



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

19th November 2020

Dear Constituent,

Re: Protecting Charities

Thank you for your email and for setting out your concerns. I absolutely agree with you that charities play a vital part in our national life and, as you rightly say, medical charities are particularly important. They spur on some of our best and most innovative developments in medical treatment and diagnosis.

I have met with Government on a number of occasions to discuss this and hope it will give you some reassurance to know that Ministers in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) have met with the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) regularly in recent months. This organisation includes over 150 charities that fund all stages of research, from Alzheimer's Research UK and the British Heart Foundation through to Cancer Research UK and the Stroke Association. During these discussions there has been open dialogue on the challenges which medical research charities are facing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and how these can be addressed.

In addition, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is also working with the AMRC, as well as individual charities, to understand the impact of the pandemic on the sector. I also know from the conversations that I have had that Government is keen to foster close cooperation to ensure that that patients continue benefiting from charity funded research.

I also want to reassure you that the Government understands the huge financial impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on medical research charities and the research they sponsor. For this reason, the Government announced a major package of support in the summer to enable universities, which undertake the research on behalf of the charities, to continue this vital research.

The Chancellor has also made £750 million worth of funding available for charities to enable them to continue providing essential services to those most in need. As part of this funding package, £22 million has been awarded to help lifesaving health charities, including those working to support those with cancer.

Many charities and social enterprises will also benefit from the existing measures announced to support employers and businesses. Under these measures, like other businesses, charities can defer their VAT bills and pay no business rates for their shops next year.

All charities have also been eligible for the job retention scheme and the right answer for many charities will have been to furlough their employees with the Government paying the majority of their wages. This has allowed them to continue to focus their resources during the pandemic on where it is most needed – supporting patients and funding research.

You also mention the Comprehensive Spending Review in your email to me. As you may be aware, the Chancellor has announced that this one-year review will be conducted on the 25th November and will focus on supporting jobs and the response to COVID-19.

While I know that the government would have liked to outline plans for the rest of this Parliament (up to 2024) and I have been feeding into this for a number of months now, this review must now be geared towards COVID-19 and so will only span one year. This is a clear reflection of the serious economic situation we find ourselves in and the uncertain outlook for the public finances.

I met with the Chancellor again on 11 November to discuss this Spending Review and he confirmed that it will primarily focus on three areas:

- providing departments with the certainty they need to tackle Covid-19 and deliver our Plan for Jobs to support employment.
- giving our vital public services enhanced support to continue to fight against the virus alongside delivering first class frontline services.
- investing in infrastructure to deliver our ambitious plans to unite and level up the country, drive our economic recovery and Build Back Better.

I know that my ministerial colleagues are aware of the BHF campaign and the concerns which have been raised. I would be more than happy to mention these concerns directly to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the lobbies in Parliament next week.

I hope this gives you some reassurance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Higginbotham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Antony Higginbotham MP
Member of Parliament for Burnley