Asthma UK Strategy 2014–17
Reduce risk of asthma attacks
Our long-term mission is to:

Stop asthma attacks. Cure asthma.

We have been funding research into asthma for decades and an independent review has shown Asthma UK scientists have made a real impact in all areas of asthma research. In the 1970s and 1980s huge strides were made in the treatment and management of asthma and we saw dramatic improvements in death rates from asthma, numbers of asthma attacks and the overall quality of life for people with asthma.

This means that sometimes people mistakenly believe asthma is no longer serious or a drive for improvement not necessary. In fact in recent years the number of people with asthma has risen. 1 in 11 people in the UK has asthma, including 1.1 million children, and their chance of good outcomes have plateaued or even on some measures declined.

In the UK today, every ten seconds someone has a potentially life threatening asthma attack and still three people die each day from asthma.

Tragically, the majority of these could be prevented right now with the right basic care by simply following the quality standards that Asthma UK fought for and are evidenced to work.

For those with some forms of asthma there is still a lack of effective treatments – thankfully we are in a time when new scientific avenues are opening up all the time if only funding was available. That’s why now is the time to end the complacency about asthma.
Asthma: The numbers

5.4 million people in the UK have asthma

2/3rds of deaths from asthma attacks are preventable

10 seconds

every 10 seconds someone has an asthma attack

3 people die from asthma every day in the UK

250,000 people have asthma so severe current treatments don’t work
From the Chief Executive

Asthma attacks are frightening, debilitating and tragically sometimes end in death

Every day hundreds of people struggling with their asthma seek expert advice from Asthma UK’s website and nurse-led helpline. From this we know how much more support is needed for people with asthma to effectively manage on a daily basis and reduce their risk of a potentially life-threatening asthma attack. We also know for some only breakthrough treatments and a cure will be enough.

Every ten seconds someone has a potentially life-threatening asthma attack. For some, asthma attacks start to change their lungs - a process that can be irreversible. Asthma attacks must be stopped.

The last couple of years have seen some critical new developments that have focused our thinking even more on the need for Asthma UK to ensure people with asthma get the treatments, care and support they deserve to reduce their risk of an asthma attack.

We are now in the fourth year of our ground-breaking new research strategy which is delivering real change in the world of asthma research within the UK and internationally, all due to the generosity of our supporters.

We fund world-class laboratory research through the MRC-Asthma UK Centre for Allergic Mechanisms of Asthma and recently we launched the new Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research. This brings together the leading UK applied asthma research institutions to halve the time it takes for research discoveries to practically improve the lives of people with asthma.

Additionally our grant programme is funding a whole new generation of asthma researchers and new avenues for innovation. We are also very proud that Asthma UK is the lead organisation for the European Asthma Research and Innovation Partnership (EARIP).

To really make the most of this expert collaboration and world class infrastructure we will need substantially more contributions to asthma research going forward. Respiratory research is chronically underfunded versus other conditions and we aim to change this to increase our research pipeline and improve our chances of success.

Research is critical to beating asthma long-term but we must also improve the treatment and management of asthma right now. We campaigned for the National Review of Asthma Deaths, published in early 2014. It was a stark reminder of why we must urgently end the complacency about asthma care.

Shockingly many deaths were avoidable with better routine care and the good practices we have known about for years. Prescribing errors, failure to ensure basic reviews are carried out, lack of follow up after hospitalisation and children faring even worse than adults were just some of the sobering findings.

That’s why we are reviewing our strategy in light of these and other findings. We are, more than ever, determined to ensure the good practice we know works is given to each and every person with asthma, and that asthma research receives a fair share of scientific funding.

Kay Boycott
Chief Executive
**What we do**

We fight asthma in three ways; fund world class research, campaign to improve the quality of care and provide expert advice and support.

Our long term mission is to

**Stop asthma attacks. Cure asthma.**

We are fighting asthma in three ways:

**Research:** We fund new avenues of asthma research and asthma scientists with the aim of halving the time it takes for new discoveries to start helping people with asthma. New technologies and collaborations will increase the chances of scientific breakthroughs and we are determined everyone with asthma should benefit.

**Improve quality of care:** We constantly challenge complacency around asthma. We raise awareness of issues and solutions to ensure there is consistent delivery of the basic care that research has proved time and time again substantially reduces the risk of an asthma attack.

