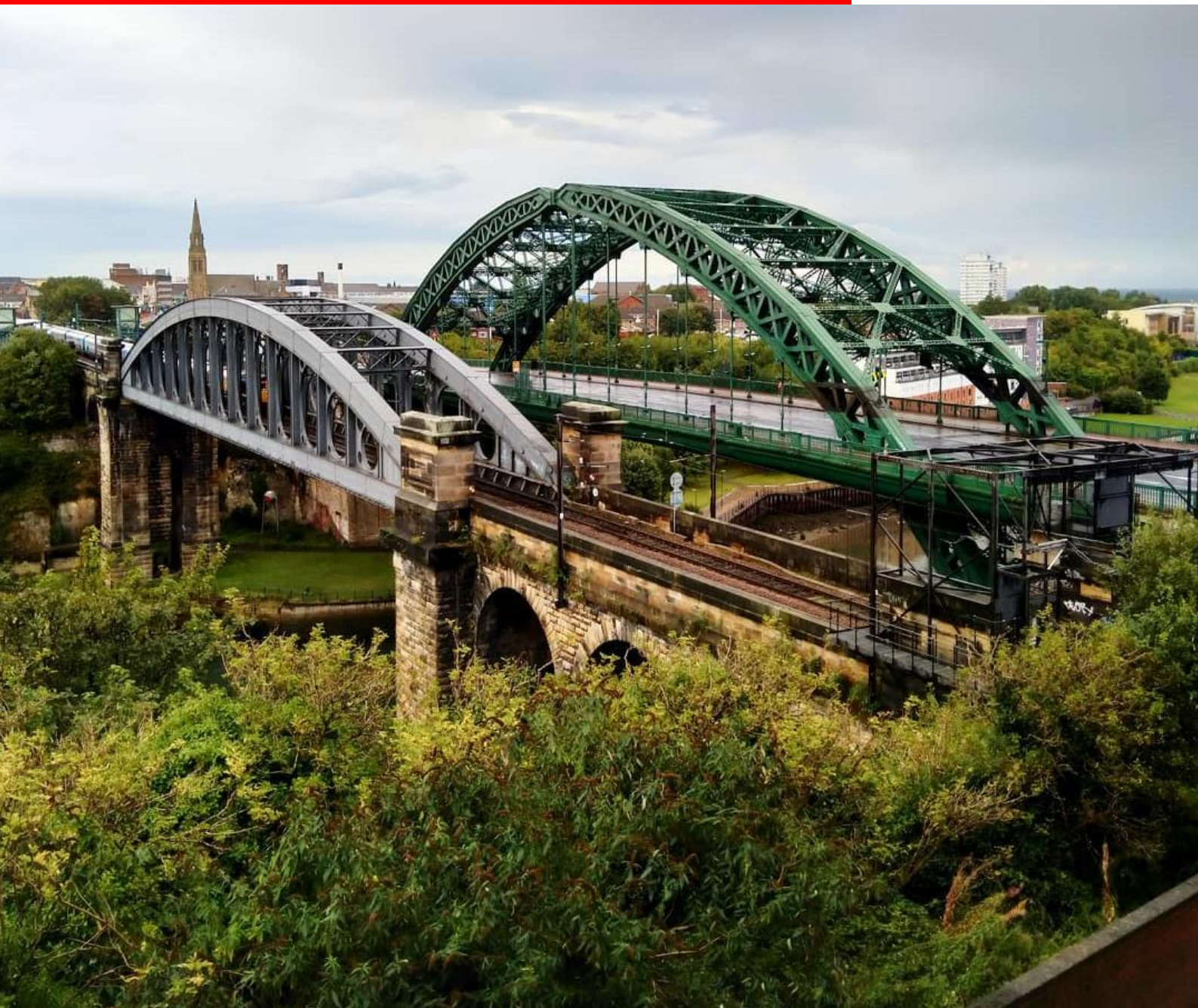


Planning for the future

Support 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

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If you have information to add or notice anything outdated in the booklets, please contact us and these will be considered.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

Planning for the future

Planning for legal matters related to memory difficulties or dementia should ideally take place in the early stages. The person can then still express their wishes and understand the implications. This will help the person feel more in control. This includes:



- **Making a will:** If possible, this should be done with the guidance of legal experts to make sure it is valid.
- **Appointing a power of attorney:** Choosing a trusted person or persons to handle financial and healthcare decisions when a person can no longer do so.
- **Advance care planning:** Discussing your wishes for medical care and end-of-life decisions with healthcare professionals and loved ones.

Making a will: The ability to create a will largely depends on a person's mental capacity. Dementia is a condition that gets worse over time. It affects cognitive functions, such as memory and the ability to make choices. As the dementia advances, it can change a person's ability to fully understand the implications of a will.

