One year on from the **House of Commons Petitions Committee report** on funding for research into brain tumours, Brain Tumour Research is working with the Government’s Task and Finish Group and calling on the Government to implement the Petitions Committee’s recommendations.

Brain tumours kill more children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer¹, yet just 1% of the national spend on cancer research has been allocated to this devastating disease².

Following Brain Tumour Research’s successful e-petition, the Petitions Committee’s subsequent inquiry, first report and Westminster Hall debate supported by over 70 cross-party MPs, a Government Task and Finish Group was set up. The Group is addressing the need to increase the level and impact of brain tumour research. With the backing of 120,000 people, who signed the original petition demanding more funding for research into brain tumours, Brain Tumour Research is playing a lead role within the group to ensure the recommendations are followed through.

The Group recognises the need to build research capacity in this area within the UK, while still developing a new generation of brain tumour researchers and attracting and retaining talent to the field. This challenge requires dedicated action across the board, from both charities and the Government.

According to the Petitions Committee, “successive governments have failed brain tumour patients and their families for decades”³ yet in the 12 months since the Petitions Committee report, national spend on brain tumour research may have gone backwards. The National Cancer Research Institute’s (NCRI) latest figures reveal that the total national spend on cancer research allocated to research into brain tumours decreased to just 1.37% in 2015⁴.

The burden of research investment into brain tumours has fallen heavily on the third sector. In 2015, charities funded 86% of the national research into brain tumours, while the 14% of Government spend on brain tumour research represented just 0.52% of its total spend on cancer research in 2015⁵.
Shocking brain tumour campaigners in an announcement late last year, Cancer Research UK (CRUK) estimated that deaths from brain cancer will remain static over the next 20 years, with just one in five surviving the disease for five years following diagnosis. Yet they predict that overall cancer death rates within the UK will fall by 15% by 2035. This disparity is unacceptable; we must offer a fairer deal to brain tumour patients.

Brain tumours have been neglected for too long; we should not allow this situation to continue unchallenged and abandon the 60,000 people living with this disease in the UK. While we applaud the wonderful advances for many other diseases, through the fantastic research breakthroughs of recent years, it is now time for focus on brain tumour patients and their families to see results.

Better outcomes are the result of painstaking long-term research both in the lab and in the clinic. We need a significant boost to dedicated research investment in order to increase the number of researchers in this area and to achieve better outcomes for brain tumour patients.

Brain Tumour Research is campaigning to see the national spend on research into brain tumours increased to £30 - £35 million a year, in line with breast cancer and leukaemia. The charity, which receives no Government funding, is building a network of experts working at world-class Research Centres of Excellence in the UK, with four already established.

Following their inquiry, the Petitions Committee identified that for too long, funding for brain tumour research had been inadequate and not given sufficient priority. “Britain has dedicated researchers in this area but is losing young, talented people because they are unable to access research funding. The country is losing the chance to be a world leader in this area and is letting down patients and their families.”

The Committee reported that funding for site-specific brain tumour research comes mostly from the voluntary sector and praised charities for their incredible work in funding brain tumour research. They highlighted the difficulties that are faced within fundraising, not least because of a lack of public awareness.

The Petitions Committee stated that the Government must not leave charities to tackle this devastating disease alone and that sole responsibility for deciding on priorities for medical research and for identifying diseases with unmet need should not be left to the voluntary sector.

Going on to explore barriers to research, the Committee found that historical funding problems for research into brain tumours and lack of leadership from successive governments in this area appears to have left a gap in the research workforce within the UK.

The Committee welcomed the recent commitments by NCR partners CRUK and Children with Cancer to prioritise brain tumours as a cancer of ‘unmet need’ but believe that the responsibility for ensuring that gaps in research funding are filled cannot rest solely with the voluntary sector.

They explained that if the Government showed additional leadership on brain tumour research funding, other institutions and organisations would follow.

The Petitions Committee recommended that the Government should:

- Take a greater lead by playing a greater role in identifying gaps in funding, by setting priorities for research and by supporting the development of the research workforce required to give those suffering with a brain tumour some hope for the future
- Give a clear statement of whether it thinks funding levels are adequate and, if not, what it will do to ensure that funding for brain tumour research increases
- Use its powerful influence on funding levels to send a clear message that brain tumour research is a major priority for the UK
- Ensure that there is adequate support for young scientists who wish to pursue a career in brain tumour research, so that they can stay and progress in their areas of specialism
- Not leave the prioritisation of research funding only to the voluntary sector, it should consider the burden of disease from brain tumours and take a more active role in setting priorities for brain tumour research funding
- Must ensure greater oversight of research funding to ensure that it is able to identify and, if appropriate, take steps to address any gaps in funding

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We call on Parliamentarians to support their constituents and take action.

You can help the Government to address the historic underfunding of brain tumour research by working with us to implement the Petitions Committee’s recommendations.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to organise a meeting with our Public Affairs team or would like further information: campaigning@braintumourresearch.org

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