



British Association for Sexual Health and HIV: Four Priorities for the New Government

AN AMBITIOUS VISION TO SAFEGUARD SEXUAL HEALTH
AND WELLBEING IN THE UK

Foreword

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV has championed excellence in sexual health since 1922. We are pleased to share our expertise and work with the new Government to tackle the challenges we face today.

Sexual health is at a tipping point across the UK. We are seeing the highest rates of syphilis since 1948 and more gonorrhoea than at any other point since records began. This is alongside rising levels of abortion, disinvestment in services and expertise, deprioritisation of prevention and huge inequalities in societal wellbeing, experienced most acutely by marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

It is clear that the status quo simply isn't working. A new approach is urgently needed in order to address these challenges and serve our communities better.

We strongly support the new Government's commitment to eliminate new HIV transmissions by 2030. There is only your Parliament left to achieve this goal and to do so, we need to look at sexual health and wellbeing as a whole. We have the legacy and potential to be a world leader in HIV and sexual health, and we set out here how to realise this.

The challenges facing us are broad, and whilst it's not all about the funding that is put into the system, it is an inescapable fact that sexual health services have been cut to the bone in recent years. Investment that can properly support the vital work that services carry out is therefore desperately needed, and will help to safeguard the ability of services to support the best possible outcomes for the whole population, including for demographics who are most likely to experience persistent inequalities.

To ensure we invest effectively for the future, a new, coherent vision for sexual healthcare, through the development of a new strategy for sexual health is needed and we commit to supporting your government in this. It has been five years since government first committed to developing a national strategy for England, and in the time since, challenges have only become more pronounced and the workforce and people who use services have suffered as a result. We will help you to stop this and reverse these trends.

It is crucial that the workforce is addressed in a future strategy. There are pressing needs in recruitment and retention, which – if left unaddressed – will leave the crucial specialty of genitourinary medicine (GUM) on a wholly unsustainable footing. We are losing much needed experts.

As we look ahead to the new Parliament, it is imperative that we get this right. There are major public health challenges on the horizon, from drug-resistant STIs, to potential future outbreaks that could be of a scale even greater than we saw most recently with mpox. We are blessed with highly talented, passionate and expert specialists in GUM who stand ready to work with the new government to deliver. The time to act is now.



Professor Matt Phillips

President of British Association for Sexual Health and HIV

Supporting sexual health in the new Parliament...

BASHH is calling on the new Government to take forward four key priorities that will turn the tide on sexual health and ensure the system is on a sustainable footing. These priorities are the most important issues for BASHH members and, taken together, can begin to address the challenges in sexual health to improve outcomes.

1. Commit to the development of a new sexual health strategy for England

That is informed by both experts and service users, and which supports an ambitious and cohesive approach to sexual health policy across the four nations.

2. Fully resource sexual health services so they can meet growing and changing needs and end health inequalities

Ensuring that sexual health services are provided with a funding settlement that recognises rising demand and prioritises prevention, leaving no-one behind.

3. Ensure timely access to expertise for everyone with a need for sexual health provision

So that all parts of society have equitable access to the right sexual health services and expertise when they need it, where they need it, to help achieve the best possible outcomes.

4. Build a workforce in GUM that can meet population needs long into the future

By supporting BASHH's LoveGUM campaign and work with us to increase recruitment of Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) doctors and to build the wider workforce, securing the future of the specialty, and the people it serves, today and for future generations.

Everyone deserves good sexual health and wellbeing throughout the life course.

Now is the time to act for equitable sexual healthcare that is fit for purpose and supported to meet current and future public health challenges.