



**Chris Heaton-Harris**  
Member of Parliament for Daventry  
House of Commons, London SW1A  
0AA  
Tel: 020 7219 7048

February 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about support for people with motor neurone disease (MND). Ensuring early diagnosis and support for those living with MND remains a key priority of the NHS.

With early diagnosis being the key to treating the symptoms of MND, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published new guidelines for clinicians on the assessment and management of MND. These set out the signs and symptoms of the disease and recommend that patients suspected of having MND should be referred without delay. The Royal College of GPs and the MND Association have also worked together to produce a 'Red Flag Tool' which sets out key signs of MND, to help GPs to identify suspected cases and ensure prompt referral.

I also recognise the valuable contribution made by carers of people with MND, many of whom spend a significant proportion of their life providing support to family members, friends and neighbours. I agree that carers must receive the right support to help them carry out their caring roles and a new cross-Government National Carers Strategy is being introduced to look at what more can be done to support existing and future carers.

I was extremely interested to read about the research undertaken by the University of Edinburgh which identified an issue with MND patients' nerve cells, suggesting that this damage could be repaired by improving the energy levels in mitochondria. While I understand that this research is still in early stages, it is a most welcome step forward, and I will certainly follow this closely.

In addition to the 1.5 million people identified in England with conditions centrally identified, GPs identified other patients who are clinically extremely vulnerable. This means that if someone with MND is identified by GP to be clinically extremely vulnerable they will be added to the list and will be able to access the cross-government support package.

Given the range of disease progression and severity of symptoms in people with MND, their blanket inclusion in the clinical extremely vulnerable group would not be appropriate. This is true for those at both the mildest end of symptoms, and those in the last few months of life.

£288 million has been spent on research into neurological conditions, including MND, in the past decade through the publicly funded National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). With the NIHR's annual spending on neurological conditions up by more than £22 million in that period, I remain hopeful that this funding will discover new ways to improve the lives of those diagnosed with MND.



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In January 2019, the NHS Long Term Plan was launched, including a commitment to reduce health inequalities. For example, the most deprived children at present are 15% more likely to be obese at year 6 of primary school; the Government has committed to halve all childhood obesity and to significantly reduce the gap between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030. To support local planning and ensure national programmes are focused on health inequality reduction, the NHS will set out specific, measurable goals for narrowing inequalities, including these relating to poverty, through the service improvements set out in the Long Term Plan.

Thank you for inviting me to the February 2020 Meeting of the APPG for MND. I am unfortunately unable to attend, but I will continue to follow this issue closely.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**