



# Care for today and cure for tomorrow

Alzheimer's Society strategy  
for funding research 2014–2017

[alzheimers.org.uk](http://alzheimers.org.uk)

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# Alzheimer's Society strategy for funding research 2014–2017

## Care for today and cure for tomorrow

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Dementia is one of the greatest problems facing society in the 21st century. Current estimates are that 800,000 people are living with dementia in the UK today and a similar number of people are the primary carer for someone with dementia. We also know the current cost of dementia to the UK economy is over £23 billion a year.

The mission of Alzheimer's Society is to reduce the impact of dementia on lives today and create a world without dementia tomorrow. We will do this by providing expert care, support and information, raising awareness of the issues surrounding dementia and funding a growing programme of research.

The Society's long-term research ambition is to change the face of dementia research. Our aim is to make sure dementia has the same global profile as cancer, heart disease and HIV/AIDS and that the same level of time, energy and money is invested into dementia research as it is into research focusing on these other conditions.

### Research as a priority for Alzheimer's Society

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Alzheimer's Society's Care for today and cure for tomorrow research programme is clear evidence of our growing commitment to research. It will increase our investment in new research to at least £10 million per year by 2017, and we will aim to continue with this growth beyond this date.

Care for today and cure for tomorrow aims to increase our understanding of the causes of dementia to drive forward advances in prevention, diagnosis and treatment and to improve the support and care provided to people affected by dementia.

# Over 20 years of funding research

Since Alzheimer's Society started to fund research in 1990, we have spent almost £30 million on cutting-edge projects investigating the cause, cure, care and prevention of all types of dementia.

This pioneering research has involved over 500 scientists and clinicians, more than 250 people with a personal experience of dementia and the awarding of 225 research grants. Resulting in the publication of over 400 peer-reviewed papers, these grants have significantly advanced our understanding of the causes of dementia, opened up new treatment avenues, improved diagnosis and enhanced the support provided to people living with dementia and their carers.

So far, Alzheimer's Society has also supported 37 PhD students and 55 research fellows, helping to strengthen and grow the dementia research community. Of the research fellows funded between 1990 and 2012, 70 per cent are still active in the field of dementia.

You can read a complete account of our first 20 years of research funding and its impact in 'Cause, cure, care and prevention: Impact of Alzheimer's Society's dementia research programme 1990–2012'.



Visit [alzheimers.org.uk/researchimpact](http://alzheimers.org.uk/researchimpact)

## Alzheimer's Society research highlights

Our funded research has:

- provided pivotal evidence in the discovery of mutations in the amyloid precursor protein (APP) gene that can cause the early onset of Alzheimer's disease
- extended the use of Alzheimer's disease drugs to people in the later stages of the illness
- discovered new, potentially disease-modifying drugs that are now being tested in clinical trials
- revealed that MRI imaging of the hippocampus in the brain can help diagnose Alzheimer's disease earlier
- shown that person-centred care can replace the use of harmful antipsychotic drugs on people with dementia in care homes
- pioneered patient and public involvement in dementia research, ensuring that we address the real needs of people living with dementia and their families.

