

1.4. Samantha Dixon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy)

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Email address: Ministerial.Correspondence@communities.gov.uk

Email subject: For attention of Samantha Dixon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy)

Dear Minister,

Make Preventing Lead Exposure a Top Building Safety Priority

Congratulations on your appointment as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. The first item on your list of responsibilities is building safety. The LEAPP Alliance would like to make sure that you are aware that one of the top hazards in housing and public buildings is lead exposure.

It is said the lead is "A health problem with a housing solution". Over half of UK homes and schools were built before lead paint was even labelled and up to a third of homes still have lead pipes ([HHSRS](#)). 12% of a self-selecting sample of 235 UK homes ([Dust360](#), [data](#), [NERC Grant NE/T004401/1](#)) had enough lead in household dust to give a child of 1–3 years more lead in their blood than the UKHSA intervention level ([Doyi et al](#)). Unsafe concentrations of lead from previous transport and industrial emissions can still be commonly found in urban soil ([British Geological Survey](#)). This all presents an enormous, ongoing, health hazard.

It is estimated that about 352,000 (~3%) UK children have too much lead in their blood ([IHME](#)). Too much lead is linked to lifelong health problems including:

- Reproductive - miscarriage, pre-term birth, low birth weight, delayed puberty
- Neurological - IQ loss, ADHD, autism, lower academic achievement, decreased hearing, language difficulties, essential tremor, ALS form of MND
- Psychological - problem behaviour, depression, anxiety, panic
- Cardiovascular - heart attack, stroke, increased blood pressure
- Renal - reduced kidney function

The cost of lead exposure is estimated to cost high income countries more than 4.4% of GDP ([World Bank](#)) – over £120 billion in the UK in 2024 considering only loss of IQ and cardiovascular mortality.

Please will you ensure that lead hazards are prioritised in all building safety initiatives. In particular we urge you to note the [comment from Richard Blakeway](#), England's housing ombudsman, that "lead should be part of a routine home survey but it's not being done" and ask the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to mandate lead risk assessments in their member's home surveys. This is normal practice in France and the USA.

Perhaps you could also take on board the suggestion from [Terry Jermy MP](#) and promote establishment of a cross-Whitehall initiative to tackle the continuing scourge of lead poisoning to help millions and save £billions.

What the country needs now is a publicity campaign to amplify the warnings about the risks of lead exposure. Some specifics might be:

- Home surveys to include lead exposure risk assessments before sale or rent

- Place leaflets in professional and DIY outlets that sell paints and abrasives
- GPs to be better educated on conditions related to lead exposure

We urge you to listen to the podcast and read the articles by Laura Hughes in the Financial Times titled "[Toxic Legacy](#)".

Yours sincerely,

.... list of co-signatories.....

The [Lead Exposure and Poisoning Prevention \(LEAPP\) Alliance](#) is growing group of over 120 academics, parents, householders, service providers and advocates who aim to influence policy leaders to prevent lead exposure and poisoning in the UK.