

How can Parliament Make Health Equal?

"We know everyday life poses greater health risks to the most disadvantaged in society, whether it's the price of healthy food, the level of pollution or the quality of jobs available. Prevention will be how we deliver healthier, more prosperous lives for all, but particularly for those suffering the consequences of widening levels of health inequality..."

*Our overall ambition will be to **halve the gap in healthy life expectancy** between the richest and poorest regions, while increasing it for everyone, and raising the healthiest generation of children ever.*

– Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan (UK Government, 2025)

Health Equals – the campaign to #MakeHealthEqual

Our health is shaped by the world around us. It's shaped by how we learn and grow, where we live, the work we do, the air we breathe, our community, and the money in our pockets. These are the building blocks of health.

But these building blocks aren't available to everyone in the same way. Right now, in the UK, things like the cost of living, insecure jobs, and cold homes are damaging our health and wellbeing. This is cutting lives short by up to 16 years. Health Equals is a coalition of over 80 organisations campaigning to change this – to shape a society where everyone has access to the building blocks of health.



To tackle inequalities and stop lives being cut short, Health Equals is calling for a cross-government health inequalities strategy that puts health at the heart of government.

This strategy should include:

Realistic but ambitious targets to reduce health inequalities

Clear roles for all departments to restore the building blocks of health

Investment to deliver – including public health, early years, and prevention

Aligned priorities at every level – including in new strategic authorities

Independent accountability – through a light touch statutory framework

(The Health Foundation)

Make health equal across the building blocks of health

Health Equals' expert members are calling for policies across the building blocks of health, including:

Make health equal where we live

- **Available and affordable homes:** ensure local housing allowance covers the cost of rent, stop unaffordable rent hikes, and build 90,000 social homes per year for ten years (Crisis, Shelter)
- **Good quality homes:** eradicate cold, damp, mouldy homes through the Warm Homes Plan and updated and enforced decent home standards (Centre for Ageing Better)

Make health equal at work

- **Reform Statutory Sick Pay,** to strengthen the economy and reduce health-related job loss (The Health Foundation)
- **Co-designed support:** reform employment support services in collaboration with disabled people and people with health conditions (Learning and Work Institute)

Make health equal in our environment

- **Clean air:** enshrine the WHO air quality target of 5 µg/m³ of PM2.5 (particulate matter) into UK law (Global Action Plan)
- **Access to nature:** ensure that improvements in access to nature address the current inequalities in access to nature according to ethnicity and socio-economic status (Wildlife Trusts)

Make health equal through the money in our pockets

- **Welfare reform:** ensure that any changes to welfare are guided by a health impact assessment, to ensure that they do not further entrench health inequalities (The Health Foundation)
- **The Essentials Guarantee:** ensure Universal Credit meets the cost of essentials such as food and utilities (JRF, Trussell)

Make health equal in our communities

- **Restore public health funding** to 2015/16 levels and ensure it is allocated according to need (The Health Foundation)
- **Healthy high streets:** use planning reform to create high streets which are inclusive, accessible by walking or wheeling, and support our health and wellbeing (RSPH)

Make health equal where we learn and grow

- **School food:** ensure free school meals reflect the latest nutrition guidelines (Food Foundation, Impact on Urban Health, Biteback 2030)
- **Tackle child poverty:** by removing the household benefit cap and the two-child benefit limit to ensure the households in the deepest poverty receive the money they need (Child Poverty Action Group; Crisis; Fairness Foundation; JRF)
- **Community-based support:** re-invest in the Sure Start model for early years and provide young people (up to the age of 25) with open access to mental health support in every community (Child Poverty Action Group, Centre for Mental Health)