

# North East Pensioners Association

Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in MARCH 2024 including: 1. Care Homes & Housing, 2. Economy, 3. Health & Welfare, 4. The NHS, 5. Politics, 6. Poverty, 7. Security and 8. Transport.



Note for more reading click on underlined words

## 1. CARE HOMES/CARERS.

### Progress made on care worker shortage in Northumberland.

A wage increase and an uplift in mileage rates has helped Northumberland County Council tackle a shortage in care workers ([HexhamCourant](#)).

**Care homes on red alert for closure.** The social care sector faces a growing crisis, with 2.6m people in England aged over 50 unable to get care, including hundreds of thousands who are stuck on waiting lists for support or waiting to have their needs assessed, according to Age UK ([iNews](#)).

**Care Costs.** Kate Garraway has said the monthly cost of her husband care fees exceeded her ITV salary. Derek's care, the basic needs, not including any therapy, which she was happy to pay on top, was nearly £4,000 a week. How can anybody afford £16,000 a month ([Careappointments](#)).

**New energy service launching for people in the North East.** In a bid to lower energy bills and reduce carbon emissions, the North of Tyne Combined Authority have received £2m to help deliver free energy advice to people in the area. The money came from the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) ([Newstart](#)).



## 2. ECONOMY



**Budget 2024 'Eye-wateringly tough'.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies said the tax cuts announced in the Budget would not make up for the impact of tax increases and rising prices. It said households would be worse off at the election than they were at the start of this parliament ([BBC](#)).

**2024 Sweet and sour' Budget.** It combines £8 billion election year personal tax cuts with post-election plans for £38 billion of tax rises and spending cuts. Middle earners gain at the expense of pensioners and public service users ([Resolution Foundation](#)).

**HM Revenue and Customs has been forced into a swift U-turn.** This after an outcry over its plans to close a key helpline for six months a year and scale back other phone services ([Guardian](#)).

**Teachers strike 'to protect their future pensions'.** Newcastle Dame Allan Teachers are facing forcible withdrawal from the Teachers' Pension Scheme to an inferior Defined Contribution (DC) scheme. If they do not accept this they will be dismissed and reengaged on new contracts that include the DC pension scheme ([NASUWT](#)).

## 3. HEALTH AND WELFARE

**North East Health Declining.** Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research North reveals that the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy between the North and South East England won't close until 2080. The annual State of the North report calls for across-the-board action to address inequalities in health, wealth, power, and opportunity ([IPPR](#)).





## BILL WILSON

NEPA Guest Speaker Monday 8th April 2024 11.00am  
Tyneside Irish Centre Newcastle.

Volunteer - Dementia Matters & Former Unpaid Carer.

### "Understanding the Personal Experiences of Facing a Life with Dementia"

An open meeting you are welcome join us.

## 4. THE NHS

**County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust slammed by the coroner.** This for neglect after a 84-year-old died at his home in September 2022.

The pensioner died after a sore on his foot was allowed to turn necrotic and he contracted sepsis, it has emerged in a report ([D&STimes](#)).

**The first phase of Martha's Rule being implemented in the NHS from April 2024.** County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust, introduced [Call 4 Concern](#) three years ago and was one of the first Trust's in the country to have such an escalation system ([NHS](#)).



**The NHS must end the 'discrimination'.** 3m people aged between 66 and 69 are unable to get the shingles vaccine. The crucial jab – which greatly reduces the chances of developing the extremely painful viral skin condition – is offered to everyone when they turn 65 as well as those aged between 70 and 80([DMail](#)).

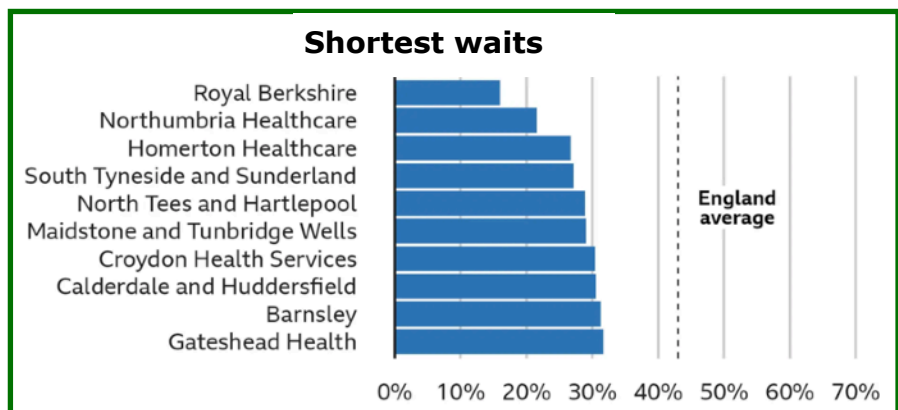
**NHS Budget Squeezed.** Additional NHS funding in the Budget was welcomed. If, however, the impact of a growing and ageing population as well as inflation is taken into account, the value of the NHS England's spending pot will decrease in value by 1% in 2024/25 ([HealthFoundation](#)).

