Five steps to delivering life-changing treatments for dementia

Almost a million people are living with dementia in the UK, and one in three who are born today will develop it in their lifetime. Dementia is a leading cause of death, with no disease-modifying treatments and a cost to the UK economy of close to £25bn a year now, and nearly double this by 2050. We are at a tipping point for progress in dementia research — with concerted action from the next Prime Minister, the UK can be a world leader in dementia clinical trials and transform lives.

1. **Keep dementia research a priority for government**
   Significant advances in science and technology mean we now have the potential to pioneer a new generation of treatments. But we need focused leadership and investment across government, to bring together the right stakeholders and drive the delivery of new treatments. Government must seize opportunities such as the 10-year dementia plan and the recently announced Dementia Mission and deliver on the commitment to double dementia research spending by 2024.

2. **Enable earlier and more accurate diagnosis in the NHS**
   Dementia treatments in development target earlier stages of the specific diseases that cause different types of dementia. But this research is being slowed down because people are often diagnosed too late and with too little accuracy to be matched to the right clinical trials. Government must invest in NHS diagnosis for dementia, to provide the cutting-edge tools and techniques that will give people the answers they need faster and the opportunity to participate in clinical research.

3. **Improve participation and diversity in dementia research**
   Recruitment to dementia clinical trials is trailing behind other major diseases. Fewer than 2% of people with dementia are recruited, compared with 20% of cancer patients. Additionally, populations disproportionately affected by dementia are underrepresented in research. Government action is needed to increase public and clinician awareness and widen opportunities to participate in dementia research, building on existing successful initiatives.

4. **Increase the speed and scale of clinical trials**
   For patients in the UK to be among the first to benefit from new treatments, the UK needs to be a leading location for clinical trials. However, the last five years have seen a decline across disease areas in both the number of trials being initiated in the UK and the number of patients in each trial, putting us at risk of falling behind global competitors. Given the specific challenges in dementia, the government should establish a dementia clinical trials network with a single point of entry for new medicines and an aligned approach to agreeing contracts with drug manufacturers more quickly.

5. **Prepare the health system for new treatments**
   We want those who will benefit to be able to access new treatments as soon as they are deemed to be safe and effective. Investment will be needed to deliver this in the NHS. The government should bring together key decision-makers across the health system to develop a clear action plan for enabling fast and equitable access to new treatments for dementia. NHS decisions about affordability should balance cost against the significant individual, societal and economic burdens of dementia.

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