

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Leadership Candidate for the Conservative and Unionist Party
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

18 August 2022

Support for Environmental Health

Dear Mr Sunak,

I am writing to ask you to commit to supporting environmental health should you be successful in becoming Leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party, and our country's next Prime Minister.

As you know, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is a charity and the professional membership body for Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs), representing over 7,000 members across the UK working in both the public and private sectors.

Our members played a vital role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, from supporting contact tracing efforts, to business closure enforcement during the various stages of lockdown. Following the gradual reopening of businesses EHPs were at the forefront of inspecting establishments to ensure that they were COVID-secure and complying with government guidelines.

Environmental health professionals work to protect people's health in a variety of ways, including maintaining food safety and standards, housing safety, mitigating the impacts of air pollution and noise as well as working to enhance our natural environment.

Environmental health is very much part of the public health community. Our members are key to supporting the Levelling Up agenda working to support local businesses and improve the health, well-being, and prosperity of local communities. They also play a significant role in the climate change planning and response within local authorities, working towards net-zero targets in local areas.

Environmental health is an invaluable early intervention resource. By protecting public health, our members play a vital role in preventing serious illness in our communities and reducing pressure on our NHS.

However, the profession is facing a crisis with 9 out of 10 (87%) local authorities using environmental health agency staff because of shortages in resources or delays in recruitment and 56% of local authorities reporting that they had vacancies in their environmental health teams that were left unfilled for 6 months or more.

Having worked closely with DLUHC to support its Cross-Government Regulatory Services Task and Finish Group, we were particularly keen to see the implementation of the recommendations from the Resourcing, Capacity & Qualifications Workstream. Most notably this included the ring-fencing of resource for new apprenticeships within local authorities to support and sustain the environmental health workforce.

Unfortunately, due to a variety of issues over the last 12 months, this recommendation has yet to come to fruition. Without this support our profession faces a decidedly uncertain future, and with it severe repercussions for our communities.

I am calling on you to commit to maintaining environmental health as a strong resource and valuable profession, and to recognise the significant impact it has protecting and enhancing our environment and our health.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope to hear from you soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. James', with a large, sweeping underline.

Dr Phil James
Chief Executive of CIEH