

Speech: PM speech at MS Society

Reception: 5 November 2018

It is wonderful to welcome you all to 10 Downing Street today to celebrate the MS Society and the amazing work that you do in so many different ways, as has just been outlined. The work you do to raise money to fund research into new treatments, to support people who are living with MS, raising public awareness of the condition. I think one of the key issues is people understanding what MS is about and the effect it has and campaigning to stop MS.

None of that would be possible without the tireless dedication of MS Society volunteers – and I am delighted that we have so many of you here today.

I also want to thank all those who raise money and provide care for those with MS.

I know just how vital that support can be because my own mother lived with MS.

Just the other day I received a touching letter from a nurse – Nicki Murray – who helped to support my mother when I was younger.

The way Nicki remembered my mother after all these years speaks volumes of the extraordinary care and compassion of our health workers.

I'd like to thank them all for everything that they do for us.

From my mother's experience, I know how incredibly tough living with MS can be.

You all know it changes lives profoundly.

The shock of a diagnosis. The fear of a relapse. The anxiety over what might be ahead – and how that might affect your family and loved ones.

And of course many volunteers and supporters first get involved with the Society precisely because they saw a loved one go through it.

Indeed, we've just heard that the first branch was founded 65 years ago by a husband who watched his wife live with MS, and was frustrated by the lack of treatment and support available.

The situation today is unrecognisable from where we were then, or even 25 years ago – not just in terms of care and support but in terms of treatment too.

We know infinitely more about how to manage symptoms. More treatment options are available than ever before, particularly for relapsing forms of the condition. And the pipeline of treatments has never been stronger.

I think we are now at a crucial point.

Your 'STOP MS' campaign reflects your ambition for us to make the next research breakthrough. And I want you to know that you have an ally in this government.

Earlier this year I announced the single largest cash commitment to our public services ever made by a peacetime Government – an £84 billion five year deal for our NHS.

In return, the NHS will produce a long-term plan to ensure that investment makes a difference on the front-line, including to people living with MS.

But of course the real breakthroughs will come in the laboratory.

We are already putting £7 billion of new public funding into science, research and innovation – the largest increase for 40 years.

And more broadly, across our whole economy, we have set the most ambitious goal for total research and development investment in our history – making it up to 2.4% of our economy – with government and the private sector working together to meet it.

Those investments will pay real dividends in the years ahead. I know that the MS Society is working closely with the National Institute for Health Research on a number of promising treatments – I want that close partnership to continue.

You've achieved a huge amount as a Society and as a wider MS community over many years.

Thank you all for that you have done.

Now you rightly have your eyes set on the greatest prize – stopping MS and bringing an end to the pain and suffering it causes to so many people.

So thank you for all that you have done and let's work together to make that, stopping MS, a reality.