## Since we began funding research in 1990...



Our research has involved

# 500

scientists and clinicians



We have worked with over

# 250

volunteers



We have published over

# 400

peer-reviewed papers

# Our 7-point strategy for funding research

<b>1</b>	<b>Doubling our funding for research</b>	Building on our 20-year research programme, we will double our commitment to research by increasing our funding from £5 million in 2014 to at least £10 million per year by 2017.
<b>2</b>	<b>Funding high quality research into all types of dementia</b>	Our funding will be available to support any area of research that investigates the cause, cure, care, and prevention of any type of dementia. We will fund the most promising applications assessed on their scientific quality and their relevance to people affected by dementia.
<b>3</b>	<b>Supporting future generations of dementia researchers</b>	The number of researchers working in all disciplines of dementia research remains small, which hampers progress. Our Dementia Research Leaders programme will increase the number of dementia researchers by offering funding opportunities to researchers who are at the early stages of their careers in biomedical, social and clinical research.
<b>4</b>	<b>Accelerating discovery of new drug treatments</b>	Our Drug Discovery programme focuses on repurposing and repositioning drugs to explore whether they can treat dementia. This involves us testing drugs that are already successfully treating other conditions and drugs still in development for other conditions to see how effective they are against dementia.
<b>5</b>	<b>Collecting brain tissue to support the highest quality research</b>	The Brains for Dementia Research programme collects high-quality and well-characterised post-mortem brain tissue from people with dementia who have received regular clinical assessments. This is a vital resource that lays the foundation to pioneering research that aims to find treatments that will manage symptoms, halt disease progression and ultimately cure dementia.
<b>6</b>	<b>Maximising the impact of research</b>	Research funded by Alzheimer's Society should not end with the publication of a journal article. To maximise the benefits of a research project, we will do what we can to make sure findings are taken forward and developed into something practical that makes a real difference to the lives of people with dementia and their families.
<b>7</b>	<b>Responding to the changing world of dementia research</b>	Our strategy recognises that there has been a long overdue shift in approach to dementia by government and society. Our strategy is to be flexible so that, where appropriate, we can catalyse and influence new opportunities that arise in the coming years.

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# Our unique way of working

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<b>A partnership with people affected by dementia</b>	Our research programme is an active partnership between researchers and people affected by dementia. This ensures our research tackles issues that are important to people living with dementia and their carers and benefits significantly from their involvement.
<b>Co-funding research</b>	We look to co-fund research with other organisations that share our priorities. This encourages additional investment into dementia research and means our funding has a positive impact on a greater number of lives. We have co-funded £7 million of research since 2010.
<b>Securing and influencing funding for research</b>	We have successfully pushed the government to make research into dementia a priority and increase investment in it. We will aim to sustain this pressure in the future and build on research pledges made at the G8 dementia summit in 2013.
<b>Integrating research throughout the Society</b>	Our research has a close, two-way relationship with many areas of our work. For example, we use research evidence to inform our policies, campaigns and the services we provide. Reciprocally, these areas influence the research we carry out, so it meets the needs of the Alzheimer's Society and the people we support.
<b>Innovative ways of involving patients and the public</b>	We are always looking to work with researchers on external projects that experiment with new ways to involve people affected by dementia and communities in research.
<b>Funding nationally, working globally</b>	Alzheimer's Society reserves its funding for research carried out in the UK. However, we increasingly work with international partners and other Alzheimer's associations to support global initiatives and strengthen the impact and reach of our work.

# Our research programmes

## Grants programme

Cause, cure, care, and prevention of all forms of dementia.

### Where we are in 2014

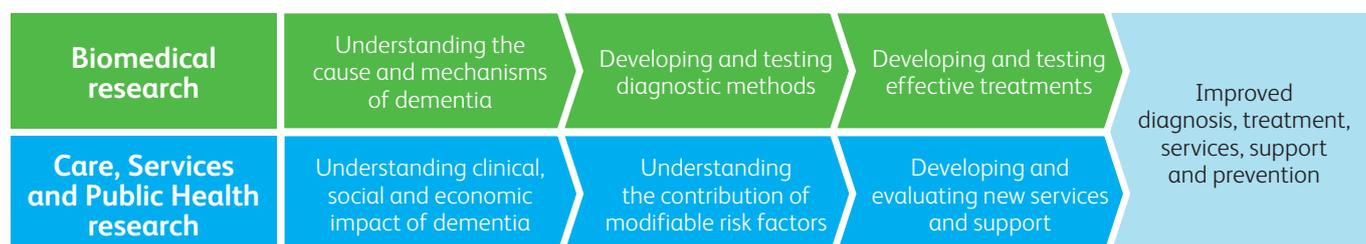
Alzheimer’s Society provides grants to a wide range of research projects that focus on the cause, cure, care, and prevention of all types of dementia. We make open calls for research proposals, which are advertised widely, including on the Alzheimer’s Society website.

