



# Practical Tips to help my memory

Occupational Therapy



## INTRODUCTION

If you have a problem with your memory it can have an impact on your ability to do everyday tasks. Introducing new coping strategies can be very helpful. Everyone is different and these coping strategies will vary.

If you follow helpful habits and routines this may reduce the impact of your memory difficulties.

It is important to acknowledge that if you are changing the way you do something, you need to allow time for new habits and routines to be established. It may be useful to trial one strategy at a time to help it to become part of your normal routine.

This booklet has been designed by Occupational Therapy staff in NHS Lanarkshire for anyone who has concerns about their memory to illustrate some practical strategies that you might find helpful. It is hoped that by using some of the techniques suggested you will be able to maintain your independence and reduce some of the frustrations memory difficulties can cause. Your feedback on the content would be much appreciated and can be done using the link below or by discussing it with the person who gave you it.



**NHS Lanarkshire Occupational Therapy staff give permission for this booklet to be shared widely and at [www.alzscot.org/ahpresources](http://www.alzscot.org/ahpresources)**

## CONTENTS PAGE

Sharing Concerns .....	4
Home Environment .....	5
Technology .....	6 & 7
Where to Find Support through Technology.....	8
Cooking.....	9
Timers, Reminders & Alarms.....	10
Medication .....	11
Days of the Week.....	12
Calendars .....	13
Planners and Diaries .....	14
Information Boards .....	15
Wipe Boards .....	16
Managing Correspondance .....	17
Using the Telephone .....	18
Night Time .....	19
Keys .....	20
Remembering items when going out .....	21
Instruction Guides .....	22
Local Resources Page .....	23
Brain Health .....	24 & 25

## SHARING CONCERNS

It can be helpful to share any concerns that you may have about your memory with others for a number of reasons:

- It can reduce the worry, stress and sometimes embarrassment associated with being unable to recall names, find appropriate words or following a conversation.
- It may mean that you receive support and be encouraged to join social situations. Reduced confidence can lead to social withdrawal, reducing the opportunity for the valuable brain health benefits gained from mixing with others socially.
- Assistance cards, that can be shown to others, can sometimes give the reassurance needed in social situations or when attending an appointment.

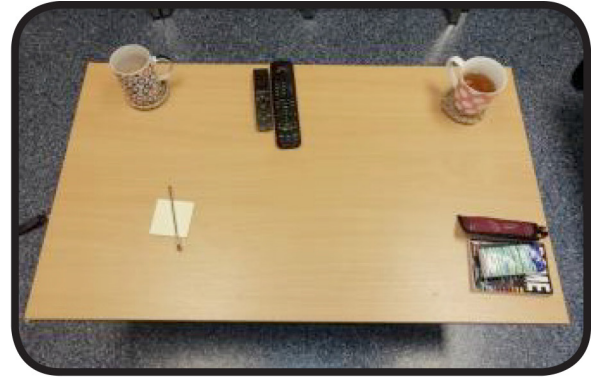
**I have difficulties remembering things.  
Please write down details for me.**

**I get easily anxious.  
Please do not hurry me.  
Give me time to think about what you say and to respond.**

Support from others is very valuable in maintaining health and wellbeing however, it is also important not to rely on others to provide unnecessary support as this can lead to dependence.

## HOME ENVIRONMENT

Having a safe home environment is important for everyone but even more so if you have memory difficulties. By keeping areas clutter free and organised it is generally easier to see what you are looking for.



It is helpful if rooms have adequate light to enable you to see things clearly.

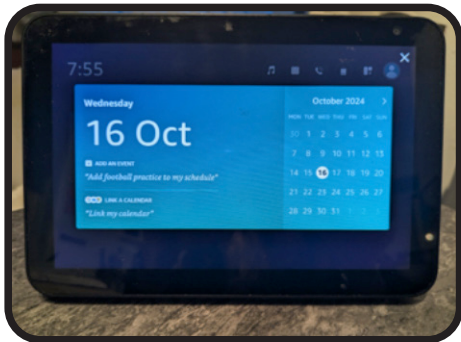
Having lights on a timer ensures lights are on if you return home when it is dark and also makes it look like someone is in the house. Another option is sensor lights that light up as you approach or using smart technology.



