



Public Health
England



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Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 13 December 2013

Dear everyone

On Wednesday our Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt hosted the first G8 summit on dementia, a watershed event and recognised by the Alzheimer's Society as potentially important a moment as their own foundation. Health ministers and experts from all the eight nations addressed the summit, including our own Prime Minister. The G8 recognise that dementia is a public health concern but also a matter for public policy too. No one organisation or country can solve this on their own. The numbers are staggering and are set to double every 20 years and some of the risk factors affecting heart disease and cancers are exactly the same for dementia. Essentially what is good for your heart is good for your brain. The traditional approach to dementia is that nothing can be done but the truth is that much can be done, not only to prevent and delay many forms of dementia (not smoking, taking regular exercise, eating healthily and drinking in moderation) but also in ensuring decent, civilised and compassionate care for those who face the daily challenges of living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The NHS has committed to improving the diagnosis rate from just under 50 per cent to two thirds by 2015 and, through the global academic community, to identify a cure or a disease modifying therapy by 2025. PHE has two major contributions to make. First, to support local government in accelerating the implementation of the NHS Health Check Programme which encourages the behaviours in midlife that will prevent and delay the onset of dementia and second, to partner the Alzheimer's Society in creating a Dementia Movement and in recruiting over one million 'dementia friends'. The ambition is to make our communities more aware, confident and accommodating of people with dementia and those who care for them.

The business community also have an important part to play and on Thursday, Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA, and I joined the Secretary of State in meeting with a number of business and industry leaders ranging from Marks and Spencer to First Group trains and buses who are committed to training their staff to be dementia friendly and in supporting their own staff who have experience of dementia within their families. Significantly, the public services can also play their part with local government employing over 2.5m people, the NHS 1.5m, and then, of course, there is PHE itself and I intend ensuring that we are dementia friendly in everything we do and that we have the right policies and practice in place. As we settle our priorities for next year, action on dementia will be in the top three.

Together with Sir Merrick, Janet Atherton, President of the ADPH, and Sir Michael Marmot, Director of UCL's Institute of Health Equity, I was delighted to endorse the King's Fund [document](#), *Improving the Public's Health: a resource for local authorities*, which was published yesterday. This is a practical and evidence-based resource, very much rooted in the real world, and focused on actions that can make a real difference. These include: the best start in life, healthy schools and pupils, helping people find good jobs and stay in work; active and safe travel; and access to green and open spaces.

And finally, this week also saw the senior leaders in PHE come together in our second 'Top 100' event to reflect on the future direction for PHE, looking to business planning for next year and the progress being made on the health and wellbeing framework for the next five years.

With best wishes