

Andrew Gwynne MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

2 September 2024

Dear Minister


We are writing to you as the Inequalities in Health Alliance (IHA) to welcome you to your new role as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention.

The inclusion of prevention in your title is exceptionally welcome, as your appointment comes at a critical moment in our efforts to tackle health inequality. There is an almost 20-year gap in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas of England, with over 2.5 million more people projected to be living with a major illness by 2040. We strongly welcome the government's commitment to halve that gap in healthy life expectancy. Reducing the avoidable differences in health across the population must be a priority.

As you know, the IHA has long called for a cross-government strategy to reduce health inequalities that considers the role of every government department and policy lever in tackling health inequalities and the wider determinants of health. We were very encouraged by the health mission commitment to establish a mission delivery board (MDB) to bring together all government departments with an influence over the social determinants of health.

The IHA now has 257 member organisations from a variety of sectors and disciplines, which have seen how the physical and mental health of people of all ages is shaped by their environments and contexts. The health MDB has significant potential to drive coordinated and comprehensive action across all government departments to tackle the root causes of illness, such as poor housing, lack of educational opportunity, smoking, employment (including how much money someone has), racism and discrimination, food quality and ability to make healthy choices, transport and air quality. The commercial determinants of health must also be considered as key influencing factors that shape people's health. All of these determinants need to be the focus of the health MDB for real improvements to be made to health inequality and healthy life expectancy.

We hope that the government will shortly set out more detail on the MDB's scope and structure. We welcome the prime minister's confirmation that he will take an active role in chairing the government's MDBs. IHA members are keen to work with you and ministers across government to support the health MDB to develop a holistic cross-government strategy to reduce health inequality, tackle the wider determinants of health and create the healthiest generation of children.



Reducing health inequalities is vital in delivering widespread economic growth, which we know is central to your government's agenda. Between February and April 2024, over 2.8 million people were out of work due to long-term sickness, the highest figure since records began in 1993. Furthermore, it is estimated that the consequences of the country's inequality cost the UK £106.2 billion in 2022. The last Labour government successfully narrowed the life expectancy gap in areas defined as deprived compared with the rest of England. We are keen to assist this Labour government to tackle the wider determinants that drive health inequality.

We would value a meeting to discuss the government's prevention-based approach to health and healthcare and better understand the work of the health MDB. With a diverse range of experience and expertise, we are confident that the IHA can work collaboratively with you on our shared goals to reduce inequalities in health and healthcare.

Yours sincerely

The Inequalities in Health Alliance

For a full list of IHA members, please see the [Royal College of Physicians website](#).