People with memory problems can have the added complication of visual difficulties, so it is often helpful if there are colour contrasts. An example of this would be dinner plates that are a different colour to the table surface.

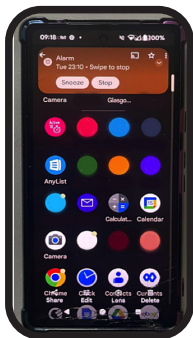
# TECHNOLOGY

There are many different devices which can help you to live a fulfilling and productive life, for example being able to access music you enjoy or staying in touch with family and friends by text message, email or video calling. The majority of devices display the day, date and time which can help with orientation.



There are various devices which can be used to set up reminder prompts such as:

- Mobile phones
- Tablets
- Smart watch
- Smart speakers and virtual assistants



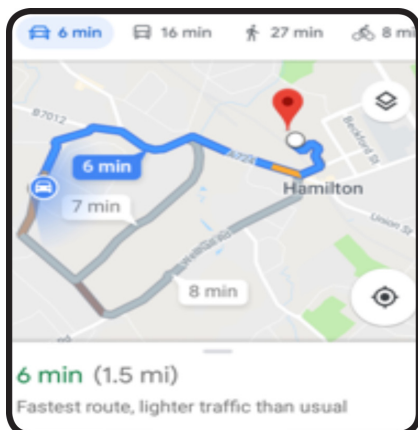
They can be used as reminders prompts for:

- Medication
- Appointments
- Attending social events

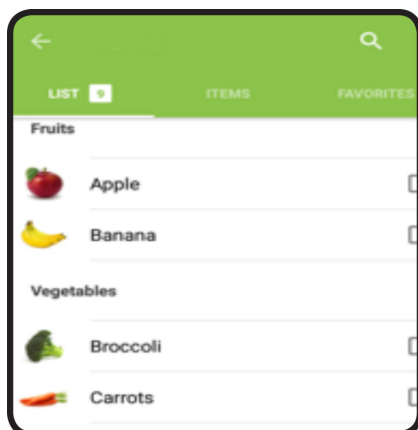


Using the calendar on your phone can be helpful to record events or appointments that you may have.

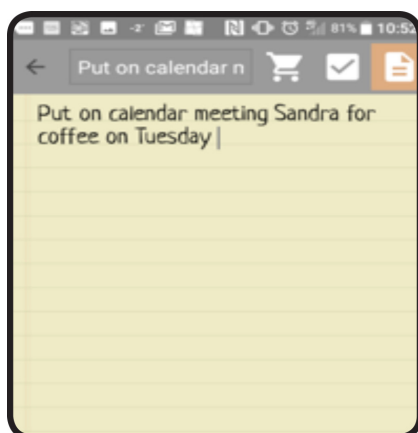
Taking photographs on your mobile phone can be a great way of keeping a record of a day out, but can also serve as a helpful reminder of where the car is parked. Photographs can also be used to remind you of information you want to share later eg details of an event you would like to attend.



Many devices have the option of route planners and maps to assist with orientation. However, there are also devices which can be used as a GPS tracker, this allows the device (and person) to be located if necessary.



Helpful apps such as a torch or a shopping list can be added.



Use the timer function, on your device, to remind you to do something such as empty the tumble dryer, put the bin out or check the cooker.

## WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

ADAM (About Digital and Me) is a platform which will help you to find the right pieces of technology at the right time.

You can have a chat with ADAM, on the Alzheimer's Scotland website. ADAM will ask some questions about the things that are important to you and things that might be becoming more challenging. ADAM will give recommendations about digital products which you might find useful.

ADAM will tell you about why they've been recommended to you and give you some insight into how easy they are to set up and use, and where you could buy them if you choose to give them a try.

