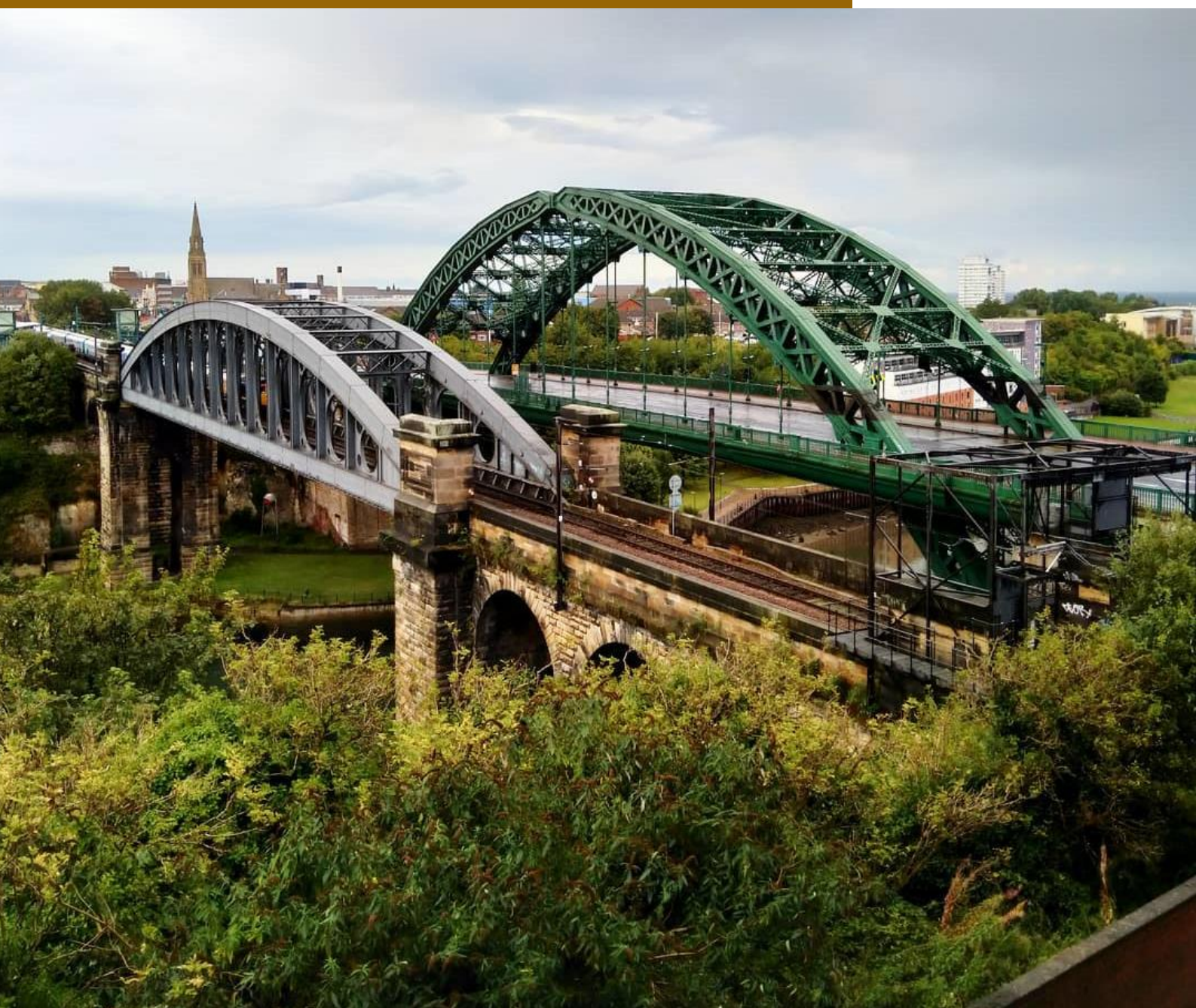


# Housing and your home

**Support available for people experiencing memory difficulties or dementia in Sunderland**

**Issue 1 – Published April 2025**



The information in this booklet has been taken from 'Support available for people experiencing memory difficulties or dementia in Sunderland' which has information on a range of subjects which you may also find useful.

