Alzheimer’s Research UK is the UK’s leading dementia research charity. We’re committed to investigating the causes of dementia and developing ways to prevent, diagnose, treat and, ultimately, cure all forms of the condition.

Our year in numbers

Thanks to our incredible supporters, in 2019/20...

- We invested £25.9 million in our charitable activities including £21.1m in our pioneering research programmes, over £1m more than in the previous 12 months.

- We enabled scientists to publish a record 268 research papers, sharing important discoveries with the global research community.

- We launched our Early Detection of Neurodegenerative diseases (EDoN) initiative, aiming to pick up the diseases that cause dementia 10-15 years before symptoms affect someone’s day-to-day life.

- We brought together 263 scientists from across the world for our very first virtual research conference.

- We welcomed the government’s pledge to double funding for dementia research to £160m a year, publishing our ‘Delivering the Dementia Moonshot’ report to highlight the research avenues that need urgent investment.

- We partnered with Alzheimer’s Society to deliver the Dementia Revolution campaign through our Charity of the Year partnership for the Virgin Money London Marathon, reaching an incredible £4m. It was the most successful Charity of the Year partnership in the marathon’s 39-year history.

- We launched the third chapter of our award-winning #ShareTheOrange campaign. Our film, fronted by Hollywood superstar Samuel L. Jackson, was watched 6.5m times.

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Our scientists made more than 250 important discoveries, paving the way for new diagnostic tests, preventions and treatments. Among our top 10 were: 

- The discovery that high or rising blood pressure in midlife is linked to increased damage to blood vessels in the brain, and smaller brain volumes at the age of 70 – both indicators of declining brain health. This study has advanced our understanding of how risk factors for heart health, including smoking and high blood pressure, affect the brain.
- After analysing how 27,000 people played our smartphone game Sea Hero Quest, scientists at the University of East Anglia discovered that adults who have an Alzheimer’s risk gene called APOE4 performed worse on spatial navigation tasks than those without the gene. These are important findings as normal memory and thinking tests could not distinguish between the two groups, pointing to a role for technology like Sea Hero Quest in improving the way we diagnose dementia.

Introduction from our Chairman and Chief Executive

With your support, we invested £25.9m in our charitable activities, including £21.1m in our pioneering research programmes - more than ever before.

This translated into more important discoveries, with Alzheimer’s Research UK-funded scientists publishing 208 research papers in 2019, sharing important new findings with the research community around the world.

And this growing momentum is consistent with all our measures and global trends indicating the vitality of the dementia research sector before the COVID-19 outbreak. In 2019, there were more research publications than ever before and knowledge was used to drive forward more cutting-edge treatments in trial for the diseases that cause the disease. We are the first to respond to these challenges COVID-19 has presented us with a challenge.

From the launch of EDoN, our ambitious initiative focusing on the early detection of dementia-causing diseases, to the appointment of Prof Jonathan Schott as the charity’s first ever Chief Medical Officer and the third chapter of our award-winning #ShareTheOrange campaign - there’s a great deal to celebrate.

The incredible support that made all this possible means we know we’ll come back stronger than ever.

Thanks to you, no matter what the world throws at us, research will find a way.

Hilary Evans  David Mayhew CBE  CHIEF EXECUTIVE  CHAIRMAN

We fund and deliver pioneering research

Between April 2019 and March 2020 our supporters enabled us to commit £25.9m to our charitable activities. This included investing £21.1m in groundbreaking research, supporting projects across all forms of dementia.

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We work collaboratively to accelerate scientific progress

We work with governments, funders, charities, the pharmaceutical industry, and people affected by dementia to bring about life-changing treatments as soon as possible.

We’re making the case for increased government funding. Dementia costs the UK economy £26bn a year, but in 2017/18, government investment in dementia research was just £82.5m: 0.3% of the condition’s enormous cost to society.

With the help of 1,200 of our supporters who wrote to their MPs, we’ve been calling for increased funding, and we were delighted that in the 2019 election, the government pledged to launch a ‘Dementia Moonshot’ to find a cure for dementia - doubling research funding and speeding up trials for new treatments. In response, we published ‘Delivering the Dementia Moonshot’, identifying the most ambitious and promising research where urgent investment is needed. With your help, we’re continuing to hold the government to account on this important promise.

We’re shaping future treatments. As we work towards the first life-changing dementia treatments, it’s essential that we fully understand the aspects of daily life people would most want a new treatment to preserve.

We’re extremely grateful to the 5,800 people who shared their views as part of our Shaping Future Treatments survey, developed with Prof Craig Ritchie at the University of Edinburgh. The results will be used to help inform regulators and healthcare decision makers who must assess the next generation of dementia treatments.