You can use this link to take you to ADAM

**<https://www.alzscot.org/adam>**

## LOCAL RESOURCES

There are local experts who can advise you on pieces of technology you may find useful.

In North Lanarkshire you can contact the Assistive Technology Team on 01698 346912 or via email **[assistivetechonology@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:assistivetechonology@northlan.gov.uk)**

In South Lanarkshire you can contact the Technology Enabled Care Team via email

**[TEC.Programme@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:TEC.Programme@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)**

## COOKING

It is important to be careful in the kitchen, particularly when using cooking appliances. Appliances such as microwaves, slow cookers and air fryers can be useful as they automatically turn off at the end of the set cooking time.



When cooking we can become distracted and forget to turn the cooker off. It is therefore essential to get into the habit of checking the cooker or the appliance is turned off.



Prompt signs positioned in a visible place, such as beside the cooker or at the door, are often all that is needed to remind us to turn the cooker off.



When choosing appliances consider choosing the simpler option with dials and digits that are easy to read.

## TIMERS, REMINDERS & ALARMS

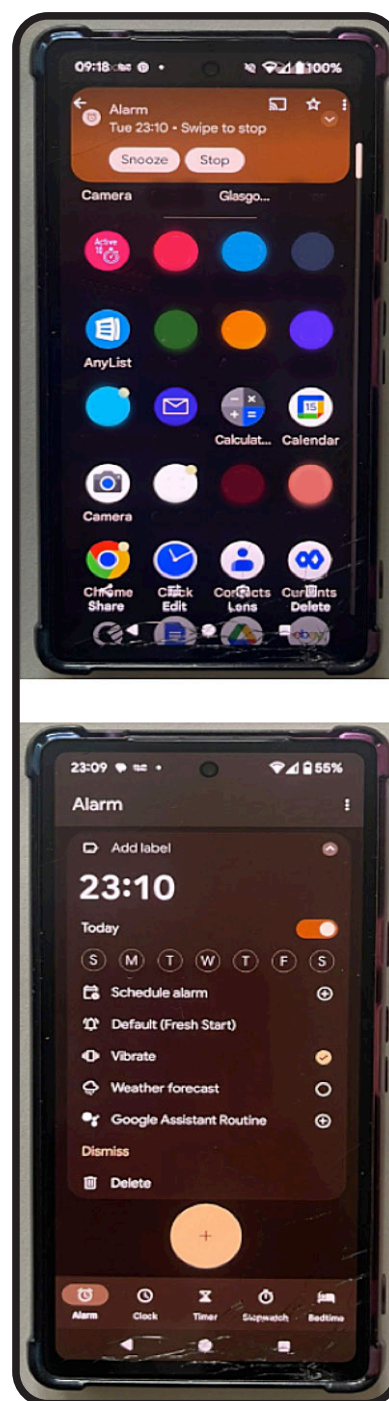


Timers come in a variety of forms e.g.:

- Traditional clockwork/digital timers
- Virtual assistants such as Alexa or Google assist
- Mobile phone alerts

Timers, Reminders & Alarms can be used for a variety of reasons such as:

- Alert you when the cooking time is complete.
- Reminding you to check items as they cook and perhaps stir them occasionally.
- Reminding you to check the washing machine/tumble drier.
- Reminding you to take your medication.
- Reminding you to pay a bill/settle an account.
- Reminding you to change TV channels.
- Reminding you to put the bin out and the colour each week.
- Reminding you to check in for a flight.



## MEDICATION

Using a pill box is a good way of organising medications, as using individual boxes can be confusing.

When tablets are put into a pill box, it is much easier to see whether or not they have been taken.



If you find it difficult to fill your pill box then your medications can be dispensed from the Pharmacy in a blister pack.



There are a range of technology solutions available such as, setting a reminder on your mobile phone or virtual assistant, ie. Alexa, google, specifically designed applications. Another option is to have prompt sign where you will see it.



## DAYS OF THE WEEK



For some people it is important to know what day of the week it is. This can be very frustrating if you can't remember.

