

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

17 August 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

As LGBT+ Councillors and London Assembly Members, we are writing to raise our growing concerns about the government's response to the monkeypox virus. As you will know, cases of monkeypox are rising rapidly, with 3018 confirmed as of 15 August. The majority of cases are in gay bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) and while cases remain predominantly in London, monkeypox is now also spreading at particularly concerning rates elsewhere.

Without urgent action, monkeypox risks becoming endemic in the UK. We cannot afford to let this happen, but there needs to be concerted action and robust senior leadership to bring together agencies and support local authorities, who are on the frontline of tackling the outbreak.

Vaccinating those most at risk of exposure is vital and we need a rapid acceleration of the vaccination programme. This has to be accompanied by a clear communications campaign so that those most at risk of exposure to monkeypox know they are eligible and how they can get vaccinated.

Sexual health services are at the frontline of tackling monkeypox, but were under enormous strain even before the outbreak began. Without additional funding, services are already struggling to deliver PrEP, contraception and support for people with acute STIs. The existing funding within the Public Health Grant simply is not enough to deliver existing services while also delivering the additional cost of identifying, treating, and vaccinating those with monkeypox or at risk of exposure to the virus. A substantial number of services have already reported a drop in provision of PrEP as a result of monkeypox.

Local authorities are also well placed to support those who face financial hardship as a result of needing to self-isolate, but again this needs additional resource and leadership from government. Currently the expectation is that local authorities will use existing discretionary welfare or hardship schemes, including the Household Support Fund, but these schemes were not designed to support the living costs of someone needing to self-isolate for up to three weeks. Without clear guidance and reimbursement for local authorities, there is a risk that some people in severe need of financial support will be forced to choose between their health and those of others, and being able to pay the bills.

As with the early response to the HIV epidemic, our community is coming together to share information and support each other. The burden cannot fall on LGBT+ people to do this alone and it is not enough.

As LGBT+ elected local leaders, we ask that the government urgently:

- **Appoint a single responsible leader, a 'Tsar'** to coordinate the response with a mandate to prevent the virus becoming endemic.
- **Accelerate the national vaccine programme.** The UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) must urgently review its estimates and more vaccines must be procured, with coordinated, funded delivery of those vaccines.
- Provide **clear, proactive messaging** to GBMSM including utilising queer media, apps like Grindr and other social media networks. We urgently need reliable, centralised information on where vaccines are available.
- **Fund sexual health services** to cope with the additional pressure monkeypox is causing. Terrence Higgins Trust and BASHH estimate £51m in new funding is needed to meet increased demands and maintain other services including PrEP, contraceptives and treatment of acute STIs.
- Provide **financial support** for people isolating with monkeypox who need it. If this is to be administrated by local government, provide clear guidance and funding.

We cannot resign ourselves to monkeypox becoming endemic. To do so would be to fail a generation of gay and bisexual men. As LGBT+ Councillors and Assembly Members from across the political spectrum, we are united in asking that you act now so that we do not pay a greater cost later.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Cllr Simon Bound, Conservative Party, Baskingstoke and Deane

Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Liberal Democrats, Bath & North East Somerset

Cllr Jamie Tennant, Labour Party, Birmingham

Cllr Jack Deakin, Labour Party, Birmingham

Cllr Lewis Allison, Labour Party, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole

Cllr Anton Georgiou, Liberal Democrats, Brent

Cllr Tom Hathway, Green Party, Bristol

Cllr Carla Denyer, Green Party, Bristol

Cllr Ani Stafford-Townsend, Green Party, Bristol

Cllr Lisa Stone, Green Party, Bristol

Cllr Will Connolly, Liberal Democrats, Bromley

Cllr Simon Jeal, Labour Party, Bromley

Cllr Adam Harrison, Labour Party, Camden

Cllr Danny Beales, Labour Party, Camden
Cllr Jonathan Simpson MBE, Labour and Co-op Party, Camden
Cllr Lloyd Hatton, Labour Party, Camden
Cllr Richard Cotton, Labour Party, Camden
Cllr Patricia Callaghan, Labour Party, Camden
Cllr Liam Martin-Lane, Labour Party, Camden
Cllr Nancy Jirira, Liberal Democrats, Camden
Cllr Josh Newbury, Labour Party, Cannock Chase
Cllr Josh Bancroft, Conservative Party, Cannock Chase
Cllr Jamie Green, Labour Party, Cardiff
Cllr Tabi Joy, Green Party, Cheltenham
Cllr Simon Bennett, Conservative Party, Wolverhampton
Cllr Ria Patel, Green Party, Croydon
Cllr Samir Dwesar, Conservative Party, Croydon
Cllr Kyle Stealey, Conservative Party, Dartford
Cllr Gary Malcolm, Liberal Democrats, Ealing
Cllr Jacob Birch, Conservative Party, East Riding of Yorkshire
Cllr Josh Babarinde, Liberal Democrats, Eastbourne
Cllr Michael Payne, Labour Party, Gedling
Zack Polanski AM, Green Party, Greater London Assembly
Cllr Danny Thorpe, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Cathy Dowse, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Rachel Taggart-Ryan, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Chris May, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Miranda Williams, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Linda Bird, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr John Fahy, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Dave Sullivan, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Sarah Merrill, Labour and Co-operative Party, Greenwich
Cllr Lynne Troughton, Labour Party, Hackney
Cllr Yvonne Maxwell, Labour Party, Hackney
Cllr Lee Laudat-Scott, Labour Party, Hackney
Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas, Labour and Co-operative Party, Hackney
Cllr Grace Adebayo, Labour Party, Hackney
Cllr Simon Whelband, Conservative Party, Harborough District Council
Cllr Luke Cawley-Harrison, Liberal Democrats, Haringey
Cllr Nick da Costa, Liberal Democrats, Haringey
Cllr Damien Greenhalgh, Labour and Co-operative Party, High Peak
Cllr Benali Hamdache, Green Party, Islington
Cllr David Robson, Labour Party, Lambeth
Cllr Diogo Costa, Labour Party, Lambeth
Cllr Isla Wrathmell, Labour Party, Lambeth
Cllr Scott Smith, Conservative Party, Lancashire
Cllr James-J Walsh, Labour and Co-operative Party, Lewisham

