

MEETING MINUTES

APPG on Dementia: Summer Meeting 2026 Translating dementia research advances into policy

3.15pm - 4.45pm Wednesday 15 July 2026

Room N, Portcullis House

Overview:

The **APPG on Dementia: Summer Meeting 2026** explored the rapid pace of progress in dementia science, diagnostics and emerging treatments, and the opportunities to translate innovation into improved health and care outcomes for people affected by dementia.

The session was chaired by Debbie Abrahams MP, Chair of the APPG on Dementia, and featured contributions from expert speakers, followed by a wider roundtable discussion with APPG members and stakeholders from across the dementia research, innovation, health and social care sectors.

Attendees:

Parliamentarians:

- **Debbie Abrahams MP** (Chair of the APPG on Dementia), Labour, Oldham East and Saddleworth,
- **Linsey Farnsworth MP** (APPG Member), Labour, Amber Valley
- **Rachel Gilmour MP** (APPG Member), Liberal Democrat, Tiverton and Minehead

Speakers:

- **Jessamy Baird**, Interim CEO, Neurodegeneration Initiative, Dementia Goals Programme
- **Andy Hill**, Programme Director, Dementia Challenge, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- **Richard Oakley**, Associate Director of Research and Innovation, Alzheimer's Society

Secretariat (Alzheimer's Society):

- **Tyler Bennington-Poulter**, National Influencing Officer, Alzheimer's Society
- **Rachael Martin-Ball**, National Influencing Manager, Alzheimer's Society
- **Kieran Winterburn**, Head of National Influencing, Alzheimer's Society

Externals stakeholders

- **Caroline Casey**, Corporate Affairs Lead, Eli Lilly
- **Sophie Dalin**, Casey Commission Team, Casey Commission
- **Stephen Hinchlerly**, Public Affairs Manager, Alzheimer's Research UK
- **Abi Lever**, Casey Commission Team, Casey Commission
- **Alison Moulds**, Senior Policy and Engagement Manager, The Health Foundation

Minutes:

3.15pm – 3.25pm: Debbie Abrahams MP - Chair of the APPG on Dementia

A welcome to the APPG on Dementia Summer Meeting and opening remarks.

Debbie Abrahams MP opened the meeting by reiterating the APPG on Dementia's mission to raise awareness of dementia in Parliament and promote policy solutions to reduce its impact. She said the meeting would focus on how advances in dementia research can be translated into meaningful improvements for people living with dementia and their families.

She said the meeting came at a particularly exciting time for dementia research, highlighting rapid advances in diagnosis, treatments, prevention and scientific understanding. While dementia remains the UK's biggest killer and one of its greatest health challenges, she argued that these developments offer genuine reasons for optimism.

Debbie noted that scientific progress is taking place alongside major health and social care reforms, including the 10-Year Health Plan, the Life Sciences Sector Plan, the Modern Service Framework for Dementia and Frailty, the Casey Commission and forthcoming Care Quality Commission dementia guidance.

3.25pm – 3.35pm: Richard Oakley - Associate Director of Research and Innovation, Alzheimer's Society

An era of hope: advances in disease-modifying treatments and dementia diagnosis

Richard Oakley highlighted that dementia research is entering a transformative new era, with major advances in prevention, diagnosis and treatment creating genuine opportunities to improve outcomes for people affected by dementia.

He said there is growing evidence on reducing dementia risk, alongside rapid progress in diagnostic technologies, including blood biomarkers, digital tools and AI. Richard emphasised that earlier and more accurate diagnosis is essential to improving access to care, support and emerging treatments, noting that around one in three people living with dementia still do not have a diagnosis.

Richard outlined the potential of blood-based biomarkers to revolutionise dementia diagnosis by making it simpler, faster and more affordable, while also accelerating recruitment into clinical trials. He also highlighted the development of digital biomarkers, including wearable technologies, and the increasing role of AI in supporting earlier detection and dementia research.

On treatments, Richard said the field has advanced significantly in recent years, with a record number of Alzheimer's disease clinical trials now underway. He noted that disease-modifying treatments such as lecanemab and donanemab represent an important milestone, as research is continuing to improve how these therapies are delivered. He also stressed the need for greater investment in treatments for other forms of dementia, including Lewy body, frontotemporal and vascular dementia.

Looking ahead, Richard argued that the NHS must begin preparing now for the introduction of new diagnostics and treatments, even before they become routinely available. He emphasised that policy initiatives, including the Modern Service Framework, the Health Bill and the Casey Commission, present important opportunities to ensure scientific advances are translated into better care and equitable access for people living with dementia.

