

PARKINSON'S FUNDING CRISIS

Charity pays NHS £2m to bolster care for sufferers

A CHARITY has become so worried about the quality of care offered to NHS patients that it is donating a record £2million to pay for nurses and treatments.

Parkinson's UK has been driven to "stage an intervention" after being inundated with complaints from sufferers about lengthy waiting times for their vital neuro-physiotherapy appointments.

The money will be directed to areas of the UK struggling the most and will pay for 24 specialists covering physio, occupational and speech and language therapy and mental health.

Campaigner Dennis Reed, of over-60s group, Silver Voices said: "What a sorry state of collapse the NHS is in if a charity has to fund core services, including nursing staff.

"It's typical that diseases affecting older people like Parkinson's and dementia are grossly underfunded.

"The charities should be campaigning with us for a health funding rescue plan rather than trying to plug holes in a rusty bucket."

It is not the first intervention of this type. Last year, Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity donated £1million for seven NHS nursing posts to care for children and young people with epilepsy.

Meanwhile, the NHS budget in 2020-21 was £192billion.

But due to the impact of the pandemic, there are a record 6.2 million people waiting to start treatment, the highest number since records began in August 2007, NHS data shows. Dr

EXCLUSIVE

By Sarah O'Grady
Social Affairs Correspondent

Donald Grosset, a consultant neurologist, said: "NHS England has published plans on how health services should recover. However the focus is on addressing the cancer and surgery backlogs.

"Neurology and Parkinson's aren't even mentioned. We are taking the initiative and working with health professionals across the UK to support and grow the workforce to drive up the quality of care.

"Parkinson's is the fastest growing neurological condition in the world. More than 145,000 people in the UK have Parkinson's. There is no cure."

Dr Rowan Wathes, associate director of the UK Parkinson's Excellence Network, said: "Prior to the pandemic, we knew Parkinson's care needed investment, but the Covid crisis has turned the

once tiny cracks in services into yawning fissures and there are now huge backlogs.

"This calls for unprecedented steps from the charity."

Analysis of NHS data by the Neurological Alliance revealed by the end of March last year, more than 150,000 people were waiting to be assessed by a specialist.

As many as 60,000 were waiting for a neurosurgery appointment. And 10,000 out of this number had been waiting for more than a year.

A research team at Lancaster University found that 29 per cent of

I was in a terrible state waiting for appointment



Concern... Margaret worries for those who need help. Inset, on a charity walk

MARGARET Stone, 79, has suffered from Parkinson's for eight years.

The mother of three had to wait more than 10 months – in a "terrible state" – for her neurophysiotherapy appointment, which she then had to travel 30 miles to London to attend.

There was a 30 to 40-week waiting list at the facility 10 minutes from where she lives in St Albans, Herts.



Margaret, who was a primary school teacher before her retirement, said: "I was originally referred for an appointment in July 2021, as I

By Sarah O'Grady

had put my hip out. I was in a terrible state.

"I finally got a two-hour assessment with a London based neurophysio 10 months later."

She added: "Travelling to London for an appointment is not the end of the world for me, but for many people that could make access to getting better healthcare impossible.

"Those with Parkinson's must be strong – not just physically, but to have stamina and a good support network so that they can manage their condition in the best way.

"I'm concerned that a lot of people with Parkinson's could not be as fortunate as I am.

"It is heartbreaking that we have a system of care which is not available to all those who need it, when they need it."

Parkinson's patients had consultant appointments cancelled, 27 per cent had specialist nurse appointments called off and 17 per cent had either physiotherapy or speech and language therapy slots scrapped.

The £2million donation – announced during Parkinson's Awareness Month – comes via the charity's UK Parkinson's Excellence Network, a group of more than 8,000 health and social care experts

on the condition. The posts will be paid for by the charity for up to two years, on the condition that local NHS commissioners continue funding afterwards.

Priority donations will be given to the most deprived local authorities.

These include Blackpool, Manchester, Knowsley, Liverpool, Barking and Dagenham – which have been rated as the top five disadvantaged areas by the Government.

Murder arrest in search for Katie

By Kim Pilling

POLICE searching for missing Katie Kenyon are "working on the basis she is no longer alive" after arresting a man on suspicion of her murder.

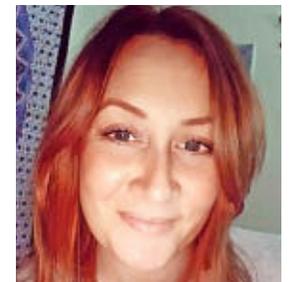
Katie, 33, was reported missing after last being seen at around 9.30am on Friday.

Lancashire Police said a man initially arrested on suspicion of her kidnap has been further arrested on suspicion of her murder.

A statement said: "While Katie has not yet been found we are now working on the basis that she is sadly no longer alive."

Detective Superintendent Gary Brooks said: "While I hold some slim hope that Katie may still be found alive I'm sad to say that Katie has now been missing for over four days.

"Despite extensive police enquiries and media appeals we have



Missing...Katie Kenyon

not found Katie nor have there been any sightings.

"We have spoken to Katie's family today and they are understandably extremely upset by this latest development and I have officers continuing to offer them support. My thoughts are with them at this time.

"We are continuing to search a number of different locations in connection with this investigation."

Police, mountain rescue teams and fire crews have been combing a popular beauty spot for missing Katie.

The search focused on the 4.6-square mile Gisburn Forest, in Lancashire's Ribblesdale Valley.

It is understood a 50-year-old man from Burnley was questioned on suspicion of kidnap.

Katie, of Burnley, is believed to have travelled from the town with a man in a silver Ford Transit to the Bolton-by-Bowland area of north Lancashire.

DAILY EXPRESS VOTE



Should charities be paying the NHS for patient care?

YES: 0901 133 4440

NO: 0901 133 4441

Yes text DXYES to 63333

No text DXNO to 63333

Texts and calls cost 50p plus network access charge. You must have the bill payer's permission. Vote closes at midnight tonight. The Daily Express may contact you by post, SMS and/or email with offers, goods or services that may be of interest to you. To stop receiving SMS messages please text 'NSNOINFO' to the originating number. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390.

IT is a sad indictment of the state of this country's treasured NHS that donations from charities are now people's best chance of receiving vital healthcare.

The Government's defund, demoralise and privatise strategy over the past decade or more has left many areas of the NHS chronically underfunded.

These charity top-ups are also a stark reminder that we are about

COMMENT

JAN SHORTT

National Pensioners' Convention



to lose our valued health service with the implementation of the NHS Reform Bill. This will make

no difference to waiting lists, will lack recruitment and training strategies and will mean a host of private companies walk in and take over, with only profit for their shareholders on their minds.

The current postcode lottery perpetuates the widening inequalities in health provision across England.

Where you live dictates how good or poor your health services

will be, with funding being extremely minimal across the board in some areas.

Depending on where you live and how well off you are, there are differences of up to 10 years in how long you can expect to live.

That's not all. Your personal circumstances add or subtract more than 17 years, in terms of the time you get to live in good health without a debilitating illness.