There are various methods of finding out what day it is. This includes:

- looking at the TV
- mobile phone
- newspaper
- TV guide
- calendar
- diary
- clock
- digital device

Some people look at the TV in the morning, while others will use a phone, clock or digital device to obtain this information.

## CALENDARS



A calendar is a visual reminder of your plans and what you need to do. It is important to refer to this on a daily basis, ideally before bed and in the morning to ensure you don't miss anything. It is also helpful towards the end of the month to check what is happening at the beginning of the following month to ensure that you are organised.



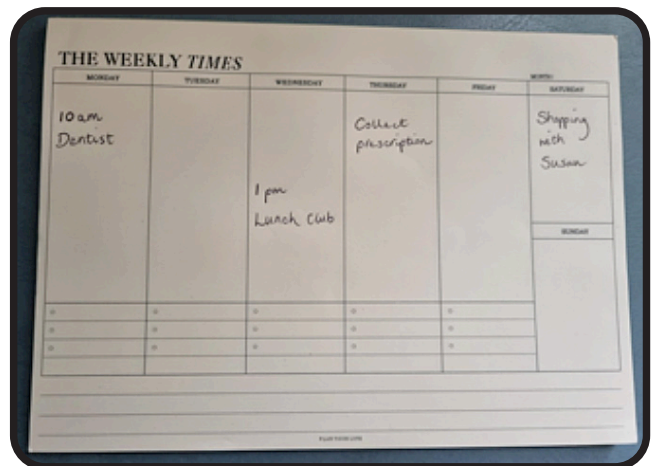
It is essential that the calendar has adequate space to write clearly, in order for it to be clearly read. In addition some people highlight important events such as birthdays and medical appointments.

When trying to keep track of the day and date, it may be helpful to circle the date in the morning or score it off at bedtime.

## PLANNERS & DIARIES

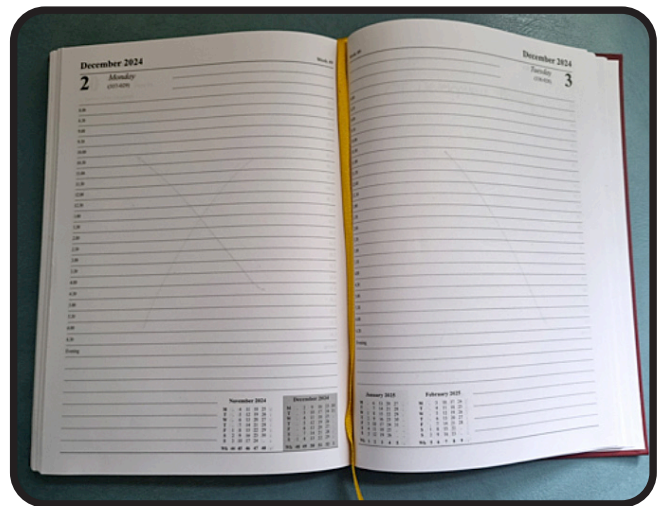
A weekly planner can be used as a snapshot of your calendar.

This can be refreshed each week. Crossing off each day at the end of the day can help with orientation.



Carrying a pocket diary or notebook and pen may also be helpful to record appointments or arrangements made when out.

This can be added to your diary or calendar when you return home. Leave your diary sitting out where it is clearly visible and have it open at the correct page



Lists can be helpful to remind you of the things you have to do.



