Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend universal screening for dementia.

In order to offer enough information to allow anyone invited to screening to make an informed choice, we would first need to understand how dementia develops and be confident that early treatment will slow the progression or even prevent the disease. At the moment we cannot say that for certain.

Researchers have explored the effectiveness of tests to detect dementia and also ‘mild cognitive impairment’ which has been suggested to be an early sign of dementia.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

About 7 out of every 100 people over the age of 65 have dementia. If this age group was screened using current tests about 18 people would receive a positive test result, but:

- only 6 of these people would actually have dementia
- 12 people would receive a positive result when they don’t have dementia
- 1 person who does have dementia would be missed and be falsely reassured

Between 7 and 17 out of every 100 people over the age of 65 demonstrate a mild cognitive impairment using current tests. But this does not always mean the person has or will develop dementia. Only about 5-10% of people with this will develop dementia each year. Because of this many people would receive positive test results when they would not actually develop dementia.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC’s dementia recommendation, please visit:

www.screening.nhs.uk/dementia