We continue to learn from people affected by dementia.

This year we formed a Policy Involvement Panel to bring people living with dementia, their carers, and their loved ones much closer to our work to inform and influence government’s action on dementia. Panel members have already contributed to 10 different projects, including feeding into the development of the year’s key policy report - ‘Delivering the Dementia Moonshot’.

We held our first entirely virtual research conference. As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, we made the difficult decision to cancel our annual Research Conference. Instead, we quickly adapted to host our first virtual conference on Twitter to ensure vital new discoveries and projects were shared and discussed, despite strict lockdowns. Over 250 scientists contributed to the event, from those self-isolating in Boston Massachussetts, to those working from their homes in Sheffield.

We pledged up to £36m to support our Drug Discovery Alliance for a further five years. The Alliance links Drug Discovery Institutes at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford and University College London, with the goal of translating new findings from academic research into potential treatments as quickly as possible. Our support now enables the Alliance to press on with critical drug discovery projects - with 14 ongoing projects focusing on emerging new biological processes linked to dementia.

Rachel Apple presenting our Just 1% petition earlier this year. The petition, signed by nearly 35,000 people, called for government to increase annual funding for dementia research to just 1% of the UK’s yearly economic cost of dementia.
Stigma and misunderstanding are still getting in the way of progress. To reach our goal of a world free from the fear and heartache of dementia, we must first change the conversation.

We’re providing accurate and accessible information about dementia to anyone who needs it. Through our Dementia Research Infoline, we offered information and reassurance to more than 3,700 people wanting to improve their understanding of dementia and research efforts to overcome it.

We distributed 195,000 free health information booklets to households and communities across the UK, and helped more than 1,800 people to register their interest in taking part in research studies through the national Join Dementia Research service.

Our #ShareTheOrange campaign is encouraging people to think differently. The third chapter of #ShareTheOrange, this time featuring Hollywood superstar Samuel L. Jackson, showed how connections in the brain are threatened when dementia takes hold, shining a light on the role research can play in saving these vital connections.

Chapter three was our most successful yet, with the campaign film watched 6.5m times across 105 different countries. And in an exciting first for the campaign, five landmarks across the UK, including the Blackpool Tower and Ely Cathedral were illuminated orange to mark World Alzheimer’s Day.

We’re engaging the public with dementia research. Between April 2019 and March 2020, we met with thousands of people at events of all types - from New Scientist Live to Green Man Festival - showcasing research and helping to change attitudes towards dementia.

And we opened a brand new grant scheme called the Inspire Fund, designed to bring new perspectives and expertise to bear on our work to build understanding of dementia. Funded projects include an analysis of attitudes to dementia on social media using machine learning and a series of events supporting Chinese communities, aiming to tackle stigma and share information about reducing risk.

We’re expanding our reach in the media and online. Our work was featured in the news more than 8,000 times during the year, an increase of over 2,000 mentions on the previous 12 months. The stories that attracted the greatest attention included:

- The Dementia Revolution: Our collaboration with Alzheimer’s Society built around the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon. Together, we generated 4,548 pieces of media coverage including slots on BBC Breakfast, Good Morning Britain and BBC Radio1. Polling found that one third of UK adults were aware of the campaign, with 41% of those saying it made them feel hopeful and 40% saying it made them feel positive about progress being made.

- Good heart health in 20s linked to better brain health decades later: After US scientists showed that better heart health in a person’s 20s leads to better memory and thinking skills decades later, our Head of Research, Dr Sara Imarisio went on record to explain the link between the heart and the brain, and the steps we can take to keep both healthy.

We challenge the way people think about dementia. We’re providing accurate and accessible information about dementia to anyone who needs it. Through our Dementia Research Infoline, we offered information and reassurance to more than 3,700 people wanting to improve their understanding of dementia and research efforts to overcome it.

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You make it possible

We rely on the generosity of our supporters to carry out our work and in 2019/20 we received an incredible £38m in donations.

53,000 people now make monthly donations to support our work, an increase of 10,000 people in just 12 months. These amazing, committed supporters contribute a vital source of predictable income to the charity. And we’re so grateful to the incredible 207 donors who left gifts in their wills to support dementia research. Legacy gifts totalled £1m in 2019/20 and made one in three of our research projects possible.

We have, once again, received astonishing levels of support from our Corporate Partners.

Our extraordinary Corporate Partners, including the Iceland Foods Charitable Foundation, The Perfume Shop, Dyson and Ubisoft raised a fantastic £3.3m during the year. These generous companies and their employees also support our cause by contributing vital skills and using their networks to amplify our awareness campaigns.

Our passionate supporters remain the backbone of the charity.

