

Dear Secretary of State

We are writing to you as members of the Inequalities in Health Alliance (IHA) to welcome you to your new role as Secretary of State for health and social care. Your appointment comes at a critical moment in our efforts to tackle health inequality, and while we understand you will have much to do, reducing the avoidable differences in health across the population must be a priority.

Health inequalities that were exacerbated by the pandemic now risk being further engrained if bold, ambitious action is not taken quickly. **We urge you to maintain the commitment to publishing a Health Disparities White Paper by the end of this year.**

The over 200 members of the IHA represent patients, communities, doctors, nurses, public health and social care professionals, dentists, pharmacists, local authorities and others. We have seen first-hand that the physical and mental health of people of all ages is in large part a product of our environment.

The cost-of-living crisis is only another reminder of this. Polling commissioned by the Royal College of Physicians in May 2022 showed that 55% of British adults in the UK felt their health had been negatively affected by the rising cost of living, with the increasing costs of heating (84%), food (78%) and transport (46%) reported as the top three factors. 1 in 4 who felt their health had been negatively affected had also been told this by a doctor or other health professional.

We were pleased to see government announce a health disparities white paper earlier this year, and that the announcement signalled that the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) would work with the 'whole of government to consider health disparities at each stage at which they arise, from the wider determinants of health, to the behavioural factors that influence health, to the health services that people access and receive.'

The white paper must deliver on all three of those fronts. Although a crucial part of the picture, focusing on individual behaviours and access to services alone will not be enough to close the almost 20-year gap in healthy life expectancy that exists between those from the least and most deprived communities.

To prevent ill health in the first place, action needs to be taken on issues such as poor housing, lack of educational opportunity, child poverty, the commercial determinants of health (such as the availability of tobacco and marketing of alcohol), communities and place, employment, racism and discrimination, transport and air pollution. Without a cross-government focus on all those issues, the DHSC and NHS will be left in the ultimately unsustainable position of treating the ailments created by the environments people live in.

That is why over 200 member organisations of the Inequalities in Health Alliance are clear that the Health Disparities White Paper must commit to clear cross-government action, including a cross-government strategy to reduce health inequalities. This would be a significant step forward in reducing the unequal levels of health in the UK, and in the long term would reduce pressure on and provide savings to the NHS and the wider economy. Before COVID-19 health inequalities were estimated to cost the UK £31bn to £33bn – and in places with the lowest healthy life expectancy in England, more than a third of those aged 25 to 64 are economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability.

The government's commitment to narrow the 20-year gap in healthy life expectancy by 2030 will simply not be possible without this bold action and leadership. Committing to deliver the health disparities white paper by the end of 2022 as planned is a significant opportunity to commit to clear,

cross-government action and reform our approach to improving the health of the nation. We urge you to seize it.

Yours sincerely

The Inequalities in Health Alliance

1. Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
2. Action on Smoking and Health
3. Alcohol Change UK
4. Alcohol Health Alliance
5. Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance
6. Arthur Rank Hospice Charity
7. Asian Breast Cancer Support Group
8. Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland
9. Association for Young People's Health
10. Association of Ambulance Chief Executives
11. Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology
12. Association of British Neurologists
13. Association of Cancer Physicians
14. Association of Directors of Public Health
15. Association of Pakistani Physicians of Northern Europe
16. Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
17. Asthma + Lung UK
18. Becoming a Doctor
19. Bedfordshire and Luton Fair Play
20. Better Breastfeeding
21. Blood Pressure UK
22. Brain Health Scotland
23. Breaking Down Barriers
24. Breastfeeding Network
25. Brighton and Hove City Council
26. British Association for Cytopathology
27. British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
28. British Association for Sexual Health and HIV
29. British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry
30. British Association for the Study of the Liver
31. British Association of Audiovestibular Physicians
32. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
33. British Association of Dermatologists
34. British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin
35. British Cardiovascular Society
36. British Dental Association
37. British Dietetic Association
38. British Fluoridation Society
39. British Geriatrics Society
40. British Heart Foundation
41. British HIV Association
42. British Indian Psychiatric Association
43. British Infection Association
44. British Islamic Medical Association
45. British Medical Association
46. British Nuclear Test Veterans Association
47. British Pharmacological Society
48. British Psychological Society
49. British Red Cross
50. British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology
51. British Society for Genetic Medicine
52. British Society for Haematology
53. British Society for Heart Failure
54. British Society for Immunology
55. British Society of Gastroenterology
56. British Society of Rehabilitation Medicine
57. British Society for Rheumatology
58. British Thoracic Society
59. Brook
60. Cancer Research UK
61. Caribbean & African Health Network
62. Centre for Ageing Better
63. Centre for BME Health
64. Centre for Health and Society, Aston University
65. Centre for Mental Health
66. Centre for Perioperative Care
67. Changing Lives
68. Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
69. City and Hackney CCG