Our strategy deliberately aims not to limit the scope of research proposals we receive so that we are guided by the strengths and innovation of the UK research community. We assess each application on its scientific quality, the importance of the problem being addressed and its relevance to people affected by dementia. These assessments are made by our Biomedical Grant Advisory Board or Care, Services and Public Health Grant Advisory Board and our Research Network of people with dementia, carers and former carers.

### Our ambitions by 2017

- Increase the funding available for our grants programme across all areas of research, as our overall research budget increases.
- Increase the frequency of our funding competitions from one to two a year, to provide more timely support for research.
- Introduce new funding competitions to support high-risk, high-reward research and to catalyse new areas of research
- Increase the funding and support available to our completed research projects, helping them to develop further and implement findings on a practical level to improve the lives of people affected by dementia.

### Remit of our funding streams



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## Our research programmes

# Dementia Research Leaders programme

Supporting the greatest minds to work on the brains' greatest problem.

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### Where we are in 2014

There are a relatively small number of researchers, clinicians and allied health professionals working in dementia research. A recent UK report found that there are six times more researchers focusing on cancer than dementia. A second report revealed that research into dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases has one of the smallest research communities of all disease areas in the European Union.

Fewer researchers naturally mean less research is being conducted, which hampers progress. New researchers, including those who have trained in a different area, bring fresh ideas that help to expand the boundaries of dementia science.

Alzheimer's Society has an outstanding record of investing in researchers committed to dementia research. Over 70 per cent of the research fellows we have funded over the past 20 years remain active within the field of dementia.

Our Dementia Research Leaders programme aims to build on this success and increase the number of researchers carrying out all types of dementia research. We offer a range of funding opportunities and support to individuals with biomedical, clinical, social science and allied health professional backgrounds. This includes undergraduate summer bursaries through to senior posts, education and training opportunities to develop core skills, and support and guidance through our researcher networks.

### Our ambitions by 2017

- Establish a series of national doctoral training centres to support more PhD students working in dementia.
- Expand our fellowship offer so we provide more appropriate and timely support to post-doctoral researchers.
- Expand our fellowship and other research funding opportunities so that they are open to practising clinicians, allied health professionals and other professionals who provide dementia care.
- Launch new training opportunities for early stage researchers and create resources that offer high-quality career information and guidance.
- Aim to fund an additional 40 PhD students and 15 research fellows.

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## Our research programmes

# Drug Discovery programme

Accelerating the search for new dementia treatments.

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### Where we are in 2014

There are currently limited treatments for Alzheimer's disease and no treatments for any other types of dementia. New treatments are therefore urgently needed. But, unfortunately, developing a treatment from scratch usually takes around 20 years and hundreds of millions of pounds in investment.

Our Drug Discovery programme aims to develop new treatments in a fraction of this time and at a fraction of this cost. It focuses on drug repurposing, which tests whether drugs already used to treat other conditions have the potential to treat dementia too. And it involves drug repositioning, which takes drugs still in development for other conditions and explores whether they could benefit people with dementia.

Launched in 2011, our Drug Discovery programme is already supporting pre-clinical research and two clinical trials for promising drugs for people with Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. We also look to work with other organisations to co-fund clinical trials, so our funding reaches further and benefits people with dementia even more.

### Our ambitions by 2017

- Make £5 million available for the most promising research projects that involve the repurposing and repositioning of drugs for dementia.
- Fund a range of preclinical studies that deliver a steady flow of drugs that can be taken forward to clinical testing.
- Secure funding for a number of clinical trials that test the most promising repurposed and repositioned drugs.
- Identify new partners that can share the cost of clinical trials, helping our research funding to reach even further and have a bigger impact.

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## Our research programmes

# Brains for Dementia Research programme

A world-class brain donation resource to underpin dementia research.

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### Where we are in 2014

Human brain tissue is vital for many kinds of dementia research. Unfortunately, it is in short supply because brain donation is not included under standard organ donation schemes.

With the support of Alzheimer's Society, Alzheimer's Research UK and the Medical Research Council, an established network of brain bank facilities now exists across England and Wales that aims to provide a nationwide gold-standard service for brain donation. The initiative asks people over 65 years to sign up to brain donation, increasing the amount of high-quality brain tissue available for researchers globally.