More than 15,000 people chose to fundraise and volunteer for us in 2019/20, and did so with the creativity, passion and sense of fun that defines our supporters. A real highlight came on 28 April 2019, when 2,000 runners took on the Virgin Money London Marathon in support of the Dementia Revolution – our joint campaign with Alzheimer’s Society. Our Revolutionaries raised an incredible £4m to power projects at the UK Dementia Research Institute, making this the most successful Charity of the Year partnership in the marathon’s 39-year history.

And we celebrated a major milestone in our partnership with parkrun UK: a staggering £1.5m raised. We’re delighted that so many parkrunners have got behind our cause, taking part in campaigns including our award-winning virtual event, Running Down Dementia.

We continue to be inspired by the generous support we receive from philanthropists, trusts and foundations.

We were delighted to receive two seven-figure donations during the year, as well as a crucial pledge from Bill Gates in support of our Early Detection of Neurodegenerative diseases (EDoN) initiative.

And we established The Accelerate Club to bring together philanthropists interested in supporting our Drug Discovery Institute at University College London. Six months in we’ve recruited 12 members to support the pioneering work taking place at the Institute.
"You can do far more than you think you can"

Anna Law is determined to play her part in ending dementia once and for all, after witnessing the impact of Alzheimer’s disease on two generations of her family – her grandfather and her mother.

She took on the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon as part of the Dementia Revolution and has since pledged to leave a gift in her Will.

“I firmly believe that we will advance our knowledge of dementia through research. In my own lifetime, I have seen how science can change lives and I take hope for the future. That’s why I’m leaving a gift to Alzheimer’s Research UK in my Will – so other families won’t have to go through what mine has been through.”

Andrew Ross, a 60-year-old occasional cyclist, planned his epic fundraising challenge after witnessing the devastating impact of dementia on his wife’s mother in the final years of her life and on her family and loved ones around her.

“Last year, we put together an event called ‘Cycle2Corfu’, which saw us cycling almost 2,000km from the UK to Greece to raise funds for dementia research. There were a lot of highs but the biggest of all was probably missing the Alps.

The climb was really tough but the beautiful scenery helped. There was an enormous feeling of satisfaction on completing our toughest days, and of course when crossing the finishing line in Corfu. We raised over £300,000 which was double our initial target and incredibly satisfying for us. We monitored our fundraising as we rode and it was a real inspiration for everyone to keep going. If there’s one thing I think we’ve proved, it’s that if you put your mind to it, you can do far more than you think you can.”

Protecting future generations from the heartbreak of dementia
We expect a sharp drop in income and, with it, a reduction in the amount we can invest in research. Although we have already postponed some planned projects, we’re safeguarding crucial areas of our work and we remain committed to our mission.

There’s still a great deal to look forward to and we take inspiration from the development of the COVID-19 vaccines, which demonstrate what we can achieve through research.

In the coming year, we will continue our long-term support for four major research initiatives designed to accelerate progress towards new treatments – the Dementia Consortium, our Drug Discovery Alliance, the Dementia Discovery Fund and the UK Dementia Research Institute. And we will continue to fund more than 110 ongoing research grants directed by leading researchers across the UK, from Pilot Projects to Research Fellowships.

Looking to the future

We made important progress in 2019/20, funding more vital research than ever before. But there’s a great deal left to do, and the enormous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means the months between the end of the 2020 financial year and publishing this report have looked very different for us and for everyone working to end dementia.

Our Early Detection of Neurodegenerative diseases (EDoN) initiative will be a priority. We look forward to working with research volunteers as we start to collect data, and with our partners to develop cutting-edge digital approaches to spot the early warning signs of the diseases that cause dementia.

We will work to ensure that the urgently-needed injection of funding pledged by government is delivered, and that funds are directed to the research that will make the greatest difference.

In response to evidence suggesting that up to 40% of cases of dementia are linked to risk factors that we may be able to influence, we will launch a new campaign to celebrate everything our brains do for us and empower people to take positive steps to protect their brain health.

As virtual fundraising events will be more important than ever, we will find new and exciting ways to connect supporters online. The Mighty Quiz will enable anyone to challenge their friends and family, and power dementia research from the comfort of their own living room. And our new virtual triathlon, The Treble Challenge, will give supporters the freedom to run, cycle and swim at a time and place of their choosing.
Thanks to our amazing supporters, we invested £25.9m in our charitable activities in 2019/20, including £21.1m in our research programmes. This is over £1m more than in the previous 12 months.

How do we use your donations?

For every £1 donated
• 72p powered our research and helped people to understand and take action on dementia.
• 28p helped to raise the next £1 and fund essential running costs.

These figures differ from the 2019 figures (77p and 23p) as a result of fewer fundraising events taking place throughout the end of the financial year and the uncertainty in our operating environment caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this uncertainty, we made the tough decision not to take on new research commitments, to ensure we could continue to fund existing research programmes.

