

BLAKE STEPHENSON MP
Member of Parliament for Mid Bedfordshire



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Karin Smyth MP

Minister of State for Health
Department for Health & Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Tuesday 3rd September 2024

Dear Karin,

Healthcare in Mid Bedfordshire

I trust this letter finds you well.

Thank you for joining the Westminster Hall Debate on Healthcare in the East of England earlier today. In your summation, you invited Members to write to you on points raised which did not receive a response in your speech. I am taking the opportunity to do so.

GP Surgery in Wixams

As I set out in my speech, residents in the new town of Wixams have been waiting nearly two decades for a GP surgery. Around 5,000 people now call Wixams home and many thousands more are expected to move in over the coming years. It is simply not good enough that suitable health infrastructure in a growing, planned new town like Wixams, has not yet been delivered.

Will the Minister and the Government commit to working with me and Wixams residents to bring together Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and the local Integrated Care Board and finally deliver a new GP surgery here?

Capital Investment in GP Surgeries

Wixams is just one example, but across Mid Bedfordshire we have seen communities take more than their fair share of development without benefitting from a fair share of infrastructure and services. If the Government is serious about its plans to deliver 300,000 new houses per year, it will also need to be serious about its plans to deliver the infrastructure our communities need.

Will the Government commit to a capital investment programme to give communities the funding they need upfront to deliver new GP surgeries, rather than asking them to wait for developer contributions once houses have been built?

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Minister to discuss how we might be able to make this work so that we can deliver new health infrastructure for my constituents in Mid Bedfordshire during this Parliament.

NHS Digitisation and Hospital Facilities in Bedfordshire

In Bedfordshire, we are significantly behind on NHS Digitisation, and I understand that there is a serious maintenance backlog at Bedford Hospital. I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with

the Minister to discuss both issues and how we might be able to find a way forward that delivers state of the art facilities for my constituents when they use Bedford Hospital.

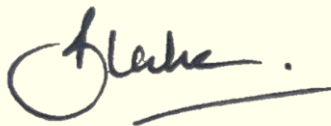
Rural Health Inequalities

Mid Bedfordshire is one of the most rural constituencies in the East of England and my constituents face significant health inequalities. Whether that's difficulties in accessing treatment for remote and isolated villages with poor access to health services, insufficient local public transport, narrow roads, and bad broadband; longer travel times to access a local GP or dentist; or the challenge for many of our more rural healthcare settings in recruiting staff.

Will the Minister commit to delivering for rural areas in this Parliament, with focussed efforts to deliver staff and services that reach out into the most isolated communities and ensure that everyone can access the healthcare they need within a short journey from their front door?

Thank you again for taking the time to consider these points and I look forward to working with you to deliver better healthcare for my constituents in Mid Bedfordshire.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Blake', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Blake Stephenson MP

Member of Parliament for Mid Bedfordshire