

Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

15 September 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and to ask you to recognise as a priority for your department the need to strengthen the resilience and social capital of communities across our country.

You have taken office as the nation participates in a shared moment of mourning and reflection. Moments like these can remind us of what we share in common.

That sense of togetherness and the strength of our 'social capital' was central to our ability to survive the pandemic and it will be vital to the ability of communities to withstand the cost-of-living crisis we now face. Those communities with less social capital will likely fare worse than others. We can think of this social capital in a variety of ways, but at the heart of all conceptions of social capital is a recognition of the value of relationships and social ties.

We are writing to you as a group of organisations who share a strong focus on the importance of strengthening social ties. We have different approaches to this subject and we use a range of different terms to describe what we think is important: from social connection and community connectedness, to social cohesion and integration. What we share is a clear understanding that the social ties that we describe play an extraordinarily important, yet typically under-recognised, role in our collective and individual well-being.

Attached is a statement setting out what we mean when we talk about social capital and why it is important: *Social capital: what we mean by it and why it matters*. It also sets out how policymakers can begin to proactively support the building of more connected and more resilient communities. It asks where this will fit within your vision for the country, and how we can work with you to help achieve this.

This week our organisations were due to attend the *Belonging 2022* conference organised by the Belong Network. This event brings together practitioners, thinkers, and experts from across a range of different sectors to discuss how we can build more connected, more resilient communities. Following the death of Her Majesty The Queen, the organisers are looking to move the conference to a date later this year. An invitation to you to speak at the conference will follow shortly, once alternative arrangements are confirmed. This event is part of a growing realisation of the importance of these issues and a growing determination to work together across sectors to address them.

We hope that you will share this determination and look forward to working with you. If it would be helpful to meet with you or your officials to discuss this further, we would be very happy to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Broadwood, Chief Executive, Belong - The Cohesion and Integration Network
Sunder Katwala, Director, British Future
Alex Smith, Founder and Chief Executive, The Cares Family
David Barclay, Partner, The Good Faith Partnership
Su Moore, Chief Executive, The Jo Cox Foundation
Linda Cowie and Meg Henry, Co-Directors, The Linking Network
Harry Hobson, Co-Founder and Director, Neighbourly Lab
David Robinson, Founder, The Relationships Project
Jon Knight, Chief Executive, /Together

