

Local support services

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

Issue 4 – Published August 2026



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

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If you have information to add or notice anything outdated in the booklets, please contact us and these will be considered.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

Local support services

Essence Pre-Diagnostic Service

The Essence Service has a dedicated worker to support those with symptoms of dementia who do not yet have a formal diagnosis.

Anyone with concerns about memory or other cognitive difficulties can contact the service for advice and can be supported to access assessment from local Memory Services if required.

Considering a diagnosis can be daunting, but according to figures from The Alzheimer's Society, 95% of people given a diagnosis agreed it was "better to know". Having a formal diagnosis may give access to treatments and support services that may not otherwise be available. It may give an individual the opportunity to plan for their future, and to make legal and financial arrangements as well as to discuss their wishes for their future care and treatment.

The Essence Pre-Diagnostic Service offers emotional and practical support during a vulnerable time. The service can support with information on symptoms and tips for coping, and support to access other services that may be useful. Individuals can be monitored until they have an outcome from their assessment, and if a diagnosis is given, they can be referred on for ongoing support from the Essence Dementia Team.

For more information about the Pre-diagnostic Service please contact:

Call: 0191 522 1310

Email: essenceservice@ageuksunderland.org.uk

Website: www.essenceservice.org.uk



Or, pop into the Essence Service Centre at: Sir Thomas Allen Centre, Mill Hill Road, Doxford Park, Sunderland SR3 2ND

Also, check out the Wellbeing Activity booklet for information about local groups and activities.

Local support services

For people with memory difficulties or a dementia diagnosis, it is important to keep doing enjoyable activities. This could be a hobby or a favourite activity.

It is also important to stay in contact with family and friends and get to know new people. This includes people who also have difficulties with their memory or have a diagnosis of dementia and their loved ones.

In this section is some information on organisations in Sunderland that can offer support. These organisations can help people to get out and about, take part in activities and improve a person's wellbeing.

Sunderland GP Alliance Social Prescribers

Social prescribers work with people to find out 'what matters to them'. The team will then support people in their own community.



The social prescribing service can help people with housing worries, money worries, being more physically active, connecting with others and support with mental health and physical wellbeing.

You can self refer to the service by visiting: www.sunderlandhealthandwellnesshub.nhs.uk (visiting the 'Social Prescriber' section).

You can also ask the receptionist at your GP practice to refer you to the Sunderland GP Alliance Social Prescribing Service.



FREE support, friendship groups and trips out and about for people experiencing Dementia, their families and carers.

Weekly at the Chester's Pub,
Chester Road, Sunderland SR4 7DR

Tuesday between 10 am and 12 noon

Washington group every 3rd Friday of the month

Weekly Home Visiting/Befriending Service and monthly
Peer Support Group for people with dementia

For more information
Email: actionondementiasunderland@gmail.com
Call: 07740 111 182

Local support services

The Essence Service, Age UK Sunderland's dementia hub

This service works with local partners to offer free and dedicated services for people who have been diagnosed with mild to moderate dementia and their carers.

The team offer social prescribing support. This gives information in areas around health, wellbeing and legal issues. They also make sure people are aware of how to access other services which may be useful to them.

People with a mild to moderate dementia diagnosis receive emotional support and support from others with similar experiences. This helps them to understand and deal with their diagnosis in a positive way.

Evidence suggests that keeping active and stimulated when a person has mild to moderate dementia is essential. It helps to slow down its progression and maintains wellbeing. With this in mind, the Essence Service offers a variety of activities. These are available from its Doxford Park centre in Sunderland and in the wider community.

The Essence Service also recognises the vital role of carers and the effect caring for someone with dementia can have. They support carers throughout the dementia journey. As the dementia progresses staff continue to help carers. They offer person centred support, social prescribing and peer support groups.

Peer support groups are a chance for carers to join other carers and talk about their experiences. This is done in a relaxed confidential environment. Sharing experiences with other carers can help to reduce feelings of guilt, loneliness and isolation. It also enables carers to access information and support during and, after the caring role ceases.



The flyer is enclosed in a dark teal border. At the top center is the Essence Service logo, a stylized flower with eight petals in various colors (yellow, orange, red, pink, purple, blue, green, and teal). Below the logo, the text 'Essence Service' is written in a purple serif font. Underneath that, 'Sunderland's Dementia Hub' is written in a bold, dark teal sans-serif font. The main body of text is in a dark teal sans-serif font and reads: 'After a dementia diagnosis, the Essence Service is the first port of call for people in Sunderland with mild to moderate dementia and those who care for them in their own home.' Below this, contact information is listed: 'Call: 0191 522 1310', 'Email: essenceservice@ageuksunderland.org.uk', and 'Website: www.essenceservice.org.uk'. At the bottom center is the Sunderland Age UK logo, which features a stylized 'A' made of three overlapping shapes in teal, orange, and green, followed by the text 'Sunderland ageUK' and the tagline 'Let's change how we age' in a smaller font.


Essence Service
Sunderland's Dementia Hub

After a dementia diagnosis, the
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Email: essenceservice@ageuksunderland.org.uk
Website: www.essenceservice.org.uk

 **Sunderland ageUK**
Let's change how we age



SUNDERLAND
SAFEGUARDING
ADULTS BOARD

Adult Abuse



Recognise it. Report it. Stop it.

Abuse can and does happen to adults.

www.sunderlandsab.org.uk

Worried about someone?

If you're worried about your safety or someone else's, scan this QR code to complete the online reporting form:



Or call 0191 520 5552

Or visit www.sunderland.gov.uk/report-it and click 'safeguarding concern'

Local support services

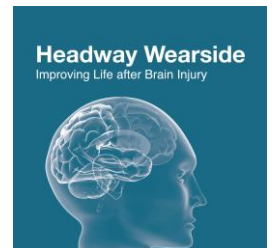
Headway Wearside

Headway Wearside offers practical and social support for those with an acquired brain injury who also have memory loss. They have a range of booklets and flyers for families and offer support for carers.

They are there to listen to your concerns, help you find solutions, and can also link you with other agencies that can offer support to meet your needs.

They offer a variety of activities, such as arts and crafts, exercise and physical games, alongside therapeutic services, including music, art, massage and wellbeing.

Social sessions offer a relaxing space to enjoy a cuppa and a chat.



Call: 0191 522 7113

Email: kim.hunter@headwaywearside.org.uk

Website: www.headwaywearside.org.uk

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





Website: healthwatchsunderland.com

Call: 0191 5147145

Email: healthwatchsunderland@pcp.uk.net

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