

# Hearts need more

Protection. Focus. Breakthroughs.

## We are in the grip of a heart care crisis.

Over the past six decades, we've made huge strides in improving outcomes for people living with heart and circulatory diseases. Today, this progress is at risk. We knew things were challenging before the pandemic. But now, in its wake and with unrelenting pressure on NHS services, the situation is far worse. We have reached an impasse.

## Our hearts need and deserve more

If we want to stop this heart care crisis in its tracks, we need the UK Government to take bold, co-ordinated action on three fronts:

**Protection.** Better prevent heart disease and stroke by addressing drivers like obesity and smoking.

**Focus.** Prioritise NHS heart care to minimise the time it takes to get help.

**Breakthroughs.** Supercharge research to unlock future treatments and cures.

## Why our hearts need more protection

Nearly two thirds (64%) of adults in the UK are living with overweight or obesity and an estimated 6-8 million people are living with undiagnosed or uncontrolled high blood pressure. This means that millions of people across the UK are at an elevated risk of heart attack and stroke, which risks putting further strain on our already overstretched health service.

Around 80% of cases of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in the UK can be attributed to modifiable risk factors such as high blood pressure, obesity, poor diet, and smoking, so action to address these is vital. This will help drive productivity and boost the economy, as well as help make a significant contribution to tackling health inequalities in the UK and ensure more people live well for longer.



## Protection

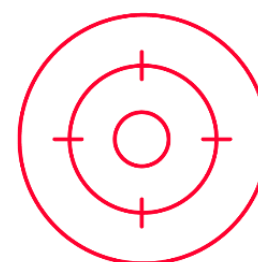
Population-level measures which aim to improve our environment and support people to live healthier lives are more likely to be effective and equitable than relying solely on individuals to take personal responsibility in an environment that heavily influences our choices. UK Government should:

- Create a healthier food environment
- Introduce a "polluter pays" tobacco levy
- Establish a sustainable public health funding solution

## Why our hearts need more focus

Even before the pandemic, there were long waiting lists for heart care, and insufficient cardiologist and cardiac physiology posts to meet the demand for heart care over the next decade. Subsequently, the pandemic has had a devastating impact.

Despite the best efforts of NHS staff, disruption has been felt in every corner of the health service, and every month, we're seeing record numbers waiting for heart tests and procedures in England alone. This ongoing disruption is likely to be one of the contributing factors to more than 100,000 excess deaths in England involving cardiovascular disease (CVD) since the beginning of the pandemic.



## Focus

The NHS cannot successfully address the heart care crisis without greater support from UK Government. By prioritising the right action we can transform heart care across the system, reducing the growing pressure on the NHS, improving people's health, and growing the economy. These priorities must be to:

- Deliver and build upon the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan for England
- Maximise NHS capacity to tackle cardiac waiting lists
- Recommit to CVD aspirations in the NHS Long Term Plan

### Why our hearts need more research breakthroughs

The huge progress that has been made in improving outcomes from cardiovascular disease (CVD) over the past six decades has been possible, in part, due to medical research discoveries. In fact, British Heart Foundation (BHF) funded research has led to world-leading breakthroughs in how we detect and treat heart attacks, stroke and other heart conditions, helping to halve the number of deaths from CVD in the UK since we were founded in 1961.



## Breakthroughs

But with CVD still causing around a quarter of all UK deaths – more than 160,000 deaths each year – and with an ageing population likely to increase prevalence of CVD in the UK, we need to accelerate the pace at which we translate promising science into revolutionary breakthroughs. To ensure funders like the BHF can continue to make lifesaving discoveries, we need a thriving research and development (R&D) ecosystem in the UK.

To unlock the UK's full potential as a science superpower, help reduce pressure on the NHS and ultimately increase the number of years people live in good health, UK Government must:

- Maximise the attractiveness of UK-based cardiovascular research
- Build clinical research capacity in the NHS
- Fund CVD research in line with its impact on society

### How you can help

The scale of the challenge facing heart care is immense. We need your support to ensure this remains a cross-party, parliamentary and Government priority.

- **Call on the UK Government and your Party to take bold action to stop the heart care crisis**  
Please consider writing to the Prime Minister to stress the need for action as outlined above. We would be happy to assist with draft messaging and supporting evidence.

Additionally, write to your Party policy team to urge them to prioritise action to tackle CVD as they develop the manifesto ahead of the General Election.

- **Be a voice for heart patients in Parliament**  
Raise these issues during relevant Parliamentary debates or Oral Question sessions or submit Written Parliamentary Questions. We would be happy to provide suggested questions and debate briefings.
- **Meet with us to find out more**  
Contact [westminster@bhf.org.uk](mailto:westminster@bhf.org.uk) to arrange a meeting to discuss the campaign in more detail.

Only with more protection, more focus and more research breakthroughs can we give people hope for a brighter, healthier future.