

Fax to Ruth Kelly MP, 01204 693383

Sheet 1 of 4

From Michael Ryan, Tel/Fax: [REDACTED]

Ruth Kelly MP

Studio 4

Horwich Business Centre,

86 Lee Lane,

Bolton, BL6 7AE

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
16 August 2004

Dear Ms Kelly,

Rising rates of birth defects in "Wigan & Bolton" & elsewhere

Thank you for your letter to Paul Marsden MP dated 21 July 2004 regarding birth defects. I am writing to your constituency office as you might not already be aware of rising rates of birth defects in your own area, which are many times greater than recorded in Camden & Islington.

You will know that birth defect data has been gathered in the UK since 1964 [see The Times, 6 Jan 2004, copied here] with the aim of identifying trends and environmental causes. The earliest data I've seen is of 1971, which doesn't give detailed data by location. The 1987 data lists 200 locations in England and Wales, which was gradually reduced to 100 in 2001 and cut to just 33 in 2002 as you already know from my letter to Paul Marsden MP of 13 May 2004.

The Welsh birth defect data, published by CARIS, lists 22 locations in Wales, which would be equivalent to over 400 locations in England on a pro rata basis. You claimed in your letter of 21 July 2004 that birth defect rates in the 303 PCT organisations are "too small to provide a basis for an early warning system". Can you provide me with the data for the 303 PCTs for 1995-2002?

I've copied the graph showing the rates of "total" birth defects for Wigan and Bolton for years 1987-2001, including separate graphs for both Wigan and Bolton for 1987-1994. You will note the huge increase in birth defects after 1994, compared with low and falling rates of birth defects at Camden and Islington. The 2002 ONS data has no listing for Wigan & Bolton, nor Camden & Islington, nor any other of the 95 English locations listed by the Office of National Statistics in the 2002 data. I've also copied the graph of heart and circulatory defects in England & Wales from 1971-2002, showing a rise from 9.0 per 10,000 in 1971 to 15.7 per 10,000 in 1983, before falling to a minimum of 7.0 per 10,000 in 1995. Since 1995, the rate has almost tripled to 19.7 per 10,000 in 2002, the highest rate ever recorded.

Bolton has an incinerator authorised to burn radioactive waste and both radioactive and non-radioactive PM2.5 emissions will have caused an increase in birth defects among your future constituents, as well as increases in a range of about 20 avoidable illnesses detailed by Dr Dick van Steenis in his report "Industrial air pollution and the country doctor" at www.countrydoctor.co.uk

The US reduced industrial emissions of PM2.5s and saved \$193 billion over the ten years 1992-2001 according to the White House Office of Management and Budget [Washington Post, 27 September 2003]. This Labour Government could save both money and lives if it wanted to.

Yours sincerely,


Michael Ryan BSc, C Eng, MICE