

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

Friday 5th August 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you to request urgent action from the government to prevent monkeypox from becoming endemic in the UK. Around 75% of reported cases of monkeypox in the UK are in London, and most of these appear to be within three boroughs: Westminster, Southwark, and Lambeth – the borough we represent. With the WHO declaring monkeypox a global health emergency and the UK having the highest number of confirmed cases of any nation in the world according to the latest figures, much more needs to be done.

Specifically, we are calling for:

- A clear strategy for more vaccine doses to vaccinate the 125,000 most at risk.
- Funding for local authorities to provide financial assistance to those self-isolating.
- Funding for sexual health services to continue their existing provision whilst meeting the challenge of monkeypox.
- New funding and resources for pan-London public messaging on monkeypox.

Whilst we welcome the news that the government has procured 100,000 vaccine doses so far, it has been estimated that 250,000 doses must be procured and given to 125,000 people in order to curb the spread of monkeypox. That means that the government needs to significantly increase the number of vaccine doses it is procuring and get them distributed as quickly as possible.

There is also urgent need for support for those having to self-isolate with monkeypox – often for a significant period. This can seriously impact people's income, which is especially concerning during this cost of living crisis. Here in Lambeth, we are offering support to those who are self-isolating with monkeypox, including with food shopping, collecting medication, and pet care, as well as providing emotional support if needed. But we need the government to step up and provide funding to local authorities, as was done during the pandemic for up to £500 per person, so that we can provide financial assistance to those having to self-isolate.

Our fantastic sexual health services, who were already experiencing pressures to meet demand with the funding they have access to, risk being put in a position where they cannot continue to deliver existing services because of having to meet the challenge of curbing the spread of the monkeypox outbreak. To avoid a collapse in vital services, such as issuing PrEP or long acting contraception, it is vital that the government provides additional funding for sexual health services to meet this challenge and maintain their existing provision.

There also continues to be an absence of clear public messaging on Monkeypox, in particular in regard to accessing the vaccine and who is currently a priority. Currently, gay and bi men who have sex with men are having to resort to using their own social networks in order to source information about how to get a vaccine, and the lack of clarity on who is a priority for vaccines currently has resulted in long queues outside of hospitals such as Guy's in London Bridge. This reliance on social networks for information on monkeypox and accessing the vaccine also means that some men who have sex with men who are not out or do not identify within the LGBT+ community are at risk of not receiving the information they need.

Lambeth Council is working closely with our partners in our local NHS trusts and our sexual health services, but it is imperative that the government provide new funding and resources so that we can continue and expand our work on a pan-London level to distribute clear, up-to-date, and easy to understand information and guidance to our residents. As demonstrated through the pandemic, the most effective way of reaching those most at risk is through targeted and localised messaging.

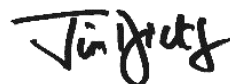
The UKHSA estimates that the number of identified cases of monkeypox is doubling every 15 days. Decisive action now to vaccinate those most at risk will allow us to curb the spread of the monkeypox and protect the whole of the UK.

We would welcome a meeting with you to discuss these issues further. We look forward to hearing your response.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Marcia Cameron
Joint Cabinet Member for Health & Adult
Social Care



Cllr Jim Dickson
Joint Cabinet Member for Health & Adult
Social Care