

Child of the North APPG Meeting Notes

11 September 2024

11:00 – 11:30

Meeting Room R, Portcullis House.

Attendees

Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Charlie Dewhurst MP, Tom Morrison MP, Rachael Maskell MP, Mary Glindon MP, Ian Byrne MP, Sam Rushworth MP, Lewis Atkinson MP, The Bishop of Leeds, Rebecca Natton, Senior Parliamentary Assistant to Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Cara Levey, Assistant at Health Equity North, Hannah Davies, Executive Director at Health Equity North, Alexis Darby, Head of Public Affairs at Health Equity North, Professor David Taylor-Robinson, Academic Co-Director Health Equity North, and Professor of Public Health and Policy at the University of Liverpool.

Inaugural Meeting

Emma Lewell-Buck MP opened the meeting by setting out the aims of the group and which Members of Parliament would like to stand for election as Officers.

Emma Lewell-Buck MP was re-elected as the Chair with Kim Johnson MP, Charlie Dewhurst MP and Tom Morrison MP elected as Officers.

Mary Glindon MP thanked the secretariat for its work regarding the APPG and looked forward to working together in this new parliament.

Forward Plan

Emma Lewell-Buck MP spoke about the high-profile work of the APPG including the mentions in parliament and the forward plan of reports.

There was then a discussion regarding the forward plan and the next report on physical activity obesity and food insecurity.

Mary Glindon MP chairs APPG on obesity and is keen for the group to link in with them.

There was a general discussion on malnutrition, stunting obesity and food insecurity.

Ian Byrne MP raised the idea of asking someone from the United Nations to speak at the next evidence session – this would be a great way to raise the profile of the report.

Sam Rushworth MP raised the point that online safety for child well-being and social media should be covered in the mental health section of the report.

Hannah Davies said that we try to get young people's voices in every report so do let us know if anyone comes to mind who would speak.

Infant Mortality

Professor David Taylor Robinson then gave an outline of the latest Health Equity North report on infant mortality.

He said the data is from ONS data and there has been a rise and it is unusual for infant mortality to rise in countries that are performing well. This is an indicator of a county's health, and the report shows stark inequalities in different parts of the county and a rise in BAME groups.

The infant mortality rate in the North is higher than in the South – and there are regional differences. We have double the rate of Sweden – in 1960 we came 10th, and we are now 29th.

The rise isn't inevitable and many of these deaths are preventable – child poverty kills children and to address this we need to tackle child poverty head on and invest in preventative services.

Emma Lewell-Buck MP thanked David and asked if there were any questions.

Ian Byrne MP asked if this data had been fed into the government's child poverty taskforce.

Professor David Taylor-Robinson replied that this has been shared with them.

Charlie Dewhurst MP asked if low vaccination rates were the most significant factor in this.

Professor David Taylor-Robinson replied that this is part of it but the deaths due to infectious diseases aren't captured in this data, but low rates of vaccinations will cause a rise, there is a measles outbreak in Liverpool now and this is preventable.

Rachael Maskell MP asked how is this mapping against premature deaths, especially BAME and what are the interventions we should be calling for?

Professor David Taylor-Robinson said that they are both indicators of adverse trends. There are much lower rates in pregnancy of maternal deaths, but we are seeing a rise in disadvantaged areas and BAME. To address this, we need to focus on the structural causes poverty affecting families and wrap around for the early years and pregnancy – we need to get this period right

Sam Rushworth MP said he would be interested in the new Woman of the North report published by Health Equity North as he is alarmed by the conditions he is hearing about.

Emma Lewell-Buck MP said that she has asked Parliamentary questions regarding infant mortality and that the Woman of the North launch will be in parliament later today and encourage members to attend.

End of the meeting