



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Ashley Dalton MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Public Health and Prevention*

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Ms Alice Struthers
Programme Director
Neurological Alliance of Scotland
By email to: alice@scottishneurological.org.uk

18 June 2025

Dear Ms Struthers,

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 March, co-signed by representatives from the Neurological Alliances of England, Wales and Northern Ireland about neurological conditions. As your concerns are health-related, your correspondence to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) was forwarded to the Department of Health and Social Care.

I would like to thank you all for your important work to support those with neurological conditions. I appreciate your concerns.

Government responsibility for delivering research into neurological conditions is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the DSIT, with research delivered through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

Between the financial years 2019/20 and 2023/24, the Department spent £288.9million through the NIHR on research into neurological conditions across its projects, programmes, and infrastructure.

NIHR funded research has tangible impact. For example, researchers at Queen Margaret University have invented footwear that can prevent falls in patients with footdrop, a symptom of some neurological conditions, promoting independence and allowing people to walk more easily. NIHR's funded research portfolio can be found at nihr.opendatasoft.com/pages/homepage.

Government funders are continuing to invest in research into neurological conditions. Some examples include:

- £8million for the EXPERTS-ALS trial, which screens for drugs that have the potential to be successful in clinical trials for people with motor neurone disease (MND). This complements the charity funded platform trial for late phase MND trials that you mention, MND SMART;

- £2million for the MND data catalyst to accelerate the discovery of new diagnostics, treatments and support better care for MND patients;
- co-funding the £6million MND translational accelerator, which has funded 12 projects aimed at accelerating the development of treatment for MND;
- working with LifeArc, MND Association, MND Scotland and My Name's Doddie foundation, the Government contributed £1.1million to the MND Collaborative Partnership;
- investment in the development of SMART-DBS, a patient-personalised deep brain stimulation therapy, to provide long-term seizure prevention for people with epilepsy and suppression of breakthrough events;
- £6million invested into two dementia and neurodegeneration policy research units, to increase evidence and inform policymaking in the Department and its arm's-length bodies. The unit's work programmes span multiple conditions, including dementia, MND, Parkinson's disease, and Huntington's disease; and
- co-funding TBI-REPORTER, which will act as a platform to collate all available research investigating traumatic brain injury (TBI), making it accessible to scientists globally. The development of this initiative seeks to accelerate TBI research and in turn improve treatment and care outcomes for patients.

The NIHR complements wider investments in health and care research, focusing its funding in early translational, clinical and applied health and social care research.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and care, including neurological conditions. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. Welcoming applications on neurological conditions to all NIHR programmes enables maximum flexibility both in terms of the amount of research funding a particular area can be awarded, and the type of research that can be funded.

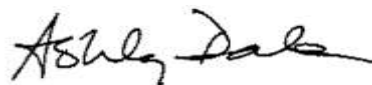
UKRI conducts research through its nine research councils. Each of the UKRI councils has its own research remit. The Medical Research Council (MRC), of UKRI, generally focuses on early biomedical research, including cellular and animal models, while the NIHR funds translational and applied research, where treatments and interventions are tested in real world populations and health and care settings. Studies funded through UKRI can be found at gtr.ukri.org.

As you are aware, we have also announced that we are setting up the new UK-wide Neuro Forum, facilitating formal biannual meetings between the Department, NHS England, the devolved governments and health services, and the Neurological Alliances of all four UK nations. This will bring stakeholders together to share learning from across the UK, discuss important neurology service transformation and workforce challenges, and share best practice examples and potential solutions that will add to existing work and to health plans more widely.

I am pleased that all UK Neurological Alliances are represented on the Forum and we value your input into the Forum's work. Due to diary pressures, I am unable to meet separately at the current time but look forward to working closely together on important neurological issues.

I hope this reply is helpful. I would be grateful if you would share it with Georgina Carr, Ana Palazón and Carla Smyth.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Dalton'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Ashley' written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name 'Dalton'.

ASHLEY DALTON