Our promise to you
We depend on the generosity of you, our supporters, to fund our pioneering research programmes. In return, we promise to:

Spend your money wisely
Only investing in the highest quality research and continuing to look for ways to reduce costs and run our charity more efficiently, including the use of volunteers where possible.

Treat you fairly
Keeping you informed by demonstrating the progress that your donations are helping to fuel, and we won’t present anything in a way that could be misleading, whether in reports like this one, on our website or on the phone.

Protect your information
Taking all necessary steps to keep your data safe. We’ll never sell, rent or share your information with external organisations for their benefit. More information at alzheimersresearchuk.org/privacy-policy.

Find out more
The following resources provide further information about dementia and the activity covered in this Annual Review.

Full 2019/20 Annual Report
For a more detailed picture of our work and progress made during the year, please read our Annual Report: alzres.uk/annual-reports

Early Detection of Neurodegenerative diseases (EDoN)
With a wealth of digital data at our fingertips, now is the time to transform the early detection of the diseases that cause dementia. Learn more about our game-changing EDoN initiative: edon-initiative.org

Delivering the Dementia Moonshot
We’ve called on government to invest in six priority research areas, which will help to deliver a life-changing treatment for dementia. Here’s our delivery plan: alzres.uk/moonshot-report

#ShareTheOrange
Too many people still think dementia is a natural part of ageing. To help change that, and improve understanding of the diseases that cause dementia, please share our film about an orange: alzres.uk/orange

An introduction to dementia
Our Quick guide to dementia available in English and seven other languages, provides the basic facts about dementia in easy-to-understand terms: alzres.uk/quick-guides
We would like to thank all those who have donated and chosen to remain anonymous.

George and Alison Cornwall-Leigh - Indian Summer Ball
George and Martha Back
Guy & Anne Morton
Hidden Hearings
Houghton Dunn Charitable Trust
Macy McDonald Menzies Charitable Trust
John Lebus, in memory of Penelope Lebus
Tom & Jenny Casswell
Karen Penny
Ken Hunter
Kittwalk, Sir Tom Hunter & The Hunter Foundation
Kohler Mira
Lavenham Trust
Lazarus
Legal & General Group plc
Lewisham College
Lloyds
Lady Enid Lymer, in memory of Alan Gray
Linstead
Dilys Linstead, in memory of Roger Linstead
Diligenta Limited
Capital
Development Bank of Wales & FW Capital

behalf of research. These people and organizations have made an exceptional contribution to our work.

We would like to thank all those who have supported us in 2019/20.

Your donations, however big or small, are driving research that will transform the lives of people with dementia. Thank you for believing in the power of research. These people and organizations have made an exceptional contribution to our work.

We would like to thank to everyone who remembered us through a gift in their Will, including:

- Albert Edward Anderson
- Andrew Bart
- Andy Watson
- Barbara Johnston
- Barbara Partidge
- Brenda Anthony
- David Greenwood
- The Handbell Centenary Fund
- The Ingram Trust
- The James Dyson Foundation
- The Jordan Charitable Foundation
- The K Manner Charitable Trust
- The K S Macdonald Charitable Trust
- The Murdoch Forrest Charitable Trust
- The Nielsen Family, in memory of David Hughes
- The Nigel Scott Will Trust
- The Glover family
- The Park Family Charitable Trust
- The Rackstraw Charitable Trust
- The Saintsbury Trust
- The Samaritans Foundation
- The Sigem Charitable Trust
- The Steel Charitable Trust
- The Sygmondain Family Charitable Trust
- The Zochonis Charitable Trust
- Tom Atwood
- Ubisoft

Thank you to everyone who donated and chose to remain anonymous.

This page contains a list of individuals and organizations that have supported Alzheimer’s Research UK. The text thanks these supporters for their contributions and highlights the importance of their donations in driving research to transform the lives of people with dementia.

The list includes individuals such as Mr and Mrs Alan Howard, who donated through their Will, and organizations like the Alzheimer’s Society and the Inland Revenue. These contributions are acknowledged as crucial to the research that the organization conducts.

The text also emphasizes the importance of donations, no matter the size, in supporting research that aims to transform the lives of those with dementia. It thanks everyone for their belief in the power of research and acknowledges the contributions of those who have supported the organization in 2019/20.

Overall, the page serves as a gratitude acknowledgment to all those who have contributed to the work of Alzheimer’s Research UK, recognizing their pivotal role in advancing research and supporting those affected by dementia.
Alzheimer’s Research UK is the UK’s leading dementia research charity.

Visit www.alzheimersresearchuk.org to find out more.