



Public Health
England



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 7 February 2014

Dear everyone

The number one health fear in the public's mind, particularly for those over 50, is the possible onset of dementia but until recently this has not been given the attention it deserves, notwithstanding the excellent work of the Alzheimer's Society and many other voluntary bodies. The international fightback began with the G8 conference in December. Acting on dementia is now one of our highest priorities and together with the Alzheimer's Society we are responsible, as part of the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia, for creating a movement of at least one million [Dementia Friends](#) by 2015. This movement aims to help people understand the disease and the small things that we can each do to make a big difference to people living with dementia and for their carers. This is being promoted through communities, public bodies, and in workplaces. On Tuesday, our national leadership team and chairman were accredited as Dementia Friends through a training session given by Nikki Squelch, the Alzheimer's Society's Head of Volunteering Development and Kate Moore, their Operations Director for Greater London. We learned the five critical points about dementia: it is not a natural part of growing old; it is caused by diseases of the brain, the most common of which is Alzheimer's; it is not just about losing your memory – it can affect thinking, communicating, and doing everyday tasks; it is possible to live well with it; there is more to a person than dementia. With support from family, friends, colleagues and their community, people with dementia can and do continue to have an active life. At the end of this excellent session we made our own personal commitments as well as identifying more we can do as a whole organisation, not least on prevention, to engage our people in this invaluable campaign, and we are already working with the Alzheimer's Society and the LGA on engagement across local government.

Also on Tuesday we [published](#) our quarterly update on the Public Health Outcomes Framework for upper tier local authorities in England. With each update we expand and revise the data, a mammoth undertaking, but necessary to ensure the reporting is relevant and meaningful for those tasked with acting on it. For example, this latest update included new baseline information for 15 indicators, updates on 46 indicators, and additional lower tier local authority data for four indicators. We are very fortunate to have this capability and its quality is a testament to the professionalism of our knowledge and intelligence teams.

Researchers from University College London have published a report showing that our Stoptober 2012 campaign was even more successful than we had dared hope. They found that 50 per cent more smokers (about 350,000) tried to quit in that month compared to other months in the same year. Equally delightful was their [finding](#) that Stoptober was very cost-effective: based on the number of people who gave up during the month the researchers estimated that around 10,000 years of life were saved. A great deal of work goes into ensuring our marketing campaigns are evidence-based and Stoptober gets top marks for this.

And finally, a big well done to our Development & Production team at Porton, led by Dr Roger Hinton, who manufacture life protecting and saving medicines. They have recently been subject to a Good Manufacturing Practice compliance audit, rigorously conducted by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, and passed with flying colours meaning that our vaccines and medicines remain available for patient care in the UK and worldwide.

With best wishes