3.35pm – 3.45pm: Jessamy Baird - Interim CEO, BARBARA Alliance, Dementia Goals Programme

Breaking barriers: enhancing access to dementia clinical trials in the UK

Jessamy Baird highlighted the UK's declining participation in commercially sponsored dementia clinical trials, noting that only 173 people were enrolled in interventional dementia studies across the UK during 2024/25. She argued that this represents a missed opportunity both for people living with dementia, who

are unable to access potentially beneficial research and emerging therapies, and for the NHS, which receives significant investment through participation in commercial research.

Jessamy outlined a number of barriers limiting the UK's competitiveness as a destination for dementia clinical trials. She highlighted insufficient diagnostic capacity, including comparatively low levels of MRI and PET imaging, limited use of blood-based biomarkers and inconsistent diagnostic pathways across the country. She explained that people are often diagnosed too late in the disease pathway, with diagnoses frequently taking more than 12 to 18 months and lacking the specificity needed to identify suitable participants for clinical trials. As a result, trial screening failure rates in the UK are among the highest internationally, increasing costs for sponsors and creating a disappointing experience for patients wishing to participate in research.

She also emphasised the limited research capacity within the NHS, noting the comparatively small dementia research workforce relative to other disease areas such as cancer. While recognising improvements to regulatory and ethics approval processes, Jessamy argued that lengthy contracting arrangements with NHS and university research sites continue to delay study set-up, reducing recruitment and, in some cases, resulting in UK sites closing before meaningful participation can take place.

Looking ahead, Jessamy argued that the UK remains well placed to become a global leader in dementia research, citing its strengths in translational science, health data and diverse population. She welcomed initiatives such as the UK Dementia Trials Network, supported through the Dementia Goals Programme and NIHR funding, as positive steps towards increasing research capacity and improving trial performance. She concluded by calling for earlier and more accurate diagnosis, greater use of blood-based biomarkers, faster research contracting and improved access to innovative treatments, suggesting that a dedicated dementia medicines fund could provide a mechanism to enable conditional access to new therapies while further real-world evidence is gathered.

3.45pm – 3.55pm: Andy Hill - Programme Director, Dementia Challenge, UK Research and Innovation

Accelerating patient access to evidence-based innovation: the Dementia Challenge as a testbed for a new approach

Andy Hill outlined why dementia was chosen as the first challenge within the UK Health Mission, describing it as the UK's leading cause of death, with around one million people currently living with dementia, rising to an estimated 1.4 million by 2040. He noted that dementia already costs the UK economy £42.5 billion annually, a figure expected to more than double over the next 15 years, while around one in four hospital beds are occupied by people living with dementia. He argued that demographic change means the NHS faces a "tsunami" of demand unless action is taken now.

Andy explained that the Dementia Challenge is primarily anchored around the aim that 92% of people receive a dementia assessment and diagnosis within 18 weeks of referral, with a goal for this to occur increasingly in community settings. The programme also seeks to improve the quality of diagnosis, staging and prognosis to enable more personalised care, reduce avoidable hospital admissions and prepare the NHS for emerging disease-modifying treatments.

The current work of the Dementia Challenge is centred around identifying interventions from private enterprise to scale into the NHS to support earlier and more accurate detection and diagnosis. Following a competitive call for applications from commercial partners, 26 shortlisted interventions and innovations are now under detailed consideration, each with the potential to strengthen the dementia diagnostic pathway. Successful interventions will be evaluated across representative NHS sites during 2027–28 before being rolled out at pace and scale from 2029 onwards.

He concluded that success should be measured not only by the adoption of effective dementia interventions, but by establishing a new model for translating evidence-based innovations into routine NHS practice more quickly. He said the Dementia Challenge represents a unique opportunity, bringing together scientific advances, strong commercial innovation, and wider health reforms to improve outcomes for people living with dementia.

4pm-4.30pm: Open discussion

Roundtable discussion with guest speakers, APPG members and external stakeholders

Linsey Farnsworth MP

Linsey Farnsworth MP reflected on her personal experience of supporting her father, who is living with late-stage dementia. She highlighted the impact of the Backbench Business Debate on dementia care held in June 2025 and noted that she would be raising dementia care during Business Questions to the Leader of the House the following day. She suggested that the coming months would provide a timely opportunity for a further debate, particularly during World Alzheimer's Month in September and alongside the final development of the Modern Service Framework for Dementia and Frailty and the ongoing Casey Commission. Linsey indicated that she would work with Alzheimer's Society to develop an application to the Backbench Business Committee.

Rachel Gilmour MP

Rachel Gilmour MP highlighted the findings of her recently published Dementia Action Report for Tiverton and Minehead, which examined the experiences of people living with dementia and unpaid carers across her constituency. She emphasised the significant gap between the estimated number of people living with dementia and those who have received a diagnosis, alongside the challenges of accessing timely support and specialist services, particularly in rural communities. Rachel stressed the importance of improving early diagnosis, strengthening post-diagnostic support and ensuring that health and social care reforms address the needs of people affected by dementia.