70. Clinical Genetics Society
71. Collective Voice
72. College of Paramedics
73. Consensus Action on Salt, Sugar and Health
74. Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust
75. covid:aid
76. C2 National Network of Connected Communities
77. Crisis
78. Crohn's and Colitis UK
79. Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance
80. Cystic Fibrosis Trust
81. Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust
82. Diabetes UK
83. Digital Legacy Association
84. Doctors' Association UK
85. Doctors of the World
86. Equality Trust
87. Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health
88. Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine
89. Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine
90. Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management
91. Faculty of Occupational Medicine
92. Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine
93. Faculty of Physician Associates
94. Faculty of Public Health
95. Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health
96. Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine
97. Fairness Foundation
98. Feed
99. Gambling Education Network
100. Groundswell
101. Groundwork UK
102. Growing Against Violence
103. Guy's and St Thomas' Charity
104. Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership
105. Health Action Campaign
106. Healthworks
107. Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland
108. Health Creation Alliance
109. Health Equalities Group
110. Health Foundation
111. Herpes Viruses Association & Shingles Support Society
112. Human Milk Foundation
113. Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
114. Imperial Health Charity
115. In2MedSchool
116. Innovation Agency
117. Institute for Health Research, University of Bedfordshire
118. Institute of Alcohol Studies
119. Institute of Health Equity
120. Institute of Health Promotion and Education
121. Intensive Care Society
122. Just Fair
123. Keep Our NHS Public
124. Kidney Care UK
125. Kidney Research UK
126. Lisieux Trust
127. Listen to Locals
128. Liverpool City Council
129. Local Government Association
130. Long Covid Kids
131. Lupus UK
132. MacIntyre
133. Malnutrition Task Force
134. Manchester Health and Care Commissioning
135. Marie Curie
136. Maternity Action
137. Medact
138. Medical Women's Federation
139. Men's Health Forum
140. Mental Health Foundation
141. mHabitat
142. Muslim Doctors Association
143. My Pickle
144. National Association of Link Workers
145. National Axial Spondyloarthritis Society
146. National Survivor User Network
147. National Voices
148. Nesta
149. Newark Sports Association
150. New Nicotine Alliance
151. Neurological Alliance
152. NHS Clinical Commissioners
153. NHS Confederation
154. NHS Providers

155. North East and North Cumbria AHSN
156. North Lewisham PCN
157. Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke
158. North Durham Patient Reference Group
159. Northern Health Science Alliance
160. Nottinghamshire Violence Reduction Unit
161. Oral Health Foundation
162. Our Lido
163. People's Health Trust
164. Pharmacist Cooperative
165. Preventative Neurology Unit, Wolfson  
Institute of Preventative Medicine
166. Primary Care Respiratory Society
167. Provider Public Health Network
168. Refugee Council
169. Resuscitation Council UK
170. Royal College of Anaesthetists
171. Royal College of Emergency Medicine
172. Royal College of General Practitioners
173. Royal College of Midwives
174. Royal College of Nursing
175. Royal College of Occupational Therapists
176. Royal College of Ophthalmologists
177. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child  
Health
178. Royal College of Pathologists
179. Royal College of Physicians
180. Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons  
of Glasgow
181. Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
182. Royal College of Psychiatrists
183. Royal College of Radiologists
184. Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
185. Royal College of Surgeons England  
Faculty of Dental Surgery
186. Royal College of Surgeons of England
187. Royal Colleges of Obstetricians and  
Gynaecologists
188. Royal Pharmaceutical Society
189. Royal Society for Public Health
190. Scottish Deep End Project
191. Scottish Health Action on Alcohol  
Problems
192. Selfless UK
193. SignHealth
194. Social Work Scotland
195. Society and College of Radiographers
196. Society for Endocrinology
197. Society of Acute Medicine
198. Society of British Dental Nurses
199. South Asian Health Foundation
200. Spinal Injuries Association
201. Strategy Unit
202. Stroke Association
203. Stronger People
204. Students for Global Health
205. The Royal Society of Medicine
206. Town and Country Planning Association
207. UK Acquired Brain Injury Forum
208. UK Association for Milk Banking
209. UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
210. UK Lung Cancer Coalition
211. UK Public Health Network
212. Ventnor Town Council
213. Versus Arthritis
214. Voluntary Health Scotland
215. Young Lives Consortium