



Monday 7th October 2024

Dear Prime Minister and Chancellor,

RE: Urgent action needed to improve the public's health

We are writing to you ahead of the Autumn Budget to highlight the urgent action needed to improve the nation's health. Austerity and Covid-19 left lasting scars, and poor economic performance is both a cause and a consequence of poor health.

Your Government has made a very positive start to the mission to improve the nation's health at a time when people in the least deprived areas of the country can expect to live 19 more years in good health, compared to those in the most deprived. We particularly welcome the formation of the Child Poverty Taskforce, and your commitment to restrict advertising of junk food and progressively increase the age of sale of tobacco.

Good health and wellbeing is the only foundation on which to build social and economic prosperity. We ask the Government therefore to deliver the changes needed to create an environment where everyone has access to the basic building blocks we need to live healthier lives for longer.

A coherent, cross-government approach to public health is needed, with every department playing its part in achieving a healthier society, and using the levers of tax, regulation, and policy to tackle the biggest public health challenges – including climate change, child poverty, and health inequalities.

Increased investment at a local level is also crucial. For example, the Public Health Grant, which is used to fund vital areas such as children's services, drug and alcohol services, and sexual health services in England, has been cut by 28% over the past ten years. This has meant difficult decisions to downsize, or even close, vital services have had to be made. Furthermore, the most deprived areas have been most severely affected by these cuts, causing the already unacceptable gap in outcomes to widen even further.

We recognise that public sector funding is limited. However, in order to achieve public health policy ambitions, a £1.4bn increase is needed to restore the Public Health Grant in England to the real-terms equivalent of 2015/16 per person levels. This investment would mean Directors of Public Health, working with partners like local government, the NHS and the voluntary sector, could deliver improved health for all, and provide the necessary leadership to address the root causes of physical and mental ill health.

Improving the health of the nation requires a bold vision, strong leadership, and political will. We urge you to prioritise public health, recognising it as a fundamental pillar of economic growth and national prosperity, and commit to the necessary investment and action that will secure a healthier, more equitable future for the nation, and enable everyone to live healthier lives for longer.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Fell, President, Association of Directors of Public Health

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair, Alcohol Health Alliance

Hazel Cheeseman, Chief Executive, Action on Smoking and Health

Hilary Evans-Newton, Chief Executive Officer, Alzheimer's Research UK

Professor Matt Phillips, President, British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH)

Liz Stockley, Chief Executive Officer, British Dietetic Association

Prof Yvonne Gilleece, Chair, British HIV Association

Lisa Hallgarten, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Brook

Andy Bell, Chief Executive, Centre for Mental Health

John Cowman, Chief Executive, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

Clare Taylor, Chair, Collective Voice and Chief Operating Officer at Turning Point

Will Haydock, Executive Director of Policy and External Affairs, Collective Voice

Colette Marshall, Chief Executive, Diabetes UK

Tom Ratcliffe, Trustee, Fairhealth

Kevin Fenton, President, Faculty of Public Health

Gary Waltham, CEO, Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare

Ailsa Rutter, Director, Fresh and Balance

Charles Ritchie MBE, Chair, Gambling with Lives

Larissa Lockwood, Director of Clean Air, Global Action Plan

Merron Simpson, Chief Executive Officer, Health Creation Alliance

Paul McDonald, Chief Campaigns Officer, Health Equals

Dr Luke Munford, Academic Co-Director of Health Equity North and Senior Lecturer in Health Economics at the University of Manchester

Hannah Davies, Executive Director, Health Equity North and Chief Executive of Northern Health Science Alliance

Professor Clare Bamba, Academic Co-Director of Health Equity North and Professor of Public Health at Newcastle University

Professor David Taylor-Robinson, Academic Co-Director of Health Equity North and Professor of Public Health and Policy at the University of Liverpool

Professor Kate Pickett, Academic Co-Director of Health Equity North and Professor of Epidemiology at the University of York

Dr Katherine Severi, Chief Executive, Institute of Alcohol Studies

Alison Morton, CEO, Institute of Health Visiting
Sandra Currie, Chief Executive, Kidney Research UK
Sarah McIntosh, CEO (Interim), Mental Health First Aid England
Andrea Brown, Chief Executive, National Kidney Federation
Jacob Lant, Chief Executive, National Voices
Katie Kelly, Chair, New Local
Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive, NHS Confederation
Katharine Jenner, Director, Obesity Health Alliance
John Hume, Chief Executive, People's Health Trust
Tiggy Parry, Director, Project Food
Professor Nicola Ranger, General Secretary and Chief Executive, Royal College of Nursing
Dr Mumtaz Patel, President, Royal College of Physicians
Dr Helen Stewart, Officer for Health Improvement, RCPCH
Niamh Eastwood, Executive Director, Release
Professor Maggie Rae, President, RSM Epidemiology and Public Health Section
Sharon White, CEO, SAPHNA
Emma Haddad, Chief Executive, St Mungos
Fiona Howie, Chief Executive, TCPA
Andrew Jones, Chair, UKPHR
Jessica Lichtenstein, Chief Executive, UKPHR