

North East Pensioners Association

Impact report July/August 2025

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1. CARE HOMES, CARERS & HOUSING.

More than 1,000 new homes for Newcastle, Northumberland, County Durham and Sunderland in £23m project. The North East Combined Authority has confirmed 12 disused or derelict plots to be regenerated ([Chronicle](#)).

Calls for financial support amid rising elderly single households. The number of over-65s living alone in the UK increased to 4.6 million in the last decade, with women comprising two-fifths of this population. This demographic often faces financial challenges, particularly after the loss of a partner ([SocialcareToday](#)).



Jobs in adult social care in England filled by British nationals has fallen by 85,000. The vacancy rates fell to pre-Covid levels as the numbers working in adult social care reached a record high, but Skills for Care data shows ongoing reliance on international workers as immigration rules tighten ([Communitycare](#)).

A Growing Crisis. Crisis' research reveals that older people are now facing housing insecurity at alarming rates. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable: households unable to save, people experiencing poor health, Black, Asian, and other minoritised ethnic communities ([Crisis 'I didn't expect to be living the way I am'](#)).

Care Workers Poverty Pay - the case for change in social care. Nearly 1.6m people work in social care in England alone. They provide vital care and support to older and disabled people. But analysis finds persistently high levels of poverty and deprivation among the residential care workforce ([Health Foundation](#)).

2. ECONOMY.

Blyth Market Pavilion cinema and arts centre opened August

The venue features a stylish lounge bar, café, and Studio 25 - a flexible performance and event space hosting live music, comedy, markets, and exhibitions. The cabinet member for regeneration at the County Council said: "The completion of this phenomenal venue marks a significant moment for Blyth" ([N/Gazette](#)).

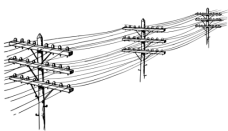


Go-ahead for preparatory works on £10bn Northumberland data centre. The company projects substantial employment benefits from the scheme. Planning documents suggest the campus would support around 1,200 jobs during construction, several hundred permanent roles to operate the data centres, and up to 2,700 additional indirect or induced jobs in the wider local economy ([NewCivilEngineer](#)).



Peterlee banking hub. Plans were submitted to convert a former vape shop into a banking hub. A banking hub is a shared space on the high street that can be used by customers of different banks. Link, the UK's cash access and ATM network, will decide if the hub will be opened ([N/Echo](#)). Note new hub also for Whitley Bay ([Chronicle](#)).

3. HEALTH & WELFARE.



Warning issued to BT landline users. A major change is on the horizon that will render them nonfunctional. Users have been alerted that a major update is coming to UK phone lines, affecting 137 new areas. This includes Darlington, Felling, Lynemouth, New Brancepeth, Sacriston, Shildon, Stockton, Washington and Wolverston ([Chronicle](#)).

Helpful Digital Switchover Guide. Helpful information on the digital switchover provided by Northumberland County Council that all will find helpful ([NCC](#)).

Long-term air pollution exposure and incidence of dementia. University of Cambridge analysis reinforces the evidence that outdoor air pollutants are linked to dementia, suggesting that reducing pollution exposure could lower dementia rates and stricter air quality standards would offer substantial health, social, and economic benefits ([Lancet](#)).

Probate unpacked: executors reveal the challenges they've faced when dealing with banks. A Which Survey revealed HSBC 56% and Barclays 62% received the lowest satisfaction scores from respondents saying they were satisfied with their skill and knowledge during the process. Santander topped the list with a score of 80% ([Which](#)).



4. THE NHS.

NHS 10 Year Plan - Opinions

Alzheimer's Society. The commitment to developing a blueprint for improving dementia care is a hugely positive step forward for the 826,000 people in England living with the condition. Done right, this plan can turbocharge improvements in diagnosis and ensure the treatment and support people receive is timely, tailored, and local ([Alzheimer's Society](#)).

A new era for the NHS. The new NHS plan includes neighbourhood health services, centres, and a "Plan for Change" to train more doctors, transform appointments, and provide personalised care ([northeastbylines](#)).

Remote consultation. In June 2025, 33.3% of GP appointments in England were remote, with 8% conducted online and 25% by phone. While online appointments have increased, phone appointments have remained steady. The NHS 10-year health plan aims to improve access to remote consultations and digital services



([DigitalHealth](#)).

New Tech and AI. We need to move from 'techno-optimism' to 'techno-realism'. The future is uncertain, and the plan highlights gaps to be filled, including updated regulation and guidance for new tech uses and evolving artificial intelligence (AI) issues. The government's commitment to a new regulatory framework for medical devices and an NHS AI strategic roadmap is positive ([HealthFoundation](#)).

Parkinson's Research. To help Newcastle scientists learn more about this risk and to develop new treatments, people are being encouraged to participate in a simple scratch and sniff test. The test takes around 15 minutes to complete and can be done at home ([NHS](#)). [Over 40 click here](#).

Elderly Ward 23 at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Gateshead - will close. This to provide community-based care, aiming for faster patient recovery. The trust is addressing financial challenges while prioritising patient safety ([BBC](#)).



