



Jim Shannon MP

Member of Parliament for Strangford
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Meg Hillier MP

Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
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16th May 2022

Dear Meg

Cost of poor housing to the Nation's future health and wellbeing

As you may know, most of us spend over 90% of our time indoors. The pandemic shone an unhealthy light on the considerable impact our homes have on our health and wellbeing. As we emerge from the pandemic, where we saw a seismic shift to working from home, there is wider public recognition that our homes and buildings can positively contribute to our physical and mental health and wellbeing. Conversely, we also know that unhealthy housing impacts negatively on the nation's economic growth, business performance, educational attainment, life chances and ability to deliver green homes. Therefore, it is timely, in the context of the post-pandemic cost of living crisis, to hold an Inquiry into the cost benefits of building and retrofitting the nation's homes back to a higher health and wellbeing standard and to look at whether the Government's legislative programme is putting in place the necessary policy changes and levers needed to improve the nation's health and wellbeing, remove health inequalities and bridge the gaps left behind by the pandemic.

Our Healthy Homes and Buildings APPG White Paper '[Building Our Future: Laying the Foundations for Healthy Homes and Buildings](#)' estimates the cost of the effects of poor housing on the NHS (in 2010) to be at least £1.4bn per year in the poorest housing in England and to be £2.5bn per year when considering all housing throughout the entirety of the UK. Your own PAC report on the [Regulation of Private Renting](#) also found that an estimated 13% of England's homes contain at least one [category 1 hazard](#), further demonstrating the need for Government action to include health and wellbeing criteria in its Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and to question the cost implications of not putting health and wellbeing criteria at the heart of the built environment.

One of the key recommendations in our Healthy Homes and Buildings White Paper was the need to establish a Government inter-departmental committee in order to join up policy on healthy homes and buildings and to champion change. Our recommendations recognised the human and cost benefits that would be achieved from Government taking a more holistic policy approach to tackle the plethora of health and wellbeing problems caused, or exacerbated, by living and working in unhealthy homes and buildings. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) could use its flagship policy to level up and reduce health inequalities through a clear policy commitment to build and retrofit greener and healthier homes, buildings and places. Such a commitment would save the Exchequer vast sums of money, level up opportunities and increase the nation's health and wellbeing. Piecemeal policy, such as the Heat and Buildings Strategy and the current Decent Homes Standard, is unlikely to go far enough to tackle the scale of the unhealthy homes crisis.

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We believe that there has been a Government failure to act to improve health and wellbeing in housing as part of its Covid recovery plans. Attempts to amend the Building Safety Bill by the House of Lords to include health and wellbeing also failed. We believe it is time like no other to investigate the cost to the public purse versus the greater health benefits which could be achieved if the Government took the necessary legislative steps to build and retrofit all UK homes to an exemplar Health and Wellbeing standard.

We wanted to raise this with you following our recent Parliamentary session, which was addressed by the noble Lords Bethell, Crisp, Best and Baroness Prashar, on **Why Levelling Up Healthy Homes Unlocks Greater Health and Wellbeing**. From the mood of the meeting, it was clear that Government needs to act now. The cost of doing nothing, as the cost of living rises, is simply too great a toll on the economy.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you along with other Parliamentary colleagues to see if there is an opportunity to hold a PAC Inquiry. I do hope this will be possible and I would be interested in hearing your thoughts.

Please RSVP to hhbappg@devoconnect.co.uk

Yours sincerely

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Healthy Homes and Building APPG

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