

Eighteenth Century American politician Benjamin Franklin rather gloomily noted, in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes. As we begin another year in the 21st Century while teetering on the cusp of a significantly ageing population, we could probably add a third to his short list – you're likely to know someone who is sadly suffering, or has suffered from some form of dementia.

This week Parliament debated the incredibly important issue of dementia and I was proud to have been the Conservative lead in the cross party application for parliamentary time.

National diagnosis rates for dementia remain low but locally we fare better. Good, early diagnosis puts people onto a care pathway that can help people live well with dementia for longer and the parliamentary debate was an opportunity for MPs to showcase excellent examples of support and practice. I like to cite the excellent work Kent Fire & Rescue Service is doing to prevent vulnerable people from harming themselves while living at home but there are plenty more local examples of good support and care.

Raising awareness within the community is essential and it is great to see local businesses getting involved. Asda Chatham granted wishes to those at Amherst Court and is considering the future training of staff to recognise and support customers with dementia. This is positive action, costs little but makes a real difference.

There is a long way to go but until recently society didn't really talk about dementia. Politicians now recognise it as a key challenge and one that needs to be looked at as a matter of urgency if we are to provide good quality, well funded care to the million people that we be diagnosed with dementia by 2021.

Living well at home with dementia is possible and something that should be a reality for the many, not a hopeful aspiration for the few. The challenge is great but I for one will not be ignoring the issue. I can't stop the certainty of death and taxes but I can help shape the support for those with dementia.