

From the President
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Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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Dear Prime Minister

On behalf of the Academy of Medical Sciences, one of the UK's four national Academies, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister and offer our support to you and your Government.

Since you first became Prime Minister in July, you have consistently highlighted your support for UK science and research. From announcing a new fast-track visa for scientists to promising major investments in R&D, your passion for science and technology is clear. These commitments are extremely welcome and the Academy looks forward to working with you to help deliver on your ambition.

As you know, biomedical research and innovation is one of the UK's great strengths. We are fortunate to have an outstanding research base, bringing together world-class universities, a thriving life sciences industry, and the unrivalled research potential of the NHS. This strength delivers benefits to patients in the form better treatments and better care, but it also deliver economic impact, with every pound invested in medical research returning 25 pence to the UK economy every year, forever.

Investment

However, despite this strength, the UK under-invests in R&D. We invest a lower proportion of our national wealth in R&D than many other leading scientific nations and well below the average across developed economies. Without concerted action our unique eco-system will suffer and we will fall behind.

During the election campaign, you committed to address this historical failing by increasing public investment to £18 billion by 2024/25. Your Government has also set a target of spending 2.4% of GDP on R&D by 2027. I hope that you will now take the opportunity to turn these targets into a reality by setting out a holistic long-term vision for public investment and measures that will encourage and support businesses to invest in R&D. In doing so you would set the UK on a transformative trajectory to matching the investment of other leading science nations and cementing our position as a science superpower.

Research in the NHS

Our NHS is unique. It is also a huge, untapped research asset that has the power to drive health improvements for patients in the UK and throughout the world.

You have promised to increase investment in the NHS to £33.9 billion by 2023-24. In order to feel the full benefits of this investment on our nation's health, the NHS must be an active partner in research and a driver of innovation. The Academy will shortly be publishing our vision for how this potential can be unleashed. Our report outlines how investing in and valuing research in the NHS can transform patient care, increase job-satisfaction, improve recruitment and retention and decrease the locum bill. I look forward to discussing how these recommendations can complement the NHS Long Term Plan and imminent People Plan.

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Talent

Of course, it is not simply about money. Research is performed by people. To excel we must invest in training our domestic workforce and giving them the skills to take part in highly interdisciplinary 21st Century research.

We must also be able to attract and retain talented people from across the globe. You have personally acknowledged this and committed to streamline our immigration system for talented researchers. This tone is extremely welcome.

However, the reality is that three years of uncertainty has had a negative effect on our reputation. Fewer researchers are choosing to come to the UK to take up prestigious EU grants and some of our world-renowned institutes are finding it harder to fill research posts. There is rebuilding to be done.

I urge you therefore to continue to champion the contribution that global talent makes to our research and to our country. I urge you to lead a Government that welcomes talented individuals who wish to study, start their careers and settle in the UK.

Leaving the EU

You have also promised to ensure that the UK leaves the EU with a deal on 31 January.

When we leave the EU, we must take advantage of the opportunities for global partnership and collaboration, making it easier to work with researchers from across the globe on shared challenges such as anti-microbial resistance and an ageing population.

We must also be clear that leaving the EU does not mean leaving Europe. Our European partners are our closest, most frequent and fastest growing partners in research. These productive partnerships are mutually beneficial for our researchers and patients alike. We must signal that we will not be stepping back from them.

As your Government negotiates the terms of our future relationship with the EU, I hope that you will act swiftly to show that the UK will continue to be a willing and collaborative partner with our European neighbours. In research, I believe that the best way to do this would be to signal the UK's commitment to achieving the closest possible association to the next EU research programme, Horizon Europe.

Our scientific prowess continues to be a great strength of our country. Like you, I believe that it holds the keys to our nation's future health and wealth. However the uncertainty of recent years, has undoubtedly had a negative impact on our reputation and our confidence. Swift action is required to reverse this.

You now have the opportunity to act quickly and concertedly to restore our reputation and ensure that the UK remains one of the best places in the world to discover, explore and develop the new ideas that will shape our future. I urge you to take it.

Yours sincerely



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