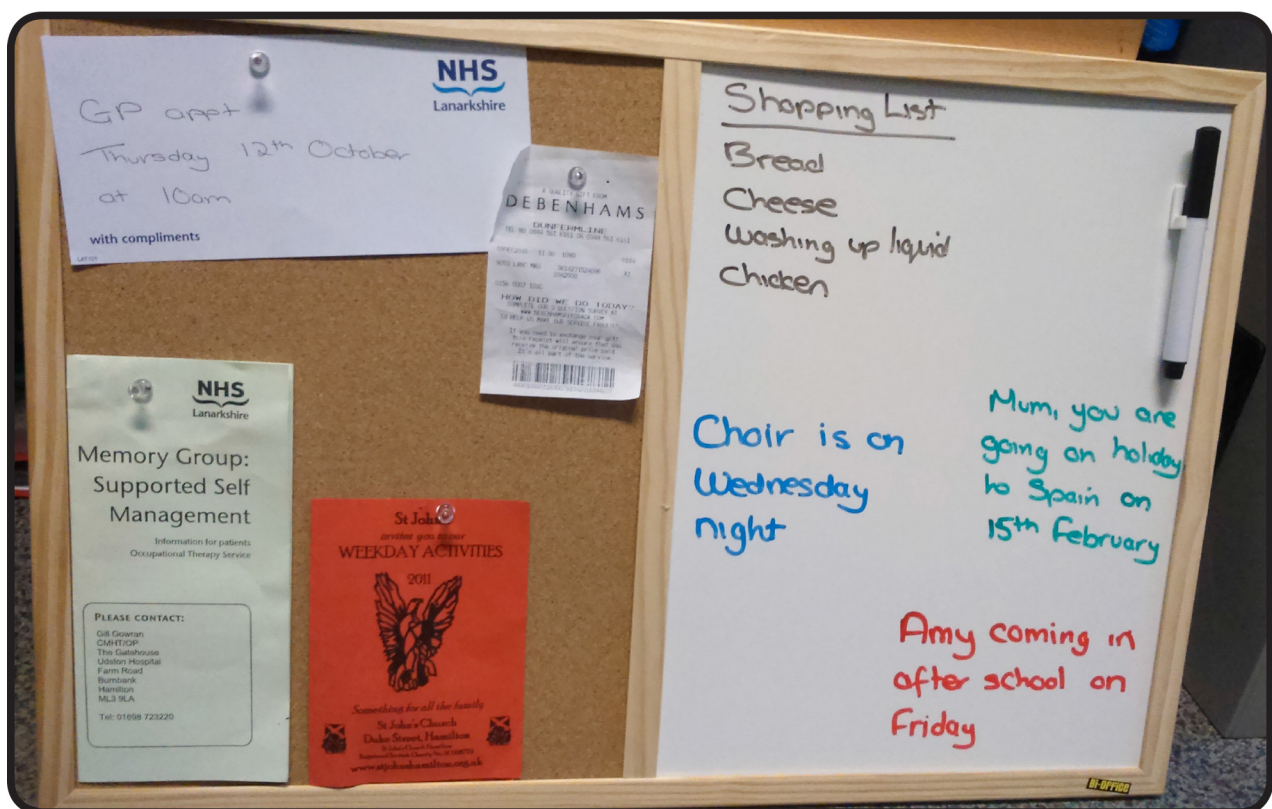
## INFORMATION BOARDS

Information boards can be useful visual prompts that come in various formats, such as pin boards or wipe boards.