5. POLITICS.

Durham County Council rescinded its 2019 declaration of a climate emergency. This a move met with opposition. The decision, believed to be a UK first, prioritises residents over what the mover of the motion said was “expensive virtue signalling” ([N/Echo](#)).



The government is consulting on reforms to council funding allocation. New analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies claims that gains for cash-strapped local authorities in the North East “may be lower than expected” overall. It pinpoints two areas, Sunderland and South Tyneside, that are actually “set to be big losers” ([IFS Ref page 35](#)).



Dirty Water, Dirty Water Everywhere.

New report finds systemic water company failure. Water company pollution incidents across England rose sharply last year, a new report from the Environment Agency has found. The report shows consistently poor performance from all nine water and sewerage companies in the region, with serious pollution incidents in 2024 up 60% from 2023 ([Gov.UK](#)).

A new water ombudsman with legal powers will be established. This to resolve disputes, replacing the current voluntary system. The changes will expand the role of the Consumer Council for Water and bring the water sector in line with other utilities. ([HexhamCourant](#)).

Ofwat to be abolished. This the biggest overhaul of water since privatisation. Ofwat to be abolished and a new, single, powerful regulator to be established to cut water pollution in England’s rivers, lakes and seas, and protect families from massive bill hikes ([Gov.UK](#)).

The Government is reviving the Pensions Commission. This to address concerns about a potential retirement crisis. Analysis shows pensioner income is set to fall. The commission will examine the long-term future of the retirement system and make recommendations for change ([Guardian](#)).

6. POVERTY.

MPs call for cross-government strategy to tackle pensioner poverty. They warn that if it doesn't effectively address this issue, it will not be able to achieve its goal of building a sustainable health and social care service.

The comments were made as part of the Work and Pensions Committee's report following [its inquiry into pensioner poverty](#), which identified "concerning" longer-term trends that “threaten to undermine pension adequacy”, such as the climbing number of people renting in the private sector during retirement ([PensionAge](#)).



7. SECURITY.



County Durham Police visible deterrent of extra patrols. This is just one part of a drive to further improve neighbourhood policing across County Durham and Darlington. Six new inspectors have been appointed to spearhead improvements to community policing across the force area ([SunderlandEcho](#)).

Coxhoe Parish Council installed CCTV. The cameras along the High Street to deter anti-social behaviour and improve public safety. The project, funded by a £7,000 grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner, will be monitored by the parish council ([N/Echo](#)).

Northumbria Police is submitting planning applications for a new operational headquarters. This as part of a long-term estate efficiency and improvement programme. The current estate requires significant modernisation and the continued investment in ageing buildings is expensive and unsustainable. They plan to transform one of the buildings in the Cobalt Business Park North Tyneside ([Police](#)).



A vulnerable elderly Gateshead couple were fleeced and burgled.

Sentencing the 2 guilty men to 6 and 3 years respectively, the Recorder said the offences were "cruel, callous and cowardly", adding: "What you did was target vulnerable, elderly victims ([Chronicle](#)).

National record number of police officers sacked amid drop in force numbers.

Latest home office data reveals 426 officers were dismissed or had their contracts terminated in the 12 months to March. This period also saw 4,806 officers voluntarily leaving policing. Forces have warned that funding levels fall short to keep the existing workforce ([N/Echo](#)).

8. TRANSPORT.

Newcastle Central Station kiosk 'inferior' to closed ticket office.

Dr Ford of the North East Public Transport Users Group criticised the new kiosk arrangement, citing long queues, hearing difficulties, and equality concerns for those with hearing impairments and non-English speakers ([BBC](#)).



Over-70s face driving ban for failing eye tests. The UK government will revise its road safety strategy, including stricter eyesight requirements for drivers. The move comes after an inquest into four deaths caused by drivers with failing eyesight saw a coroner call the UK's licensing system the "laxest in Europe" ([BBC](#)).

Additional trains. The Office of Rail and Road has approved proposals from open access operators Lumo, Grand Central and Hull Trains. The move opens the way for more direct links between London King's Cross and Glasgow, Hull and Newcastle. It will also introduce links to other destinations, including Seaham ([BusinessLive](#)).

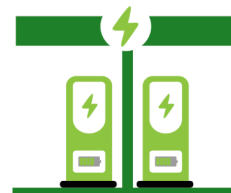
Electric Vehicles

New charging points across North East. Zest and the North East Combined Authority are partnering to install 40 new fast-charging EV spaces across the North East of England. The initiative, funded by the government and private investment, aims to address charging inequality and expand the region's EV network ([T/Energy](#)).

As from August 2025, you can get an Electric Car Grant.

This means :

- a) 13 models from Nissan, Renault and Vauxhall now qualify for major discounts as part of the Electric Car Grant scheme,
- b) drivers to save £1,500 on these latest electric cars, in addition to 4 Citroën models announced earlier in August and
- c) £650 million scheme is backing industry and jobs, while making it cheaper to own an EV ([Gov.UK](#)).



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