**Advice and support:** We help people to effectively manage their daily life with asthma by providing access to the best available information and advice to reduce their risk of an asthma attack.
Our focus for 2014-17

In the next three years we will focus on reducing the risk of asthma attacks

We are working in an environment where the NHS is going through substantial change. However we are determined, with the much needed support of others, to take advantage of our hard earned reputation for research funding excellence, understanding of asthma, passion of our supporters and sheer scale of those affected by asthma.

In the next three years we will focus on preventing asthma attacks; whether through funding research, campaigning for better routine care or providing support for people with asthma.

Reduce risk of asthma attacks

The reason for this is simple. Asthma attacks kill. If we prevent asthma attacks, we reduce the number of people hospitalised by their asthma and we also prevent deaths. By focusing on those at greater risk of having asthma attacks than others, such as people newly diagnosed with asthma, people using emergency care, people with severe asthma and children with asthma and allergies, we believe we can make the biggest difference most quickly.

We are relatively small for such big ambitions and, like many organisations, the last few years have been tough financially.

We can’t prevent asthma attacks alone. This will take a concerted effort across the NHS, amongst health professionals, from people with asthma and those who care about them, many of whom so generously fund our work.

We will track the number of asthma attacks, hospital admissions and asthma mortality and keep the pressure on decision makers to end the complacency about asthma.
Our strategies for 2014-17

- Reduce risk of asthma attacks
- Drive world class asthma research
- Directly support more people at high risk of an asthma attack
- Campaign for good asthma care
- End complacency about asthma
- Attract more funding for asthma
Our 2014-17 Strategies

Drive world class asthma research

“Asthma, one of the most important chronic diseases, remains a genuine medical mystery.” The Lancet

The challenge

After four years of hard work our transformational research strategy is becoming a reality. There are now two Centres of asthma research excellence, one tackling laboratory-based basic science and a new applied research centre focused on putting innovation into practice. Asthma UK is leading the European Asthma Research and Innovation Partnership (EARIP) and we are continuing our well established grant funding programme to drive innovation and grow new asthma research talent.

These are fantastic foundations, but there is still much untapped potential for asthma research.

In the last few years new technologies, such as innovative diagnostics or breakthroughs in genetics, have emerged with huge relevance for asthma. More collaborations within and outside the asthma research community will be critical to bring new insights to some of the biggest asthma challenges.

What we will do

Identify and invest in a new generation of asthma superstar scientists

Provide specific grant funding to stimulate innovation in asthma science

Fund world class laboratory based science through investing in centres of excellence such as the MRC-Asthma UK Centre for Allergic Mechanisms of Asthma

Build the UK’s expertise in applied asthma science by supporting the new Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research

Lead and maximise the opportunity of the European Asthma Research and Innovation Partnership

Actively seek new co-funding partnerships and collaborations to increase the amount of money made available for asthma research across the UK.

Grow our team of expert research volunteers to ensure only the most relevant research for people with asthma is funded and delivered.
The aims of Asthma UK’s research strategy are to fund research which improves the lives of people living with asthma today and reach towards the creation of asthma cures.

**Our research strategy**

We aim to increase the number of highly skilled asthma researchers in the UK, encourage and enable successful collaboration between scientists for the benefit of people with asthma, and support the ongoing evaluation of our research achievements.

Asthma UK’s research has already had a wide-ranging impact, from unravelling the intricacies of our immune system and generating targets for new treatments, through to influencing clinical guidelines that inform the day-to-day practice of doctors and nurses across the UK.

Our research has also changed the way we think about the causes of asthma in childhood, proven that viruses are important triggers to most people with asthma, and revealed the diversity of severe asthma, stressing the need for new treatments.

There are so many exciting opportunities to reduce deaths and hospitalisations, speed up the discovery of new treatments and improve how people can manage their asthma on a daily basis.
Our 2014-17 Strategies

Campaign for good asthma care

“It’s time to end our complacency about asthma, which can, and does, kill. We haven’t paid enough attention to the importance of good routine asthma care by clinicians with the right training and experience, and the part that patients themselves play in this. Too often we have also been slow to detect signs of poor asthma control and slow to act when these have been present, with tragic consequences for some families. We can and we must do better”

Dr Kevin Stewart, Clinical Director, Royal College of Physicians

The challenge

The NHS is still not delivering consistently what we know is needed to reduce the risk of an asthma attack and manage asthma.

The National Review of Asthma Deaths showed that far too often there are basic prescribing errors, routine care is not delivered and failure to follow up after an attack. Tragically two thirds of the deaths investigated in the National Review were seen to be preventable.

Hospitalisations are increasing and children are getting even worse care than adults. Good asthma management isn’t dependent on expensive new equipment or changing hospital buildings; just implementing the basics that we know work will improve the lives of people with asthma enormously.

