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Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Science, Research and Innovation
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
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1 September 2020

Urgent action required to prevent a lost generation of dementia researchers

We are writing to you to highlight the challenge the dementia research community, and our early-career researchers, face following the devastating financial impact COVID-19 has had on medical research charities. Alzheimer's Research UK and Alzheimer's Society are the largest charitable funders of dementia research and together with the dementia research community we ask you to help us prevent the loss of a generation of dementia researchers.

You will be aware that dementia is one of the greatest healthcare challenges we face in the UK, with over 850,000 people living with the condition and a cost to the economy of £26bn per year. Without life-changing treatments, the number of people living with the condition is set to grow to one million people in the next five years. Furthermore, the tragic, disproportionate impact of the pandemic on people living with dementia, who have accounted for at least a quarter of deaths with COVID-19, has reinforced that there has never been a more critical time to invest in dementia research.

Research from the NIHR has shown that COVID-19 has caused 70% of clinical trials and studies to be stopped, paused or delayed and medical research charities are expecting a 41% decrease in their research spend for 2020/21. This decrease will result in an estimated £310 million shortfall in UK medical research, from which it will take at least 4.5 years for charities to recover.

Flagship initiatives such as the Alzheimer's Society Centres of Excellence in care research, which support many early career researchers, have been integral to our understanding of what good, evidence-based dementia care looks like and has driven forward implementation of this care. Both Alzheimer's Research UK and the Alzheimer's Society have consistently supported early career researchers through fellowships and grants. But there is still much to learn, and opportunities to improve care through research are at risk. 90% of Alzheimer's Society funded researchers have told us they are concerned about the future of dementia research, a field which simply cannot afford a 'lost generation'.

The actions of the Conservative government in recent years have ensured great progress in the dementia research field. Thanks to political leadership and significant investment channelled through the Challenge on Dementia, the UK has seen the development of new networks that bring together world-leading expertise in the field, such as the world-leading UK Dementia Research Institute and Alzheimer's Research UK's Drug Discovery Institutes.

Alzheimer's Research UK and Alzheimer's Society expect to receive almost 400 research proposals each year, many of which are from early-career researchers, but without government support, the financial pressures caused by COVID-19 will mean these charities are unable to support any new funding opportunities for early-career research in 2020/21. We are increasingly concerned about the impact this will have on our highly skilled early-career dementia researchers, who, without financial support, will be left with no option but to leave the dementia research field for more consistently funded research opportunities, or to leave academic research altogether.

We are asking the government to continue its support for this growing field by delivering on its Manifesto commitment to double the dementia research budget, which will unlock new funding to enable early-career researchers to remain in a field where so much progress is urgently needed. For the government to achieve

its Dementia Moonshot ambition, it is essential that we retain the skills and talent of these early-career researchers.

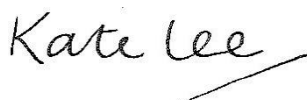
We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss opportunities to ensure that the dementia research community is protected during this difficult time.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding this matter at your earliest convenience.

Yours Sincerely,



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Chief Executive
Alzheimer's Research UK



Kate Lee
Chief Executive
Alzheimer's Society

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