

Lords Science and Technology Select Committee – Government R&D Funding in 2021

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1. Suggested questions to the Secretary of State

- *It has been nearly 18 months since the Government committed to implement a 'Dementia Moonshot' and double dementia research funding to £166m a year. What progress has been made on this commitment and when do you expect it to fully be implemented?*
- *Given the delay in rolling out additional funding for dementia research, what steps will the Government take to catch-up on the delay in the delivery of funds and ensure that important research projects are not left behind?*
- *The Government has recently announced that UKRI funding from BEIS' Official Development Assistance allocation will be cut by almost half to £125m. What effects do you expect this to have on dementia research in the UK?*
- *What conversations have you had with charitable funders of dementia research, such as Alzheimer's Society, regarding progressing this manifesto commitment?*

2. Background

There are an estimated 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK.¹ Figures from LSE, commissioned by Alzheimer's Society, show 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

Dementia is one of the greatest health challenges facing society, both in the UK and around the world. Of the top ten causes of death, dementia is the only one that can't be cured, stopped or even slowed down. Without life-changing treatments, the number of people living with the condition is set to grow to a million people in the next five years.³

3. The 'Dementia Moonshot'.

At the 2019 general election, the Government pledged that "Britain will lead the fight against incurable diseases." As a part of this pledge, the Conservative Party committed to double dementia research funding over the next decade by implementing a 'Dementia Moonshot'.⁴

The 'Dementia Moonshot' would double current Government funding of dementia research from £83m per year to £166m a year over the next 10 years. This would result in an additional £800m in funding for dementia research by 2030.

Alzheimer's Society welcomed this commitment from Government and has been attempting to work with Departments to ensure that this funding can be brought forward as soon as possible. This is particularly pressing given that no funding was announced for the 'Dementia Moonshot' at the recent Budget in March 2021, or the Spending Review in November 2021.

¹Wittenberg, Raphael et al. Projections of older people with dementia and costs of dementia care in the United Kingdom, 2019-2040. 2019. Care Policy and Evaluation Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science. https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec_report_november_2019.pdf.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Conservative Party. The fight against incurable diseases. 2019. <https://www.conservatives.com/news/johnson-britain-will-lead-the-fight-against-incurable-diseases>.

Alzheimer's Society has been asking questions of Government as to when it expects to be able to set out a timetable to implement this important pledge from their most recent manifesto. In answer to a recent Written Question on when the funding can be expected to be brought forward, Helen Whatley MP, the Minister for Care, said that "there is currently no planned date for publication of a strategy to deliver the dementia moonshot".⁵

Alzheimer's Society would like the Government to set out the timetable for the implementation of the Dementia Moonshot as a matter of priority.

In March 2021, it was announced that the Government would be reducing the BEIS Official Development Assistance allocation to UK Research and Innovation by £125m 2021/22. This would leave a funding gap of £120m for the financial year.

Alzheimer's Society would like to know what effect the Government expects this funding gap to have on the progress of dementia research in the UK, particularly in light of their commitment to double dementia research funding.

The APPG on Dementia, to which Alzheimer's Society serves as the secretariat, is currently undertaking an inquiry into the current state of dementia research in the UK, including the state of funding and the need for the Moonshot to be implemented. The Group is currently taking evidence and will be producing a report for the summer. If you would like to find out more information about this please contact jordan.clark@alzheimers.org.uk.

4. What can be achieved with the Dementia Moonshot?

Alzheimer's Society would like to see the Government support a broad approach to research. We must fund research that moves us towards life-changing treatments and diagnostics of the future and addresses the challenges people living with dementia and those who care for them face, so they can live better with the condition as it progresses.

Alzheimer's Society have established five priorities where the government's Dementia Moonshot investment can make the biggest difference for people affected by dementia:

- **Training the dementia researchers of the future:** Support for clinicians, PhD students and people at the early stages of their career to grow the dementia research field, ensuring the best minds are committed to dementia research.
- **Research to ensure the early detection and diagnosis of dementia:** To ensure people affected by dementia feel the benefits of this pioneering work, we must see renewed funding for research to fully validate a new diagnostic test and develop a mechanism to ensure that it can then be rolled out into the clinic.
- **Transforming care through technology for people with dementia:** Dedicated funds to support the design and use of technologies that enable better prevention, diagnosis, management and care of the dementia. Dedicated funds to support the design and use of technologies that enable better prevention, diagnosis, management and care of the dementia.
- **Making research a reality through Centres of Excellence:** Alzheimer's Society's Centres of Excellence in care research have been integral to understanding what the best dementia care looks like. The Moonshot funding should expand this highly successful model of 'Centre of Excellence' in key areas of dementia research.
- **Understanding the underlying causes to find a cure:** Additional investment for fundamental brain research, including as part of the UK Dementia Research Institute, of which Alzheimer's Society is a funder, to understand the causes of dementia towards new targeted treatments and forms of diagnostics.

⁵ Written Questions, Parliament. 2021. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-18/171711/>.