What we will do

Work to make the NHS Asthma Review the best in the world

Campaign to reduce variation of care across the UK

Lobby to ensure high quality specialist services and access to treatments are available for those who need it

Make the case for effective support for self-management of asthma for those at higher than average risk

Activate more people with asthma to advocate for improved care

Work in partnership to continue to reduce smoking
The National Review of Asthma Deaths

After years of campaigning by Asthma UK the National Review of Asthma Deaths (the National Review) was the first UK wide investigation into asthma deaths.

A panel of experts looked at deaths from asthma between 1 February 2012 and 31 January 2013.

Key Findings
Wide-ranging and widespread issues with the quality of asthma care received by those who died.

People did not receive key elements of routine care, prescribing errors were widespread, their asthma attacks were poorly managed and people with severe asthma were not always referred to a specialist when they should have been.

A number of avoidable factors in relation to both the care people received, and patients and their families and environments were identified, including recommendations about support for self-management. These were often higher in primary care than secondary care.

Children fared worse than adults in several respects, and care fell well below expected standards in almost half of child deaths.

Room for improvement in care received by 83% of those who died.

2/3 of deaths were preventable.

More than two thirds of the people hospitalised by an attack in the month before they died didn’t receive a proper check up after their attack.
Our 2014-17 Strategies

Directly support more people at high risk of an asthma attack

“Having an asthma action plan for my son, Felix, has been critical – it’s given me so much security and comfort about his care for when I’m not with him. I got one from Asthma UK’s website and keep a few copies – one at his school for his teachers, one in his bag for when he goes to have tea at a friend’s house. It’s such a relief to know it’s there for people to use if ever he has an asthma attack when I’m not there.”

Tracy Mace

The challenge

Asthma attacks are prevented by active management on a day by day or week by week basis through understanding triggers, taking medication correctly and seeking help when symptoms change. However, individuals’ motivations, need and ability to seek support to reduce their risk vary enormously.

Groups with particularly high risk are those newly diagnosed with asthma, those with severe asthma, those using emergency care and children with asthma and allergy. There are new insights and technologies emerging all the time that can offer significant improvements to how we currently deliver advice and support to people with asthma, especially those at higher risk.

We also know the risk factors for an asthma attack and how to reduce them. The challenge is making this a reality for all the people at high risk of an asthma attack.

What we will do

Provide gold standard asthma advice based on the best available global evidence

Drive use of our risk assessment tools and asthma action plans to reduce the risk of asthma attacks

Significantly increase the capacity of our nurse-led Helpline

Invest to transform how we deliver advice through digital channels

Develop new programmes for those at higher risk of an asthma attack
The Asthma UK Risk Test

Every ten seconds someone has a potentially life-threatening asthma attack, but many can be prevented with the right management.

Even now some people with asthma don’t know asthma attacks can kill. Almost a quarter of people believe asthma attacks can’t be prevented.

The Asthma UK Risk score test assesses 8 known asthma risks to help people with asthma understand their risk of an attack, and Asthma UK provides advice on how to prevent them.

This test is based on the best available global evidence and has been validated with the real life experience of thousands of people with asthma.

Since the test was launched 2 years ago tens of thousands of people with asthma say it has helped to change their behaviour and prevent an asthma attack.

4 in 10 people shown to be at risk of an asthma attack did not think they were at risk before taking the test.
Our 2014-17 Strategies

End complacency about asthma

“Lloyd was in hospital every six weeks with terrible asthma attacks which meant the family spent countless nights at hospital. One Christmas he ended up on a life support machine in intensive care after a respiratory and a cardiac arrest. My daughter needed counselling she was so traumatised.”

Kim Price

The challenge

Those who manage the burden of asthma daily are well aware of how difficult a condition like asthma can be to manage, and how much it costs in terms of treatment and lost working or school days. Unfortunately, there are still some, including healthcare professionals and decision makers and even people with asthma, who don’t see asthma as serious. When there is complacency about asthma, we know asthma will continue to kill.

We also know that, even though life-saving treatments have progressed hugely in the last 50 years, there are still people who are so worried about side effects or others judging them as weak they won’t use inhalers as prescribed. We need everyone, including healthcare professionals and people with asthma to understand how serious asthma can be, and to reduce concern about potential side effects.

