

Councillor Rebecca Lury  
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Nicola Blackwood MP  
Minister for Public Health  
Department for Health  
Richmond House, 79 Whitehall  
London, SW1A 2NS

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Dear Ms Blackwood,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Healthy Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee in the London Borough of Southwark in regards to sexual health budgets.

Our Committee recently carried out a piece of work into the changes to sexual health services that are taking place in our Borough, and through this a number of issues of relevance to your role as Minister for Public Health were raised.

As you may already know, there are around 28,000 Southwark residents who use sexual health services each year. We know that a large number of these can be re-directed to use self-testing, but the wider implications of such high numbers of users is still felt through the health system. Currently, 90% of Southwark Council's 2015/16 budget for sexual health is spent on GUM/RSH services, with 2% of the sexual health budget on HIV and STI prevention and early intervention, 3% on young people's sexual health services and 2% on online sexual health services and the remainder on Primary Care and pharmacy services.

Our Committee is particularly concerned about the financial pressures that are being seen across health services. Whilst we understand that cuts are necessary, we believe that there still needs to be an appropriate level of funding for public health at a time when these issues are continuing to increase across the country.

As a Council we are making savings, but have real concerns that it will not be long before we hit the ceiling in being able to deliver a quality service for our residents. We believe that sexual health has for too long been treated like a Cinderella service, and we would like to see a re-focus by the Department for Health to give it the same parity as conditions such as cancer and mental health.

I would welcome your thoughts on the current situation in which we find ourselves and an update on the priority areas that the Department for Health are considering including the ways in which the Government is looking to support the early identification and prevention of sexual health infections and disease.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Rebecca Lury  
Labour Member for East Walworth Ward  
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