Early stages: In the early stages of memory difficulties or dementia, people may still be able to make a will. At this stage it is very important to involve legal professionals and medical experts to assess their capacity. This will make sure the process is conducted correctly.

Mild to advanced stages: As dementia progresses, the ability to create a will may diminish. At this point, it's essential to prioritise the person's best interests. If they cannot understand the will's implications, it is best to seek alternatives.

Once you have made a will, it is usually stored with a solicitor, and you get a copy. Most solicitors charge a small fee for this. You can keep the will at home if you prefer. It is important to tell someone you trust where it is kept. This will help them to find it when it is needed.

The probate service can also keep your will for you for a fee. Visit www.gov.uk (search 'how to store a will with the probate service').

Age UK have written a guide on wills and estate planning. It has practical advice for making and updating your will.



You can order this and other useful guides and factsheets by calling the advice line or you can print them off yourself from their website.

Call: 0191 514 1131

Email: enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk

Website: 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, The Essence Service on: 0191 522 1310.

Planning for the future

Power of attorney

Power of attorney is a legal document that allows a designated person (the attorney) to make decisions on behalf of someone else (the donor).



There are two types of power of attorney:

1. **Property and financial affairs power of attorney:** This allows the attorney to manage the person's financial matters, such as paying bills, selling assets, and making investments. It can help to ensure the person's financial well-being. This is important if they can no longer handle their own affairs.
2. **Health and welfare power of attorney:** This allows the attorney to make decisions about the person's healthcare, living arrangements, and medical treatments. It helps decisions be made that align with the person's wishes. This is important when the person can no longer express them.

You can only set up a lasting power of attorney when you have mental capacity. Once someone has lost capacity, it is too late and an application to the Court of Protection will be needed.

To apply for power of attorney, visit www.gov.uk (search 'power of attorney'. You can also download the application forms from this website.)

Citizens Advice can also help you. Call their national helpline on 0800 144 8848.

There is usually a cost to register the lasting power of attorney application. Although some people on certain benefits can get a reduction or maybe exempt.

Age UK has written a guide which explains how to appoint someone to make decisions on your behalf if you're no longer able to make or communicate your decisions. It covers, the different types of power of attorney, the process of choosing an attorney, the different ways of communicating your wishes and what happens if you haven't set up a power of attorney.



It also lists useful organisations that offer impartial information and advice about setting up a power of attorney.

They also have an advocacy service which can offer help and support with power of attorney and a range of other issues, such as the other subjects mentioned in this section of the booklet.

Call: 0191 514 1131

Email: enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk

Website: 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.

Planning for the future



Advance care planning

Advance care planning is the process when people discuss their preferences for medical care and end-of-life decisions with healthcare professionals and loved ones.

It involves preparing for future decisions about medical care when a person becomes seriously ill or unable to let you know their wishes. Having meaningful conversations with loved ones is the most important part of advance care planning. Many people also choose to put their preferences in writing by completing documents called advance directives.

Advance directives are legal documents that offer instructions for medical care and only go into effect if the person cannot let you know their wishes.

The two most common advance directives for health care are the advanced decision (otherwise known as a living will) and the durable power of attorney for health care.

Advanced decisions or a living will

Whilst they still have mental capacity, a person may make an advance decision or a living will to refuse certain medical treatment. An advance decision would become relevant if and when there comes a time when someone is unable to make or communicate their own decisions.

Is an advance decision (living will) legally binding?

Advance decisions are legally binding, so health professionals must follow them – as long as they meet certain requirements.

Top tip

If you have to go to the Court of Protection, this can take time and be costly. As a result, it is important to have the power of attorney in place.

Planning for the future

This is me

Developed by the Alzheimer's Society 'This is Me' is a simple leaflet. It is aimed at anyone receiving professional care who is living with dementia or going through delirium or other communication difficulties.



It records details about those who can't easily share information about themselves. Such as:

- A person's cultural and family background.
- Important events, people and places from their life.
- Their preferences and routines.

The leaflet can be used in any setting. At home, in hospital, in respite care or in a care home. It helps health and social care professionals better understand who the person really is. Care delivered can then match the person's needs.

This can help to reduce distress for people living with dementia and their carers. It can also help to overcome problems with communication. As well as stop more serious conditions such as malnutrition and dehydration.



Call: 0333 150 3456

Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk (search 'this is me').

Lions Club Charity, Message in a Bottle

Lions Club Message in a Bottle scheme is a simple idea designed to encourage people to keep their basic personal and medical details on a standard form and in a common location – the fridge.

It saves the emergency services valuable time if they need to enter a property in an emergency situation.

If you have any questions about this or would like a bottle for you or a family member, please contact Healthwatch Sunderland.



Call: 0191 514 7145

Email: healthwatchsunderland@pcp.uk.net

Website: www.healthwatchsunderland.com (search 'message in a bottle').

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 and the other documents which accompany it. 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





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