**The British Social Attitudes survey revealed the lowest ever satisfaction with the service.** This since the study started more than 40 years ago, with just 24% of those surveyed saying they were happy with the NHS in 2023. Waiting times and staff shortages were the biggest concerns ([BBC](#)).

### Need an operation?

The hospitals with the shortest waits revealed and some of our hospitals are amongst the best.

([BBC](#))



**End of the hated 8am scramble for a GP appointment.** Patients must now get a slot or be referred elsewhere the FIRST time they call. The move was unveiled by NHS England in the new GP contract. But GPs have called the contract 'insulting' and threatened to strike ([Mail](#)).

## 5. POLITICS

**NEPA were represented by our Chair Eileen Thompson at a Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry into the rights of older people.**

Issues discussed included digital exclusion particularly with reference to online banking and closure of bank branches and the need for a Commissioner for Older People. Our thanks to Independent Age for all the support ([NEPA](#)).

**DWP failed to adequately communicate changes to Women's State Pension age.**

The [WASPI](#) women. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has found that thousands of women may have been affected by DWP's failure to adequately inform them that the State Pension age had changed ([PHSO](#)).



### **North East Mayoral, Combined Authority.**

**This new combined authority.** This will be led by a Mayor elected by residents across the area, and together with one representative from each of the seven constituent click the link for full details ([gov.uk](http://gov.uk)).

**Mayoral Hustings which the Elders Council of Newcastle held 24 March 2024.**

The Older Voices recording was broadcast on Nova Radio North East (102.5fm). You can listen to it again, here's the link to the recording in which they were asked, if elected what would they do for older people ([Oldervoices](#)).

**Hustings to be held by the North East Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise Sector Engagement with NEMCA Mayoral Candidates.** This to be held on Thursday 18th April, 4pm-6pm at the Common Room, Newcastle ([Click to Register with VONNE](#)).

### **Hustings organised by National Pensioners Convention**

**This to be held in Gateshead Town Hall Council Chamber on Monday 29 April 2024 at 1pm.**

**The afternoon will be chaired by Norman Jamison the National President of the National Pensioners Convention.**

**The NPC(NR) Secretary Alec McFadden is asking attendees for organisational and safety reasons to please do the following:**

- a) give notice of their attendance to: [alec.stuc@gmail.com](mailto:alec.stuc@gmail.com) and**
- b) submit any questions for the mayoral candidates prior to the event to : [alec.stuc@gmail.com](mailto:alec.stuc@gmail.com)**



### **4 Alzheimer's Society Questions for candidates.**

1. If elected, will dementia be a priority for you?
2. Will you work to create a more inclusive, accessible community for people living with dementia?
3. I would like to know how you are going to work with people living with dementia to make dementia a priority?
4. Carers face significant mental and financial strain. Is this something you will work to address?



## 4. POVERTY.

**Pensioners living standards have been hard hit.** The proportion unable to heat their home more than doubled to 5% (or 600,000). Clearly many low-income pensioners have struggled due to rising energy and food costs, despite the fact this group received targeted additional support through cost-of-living payments ([IFS](#)).



## 5. SECURITY

### Pension scams. The signs to look out for:



- ▶ Pension cold calls are illegal.
- ▶ Being forced to make a quick decision is a warning sign.
- ▶ Beware promises of low risk/high returns.
- ▶ Beware offers of a 'free pension review'.
- ▶ Avoid companies providing 'help' to release cash from your pension.
- ▶ Contact information is important. Beware if you have little or nothing **Which?**



## 8. TRANSPORT

**300 drivers and engineers at Arriva Northumbria are to strike.** This for one week from **7 April** 2024 with a further week starting **21 April** 2024. Unite says its members voted overwhelmingly in favour of strikes following "the refusal of Arriva to improve a pay offer of just 4 per cent" ([N/Echo](#)).

**Transport needs assessment highlights need for funding in rural areas from new combined authority.** This new report presented to the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board has highlighted the disparity in public transport between Northumberland's rural and urban areas ([Chronicle](#)).

**South Tyneside embark on huge EV charge-point roll-out.** In a move that will boost the North East's charging network by 126%, South Tyneside Council are partnering with Connected Kerb to roll out 2,100 chargers, 80% of which will be operational within two years ([Airqualitynews](#)).

**Integrated Transport.** Candidates for the North East mayoral election have backed the creation of an integrated transport system for the region. The candidates were speaking at a hustings event at Newcastle University, organised by the North East Public Transport Users Group and the University ([Chronicle](#)).

**The Northbound Tyne Tunnel is set to be closed for a total of 36 weekends** The maintenance will begin on 3 May for one weekend of initial works, then recommence on 7 June and end on 3 March 2025. The tunnels will remain open, as usual, from Monday to Friday ([TT2](#))



**Congratulations to Norman Jamison a long serving member of NEPA who has just been elected National President of the National Pensioners Convention.**



Sean Fahey  
NEPA Secretary

**If you want to know more contact the NEPA Secretary at  
Email: [nepacontact@gmail.com](mailto:nepacontact@gmail.com) or Tel. 01670 361981  
[NEPA Website Click Here.](#)**

