

27th October 2021

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Maggie Throup MP,
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Vaccines and Public Health,
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

Dear Under-Secretary of State,

Lead Exposure and Poisoning Prevention

It is the [WHO International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week \(ILPPW\)](#) from 24th to 30th October. There is no good reason to think that lead exposure and poisoning are not still a health problem in the UK. A Unicef report estimates that [186,117 to 281,542 UK children](#) have dangerous concentrations of lead in their blood. This could be costing the country [0.31% of GDP](#) or [£6bn per year](#).

In a letter to Dame Cheryl Gillan in 2019, your predecessor, Jo Churchill MP, stated that *“prevalence is likely to be higher in at-risk populations, in whom lead exposure may be a public health concern”*

It is, therefore, very disappointing to find that there is no mention of lead exposure or lead toxicity in the [NHS Long-Term Plan](#) nor the [“Giving Every Child The Best Start In Life” programme](#). It is probable that many UK children have had a very poor start to life by being exposed to life-changing amounts of lead. The [US National Toxicological Programme](#) found that lead exposure in children is associated with IQ loss, decreased hearing, problem behaviours, ADHD and delayed puberty. Before birth, lead toxicity is associated with miscarriage, pre-term birth and low birth weight. In adults, the associated effects include depression, anxiety, panic, heart attack, stroke, increased blood pressure and reduced kidney function. The UK’s use of lead has been similar to the USA.

President Biden said that [“Lead pipes are a clear and present danger to our children”](#) and proposed spending [\\$45bn](#) to fix the problem. The US EPA says lead poisoning is the [number one environmental health threat to children ages six and younger](#). The CDC asserts that [“Lead poisoning is 100% preventable”](#). A recent [report from the Pew Trust](#) explains how lead is a factor in health inequalities and describes policies to prevent and respond to childhood lead exposure.

Please will you ensure lead exposure and toxicity is included in the NHS Long-Term Plan and the “Giving Every Child The Best Start in Life” programme and also support the following:

1. Screening of children for elevated blood lead concentrations (EBLC).
2. Research into the prevalence of EBLCs in children and pregnancy.
3. Inclusion of lead risks in the [Healthy Homes and Buildings White Paper](#).
4. Ensuring the UK matches the new, lower, [EU limits on lead in food](#).
5. Provision of more information on the dangers of lead exposure to the following:
 - a. Health care providers, particularly GPs.
 - b. Housing leaders – tenants and housing associations, professional bodies.
 - c. Tradesmen and DIYers.

Our "[Manifesto for a Lead-Safe UK](#)" explains the issue in much more detail with full references to scientific papers and government sources. Our press release for ILLPW 2021 can be found [here](#).

Written longhand by me Yours ever, Steve

Steve Norris as a Member of the LEAPP Alliance.



The Lead Exposure and Poisoning Prevention ([LEAPP](#)) Alliance

Frank Sheppard, Lead Containing Materials Association

Hesaan Sheridan, Heritage Testing

Dr Simon Reddy, Lead In The Water

Tim Pye, Lead Safe World UK

Dr Caroline Taylor, Senior Research Fellow, University of Bristol

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Dr Andrew Turner, Reader in Environmental Science, University of Plymouth

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Dr Jane A Entwistle, Professor of Applied Geochemistry and Health, Northumbria University