholders including, BASCD members, non-members, dental public health trainees, public health specialists, academics and national consultants.

Interviews were conducted remotely and were transcribed by hand. Forty five codes were created, collapsing into a final total of twenty. An inductive approach to thematic content analysis was used to generate themes. Four themes were constructed to encompass the coded data. Triangulation was conducted with a third party to review the codes and ensure internal validity was maintained (4).

Figure 1: Sequence of methods



RESULTS

Figure 2: Constructed Themes

Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Visibility	Prominence	Awareness Profile of statement Reputation of BASCD
	Communications	Social Media Website
Knowledge	BASCD Related	BASCD Membership BASCD Conference
	Statement Related	Knowledge of contents
Impact	Usefulness	Applicability Barriers to usefulness
	Cross Partner-Working	Collaborative working Lack of cross partner-working Wider public health
Recommendations	Communication	Public messaging Communication strategy Media Re-launch
	Workforce	Membership Responsibility Capacity
	Marketing (statement)	Opportunities to influence

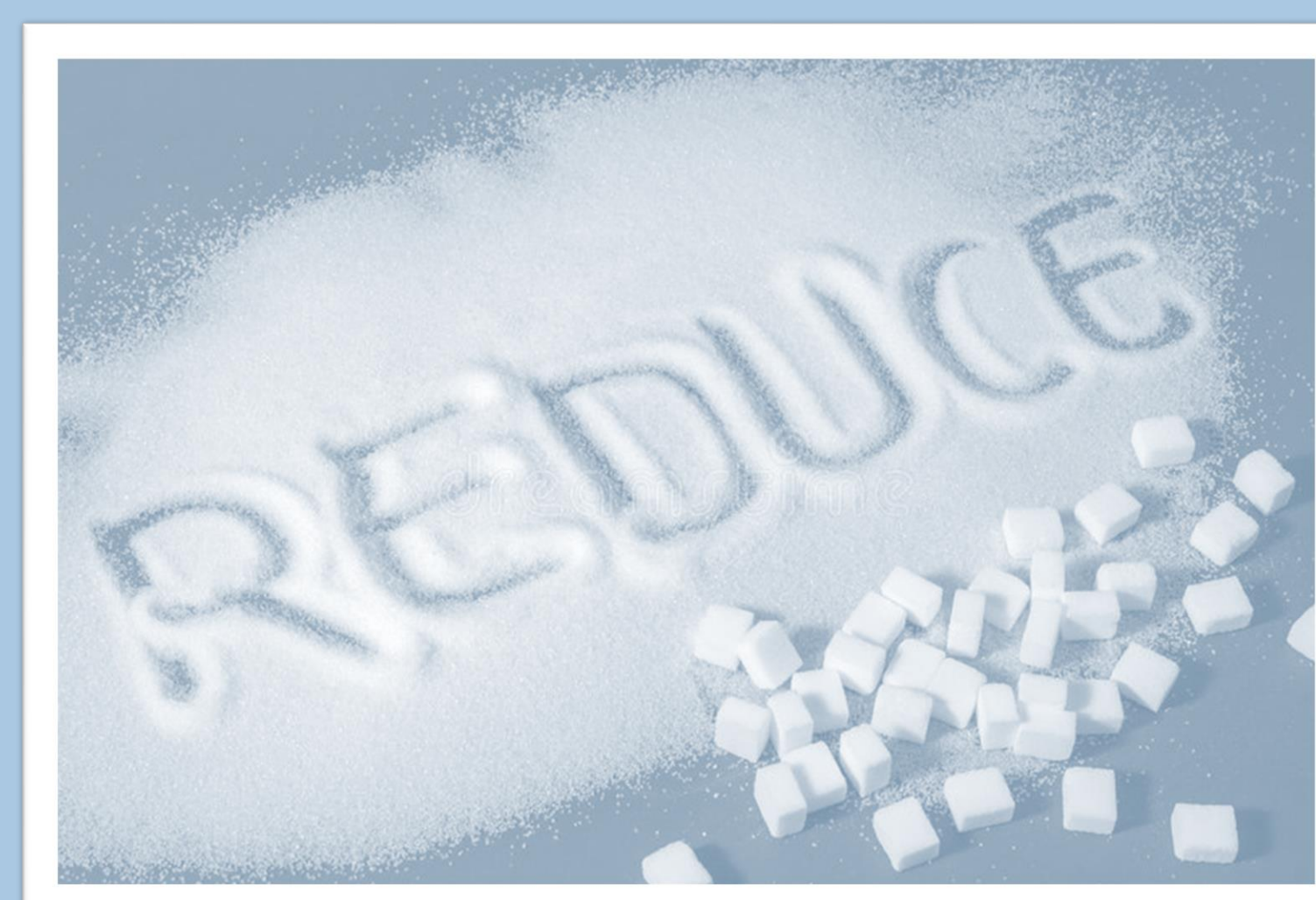


Figure 3: Summary of Results

- ❖ Four main themes were identified including statement visibility, knowledge, impact and recommendations.
- ❖ Nine sub-themes and 20 codes were generated.
- ❖ Profile, visibility and knowledge of the statement was poor. Interviewees were supportive of its content and applicability to public health. Overwhelmingly, they considered it required a higher profile for impact.
- ❖ Local implementation and collaborative working linked to the statement was low.
- ❖ Direct impact of the statement was limited as a result of poor visibility and awareness.



DISCUSSION

Results have provided BASCD with suggestions for increasing the value and impact of what has been considered a positive, useful and well-respected statement.

Recommendations

1. Increase the visibility and profile of the statement
2. Review the current communication strategy for BASCD publications and utilise social media outlets for promotion
3. Update the statement to reflect current evidence
4. Re-launch the statement

These recommendations are being implemented, with the second edition of the statement being presented at the Autumn BASCD Conference 2022. A communication strategy has been developed to include multiple social media platforms, membership dissemination and collaboration with partner organisations to promote the statement and its public health messages.

BASCD will continue to work with other nations and agencies across the health sector to help reduce the consumption of free sugars and improve oral and general health.

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst the statement was positive, useful and well-respected, it was not visible. This has informed content and dissemination of the second edition.

A communication strategy has been developed as part of a re-launch campaign during Sugar Awareness Week 2022, to help BASCD's membership facilitate and improve oral health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the study participants for taking part.



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