



Dementia Conference Report 2025

15th September 2025

Contents

Introduction Conference program

Dementia Connectors

Informing the strategy: What you told us and what we did

What is working well

What needs to improve

Next steps

Summary of findings

Feedback from the conference

Introduction

This report is from the third Dementia Conference, facilitated by Search in partnership with Age UK North Tyneside. It follows in the footsteps of two conferences, in 2022 and 2023, which were funded by Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB). The aim of these conferences was to feed into and shape a Dementia Strategy for Newcastle, which would be a shared vision shaped by people living with Dementia.

The information and the draft strategy which we all worked so hard to produce will be taken forward to inform the dementia sections of the Ageing Well Strategy.

The 2025 conference introduces the new Dementia Connections team and explains their role and picks up on two key themes which the delegates of the previous conference requested more information on.

The round table discussions were an opportunity to reflect on two themes identified from our last conference. Delegates were asked what was working well in these areas and what else might be needed.

Digital - This was highlighted as a big concern in the previous conferences. A big shift to things being done online made people fear being left behind, while others said they would like to try and embrace it and see how it might improve their situation.

Transport – Good transport links and services, accessible parking is vital to living well with dementia, changing of bus routes, times cause anxiety and stress and often contribute to isolation and disengagement.

Conference program

Welcome – Simon Luddington and Dawn McNally.

Presentation from Simon Luddington – feedback from the previous conference – what you said, what we did

Presentation by Kirsty de Bono-Hume; Age UK North Tyneside – Dementia Connections – meet the team

Presentation by Derek Duggan – A Carer's perspective

Presentation by Dr Alison Killen; Newcastle University – Living Well with Dementia

Round Table discussions

Presentation by Stella Simba – Newcastle Digital Inclusion Manager; Connected Voice

Presentation by Matt Goodwin – Head of Planning; Nexus

Round Table discussions

Close – Simon Luddington and Dawn McNally.



Dementia Connections Newcastle

Search and Age UK North Tyneside are now working in partnership to support people living with dementia and their carers across Newcastle.

The aims of the combined team is to:

- Provide individualised support to those affected by dementia at a time when needed.
- Educate, empower and engage individuals to make informed choices regarding their care/ care of their loved one.
- To reduce crisis situations / hospital admissions.
- Work in partnership to build upon dementia service provision

Dementia Coordinator Role is delivered by Search

- Work with individuals to access services and support to promote living well with dementia.
- Assessments, onward signposting / referrals to ensure needs are adequately met.
- Offer or engage individuals with social groups and activities
- Welcome and support carers – recognising the importance and need for peer support.
- Networking / partnerships throughout the city

Admiral Nurse Role delivered by Age UK North Tyneside

- An Admiral Nurse specialises in helping to support families that care for someone who has a diagnosis of dementia.
- Individualised approach to each family.
- Support family members / carers to ensure their own health and wellbeing is taken into consideration as well as their loved one.
- Educate and empower individuals to obtain the right support at the time its needed.
- Assist with navigation of services, make onward referrals and signposting as indicated.
- Consideration re: Future planning including emotional support, loss and bereavement.

Informing the Dementia Strategy

What we did



Key messages from the last conference were the importance of:

- opportunities to socialise, share skills, experiences and gain support.
- Places that did not carry a "dementia Label" but that were inclusive, understanding and welcoming.
- Services, community spaces and communities that understood dementia, the challenges which carers faced and were supportive. This was found to be unequal across the city

What we did

Services

Following on from the conference Search supported St Martins Centre, Everyturn and Keyring with a grant to set up Memory Teas across the city, operating in the areas we couldn't reach.

Other groups and organisations have set up dementia friendly activities which have been well received and a great resource to refer people into.

Raise Awareness and understanding

Search has been working with different organisations across Newcastle to improve their understanding of dementia, advising them on making changes to buildings and how their interactions might be more dementia friendly.

A joint team from Search and Newcastle University rolled out Dementia Awareness Training to staff and volunteers across organisations in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Alzheimer's Society have helped us deliver Dementia Friends Sessions.

Search have worked closely with Newcastle and Northumbria Universities to open up more research opportunities.

Informing the Dementia Strategy

What you told us- What is working well

Transport

Bridge Card – NEXUS customized to individualized needs
Helpful Staff on Metro System

Support

Dementia Connections Service Admiral Nurses
Newcastle Carers Centre
Search Memory Teas (Groups for Couples)
St James Memory Café
St Martins Centre- Memory Tea
Crisis Support – Stepped levels of care
Walking Football NUFC Foundation and Search
Access to Search Groups- Carer Support (Returning from Groups with positive experience)
Search Advice and Information and Lasting Powers of Attorney
Joint working between Services and Organisations (variable)
Family Carers and Professionals
WAG Dog befriending

Communication

Newcastle City Council Information Now
More Social Media and TV coverage is happening
Newcastle University Dementia related research
Dementia Friends (needs to get back on track)
Awareness and Training
Publicity of Carer Needs
Family Carers informed by Search/Professionals

