

Adjournment Debate: Concussion in sport – Thursday 11th March 2021

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This briefing includes:

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1. Points to raise

- *To help us understand further the impacts of sporting head injuries on brain health more research is needed. At the 2019 General Election the Government committed to double dementia research funding to £160m a year over the next decade, but they've yet to realise this promise. Can the Minister set out a timeline of when he expects this commitment to be met?*
- *Figures from Alzheimer's Society show that by 2040 the cost of dementia to the UK economy will rise from £34.7bn to £94.1bn. To mitigate against these possible economic costs, the Government should bring forward its commitment to double dementia research funding so we can better understand the impact of sporting head injuries and hopefully reduce the number of people develop dementia. When will the Government meet its commitment in the 2019 manifesto and double dementia research funding?*
- *Alzheimer's Society says that we urgently need more research to understand any link between the number and type of injuries sustained during contact sport and developing dementia and what the underlying mechanism may be. To help fund this research shouldn't the Government take a leading role and bring forward their commitment to double dementia research funding, as set out in their 2019 election manifesto?*

2. Background

There are currently over 850,000 people in the UK with dementia and this is expected to grow to over 1.6 million by 2040.¹

London School of Economic figures, commissioned by Alzheimer's Society, show the cost of dementia care will nearly treble over the next two decades. The total cost of dementia to the UK economy, including costs to the NHS, paid social care and unpaid care, has risen to £34.7bn and will rise further to £94.1bn by 2040.²

3. The need for dementia research funding

Dementia is the biggest killer in the UK³. Contact sport is just one possible risk factor, amongst many and increased support from Government on research funding would inevitably increase understanding on this issue.

¹ https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec_report_november_2019.pdf

² https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec_report_november_2019.pdf

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/monthlymortalityanalysisenglandandwales>

There is urgent need to accurately gather data relating to traumatic brain injuries (from mild to severe) in sport over time. We need to see more research to understand any link between the number and type of injuries sustained during contact sport and developing dementia and what the underlying mechanism may be.

During the 2019 General Election the Conservatives pledged in their manifesto to double dementia research funding in the UK to £160m a year, over 10 years.

Alzheimer's Society believes this vital funding could be used to help us better understand the causes of the disease, clinical and drug discovery research providing hope of a cure for the future, and social care, technological innovation, and public health research to address the care needs of today. The funding would also help researchers gather a better understanding of the links between sports brain injuries and dementia.

As well as supporting a better understanding between brain injuries occurred in sporting activities and brain health, government investment in research can help drive the post-COVID-19 economic recovery. Figures from Brunel University show that, for every £1 of public or charity investment in medical research delivers a return equivalent to around 25p every year, forever.⁴

Alzheimer's Society is calling on the Government to realise their 2019 manifesto commitment and double dementia research funding.

4. Sports United Against Dementia

Sport United Against Dementia (SUAD) is a partnership between Alzheimer's Society and the nation's most loved sports.

Alzheimer's Society are working closely with sports clubs, professional bodies, and sporting stars to:

- Further scientific understanding of dementia, leading to better treatments and improved care, improving understanding of the links between sport and dementia - both as a potential cause and a preventative factor.
- Ensure everyone involved in sport can access Alzheimer's Society's expert dementia support for years to come, including current and ex-players; managers; fans; and their families.
- Enable people affected by dementia to continue enjoying sport and supporting the clubs they love by making the UK sports industry truly dementia inclusive.

⁴ <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/every-2-invested-in-medical-research-delivers-a-return-equivalent-to-25p-every-year-forever-2>