

Scottish Government to launch a scholarship to honour Gordon Aikman

The Scottish Government has announced a new £25,000 scholarship in memory of Gordon Aikman who died at the beginning of the month.



Gordon on the left with his husband Joe Pike. The couple married in March 2015.

The scholarship will support improvements in motor neurone disease (MND) care. Gordon was diagnosed with MND at the age of 29. He campaigned hard for the rest of his life to raise funds and awareness. [Gordon's Fightback](#) has raised over £550,000 to help MND Scotland find a cure for the disease.

The Gordon Aikman Scholarship will fund individuals and professionals to develop practical improvements in the way people with MND are cared for – such as sharing best practice in specialised physiotherapy or developing a better understanding of carers' educational and support needs.

Health Secretary Shona Robison said the scholarship programme would commemorate the contribution Gordon Aikman made to improving the lives of people with MND and continue his legacy.

The announcement was made today in the Scottish Parliament – during a parliamentary debate held to reflect on the contribution Gordon Aikman made to public life and to further raise awareness of MND.

The Health Secretary has also requested that Chief Scientist's Office work with the NHS Research Scotland Dementia and

Neuroprogressive Disease Research Network to convene a research event to take forward discussions on how to bring MND clinical trials to Scotland.

Opening the debate, Health Secretary Shona Robison said: "Gordon was deeply committed to advancing the cause of people living with MND in Scotland.

"His campaign not only raised over a half a million pounds for the charity, MND Scotland, but was also instrumental in bringing about changes to the law around voice therapy and doubling the number of MND specialist nurses working in the NHS.

"Gordon was an inspirational figure and I want to make sure that the momentum he created – and the good work that followed from that – continues to be taken forward, even now he's gone.

"That is why I've established a scholarship programme in honour of Gordon. The scholarship will fund professionals or individuals with knowledge of MND, to take forward research into new and better ways of caring for people with the condition.

"I very much hope it will continue to drive forward the improvements to MND care that Gordon has kick-started in Scotland and be a fitting tribute to his memory."

Lawrence Cowan, close friend of Gordon Aikman and Chair of MND Scotland, said: "Gordon's campaigning transformed MND care in Scotland. With this scholarship we can help inspire people to keep transforming MND care for years to come.

"It will help bring people together, try new things and ultimately improve how we fight back against this cruel disease."

Gordon's husband, Joe Pike, said: "We are delighted that this scholarship will continue Gordon's legacy. We must also work

hard to make Scotland an international centre for clinical trials into MND.

“It is vital we find a cure for the disease that robbed Gordon of his future, and continues to affect hundreds of families across the country.”