

Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

22 July 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Achieving Labour’s Manifesto Pledge to Prioritise Women’s Health: 800 clinicians and 60 leading organisations call upon the new Government to improve the health of the 51% and prioritise women’s reproductive healthcare

I am writing as President of the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (the FSRH) and as Chair of the FSRH Hatfield Vision Taskforce, representing over 60 leading organisations in the field of women’s and sexual and reproductive healthcare, to warmly congratulate you on your appointment to Secretary of State, to request to meet you to bring to your attention to the shocking health inequalities women and girls currently face across the UK, and to urge you to make reproductive health a priority in your agenda. This letter has been further individually signed by over 800 doctors, nurses and other clinicians working in the field of women’s reproductive healthcare.

As you may know, the FSRH is the voice for professionals working on the frontline of sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) provision across the UK. We passionately believe that access to SRH services is absolutely crucial for people to be able to live well and pursue ambitions in every aspect of their lives, across their life course. This is why we launched the [FSRH Hatfield Vision](#); a framework of 16 Goals and 10 Actions that set out what needs to be achieved to make high quality SRH a reality. The Vision has been endorsed by over 60 leading organisations working in these sectors, including the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of GPs, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, the BMA, Wellbeing of Women and BPAS.

Across the UK, we know that too many people are unable to access the critical services they need. For example:

- Around 45% pregnancies in Britain are unplanned or ambivalent, and women from the most deprived backgrounds are almost three times more likely to have abortions than women from the wealthiest backgrounds.¹
- Teenage conception rates in England and Wales have been continuing to rise since 2021 – reversing the previous fourteen years of improvement.²
- The number of abortions taking place in England and Wales is also at a record high, with a 17% increase in procedures in comparison to the previous year.³
- Cervical screening uptake currently falls below the 80% target, with only 65.8% of eligible women aged 25-49 adequately screened in 2023.⁴
- Girls born in the most-deprived areas of England will have almost 20 fewer years of good health compared with those in the least.⁵
- Maternal mortality for Black women is currently almost four times higher than for White women, and significant disparities also exist for women of Asian and mixed ethnicity.⁶

We know that these inequalities are unacceptable – and importantly- preventable with the right policies and practises in place. We also know that there are unparalleled financial benefits to tackling the unmet need for contraception; according to DHSC, £9 saving to the public purse for every £1 spent.⁷

Last month, and with the support of over 60 endorsing organisations, the FSRH launched its [Hatfield Vision Manifesto](#) which makes 5 clear asks which would help to enable all people to access the sexual and reproductive healthcare services they so urgently need:

1. ***Introduce a dedicated Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and commit to continuing the Women’s Health Strategy.***
2. ***Improve access to the full range of contraceptives for all people in the location of their choosing.***
3. ***Ensure education and information about sexual and reproductive health is easily accessible and available to all throughout their life course.***
4. ***Tackle sexual and reproductive health disparities faced by Black women and women of colour.***
5. ***Ensure Community Sexual and Reproductive Health training posts are fully funded.***

As Chair of the FSRH Hatfield Vision Taskforce representing these 60 organisations and on behalf of the over 800 clinicians who signed this letter in support, I very much look forward to working with you. I would be delighted to meet on behalf of our members and endorsing organisations to discuss your plans for this important area of your brief, specifically on how we can work together to make our shared vision of high-quality reproductive health for all, a reality.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please respond via ebatchelor@fsrh.org.

With best wishes,



Dr Janet Barter

The FSRH President and Chair of the FSRH Hatfield Vision Taskforce

References

1. Health matters: reproductive health and pregnancy planning - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk); Women from poorer backgrounds three times more likely to have abortions (The Guardian)
2. Office for National Statistics release England and Wales conception data for under-18s; Q1-Q2-2024 | FSRH
3. Abortion statistics for England and Wales: January to June 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
4. Cervical Screening Programme – Coverage Statistics (NHS)
5. Reducing women’s health inequalities in the most-deprived areas (The King’s Fund)
6. Saving Lives, Improving Mothers’ Care: Lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths and Morbidity 2019–21 (MBRACE UK)
7. Extending Public Health England’s contraception return on investment tool: Maternity and primary care settings (PHE)

Organisations supporting this letter



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| Academy of Medical Royal Colleges | Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales | Royal College of Midwives |
| Advisory Group on Contraception | Fertility Network UK | Royal College of Nursing |
| Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry | Fumble | Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists |
| BASHH | Humanists UK | Royal College of Physicians |
| Bayer | Informing Choices NI | Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh |
| Bloody Good Period | IRISi | Royal Pharmaceutical Society |
| British Gynaecological Cancer Society | Local Government Association | Sex Education Forum |
| BMA | Margaret Pyke Trust | Teenage Pregnancy Knowledge Exchange |
| British Menopause Society | Medical Women's Federation | The Eve Appeal |
| BPAS | Mothers for Mothes | The Lowdown |
| Brook | MSI UK | The Motherhood Group |
| BSACP | My Body Back | UK Clinical Pharmacy Association |
| Company Chemists' Association | National Aids Trust | UK Preconception Partnership |
| Doctors for Choice UK | National Pharmacy Association | Verity |
| Endometriosis UK | NUPAS | Wellbeing of Women |
| English HIV Sexual Health Commissioners Group | NAZ | Women's Budget Group |
| Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine | Organon | Women's Equality Network Wales |
| Faculty of Public Health | Perrigo | |
| | Primary Care Women's Health Forum | |
| | Royal College of General Practitioners | |

FSRH Clinicians supporting this letter

Dr Cindy Farmer, FSRH Vice President

Dr Zara Haider, FSRH Senior Vice President

Dr Maryam Nasri, FSRH Vice President

Dr Charlotte Porter, FSRH Vice President

Dr Manisha Singh, FSRH Vice President

Dr Sinead Cook, Chair of FSRH Scotland Committee

Dr Georgina Forbes, Chair of the FSRH Wales Committee

Dr Siobhan Kirk, Chair of the FSRH Northern Ireland Committee

Dr Aziza Sesay, the FSRH Hatfield Vision Ambassador

In addition the above this letter has been individually signed by nearly 800 FSRH members, doctors, nurses and other clinicians working in the field of women's reproductive healthcare. You can view the signatories in full [here](#).