

We say goodbye to the BDR Coordinating Centre Team

In 2018, we brought you the news that BDR had a new Director, Professor Alan Thomas. **Professor Thomas**

(pictured left, in the centre) is supported by the BDR Deputy Director, **Debbie Lett** (to the right) as well as by BDR Coordinating Centre Manager, **Nicky Barnett** (on the left).

From April 2026, the team will be retiring. We will certainly miss our BDR colleagues as it has been a privilege to work alongside them on such an important programme. We are also very much aware of the immense contribution made by BDR participants and supporters. Without your generosity, the programme would simply not exist and so we would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and appreciation.

So what happens next? There are no planned changes to the study protocol and so the assessments will continue as normal as will the brain donation process. We will however, no longer have the same email address for the BDR Coordinating Centre, but new contact details are being established and will be shared when available.

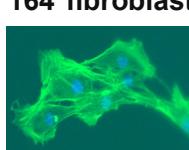
Some key achievements during the last 8 years

Blood samples Although blood sampling started back in 2014, initially we did not have sufficient samples to share this precious resource with researchers. By 2022, this position had changed and since then, blood samples, particularly those paired with post mortem neuropathology data and in some cases, with requested brain tissue, have become an incredibly valuable resource. To-date, we have sent out a total of 694 samples and we have requests from a further five researchers, which if fulfilled, could result in an additional 250 samples being dispatched. The samples used so far were requested for the following purposes:



- ◆ To extract genetic data which can be used by BDR researchers
- ◆ For potential new drug development for Alzheimer's disease
- ◆ For the early identification of Alzheimer's disease
- ◆ To compare early memory problems with early stage dementia, to see if we can detect who will develop dementia
- ◆ To determine if blood vessel damage within the brain can be measured in blood samples taken in life.
- ◆ To develop new technology for the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease

Fibroblasts and stem cells In 2021, we started collecting brain tissue samples for the creation of fibroblasts and stem cells. So far we have **164 fibroblasts** created from the brain banks shown in the table (right). So far,

 these samples have been used to look at the impact of a genetic risk factor (APOE) on cell metabolism. They have also been used to assess whether specific light waves can be used to reduce the risk of women developing Alzheimer's disease.

BDR Centre	No. fibroblasts
Newcastle	111
King's College	25
Bristol	15
Manchester	12
Oxford	1
Total	164

What's happening in your local BDR?

New staff at the local Centres in Bristol and Newcastle

As well as changes in the team managing the programme overall, we also have some new faces in the local assessment teams.



In Bristol, we welcome new staff member **Beccy Smith** (pictured left). Beccy joined the BDR team in Bristol around 5 months ago and she has first hand experience of caring for someone living with dementia,

"My mum and I cared full time for my fabulous grandfather, Gerry, as he had Alzheimer's Disease. I was very proud of him and he was very proud of me. I am passionate about dementia research and care that is therapeutic, holistic and evidenced based".

On joining the BDR team, Beccy said, *"I really love it. I particularly enjoy meeting all of our interesting and remarkable participants and conducting assessments with them. It's a huge privilege and I feel very lucky to do this job".*



UK | Malaysia | Singapore

At the Newcastle BDR Centre, we say goodbye to long term staff member, **June Edwards** (pictured right).



June joined the team in 2014 and since then, has made countless assessment visits as well as supporting families through the process of tissue donation. We will all miss June and wish her every happiness in her retirement.



Joining the Newcastle Brain Tissue Resource team is **Kirsty Olsen**, (pictured left). Kirsty has worked in dementia research for many years and is enthusiastic to learn more about brain tissue donation and how this fits into the wider dementia research landscape. Kirsty will be covering June's role in BDR until a permanent replacement can be found.

News from our funders

The two main UK dementia charities, Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Research UK, generously fund the BDR initiative and they engage with the public about current research findings



The latest in dementia treatment and diagnosis

Information on the latest research findings can be found on the Alzheimer's Society website at

<https://tinyurl.com/3mw85d6f>

Season's Greetings to all and we wish you the best for 2026!



In Conversation at Christmas 2025

When: Tuesday 16 December 2025

Where: Online (Zoom webinar)

Time: 1 - 1:45pm

Dementia research made **big strides** in 2025, with more clinical trials starting than in previous years and growing public involvement in studies.

[In Conversation at Christmas 2025 - Alzheimer's Research UK](#)

The above event will be recorded for those unable to join the live event.

More information about public events can be found at
[Online public events - Alzheimer's Research UK](#)