The Brains for Dementia Research brain bank is unique in that it monitors each prospective donor from recruitment until death. Donors receive support throughout this process and participate in regular assessments to record their cognitive function, medical history and behaviour. Researchers are therefore provided with a complete medical history to accompany the donated brain tissue; they can also access blood samples from donors to help with the discovery of biomarkers that indicate dementia.

### Our ambitions by 2017

- Recruit 3,000 people to donate their brains to dementia research.
- Collect at least 500 well-characterised brains and in-depth clinical information about each donor.
- Distribute brain samples worldwide to support promising new research investigations focusing on dementia.
- Launch new training opportunities for early stage researchers and create resources that offer high-quality career information and guidance.

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## Our research programmes

# Patient and public involvement programme

Harnessing the skills and experience of people affected by dementia to increase the impact of research.

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### Where we are in 2014

Alzheimer's Society has been a pioneer of involving patients and the public in research since we created our Research Network in 1999. It was set up to make sure our research meets the priorities of people living with dementia and their families.

The Research Network has now grown to become an active and engaged group of over 250 volunteers, all of who have a diagnosis of dementia or are carers or former carers. These people are involved in every aspect of our funded research, from research design to helping spread awareness of research findings and the importance of research itself.

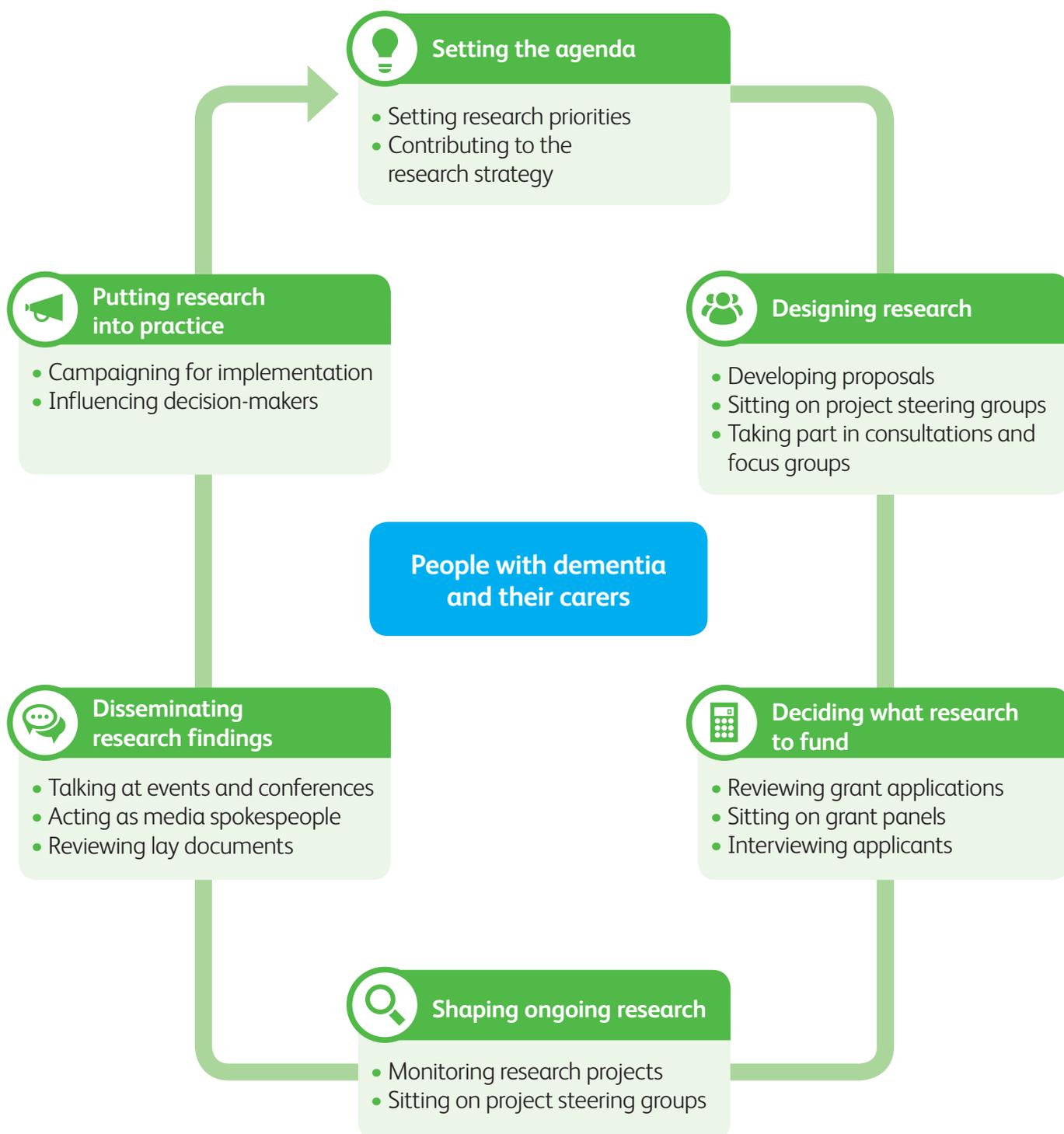
To ensure our Research Network volunteers feel supported and equipped to participate, we provide them with training on research methodology and the impact their involvement can make to research.

