

17 October 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

As paediatricians we are deeply concerned by the growing child health inequalities across the UK and write to urge you to commit to publishing the Government's White Paper on Health Disparities with a view to reduce child poverty.

Health inequalities are the avoidable, unfair, and systemic differences in health outcomes between different groups of children and young people.

Evidence shows that poverty is a key driving factor of these inequalities. We know from our own practice that children living in poverty are more likely to have poor health outcomes. This includes low birth weight, poor physical health, and mental health problems.

Importantly, this is not just an issue of individual children's health, but the health of our nation. We see the lifelong impacts of health inequalities throughout our careers. The impacts of poverty and child health inequalities will follow a child through their life. The issues we see today not only level down the future health of our nation, our economic potential and will cost more to address in the future.

This is not a new phenomenon. Health inequality and poverty was an issue pre-pandemic. However, COVID-19, rising costs of living and lengthening waiting times are exacerbating the problem and risk that it becomes ingrained.

The Government's manifesto commitment to level up different areas and social groups across the UK remains of paramount importance.

It is welcome that this programme recognised the need to address inequalities in health outcomes and heralded the development of the White Paper on Health Disparities. We ask that this White Paper is published by the end of the year and must:

- make clear how child poverty and health inequalities will be reduced
- recognise that children and young people are a distinct group

Your Government has the opportunity to shift the dial on millions of children's life chances – we urge you to seize it.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Camilla Kingdon, RCPCH President, 818 members of the child health workforce in England.