Find the full document at: [www.healthwatchsunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchsunderland.com)

# Contents

About Healthwatch Sunderland and why we did this work	3
Top tips for making your home dementia friendly	4
Home adaptations and help to remain at home	5
Interactive doorbells	5
Age UK Sunderland's LIFeStyle Service	5
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue – home safety checks	6
Locking cooker valve	6
Save energy, pay less	6
Thinking about your options	7
Sheltered housing	7
Extra care	7
Residential and nursing care homes	8
Care Quality Commision	8
Finding, choosing and paying for a care home	8
Energy Suppliers Priority Register	9

The information in this booklet is a section that has been taken from the full booklet titled, 'Support available for people experiencing memory difficulties or dementia in Sunderland'. The full booklet has information on a range of subjects which you may also find useful.

Healthwatch Sunderland regularly updates these booklets. The copy you have may not be the latest version. For the most current copies of all the associated booklets, please visit: [www.healthwatchsunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchsunderland.com) or call us on 0191 514 7145.

If you have information to add or notice anything outdated in the booklets, please contact us and these will be considered.

# About Healthwatch Sunderland

## Healthwatch Sunderland is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and social care decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

**It is our vision** to live in a world where we can all get the health and care we need.

**It is our mission** to make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.

Our values are to:

- **Listen** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Include** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analyse** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Act** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partner** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

## Why we did this work

During our engagement with the Essence Service, which supports people in the early stages of dementia and their carers, we heard from local carers about some of their experiences. They expressed concerns about the lack of information available on local support services following their family members' diagnoses. Many felt unsure about where to go for help and were not aware of the available resources. This feedback was also recognised by the Essence Service during their feedback sessions held in Dementia Action Week 2023.

In response to this need, we collaborated with the Essence Service, carers and other local partners to create a booklet named 'Support available for people experiencing memory difficulties or dementia in Sunderland'. This document offers key support information on a range of subjects. This may be useful for people experiencing memory difficulties and those living with dementia. The information in this booklet, 'Housing and your home', has been taken from the full booklet.

Please be aware that some of the services mentioned, are only available to people with a dementia diagnosis.



# Housing and your home



Top tips for making your home dementia friendly:

- 1. Make sure you've got good lighting** – Check that natural light can get into your house. Good lighting helps you see clearly and make sense of where you are. Make sure there's nothing blocking light from coming in through the window. Also make sure your bedroom is dark enough at night, as this will help you sleep better.
- 2. Make sure your flooring is safe** – Remove anything that could make you trip up. Get rid of any rugs or mats and watch out for other trip hazards like cables. Make sure you can see the flooring clearly too, plain matt flooring is best. Avoid flooring that's shiny or that's a similar colour to the walls, as it may confuse you.
- 3. Make eating and drinking easier** – Eating and drinking well is important for your health. Use plates, cups and tablecloths with colours that contrast with food. Try using clear plastic containers to store your food, so you can see what's inside.
- 4. Get furniture that you can see clearly** – Dementia may affect how well you can tell the difference between colours. Use bright and contrasting colours to help you see furniture better. Avoid stripes and strong patterns as they can be confusing.
- 5. Remind yourself where things are** – If you have memory problems you may forget where things are kept. Put pictures or signs on cupboards and drawers so you know what's inside them. Try to keep things like your keys, wallet and mobile phone in the same place.
- 6. Keep things simple in the bathroom** – Put a picture and sign on the door labelling the toilet or bathroom. Consider removing the toilet lid if it makes it easier to identify. It's also helpful to have towels and toilet rolls with colours that contrast the walls.
- 7. Keep clutter-free** – Untidiness around the home may make you feel confused and distracted. Get rid of any excess clutter and make sure cupboards and drawers are tidy. Turn off the TV or radio when you're not watching or listening to them, so the noise isn't confusing or distracting.
- 8. Cover or remove mirrors** – People with dementia may not recognise themselves at their current age. This can cause distress, so you may wish to remove or cover any unnecessary mirrors.
- 9. Use equipment to keep yourself safe** – Use grab rails to hold onto and prevent yourself from falling. Installing smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors can also help keep you safe. Sensors can help too. For example, they can detect whether the water has been left running or the temperature is too high or low.
- 10. Keep active and engaged** – Keeping up with the things you enjoy is great for your quality of life. Use a large-faced clock and a calendar to help you keep track of the day and time, and the different things you're doing. Some people find a whiteboard helpful for writing down reminders.
- 11. Get outside** – Take opportunities to get outdoors. It's good for your wellbeing. Check that the front door is easy to tell apart from the others in the road or block. If you've got a garden, make sure there's somewhere you can sit and rest when you need to.