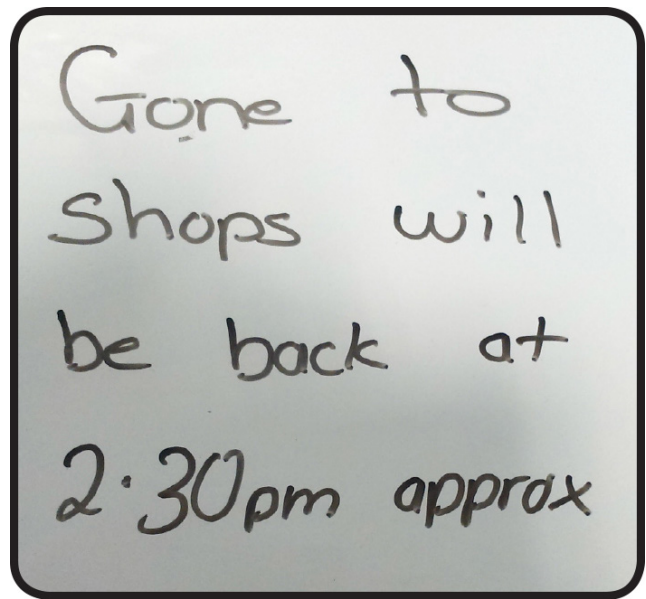
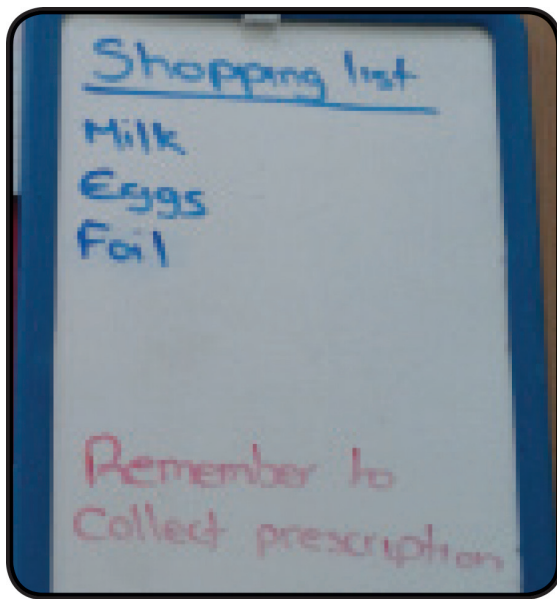
To be helpful it is important the board does not have too much information on it. If writing on a wipe board consider using different coloured pens for separate items to help them stand out.

Some people find it helpful to attach appointment letters or shopping lists to these.

It is important to regularly check boards and update them as required, making sure information no longer required is removed.



## WIPEBOARDS



These come in different sizes and can be fixed to a wall, or smaller ones can be left to be moved about to wherever they are required. If using a larger board that has different information, it is better to use a different colour of pen for each item so they are more easily differentiated.

It is essential that when a task is done, or an event or outing has taken place, that this is removed from the board. Where possible the person with memory difficulties should be encouraged to do this themselves, so it becomes a habit and part of their normal routine.

## MANAGING CORRESPONDENCE

It is important to have a system for organising correspondence to ensure that bills are paid, appointments are attended and you can find documents that you need.



A clearly labeled plastic wallet will allow you to store documents and letters so that you can find them at a later date.



Use different coloured wallets to help organise information, such as household bills or medical appointments.

## USING THE TELEPHONE

Placing a telephone message prompt card, a notepad and a pen next to your telephone can be helpful.

A prompt card can be referred to when writing a message down to ensure you have all the information required, suggestions of what to include on are:

### Telephone Messages

- Put phone on speaker/hands free
- Ask for the person's name
- Ask for their telephone number
- Write all messages down
- Tell the caller that you are writing down the message
- Read the message back to the caller

Another prompt card highlighting the importance of telephone safety may also be beneficial, suggestions to include in this are:

### Telephone Safety

- Do not give your bank details out over the telephone
- Do not give your PIN details out over the telephone



## NIGHT TIME



Keeping a light on during the night in the hallway or in the bathroom can help with orientation. Lights can also be very beneficial, as they light up the area when the motion sensor is triggered. You can get lights that are battery powered and ones that plug in to the socket.

To ensure your home is secure before going to bed, try and use a checklist to tick off tasks that you have done.

### Before going to bed check:

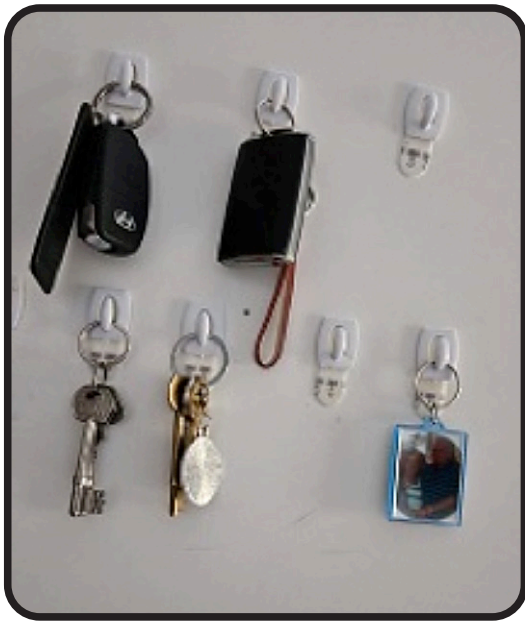
- Back door is locked ☐
- Cooker if off ☐
- Front door is locked ☐
- Windows are closed ☐
- Calendar for morning ☐
- Alarm is set ☐
- Medication is taken ☐

