



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

4 August 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

As the LGBT+ Groups of our respective political parties, we are writing to you with concern about the rapidly rising number of monkeypox cases in the UK. Without urgent action, we risk monkeypox becoming endemic in the UK. This poses a serious risk to health and will exacerbate the health inequalities already experienced by gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM).

Monkeypox is causing real fear and anxiety within the LGBT+ community and so targeted communication to those most at risk is essential. We need clear, non-stigmatising messaging, delivered direct to GBMSM about the symptoms of monkeypox and what to do if you suspect you have the virus to inform and reassure people (rather than the current broadcast to all approach that constantly mentions GBMSM). Messaging must reach communities at high risk of acquiring monkeypox, through targeted messaging on apps, online and in the queer media.

Vaccinating those most at risk of monkeypox must be a priority if we are to stand a chance of preventing the virus from becoming endemic in the UK. Sexual health experts [estimate that at least 250,000 vaccines are needed](#), to give two doses to 125,000 people, but UKHSA has procured just over half this amount and estimates that only 50,000 people need to be vaccinated.

The additional pressure that assessing, treating and vaccinating people against monkeypox has had on sexual health services has been overwhelming – and is exacerbating other health inequalities experienced by LGBT+ people in the treatment of STIs and starting on PrEP. This is having opportunity cost for HIV and sexual health and risks jeopardising the government's target of ending new HIV transmissions by 2030. This is also impacting contraceptive provision which is worrying.

Finally, we must learn the lessons of the COVID 19 pandemic and ensure that no one required to self-isolate is forced to choose between protecting theirs and other people's health, or affording essentials like food and rent. There is currently no financial support available for those required to isolate as a result of monkeypox. The

21 day isolation period is placing huge financial strain on some of those affected. We urgently need a clear route to financial support for those who need it, to support people to stay at home safely. If funding is to be administered by local government, as with COVID isolation funding this needs appropriate resourcing and clear guidance.

We are united as LGBT+ groups from across political parties in asking that the government treat the monkeypox outbreak as a public health emergency. We cannot afford to allow monkeypox to become endemic in the UK. Luckily, we have the tools required to stop this outbreak and prevent further risk to health now. We ask that you do so urgently.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Luke Black, Deputy Chairman LGBT+ Conservatives

Matthew Lloyd and Evie Brooks, Co-Chairs LGBT+ Labour

Gareth Lewis Shelton, Chair LGBT+ Liberal Democrats

Michael Gibbons, Co-convener Out for Independence

Seb Cousins and Ria Patel, Co-Chairs LGBTIQ+ Greens

*cc: Maggie Throup MP, Minister for Public Health*