Contact the Alzheimer's Dementia Support Line for further information.

Call: 0333 150 3456

Website: [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

# Housing and your home



## Home adaptations and help to remain at home

The home improvement agency aims to enable those needing support to maintain their independence in their chosen home for the foreseeable future.

Services include minor or major adaptations to the home, the handyman's service for smaller jobs around the home and advice on how to access funding to improve the standard of your home or keep it warm.

Call Sunderland Care and Support on 0191 561 4355

Or email: [hia@sunderlandcareandsupport.co.uk](mailto:hia@sunderlandcareandsupport.co.uk)

To enquire about the handyman service call: 0191 5616666

## If you live in a Gentoo property

Gentoo offer support to make adaptations and repairs to housing for older and vulnerable people.

Call: 0191 525 5000

Website: [www.gentoo.org.uk](http://www.gentoo.org.uk) and search repairs

## Interactive doorbells

An interactive doorbell works by allowing people to see who is at the door when there is motion detected. Even when not home the person can see what's happening through the device's App on their phone and speak through the doorbell.

The mobile phone application (app) also has several other useful features to make a home more secure.

These are available through many trusted retailers. On the high street and online. You could ask a friend or a relative to help you find the most appropriate option.



## LIFestyle Service

**Are you in need of some help in your daily life and around the home?**

If so, Age UK Sunderland's LIFestyle service is for you. We have a fully trained team covering the whole of the city who can help with your housework, shopping, or a visit for companionship.

Call: 0191 514 1131

Email: [lifestyle@ageuksunderland.org.uk](mailto:lifestyle@ageuksunderland.org.uk)

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland) and search 'Lifestyle service'

# Housing and your home



## Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue – home safety checks

If you live in Tyne and Wear, you may be eligible for a free safe and well check. A uniformed member of staff will visit your home to discuss a range of fire prevention topics.

They will then:

- Give you detailed safety advice specific to you and your home.
- Fit smoke alarms and issue protective equipment if necessary.
- Offer you the opportunity to ask any questions.

Safe and well checks normally take around 30 to 45 minutes, but this can vary depending on your circumstances.

To find out if you're eligible for a safe and well check by visiting their website and searching 'safe and well check' or giving them a call.

Call: 0191 444 1500

Website: [www.twfire.gov.uk](http://www.twfire.gov.uk)

## Locking cooker valve

A locking cooker valve can help people to retain their independence at home and provides reassurance to family, friends and carers.

The simple safety device is fitted to existing gas cooker pipework. When the valve is locked, the gas supply to the cooker is stopped. This prevents the risk of the cooker being unintentionally turned on or left on. This can give peace of mind to the carer or relative that the cooker can't be used when they leave the house or the room.

The carer or relative can easily turn the valve on using the key when the cooker is required. This enables the vulnerable person to continue to use their gas cooker safely.

This service is free regardless of your gas supplier. You don't need to change energy supplier or inform your supplier of the device. If the property is rented you will need to seek the permission of the landlord to have the work done.

Contact the Northern Gas Network Customer Care Team:

Call: 0800 040 7766

Website: [www.northerngasnetworks.co.uk](http://www.northerngasnetworks.co.uk) (Search 'locking cooker valve')

## Save energy, pay less

Age UK has written a guide called save energy, pay less. It contains information on improving energy efficiency around the home.



You can order any of these guides by giving their advice line a call. Or you can print them yourself from their website.

Call: 0191 514 1131

Email: [enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk)

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland) (search 'information and advice'. Then scroll down to free booklets and online information).

For personalised support contact Age UK Sunderland's Dementia Hub, The Essence Service on: 0191 522 1310.

# Housing and your home

You or the person you are caring for, may start to feel as if living in their own home is getting too difficult. It may be time to look at alternatives.



## Thinking about your options

Age UK have written a guide, 'Housing Options' which gives you information whether you want to stay where you are or decide to move.



Call: 0191 514 1131

Email: [enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk)

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland) (search 'information and advice' and scroll down to free booklets and online information).