What we will do

- Demonstrate the true economic and societal cost of asthma
- Raise awareness of the seriousness of asthma
- Raise awareness of the triggers and risk factors for asthma attacks, especially amongst those at higher risk
- Directly address negative attitudes and beliefs about asthma, including concerns about side effects
- Equip the asthma healthcare professional community to champion good asthma care
- Work with people with asthma to ensure the organisation represents their needs and concerns
Tragically we hear far too often from families who have lost a loved one to an asthma attack.

Three people a day are still killed by asthma, and as the National Review of Asthma Deaths showed, many of these were preventable. For some an asthma attack can come out of the blue, for others it is an all too frequent occurrence.

Alex’s story
“My daughter Alex died of an asthma attack in April of this year. She was just 15. Alex had her whole life ahead of her — I didn’t think for one second that asthma would claim her life. She took medication as directed — including on the day she died — but what I’ve come to realise is that Alex didn’t have a proper care plan, and neither were we told of the seriousness of her condition. I know now that things could have been very different, had Alex been seen regularly by an asthma nurse and given different medication. For such a common condition, this simply shouldn’t happen. I should never have lost my daughter to asthma. We feel that we were very badly let down by the healthcare professionals we saw.” Louise (Alex’s mum)

Emma’s story
Emma was diagnosed with asthma when she was two but in the past few years her condition has deteriorated. She’s been in and out of hospital every month, has roughly 15 admissions every year and has needed to be put into an induced coma for three days. Emma doesn’t have an action plan and has no contact with the asthma nurse at her local surgery. She feels her GP doesn’t understand her condition or take it seriously. Once when she was having an attack her GP said: “Your chest is clear, just keep doing what you’re doing and the steroids should kick in soon.” Three hours later she was in intensive care where she stayed for three weeks.
Our 2014-17 Strategies
Attract more funding for asthma

“The support from Asthma UK’s fundraising team was brilliant. The fundraising pack made the process a lot easier and cycling past the Asthma UK gazebos with people cheering me on was amazing. No energy gel could have given me that kind of boost!”

Osian Lewis, who tackled the Prudential RideLondon – Surrey 100 on behalf of Asthma UK.

The challenge

Asthma UK’s supporters and donors have a fantastic track record of funding asthma research that has delivered real breakthroughs for patients, and funding services that improve the day-to-day lives of those living with asthma. Even so asthma is still underfunded as a condition, particularly as there are many new avenues of research and models of care that need to be pursued in the next three years.

The funding environment has been difficult, and to continue the breadth and quality of work we do on behalf of such large numbers of people we will need to grow our income and the number of people who support us. We know there are many other demands on people’s pockets, and so we must continue to demonstrate our impact and build an asthma team donors want to invest in for the long term.

What we will do

Increase understanding of asthma, its impact and the potential for real change our work can deliver

Continuously improve the support for those who fundraise for us so they are inspired to raise more money for asthma

Actively build more partnerships, financial or otherwise, with organisations who share our vision

Challenge our internal effectiveness to make the most of every penny for people with asthma

Pursue opportunities for new long-term funding streams to give increased stability to our income

Build a team people want to invest in, experts in their field and passionate about improving the lives of people with asthma
We are inspired every day by our fantastic volunteers and supporters. Without them, none of this would be possible.

Asthma UK’s amazing supporters run thousands of miles and cycle in all weathers to raise money for asthma. Other volunteers play a vital role by ensuring we speak on behalf of people with asthma including making sure research is focused on their needs.

From meeting politicians to being part of an asthma research committee, taking part in focus groups to speaking in schools, they make sure the voice of the patient is in all our work and their donations mean we can continue to do our vital work for people with asthma.

“When I was first diagnosed with asthma I thought, ‘That’s my life over now, I’ve had it!’ But 18 months later a friend of mine who loves cycling encouraged me to start riding and said it would help with my breathing. So I signed up to take part in a cycling challenge in aid of Asthma UK, got a bike and haven’t looked back. Joining the ride has probably saved my life. I’ve lost two stone and don’t use my puffer half as much as I did. Even my friends have noticed an improvement in my health” Kevin Ellis
Every ten seconds someone in the UK has a potentially life-threatening asthma attack and three people die every day. Tragically many of these deaths could be prevented, whilst others still suffer with asthma so severe current treatments don’t work. This has to change. That's why Asthma UK exists.

We work to stop asthma attacks and, ultimately, cure asthma by funding world leading research and scientists, campaigning for change and supporting people with asthma to reduce their risk of a potentially life threatening asthma attack.

Stop asthma attacks. Cure asthma.

To find out more about any aspect of Asthma UK’s work, including how to fundraise or get involved, visit www.asthma.org.uk or call us on 0800 121 62 44.