**Have you  
taken your  
medication?**

If you take medication at night you may find using a prompt sign helpful. If you place the sign on your pillow every morning when you make your bed it will be visible when you go to bed and can be placed on your bedside table until the morning. Alternatively you could use an assistive device.

## KEYS

Misplacing keys is a common problem. It is important to have a safe place to keep them and get into the habit of returning them there. DO NOT leave your key in the lock as it prevents access in an emergency.



Some people find keeping keys on a hook helpful while others prefer a specific drawer or dish.

You can also get digital key finders to attach to your keys to allow you to locate them if lost. These are readily available from various suppliers.



Locating keys when out can be challenging but if they are attached to your bag or person they are much easier to find.

## REMEMBERING ITEMS WHEN GOING OUT



If you need to remember to take something out with you make sure it is visible and accessible.

Placing a bag on the door handle and not on the floor is an effective strategy.



Putting a note on the door is also helpful if you need to remember to do something before leaving the house, such as remember to take tickets and passports or turn the heater off.

Before leaving the house  
check you have your:

KEYS

MOBILE

MONEY

HEARING AID IN

☐☐☐☐

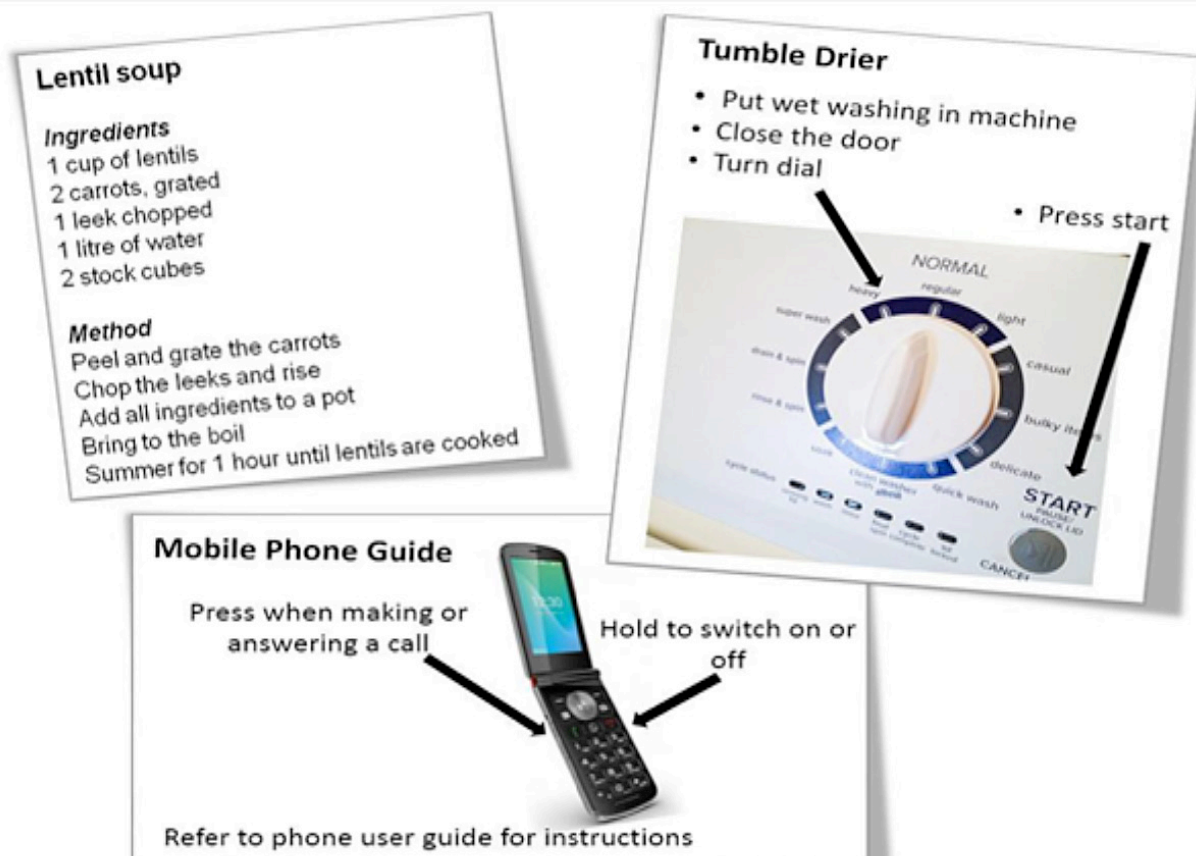
Having a prompt card by the door can be helpful. This ensures that you have all the items you require when you go out.

