



Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

By email

10 July 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

On behalf of the First 1001 Days Movement, congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

The First 1001 Days Movement is an alliance of over 200 charities and professionals with a shared mission to support babies' emotional wellbeing and development.

We were delighted that your election manifesto outlined an *“ambition to raise the healthiest generation of children in our history”*, and linked this to, *“reform[ing] the NHS to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health.”*

To raise mentally healthy children, it's crucial the NHS invests in services that support the emotional wellbeing of babies and toddlers. This is proven to prevent or mitigate mental health disorders in children. This recent [report](#) from the Royal College of Psychiatrists summarises the evidence.

In January, we submitted evidence to Luciana Berger's independent review. We are keen to see a long-term cross-government strategy for mental health that includes babies and toddlers, in due course.

Most immediately though, we are concerned for the future of the Start for Life programme. We hope that you will work across departmental boundaries to give babies the best start in life. We are also writing to your Cabinet colleague Bridget Phillipson, as the programme sits across the two departments. As you will know, Start for Life included £100m for perinatal and parent-infant support. This funding helped to address gaps in NHS provision of mental health services for under-2s.

This was crucial, because despite the NHS Long Term Plan stating that mental health services should begin at birth, our freedom of information requests have repeatedly found that many NHS Trusts do not accept referrals for under 2s. Start for Life estimates that at least 10% of babies are living in fear and distress because of disrupted relationships with their main parent or caregiver. This means 60,000 babies each year leave hospital in need of extra support.

We appreciate a cross-government mental health strategy will take time to develop and embed. In the meantime, please will you help to ensure that recently established services which support babies and new parents do not have their funding withdrawn? The Start for Life programme boosted a range of services that support the physical health of babies too, such as



infant feeding. Currently the programme's funding ends on 1 April 2025, so we urge you to extend it in the coming Spending Review.

Our Steering Group of charity Chief Executives would be delighted to brief you on this and other recommendations of relevance from our, '[Manifesto for Babies](#)'. For example, you will know that currently, one in five babies are missing their health visitor check at one year. This is a crucial opportunity to identify babies in need, but health visitor numbers have declined 40%, since 2015. We therefore also urge you to move quickly with funding the NHS Workforce Plan to address this.

The First 1001 Days Movement has always been a constructive partner and critical friend of government. We have hosted ministerial visits, contributed to guidance and worked with officials to glean insights from services and families. Our members support thousands of families across the country, so we understand the challenges experienced by new parents and babies. Our webinars and newsletter reach hundreds of service providers and professionals and we would be delighted to take a short article from you or invite you to speak at a webinar.

We stand ready to help you achieve your ambition for children's health, through effective early years interventions, so please let us know how best we can support.

We look forward to hearing from you and your team. Please let us know when would be convenient to meet via tamora@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tamora Langley in blue ink.

Convenor, First 1001 Days Movement

Handwritten signature of Anna Feuchtwang in black ink.

Anna Feuchtwang, Chief Executive Officer, NCB

Handwritten signature of Sir Peter Wanless in black ink.

Sir Peter Wanless, Chief Executive Officer, NSPCC

Handwritten signature of Professor Jane Barlow in black ink.

Professor Jane Barlow, President, AiMH UK

Handwritten signature of Kathy Jones in black ink.

Kathy Jones, CEO, Fatherhood Institute

Handwritten signature of Alison Morton in black ink.

Alison Morton, CEO, Institute of Health Visiting



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Peter Grigg'.

Peter Grigg, Chief Executive, Home-Start UK

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Clare Lyons-Collins'.

Clare Lyons-Collins, Chief Executive, Best Beginnings

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'K Roche-Nagi'.

**Kathleen Roche-Nagi, Director
Approachable Parenting**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Keith Reed'.

**Keith Reed, Chief Executive
Paren-Infant Foundation**



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Infant Project

Celebrating 25 years of
our Parent-Infant Therapy
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Dr Karen Bateson, Joint CEO, OXPIP