

Prime Minister launches 'Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission'

- Prime Minister launches national mission to tackle dementia, and doubles research funding to £160 million a year by 2024
- New taskforce to speed up dementia research, using the successful approach of the Covid Vaccine Taskforce
- Prime Minister calls for volunteers to come forward and join 'Babs' Army' by signing up for clinical trials

The Prime Minister has launched a new national mission to tackle dementia and doubled research funding in memory of the late Dame Barbara Windsor.

Dame Barbara's husband, Scott Mitchell, met with the Prime Minister earlier this week at Downing Street. They discussed the significant suffering caused by dementia and the slow process of finding treatments and cures.

In response, the Prime Minister has launched the 'Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission,' in honour of Dame Barbara and the millions of other people and their loved ones who have had their lives ruined by dementia.

An additional £95 million in ringfenced funding will support the national mission, boosting the number of clinical trials and innovative research projects. This will help meet the manifesto commitment to double dementia research funding by 2024, reaching a total of £160 million a year.

The mission will be driven by a new taskforce, bringing together industry, the NHS, academia and families living with dementia. By speeding up the clinical trial process, more hypotheses and potential treatments can be tested for dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases.

The taskforce will build on the success of the Covid Vaccine Taskforce led by Kate Bingham.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said:

Dame Barbara Windsor was a British hero. I had the pleasure of meeting her both on the set of Eastenders as Peggy Mitchell, and at Downing Street as we discussed the injustices faced by dementia sufferers.

I am delighted that we can now honour Dame Barbara in such a fitting way, launching a new national dementia mission in her name.

Working with her husband Scott, and on behalf of everyone who is living with dementia or has a loved one affected by this devastating condition, I am doubling research funding and calling for volunteers to join 'Babs' Army.' We can work together to beat

this disease, and honour an exceptional woman who campaigned tirelessly for change.

One million people are predicted to be living with dementia by 2025, and 1.6 million by 2040. Up to 40% of dementia cases are potentially preventable but causes are still poorly understood. Dementia can affect the brain years before people show any symptoms, which means treatments need to be tested on people far earlier.

More clinical trials are needed but these are often overly time consuming, with resources wasted on trying to find volunteers.

The Prime Minister has today issued a call for volunteers with or without a family history of dementia to come forward and sign up for clinical trials for preventative therapies, nicknamed "Babs' Army."

Scott Mitchell, Dame Barbara's husband, said:

The first in 15 Prime Ministers and over 70 years to grasp the nettle and reform social care, I'm so pleased that Boris had the conviction to do this reform. I'm so honoured that not only has he reformed social care, but he's also committed this new money in Barbara's name to make the necessary research breakthroughs to find a cure for dementia.

Barbara would be so proud that she has had this legacy which will hopefully mean that families in the future won't have to go through the same heart-breaking experience that she and I had to endure. I can't stop thinking about her looking down with pride.

Volunteers can register their interest through the [Join Dementia Research website](#). The new taskforce, combined with the extra funding, will work to reduce the cost of trials while speeding up delivery. Existing NIHR infrastructure will be used, building on new ways of working pioneered during covid vaccination clinical trials.

A recruitment process will start this week for a taskforce lead, with the successful candidate focusing on galvanising action while ensuring the best use of tax-payer money.

The new national mission will build on recent advances in biological and data sciences, including genomics, AI and the latest brain imaging technology, to test new treatments from a growing range of possible options.

Researchers will look for signals of risk factors, which could help those who are at risk from developing dementia to understand how they might be able to slow or prevent the disease in the future.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Steve Barclay, said:

Anyone who lives with dementia, or has a loved one affected, knows the devastating impact this condition can have on their daily lives, but for too long our understanding of its causes have not been fully understood.

By harnessing the same spirit of innovation that delivered the vaccine rollout, this new Dementia mission, backed by £95 million of government funding, will help us find new ways to deliver earlier diagnosis, enhanced treatments and ensure a better quality of life for those living with this disease, both now and in the future.

Hilary Evans, Chief Executive at Alzheimer's Research UK, said:

We're delighted the Government has recommitted to doubling dementia research funding, and that our call for a Dementia Medicines Taskforce to speed up the development of new treatments has been heard. This marks an important step towards finding life-changing treatments for dementia and supporting our NHS to be able to deliver these new medicines to the people who need them when they become available.

We are incredibly grateful to our tireless supporters who have helped keep dementia on the political agenda over the past three years. Over 50,000 people joined us in contacting their MPs, signing petitions, and even writing personal letters to the Prime Minister himself.

The upcoming 10-year dementia plan is a chance for the next Prime Minister to make sure this funding is met with ambitious action and we look forward to working with the Government to turn it into a reality.