IT and Digital

Teach and Tech Groups
Koms (Home digital communication device)

Informing the Dementia Strategy

What needs to improve/more of

Transport

Transport in the Inner and Outer West

Bus routes up and down the city (not just east to west)

Bus staff to be more understanding / considerate (like in the pandemic)

Mobility Scooter Access – To buildings and Metros

Taxi card scheme needs improving

Transport to medical appointments

Easier parking at hospitals

Removal of Cash parking excludes people

Communication

Language Barriers

Awareness and addressing stigma in South Asian and Chinese

Communities

Barriers for men coming forward

Education for Carers

Clarification of Admiral Nurse Role

Pre and Post Diagnostic support and information (Time left waiting without diagnosis)

Signposting -communication – A leaflet is not enough

Support

More Individualised Support

Support for Carers

Carer wellbeing appointments (at least annually)

More consideration in hospitals

Gaps in East End for support

More groups from Search – waiting lists

Funding.

More Search activities funded (Daily)

Carer Support funded

More staff in groups

Consistent provision (some groups come and go /east end and city)

Support from staff to take part in research

Access to GPs – GP follow checklist and feel not heard.

Digital

More cash opportunities in shops, cafes, services and parking

Does it all have to be Digital?

Free Wifi for everyone

More Techy Teas

More individual support for digital

Promotion of digital aids

Support to see Digital House of the future



Next steps

The rich information provided directly through discussion in round table discussions will be shared with decision makers and used to influence further development of the draft Dementia Strategy.

The information is presented in this report and the report will be shared widely among professionals and organisations who work with people living with dementia to shape and improve services. The report will influence the work of the Dementia Partnership (a broad range of professionals, organisations and stakeholders who are working on the Dementia Strategy).

Search along with other organisations across the city will use the information provided by people living with dementia to shape, inform and improve their work to ensure that they remain Person Centred and meet the needs of the people they serve.



Summary of findings

There was a lot of information shared so openly in the conference, below we have summarised the key themes coming from the report into headings.

Transport

Current transport support is valued, particularly helpful Metro staff and individualised options such as the Bridge Card, which make travel more manageable for people living with dementia and their carers. However, significant barriers remain across the Inner and Outer West, with limited bus routes, a need for more understanding from bus staff, and ongoing issues with mobility scooter access on public transport and in buildings. Practical concerns –such as improving the taxi card scheme, better transport to medical appointments, easier parking at hospitals, and reinstating cash payment options for parking.

Support

A wide range of support services is appreciated, including the Dementia Connections Service, Admiral Nurses, the Carers Centre, Search Memory Teas and cafés, walking football groups, crisis support pathways, and strong joint working across some services. People value positive experiences with Search groups, access to information and the compassionate involvement of family carers and professionals. However, support remains inconsistent, with calls for more individualised help, better provision for carers (including annual wellbeing appointments), clearer role definitions such as for Admiral Nurses, and stronger pre- and post-diagnostic support. Gaps in the East End, long waiting lists, funding limitations, inconsistent group availability, challenges accessing GPs, and the need for more staff and research participation support show that provision, though helpful, is not yet meeting demand.

Communication

People value existing communication channels such as Information Now, increased social-media and TV coverage, university research involvement, and the continued—though diminished—presence of Dementia Friends and awareness training. However, communication gaps persist, particularly around language barriers, stigma within South Asian and Chinese communities, and the challenge of engaging men. Carers still need clearer education and signposting, better pre- and post-diagnostic information, and communication approaches that go beyond leaflets. Public recognition of carer needs has grown, but more consistent, culturally sensitive, and accessible communication is required.

IT and Digital

Digital initiatives such as Teach and Tech groups, Komps, and broader digital aids are valued and help people stay connected and informed. Yet there is a feeling that digital-by-default systems exclude many, prompting calls for more non-digital options and wider access to cash payments. People would like more Techy Teas, increased individual digital support, free public Wi-Fi, and better promotion of digital tools, as well as opportunities to experience innovations like the digital house of the future. While digital support is progressing, it needs to be more inclusive and accessible for all.

Priority Areas

Develop a Newcastle specific standalone Dementia Strategy

Continue to develop Dementia Connections –

Make Dementia Connections a Statutory funded service

Join Up Statutory and Voluntary, Community, Social and Enterprise services so they operate seamlessly

Raising awareness and addressing Stigma

Dementia Inclusion for South Asian, Chinese Communities and other ethnic minorities

Support for people to take part in research

Dementia UK to collect evidence for Admiral Nurses and Dementia Coordinators to be statutory funded.



Feedback from the conference

Great conference, met
some lovely people!

Great effort keep
spreading the word.

Search is a trailblazer in
raising awareness about
dementia. Wonderful range
of activities.

I've learnt a lot today
really enjoyable for us
as a carer, I don't get
heard usually

I really enjoyed the
conferenced, well
organized and
interesting.

Good that Age UK
North Tyneside and
Search can work
together to make a
change.

Keep fighting for a Strategy
we need one

Enjoyed everything
very much.

A very informative event.
Thank you.