

The RT Hon Boris Johnson MP

10 Downing Street

London

SW1A 2AA

26 October 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as leading experts in the field of diabetes to highlight the devastating impact of COVID-19 on medical research charities, and the vital and unique role the research they fund plays in transforming the health of people living with long-term conditions, as well as the health of the biomedical research ecosystem and wider economy.

We urge you to take quick action to invest in the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) proposal for a [Life Sciences-Charity Partnership Fund](#) to ensure that the medical research charity sector is not weakened by the drastic drop in income it faces due to COVID-19. Now more than ever investment is needed in the sector to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, and future pandemics, on the health and wealth of the nation.

The UK medical research charity sector is world-leading and integral to the UK's life sciences ecosystem, which generates over £74 billion in turnover, and supports nearly a quarter of a million jobs across the sector. Last year, charities invested £1.9 billion into medical research – more than half of all public spending in this sector nationally. This funding is invested in innovative research that transforms healthcare and saves lives, with the people benefiting from the research at the heart of everything medical research charities do. It also provides a springboard for the careers of promising early career scientists and contributes significantly to the life sciences workforce pipeline. The investment reaps rewards for the wider economy, with the annual rate of return on charitable investment in medical research being 24-28%.

As a direct result of the financial impact of the pandemic, medical research charities are cutting an average of around 40% of their research funding over the next year. **A £310 million shortfall in research spend in 2020/21, and an estimated 4-year recovery period is projected.** As Diabetes UK funding accounts for 10% of the investment in diabetes research nationally, and we know that many early career researchers rely on it, we are understandably gravely concerned that Diabetes UK has been forced to cut investment into new research by 40% this year.

This has happened at a time when the challenge of diabetes has never been so great. Prevalence of diabetes continues to rise, with nearly four million people in the UK diagnosed with the condition, and a further one million people living with undiagnosed type 2 diabetes. The relentlessness of managing diabetes has only been made harder by COVID-19.

The pandemic has directly, and disproportionately, affected people living with diabetes, with around [third](#) of those dying from the virus having the condition. But the impacts are felt in all aspects of diabetes management, with many routine diabetes services disrupted, and access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity limited.

Medical research charities, including Diabetes UK, are doing all they can to support their currently funded researchers through the pandemic, but cannot continue to invest in new research at the same

level without Government support. The £750 million Government package granted to the charity sector in April, and the £280 million package for university research, provide little relief for medical research charities and will not bridge the funding gap. **We urge you to work in partnership with the sector to establish a Life Sciences-Charity Partnership Fund.** This co-investment scheme is urgently needed to protect life-saving research and to maintain investment in the life sciences sector, which will benefit us all in the long-term and ensure that the sector emerges from this pandemic intact and in a strong position to support the nation's economic recovery and protect us against future pandemics.

Signed,

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