Overall, we remain at the forefront of involving people affected by a condition in the co-design and co-delivery of research. And as well as funding research, we have created successful processes that now support researchers developing and delivering research funded by other organisations.

### Our ambitions by 2017

- Continue to lead the way in patient and public involvement in research by developing a greater understanding of the priorities of people affected by dementia and helping them to increasingly shape research proposals.
- Demonstrate the impact that our programme of patient and public involvement has had on dementia research funded by Alzheimer's Society and other organisations.
- Raise awareness of research opportunities for people with dementia and their carers and increase participation in clinical dementia research.
- Find new ways for patients, the public and practitioners to get involved in implementing research findings on a practical level and spreading awareness of knowledge acquired by research.

# Involving people with dementia and their carers at all stages of our research



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# Governance

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## Developing our research strategy

The Alzheimer's Society research strategy reflects an anticipated growth in our research budget up until 2017 and many potential changes and opportunities in the external world.

Whilst we know exactly what we want to achieve, our plans for delivering our goals retain some flexibility. This is so we can respond quickly and effectively to changes that arise in the field of dementia, develop new partnerships and adapt when necessary to secure research funding.

Our research strategy is developed with and guided by our Research Strategy Council, Grant Advisory Boards and people affected by dementia from our Research Network. Their advice ensures the Society funds research that is of high quality and relevance.

When appropriate, we will create special interest groups from our wide network of advisers, people affected by dementia and other experts to work on specific topics.

## Our operating principles

All research proposals submitted to Alzheimer's Society are assessed through peer review and by our Research Network of people with dementia, carers and former carers. This makes sure the research we fund is of a high quality, relevant and a priority for people affected by dementia.

Our Grant Advisory Boards, which are composed of independent chairs, experts in the field of dementia research and people affected by dementia, make final funding recommendations. All applicants for funding are provided with feedback relating to our decisions. Applications that receive funding from Alzheimer's Society and the overall percentage of bids that are successful are featured on our website.

Volunteers from our Research Network are connected to each of our funded research projects to monitor and support progress and spread awareness of relevant information to external audiences.

Alzheimer's Society is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and all our funding processes follow recognised best practice. Our peer review processes were audited by AMRC in 2011 and recommended for meeting the five set principles of accountability, balance, independence, rotation and impartiality.

## Keep up to date with our research developments

As our research programme evolves, we will announce new funding opportunities at [alzheimers.org.uk/ourgrantsrounds](http://alzheimers.org.uk/ourgrantsrounds)

You can also sign up to receive email alerts at [alzheimers.org.uk/grantupdates](http://alzheimers.org.uk/grantupdates)

**Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading support and research charity for people with dementia, their families and carers.**

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Our research strategy can be found online at:

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