

Keeping people with dementia safe

The Herbert Protocol

Plan ahead. Share trusted information. Help bring someone home safely.

The Herbert Protocol is a simple, practical way to help keep people living with dementia safe and support a quicker, more compassionate response if someone goes missing.

What is the Herbert Protocol?

It is a nationally recognised scheme used by the police and emergency services across England and Wales, including Thames Valley Police. The protocol helps officers respond quickly and understandingly when a person with dementia is reported missing.

The Herbert Protocol is a form that is completed in advance, while a person is safe at home.

The protocol is named after George Herbert, a man who lived with dementia and went missing while trying to return to a place from his past. It was created to reduce risk, increase understanding and support safer outcomes.

It brings together important information about the person, such as:

Information to record

- What the person looks like, including a recent photograph
- Health needs and any medication they rely on
- Places that are meaningful or familiar to them
- Daily routines and places they may go if they feel confused or distressed

- Contact details for family members, carers or friends

Having this information ready means families and carers are not expected to remember everything during what can be an upsetting and stressful time. It also allows the police to begin searching straight away, without delay.

How it helps when someone is missing

When a person with dementia is reported missing (sometimes called a MISPER incident), every moment matters.

People with dementia may be frightened, disorientated or unable to explain who they are or where they live. The Herbert Protocol supports a response that recognises this and treats the person with dignity and care.

It helps by:

- Gives police early access to trusted information
- Guides searches towards familiar or meaningful places
- Reduces pressure on families and carers at a difficult time
- Supports a calm, informed and compassionate search

Complete and store the form online

The Herbert Protocol can be completed and stored securely online through MedicAlert, a UK charity that supports people living with long-term conditions, including dementia.

Thames Valley Police use the MedicAlert platform to access Herbert Protocol information when a person with dementia is reported missing. This means officers can quickly obtain key details to support their search and help bring the person home safely.

Complete the Herbert Protocol online

The online Herbert Protocol service is free. You do not need to buy any other MedicAlert service.

The online platform allows families and carers to

- Create a Herbert Protocol profile online
- Update information easily when circumstances change
- Keep current details ready for quick access in an emergency

If someone is reported missing, the police can contact MedicAlert's 24-hour emergency service to access the Herbert Protocol without delay.

Support after someone returns home

When a person with dementia is located and returns home safely, support does not stop there.

MedicAlert can help families and carers after the incident, recognising that this can be an emotional time and that circumstances may have changed.

This includes:

- Supporting a review of the Herbert Protocol information
- Helping families update details if routines, health needs or risks have changed
- Ensuring records remain accurate and useful should they ever be needed again
- Offering reassurance about next steps and future planning

This review helps make sure the Herbert Protocol continues to reflect the person's needs and experiences, learning from what has happened in a supportive and non-judgemental way. Keeping information up to date can also help reduce risk and support even faster responses in future.

MedicAlert services: what is optional?

MedicAlert also offers other services, such as medical ID bracelets and jewellery, which some people choose to wear.

It is important to know that there is no requirement to sign up to any paid MedicAlert services to use the Herbert Protocol platform.

The Herbert Protocol online service is free. Families and carers can create and store a Herbert Protocol profile at no cost, and this information can still be accessed by the police if needed.

Some people may decide that wearing a medical ID is helpful, but this is entirely optional. The Herbert Protocol can be used whether or not a person chooses to take up any paid MedicAlert services.

Technology Enabled Care

Technology can also play a helpful role in keeping people safe and supporting independence.

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) refers to everyday technology and equipment that can help adults:

- Stay safe in their own home
- Feel more confident going out and about
- Remain independent for longer
- Provide reassurance to carers and families
- Personal alarms or fall detectors
- Sensors or alerts supporting safety at home
- Reminder devices for medication or daily routines
- Digital tools supporting independence and wellbeing

In Wokingham, Technology Enabled Care is provided by Wokingham Borough Council. Support is offered in a way that aims to feel supportive rather than intrusive and is shaped around what matters most to the individual.

You can find out more about Technology Enabled Care, including who it is for and how to access support, on the Wokingham Borough Council website:

Find out more

Technology Enabled Care – Wokingham Borough Council

Email: tec@wokingham.gov.uk

Telephone: 0118 974 6000 and ask for the TEC team in Adult Social Care.

A compassionate approach to safety

Living with dementia does not mean losing dignity, identity or independence. The Herbert Protocol, alongside Technology Enabled Care, is about planning ahead, reducing fear and supporting kinder, safer responses when they are most needed.

For families and carers	For professionals	For people living with dementia
Reassurance and practical preparation	Trusted information to guide a coordinated response	Understanding, humane and respectful support

Wokingham Borough Safer Communities Partnership

Working together to keep people safe, prevent harm and support stronger communities.