

28<sup>th</sup> March 2022

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The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP,  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities,  
House of Commons,  
London,  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Levelling Up and Lead Exposure**

The levelling up agenda must include lead exposure and poisoning prevention to avoid life-long and intergenerational disadvantages.

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. Rishi Sunak has said in his 2021 autumn budget speech that it is the "birth right of every child" to succeed. That will not happen if so many lives are blighted by lead poisoning.

Lead toxicity is associated with a wide range of health problems including:

- Reproductive – miscarriage, pre-term birth, low birth weight, delayed puberty
- Neurological - IQ loss, decreased hearing
- Psychological - problem behaviours, ADHD, depression, anxiety, panic
- Cardiovascular – heart attack, stroke, increased blood pressure
- Renal – reduced kidney function

The UK stopped using lead in paint, pipes and petrol decades ago, but the toxic legacy remains. 82% of homes were built before lead paint was banned, an estimated 9 million homes still have lead pipes, lead from petrol and paint is still found in soil and air. 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.

There are many low-cost interventions that can help reduce lead exposure which has been described as a "health problem with a housing solution". Our "[Manifesto for a Lead-Safe UK](#)" explains the issue in much more detail with full references to scientific papers and government sources.

Please will you ensure that the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper includes initiatives to manage and mitigate lead exposure and poisoning.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Pye  
LEAPP Alliance

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



Endorsed by:

- Steve Norris as a Member of the LEAPP Alliance.
- Frank Sheppard, Lead Containing Materials Association
- Hesaan Sheridan, Heritage Testing
- Dr Simon Reddy, Lead In The Water
- Dr Caroline Taylor, Senior Research Fellow, University of Bristol
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