

There are 20,914 good reasons why each and everyone one of us in Kent should get involved in Dementia Awareness Week. I say this because that is the number of people in Kent who are currently living with dementia.

One in three people over the age of 65 will develop dementia, and as a local MP, all too often I see firsthand the devastating impact the condition has - not only the person with dementia but their family, friends and carers too.

The fact that there are more and more people in Kent who are living with dementia puts into perspective why there is a duty on us all and society as a whole to act.

Across the UK, on average less than half of those people have received a diagnosis. Diagnosis is the key that unlocks access to support services. There are many reasons why people may be afraid to ask their GP for a diagnosis.

They may feel scared, confused or even ashamed. But the sooner they know what they're dealing with, the sooner they can get on with their life and feel in control again.

That's why Alzheimer's Society – the charity behind Dementia Awareness Week – is using the week to encourage people to 'open up' and talk. They want anyone who is concerned to talk to their doctor, their family, but also to come and talk to them about how they can make a difference in their own communities for other sufferers.

There are lots of small ways that we can all make a big difference for people in our local community this Dementia Awareness Week, whether it is becoming a Dementia Friend or encouraging friends or family to visit their GP if concerned. We've come a long way to helping people with dementia in the UK, but there is still very far to go.