

NEWSLETTER

FOR OUR VALUED STAKEHOLDERS – JANUARY 2022



So much has happened since our last newsletter in September, from heading to Glasgow for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), where we highlighted the impact of air pollution on lung health, to launching a new assessment questionnaire to help people with Long COVID.

We are proud to have released the results of our first-ever COPD survey (thought to be the largest ever survey of its kind), and were delighted to share the positive news that a new biologic drug has been recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for severe asthma patients. Sadly, we learnt of the sad news of the passing of Sir Dennis Walters, former chair of the National Asthma Research Council, predecessor to Asthma UK. You can read more about the great work Dennis has done below.

Sarah Woolnough, Chief Executive



FIGHTING TO CLEAN UP TOXIC AIR

COP26

In November, the world's eyes were on the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow for the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26. The week before the event, we released our new research which shockingly revealed that every two minutes a baby is born into areas of toxic air pollution. This received widespread media coverage in titles including: **The Independent, The Times, The Mirror, Evening Standard, Forbes, BBC London** and **Daily Mail**, with an overall reach of more than 100 million.

For the two-week duration at COP26 we had a stand that people could visit to learn more about our newly-launched 'Clear the air' campaign and to hear the stories of how air pollution can and does damage people's lives. We also supported dozens of our campaigners to attend, to ensure their voices on the health crisis caused by air pollution were heard.



We also hosted a summit with **Impact on Urban Health** about air pollution, leading to a significant number of productive conversations with senior political figures, including the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid.

COP26 may be over but our campaign to clear the air doesn't stop here. Supported by Impact on Urban Health, **we're continuing to campaign** on this vital issue and are encouraging people to share their stories of how they've been impacted by dirty air.



Clean Air Communities summit, including Monica Lennon MSP

The Expansion of the ULEZ

In other air quality news, the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London expanded in October, which we fully support as an important step towards cleaner air in the capital. I look forward to working with the Mayor of London on further traffic reduction schemes in the future.



ULEZ Expansion launch event

Supporting clean air in Portsmouth

Portsmouth recently became the fourth city in England to introduce a clean air zone, which we believe is a great step forward to protect the tens of thousands of people living with lung conditions in the city. Our commentary around this issue was picked up by **ITV Meridian**, **Capital Radio**, **Portsmouth News**, **Daily Express** and the **BBC**.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH LUNG CONDITIONS

In the past three months our dedicated Helpline responded to 4,848 enquiries, giving potentially life-saving or life-changing advice about lung health.

Landmark research On COPD

To mark World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Day, we published our first ever COPD survey which revealed unacceptable delays in diagnosis and poor standards of care. This received widespread media coverage including in **The Times**, **Sky News** and **iNews**.



We also set out our position for policymakers in this **Open Access Government** article. We sent the report to senior figures across UK governments and health systems and have arranged several high-profile meetings as a result. We also worked with MPs to **secure a parliamentary debate** on COPD, with many MPs who spoke in the debate using our briefing extensively. The evidence from the report will be hugely helpful in building up our policy work and we have already used it in one consultation response.

Better treatments for severe asthma

We're also delighted that after years of campaigning and working with NICE, the biologic drug dupilumab, which has the potential to change the lives of tens of thousands of people living with the severest form of asthma, has now been approved across the UK for treating some people with severe asthma with Type 2 inflammation.



However, we continue to be concerned by the low numbers of people being referred to specialist care, and will continue to campaign to make sure NICE introduces clear guidelines that supports healthcare professionals to refer suspected severe asthma patients at the appropriate time.

Meeting demand for RSV

We have worked hard to meet the increased demand for support for paediatric infections this winter, through adding resource to our Helpline team. We have also added to our online health information with accessible videos from families with lived experience of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), one of the most common causes of colds, to help parents whose children are in hospital to know they're not alone, and from clinicians to provide reliable and up-to-date advice. We will present these videos in multiple languages, reducing barriers of access and health inequalities.

Collaborating for better care

We've been working on two Accelerated Access Collaborative (AAC) rapid uptake programmes for asthma – a breathing test called FeNO and biologic drugs (like dupilumab). We are pleased that more people are using FeNO (a type of breathing test) than predicted. For biologics, we have led a collection of data on the time it takes to initiate someone on a biologic and will use this data to drive forward the programme's ambitions.



We continue to work with NHSE (National Health Service England) on its green inhaler programme, which incentivises healthcare professionals to prescribe inhalers that are more environmentally friendly. We secured some positive changes to guidance for healthcare professionals on this, adding in additional references to make it clear that any changes must be made as part of a shared decision-making process with the patient.