Cllr Luke Warner, Labour and Co-operative Party, Lewisham
Cllr James Rathbone, Labour and Co-operative Party, Lewisham
Cllr William Cooper, Labour Party, Lewisham
Cllr Paul Bell, Labour Party, Lewisham
Cllr Jack Lavery, Labour and Co-operative Party, Lewisham
Cllr Liam Curran, Labour and Co-operative Party, Lewisham
Cllr Ed Hume, Labour Party, Milton Keynes
Cllr Shanika Mahendran, Labour and Co-operative Party, Milton Keynes
Cllr Alexander Hay, Labour Party, Newcastle
Cllr Stephen Brayshaw, Labour Party, Newham
Cllr Rohit K Dasgupta, Labour and Co-operative Party, Newham
Cllr Neil Wilson, Labour and Co-operative Party, Newham
Cllr James Asser, Labour Party, Newham
Cllr Joshua Garfield, Labour and Co-operative Party, Newham
Cllr Liam Bones, Conservative Party, North Tyneside
Cllr Barry Flux, Conservative Party, Northumberland
Cllr Alexander Catt , Green Party, Norwich City Council
Cllr Lucy Pegg, Green Party, Oxford
Cllr Chris Jarvis, Green Party, Oxford
Cllr Chris Penberthy, Labour Party, Plymouth
Cllr Dylan Tippetts, Labour Party, Plymouth
Cllr Charlotte Cree, Labour Party, Plymouth
Cllr Lewis Gosling, Conservative Party, Portsmouth
Cllr Joel Anthony Herga, Conservative Party, Redbridge
Cllr Mark Santos, Labour and Co-operative Party, Redbridge
Cllr John Howard, Labour Party, Redbridge
Cllr Daniel Morgan-Thomas, Labour Party, Redbridge
Cllr Sam Trask, Conservative Party, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Cllr Karl Johnson, Conservative Party, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Cllr Ros Davis, Labour Party, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Cllr Julie Barton, Labour Party, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Cllr David Foxcroft, Conservative Party, Rossendale
Cllr Steve Hughes, Labour Party, Rossendale
Cllr Alex Balkan, Conservative Party, Runnymede
Cllr Chris Twells, Liberal Democrats, Salford
Cllr Richard McVittie, Labour Party, Sandwell
Cllr Elisabeth Roberts, Labour Party, Shrewsbury & Atcham
Cllr Victor Chamberlain, Liberal Democrats, Southwark
Cllr David Watson, Liberal Democrats, Southwark
Cllr Catherine Goodman, Green Party, St Neots
Cllr Joe Porter, Conservative Party, Staffordshire Moorlands
Cllr Matthew Furniss, Conservative Party, Surrey
Cllr Sam Bennett, Liberal Democrats, Swansea
Cllr Peter Golds, Conservative Party, Tower Hamlets

Cllr Dave Morgan, Conservative Party, Trafford
Cllr Leighton Rowlands, Conservative Party, Vale of Glamorgan
Cllr Cheryl Briggs, Green Party, Vale of White Horse
Cllr Tom Gordon, Liberal Democrats, Wakefield
Cllr and AM Emma Best, Conservative Party, Greater London Assembly (and Waltham Forest)
Cllr Kira Lewis, Labour Party, Waltham Forest
Cllr Aled Richard-Jones, Conservative Party, Wandsworth
Cllr David Boothroyd, Labour Party, Westminster
Cllr Patrick Lilley, Labour Party, Westminster
Cllr Tim Roca, Labour Party, Westminster
Cllr Helen Belcher, Liberal Democrats, Wiltshire
Cllr Anwen Muston, Labour Party, Wolverhampton Council
Cllr Robyn Norfolk, Labour Party, Worcester

Cc: Maggie Throup MP, Minister for Public Health