## INSTRUCTION GUIDES

Many people find using an unfamiliar appliance or a new piece of technology challenging. It can be helpful to write down step by step instructions that are easy to follow. If family are helping you to do this, it is essential they use your words for each step so it is easier for you to follow.

Using picture guides can make written instructions easier to understand. If using this method it is important to use a picture of the actual item that is being used and not something similar as this can be confusing. This can be done simply by taking a photo of the item and labeling the relevant parts accordingly, or by taking screen shots of the relevant steps to illustrate the process.

Similarly having recipes written in a simple step by step guide can assist you to continue to successfully prepare these dishes.



## LOCAL RESOURCES PAGE

### Technology Support

There are local experts who can advise you on pieces of technology.

In North Lanarkshire you can contact the Assistive Technology Team on 01698 346912 or via email [assistivetechonology@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:assistivetechonology@northlan.gov.uk)

In South Lanarkshire you can contact the Technology Enabled Care Team via email [TEC.Programme@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:TEC.Programme@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

### Alzheimer's Scotland Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre

64 Dalziel Street, Motherwell, ML1 1PJ

Tel: 01698 275300

Email: [lanarkshireservices@alzscot.org](mailto:lanarkshireservices@alzscot.org)

## BRAIN HEALTH

Making positive changes in the way we live our lives can influence the health of our brain throughout our lives. To encourage good brain health you should:

- Exercise
- Reduce risks
- Eat well
- Be Aware
- Stay connected
- Switch off

For information on brain health the national resource [www.brainhealth.scot](http://www.brainhealth.scot) has a wealth of information on the topic and resources to promote brain health.

## What if I still have concerns after trying to make changes?

If you continue to have concerns about your memory and ability to do familiar tasks you should consider consulting your GP and/or health professional to enquire if further investigation is required.

If you continue to have difficulties doing everyday tasks, without assistance, you may wish to contact your local Social Work Department to enquire if they are able to provide any additional support.



## PERSONAL NOTES



## HOW WE KEEP YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION SECURE

NHS Lanarkshire take care to make sure that only people who are allowed to can access your personal information. Our staff have a legal duty to keep information about your health safe, secure and private.

If you want to learn more about how we do this, you can visit our website at <https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/data-protection-notice> You can also ask a member of staff for a copy of our Data Protection Notice.

**NHS Lanarkshire** - for local services and the latest health news visit [www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)  
NHS Lanarkshire General  
Enquiry Line: 0300 30 30 243

**NHS inform** - The national health information service for Scotland.  
[www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)  
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

### For NHS staff only -

For advice on how to get a leaflet translated for your patients, please contact: [patientinformation@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformation@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)  
For patient letters, records etc. please email: [translation.services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:translation.services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

Pub. date:	Jul 2025
Review date:	Oct 2026
Issue No:	06a
Department:	Occ Therapy
Clinical Lead:	