For personalised support contact Age UK Sunderland's Dementia Hub, Essence Service on: 0191 522 1310.

## Sheltered housing

Sheltered housing provides a comfortable, convenient and secure accommodation. Whilst enabling full independence with the support of a housing scheme officer and 24-hour emergency alarm system.

Generally, the schemes will:

- Respond to emergencies and liaise with the appropriate people.
- Check equipment and alarms system.
- Will support the organisation of social activities for residents.

Contact the Sunderland City Council's home and money team for a list of sheltered accommodation across Sunderland.

Call: 0191 520 5551

## Extra care

Extra care housing is made up of self-contained homes. They have additional support services to help residents live independently.

There are several extra care schemes across Sunderland providing apartments/bungalows for rent, for sale, or shared ownership.

Extra care schemes offer secure, self-contained accommodation designed to meet the needs of people aged 55 or over who can live safely on their own with some care and support. People who live in extra care housing have their own self-contained apartment or bungalow, their own front door and a legal right to occupy the property.

Read more by visiting [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk) (search 'extra care').

Call: 0191 520 5551

# Housing and your home



## Residential and nursing care homes

Residential and nursing care homes are for people who cannot continue living in their own homes. It can be for a short time, over a longer period or permanently.

The main difference between residential and nursing care is that a nursing care home will always have a registered nurse onsite. They can manage more complex health needs compared to a residential care home.

If a person living in a residential home develops a health condition or an existing condition worsens, they may have to move to a nursing home.

People can arrange care for themselves or a loved one directly with a provider. Or the council can arrange the support and will carry out an assessment to decide the care and support needed. This will see if you meet the eligible criteria for this support.

The council can supply you with a list of Sunderland's homes and assess you.

**Call Sunderland City Council: 0191 520 5552**

**Visit: [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk)** (search 'residential and nursing care').

## Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England.

They make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and encourage care services to improve.

They monitor, inspect and regulate services and publish what they find. Where they find poor care, they will use their powers to take action.

You may want to check with the CQC how particular care homes are rated, before you make a decision on where you or a loved one lives.

**Call: 03000 616161**

**Email: [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)**

Age UK have written a guide to finding, choosing and paying for a care home. They also have a care home check list. This contains what to consider and questions to ask when looking at care homes.



**Call: 0191 514 1131**

**Email: [enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/sunderland)** (search 'information and advice'. Then scroll down to free booklets and online information)

**For personalised support contact Age UK Sunderland's Dementia Hub, Essence Service on: 0191 522 1310.**





## Energy Suppliers Priority Register

**The Priority Services Register (PSR) provides extra help and additional support during a power cut for elderly, very ill or disabled people, or those who rely on power for medical equipment.**

**PRIORITY  
SERVICES  
REGISTER**

Joining your energy suppliers Priority Services Register means you'll be able to get a range of extra help when you need it. This could be all the time, or for a short period due to something that's happened in your life.

Some of the help you can get includes:

- Priority support in an emergency
- Wherever possible, advanced notice of scheduled power cuts
- An identification and password scheme if someone needs to visit or contact you, helping you feel confident they are genuine
- The ability to nominate someone to receive communications and bills from your supplier, for example a family member, carer or someone you trust
- The chance to move your prepayment meter if you can't safely get to it to top up
- Regular meter reading services
- Account info and bills in large print or braille
- Assistance reconnecting your gas supply, if you need it

**Register by contacting your energy supplier – you will find their details on your latest bill**

# Thank you to our partners

This work would not have been possible without the support from our partners and local carers with lived experience of living and supporting a loved one with a dementia diagnosis. Thank you on behalf of all at Healthwatch Sunderland for your time, your passion and your commitment to producing this booklet. It is hoped it will support and improve the lives of people experiencing memory difficulties, dementia and their carers across the City of Sunderland.

Thank you to:

## Local carers



South Tyneside and Sunderland  
NHS Foundation Trust



North East and  
North Cumbria



Cumbria, Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust





**Website: [healthwatchsunderland.com](http://healthwatchsunderland.com)**

**Call: 0191 5147145**

**Email: [healthwatchsunderland@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchsunderland@pcp.uk.net)**

 **@HWSunderland**

 **Facebook.com/HWSunderland**

 **Instagram.com/healthwatchsunderland**