Leaders in Long COVID

In November, we launched a new online assessment questionnaire to help people experiencing persistent symptoms after contracting COVID-19. **My Long COVID Needs** has been funded by NHSE and developed in partnership with a number of other charities and organisations, and is currently in its user-testing phase. The tool helps people identify the symptoms they're most concerned about and signposts to useful services and advice, as well as preparing a report that users can print off and take to their GP. We plan to respond to user insights and feedback over the next few weeks and officially launch later this month.

We wanted to raise awareness that many people have not been able to access the support they need for their Long COVID symptoms, so in November I was interviewed on **Channel 4 News** about what we're hearing through our research and Helpline about the struggles people are facing. We will continue urging the government to invest in proper research and support.

FUNDRAISING

This Christmas we've been running a festive fundraising appeal, asking people to donate where they can to give hope to the thousands of people who call our helplines every winter for crucial advice and support. We launched our first ever Helpline nurses Q&A on social media as part of ongoing engagement for our Christmas appeal, and have in place an in-memory initiative to drive donations.

We hosted our Christmas carol concert last month – our first ever as a merged charity. It was a lovely, festive evening with mince pies and mulled wine and was a great fundraising success. The event was attended by our patron, the Duchess of Gloucester, and a number of celebrity readers from the acting world: Nathaniel Parker, Lucy Russell and Nickolas Grace.



Updating our online shop

We've also recently updated our online shop, added new products including Christmas cards and jumpers and we sold around £8,000 worth of products in the first two weeks.

www.shop.auk-blf.org.uk



Corporate partners

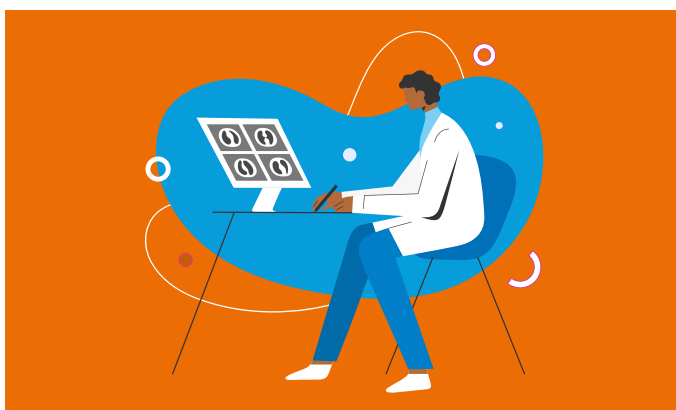
We've had a number of positive conversations with corporate partners such as NiQuitin who have confirmed a second year of our partnership. Do look out for our new TV adverts. We also have secured a new and exciting Charity of the Year partnership worth **£100,000** a year, which we can share more about soon.

RESEARCH

We've been involved in a number of exciting and innovative pieces of research which will help generations of people with lung conditions, spanning topics as varied as Long COVID, machine learning and asthma, and the impact of living with long-term conditions on mental health and wellbeing.

Developing new treatments for mesothelioma

Our mesothelioma project is moving us closer to effective treatments for this type of lung cancer, for which outcomes are currently very poor. The study explored a potential new treatment called a 'PARP inhibitor', which has uncovered clues as to which patients are most likely to respond to this new type of treatment and will underpin future clinical trials. This may lead to the approval of new, personalised treatments. In November, we held our first-ever online Mesothelioma Research Network Annual Scientific Meeting.



Breathing tests for IPF

Our idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) project explores the use of a new breathing test in managing patients with IPF compared with the standard test of spirometry. This study found that both measures were just as effective and reliable as each other in monitoring IPF, but the advantage of the new breathing test, iOS, is that it takes less time to perform and people living with IPF find it easier to do. We hope that this tool will improve the care received by and the experience of patients with IPF.

Recognition for our PPI

I am also delighted to report that the National Asthma and COPD Audit Programme (NACAP), for which we provide the patient and public involvement (PPI) for adults, has been awarded the Richard Driscoll Memorial Award for 2021.

This award celebrates great PPI in national clinical audit, so is a clear recognition of our efforts and achievements in ensuring that the NACAP project remains patient-centred and likely to contribute to more positive outcomes for patients.

You can find out more about some of the research projects we've been involved in on our **YouTube channel**.

REMEMBERING SIR DENNIS WALTERS

I'm saddened to say that Sir Dennis Walters, who ran the Asthma Research Council (now Asthma UK) for two decades, died in October, aged 92. After a long political career, Dennis began chairing the Council in December 1969.



Dennis was extremely passionate about research into asthma, with his son, Nicholas, himself suffering from serious hay fever and asthma when he was young. I'm grateful to Dennis for all the incredible work he did making life better for the millions of people living with asthma.

HOW TO KEEP UPDATED



Please do keep an eye on our websites and social media channels to stay updated with more of what we're working on. We've also launched new blog sites for **Asthma UK** and the **British Lung Foundation** where you'll be able to read stories of people living with lung conditions, the latest research and what we're campaigning for. ■

Thank
You