

North East Pensioners Association

Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in FEBRUARY 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.

End discrimination for older renters. We know renters can be evicted for no reason and can face informal discrimination if they receive income top-ups, such as older people who receive Pension Credit — this is known as 'No DSS' discrimination. ([IndependentAge](#))



No-fault evictions will be banned by next election. The Housing Secretary told the BBC that "we will have outlawed" the policy by the election "and we will have put the money into the courts in order to ensure that they can enforce that". Since 2019 26,311 have been evicted ([Insidehousing](#)).

Social Housing. Local authority housing chiefs have joined charity Shelter in demanding urgent action to build more homes across the region, after shocking figures laid bare the huge scale of demand. There was a 51% (75,985) increase in the number of North East households trying to secure social

housing ([Chronicle](#)).

UK care firm charged workers from Africa thousands more than cost of visa. The allegations come after the Home Office added care workers to the UK's shortage occupation list in 2022 to help fill 165,000 vacancies in care homes and domiciliary care ([Guardian](#)).

2. ECONOMY

Royal Mail's scrapping of Saturday post. This could mean 'second-class citizenship' for elderly. The Silver Voices campaign group for over 60s, warned the move would hit older people hardest. They said: "It looks like Ofcom is going to fire the starting gun on a radical review of our postal services" ([Express](#)).



The triple lock will see the state pension rise by 8.5%, making it worth: £221.20 a week for the full, new flat-rate state pension - pension age after April 2016. £169.50 a week for the full, old basic state pension - pension age before April 2016 ([BBC](#)).



HMRC investigations of wealthy 'tax dodgers' halved in five years. Civil investigations opened by the offshore, corporate and wealthy unit, part of HMRC's fraud investigation service, fell from 1,417 in 2018-19 to 627 in 2022-23 ([Guardian](#)).

Pension snooping powers branded attack on freedom. Fears that new "big brother" powers could allow the government to snoop on bank accounts of state pensioners ([Express](#)).

3. HEALTH AND WELFARE



Drugs used to treat erectile dysfunction. These could also be linked to a reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, according to new research from University College London. The findings have been published in the online issue of medical journal *Neurology* and more research is needed to confirm these findings ([Alzheimer's researchUK](#)).

Drug offers 'wonderful' breakthrough in treatment of asbestos-linked cancer.

Scientists have developed a drug to treat mesothelioma, a notoriously hard-to-treat cancer linked to asbestos, in the biggest breakthrough in two decades.

Keeping warm - Age UK Guide. How to stay warm and well this winter. Order the guide on line by clicking [here](#) or on the telephone: 0800 678 1602.



Anxious Minds. Free counselling for veterans in the North East.

This can be accessed on 01670 946188/0191 2620305 or on email blyth@anxiousminds.co.uk. It can be delivered either remotely or in person ([Anxious Minds](#)). Ensure your status is shown on your NHS medical records (NHS) ([Gov.UK](#)).

Study shows England's oldest became frailer during austerity. Research shows the rate of frailty in people aged 85 and over in England increased 50 percent faster per year between 2012 and 2018 compared with the preceding eight years ([SCT](#)).



Do we know true scale of pollution in English waters? Is our bathing water more polluted than we think? There are documents which show that almost twice as many English bathing waters would fail pollution tests - if the regulator wasn't legally allowed to disregard some of the worst results ([Channel4](#)). Be careful where you go plodding?

Cancer survival rates have slowed. Cancer Research UK say the rate of progress was 5 times faster in the 2000s than in the 2010s. Surviving a decade or more however with cancer in the UK is the highest it has ever been, rising from 47.9% in 2010/11 to 49.8% in 2018 ([BBC](#)).

You are invited to Age Without Limits Action Day.

Wednesday 20th March 2024 Grainger Market 10am - 2pm. All of Search's regular activities for the day will be moved to the Grainger Market to showcase what is possible in older age ([Search Newcastle](#)).



Playing a musical instrument or singing. This keeps the brain healthy in older age, UK researchers suggest. They indicate that education or engagement in musical activities in later life is potentially valuable as a means of harnessing cognitive reserve, as part of a protective lifestyle for brain health ([GeriatricPsychiatry](#)).



BILL WILSON

NEPA Guest Speaker Monday 8th April 2024

Tyneside Irish Centre Newcastle.

Volunteer - Dementia Matters & Former Unpaid Carer.

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

Non-members most welcome but please give NEPA notice no later than Friday 29 March 2024 so any extra numbers can be safely accommodated.

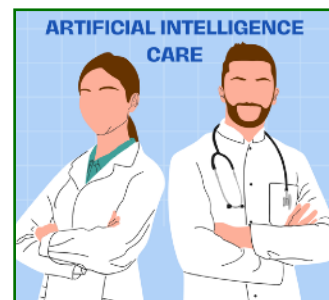
4. THE NHS



The ITV Series "Breathtaking". This has opened a floodgate of rage, relief and recognition. During the Covid pandemic, NHS staff were treated as expendable. The emotional response to the series suggests they still feel this way says the author ([Guardian](#)).

NHS dentist shortages to be tackled with cash incentive. The £20,000 "golden hello" payment will be available to up to 240 dentists, about 1% of the workforce, with the aim of getting more people to work for three years in the so-called dental deserts where there is the poorest access to NHS care ([BBC](#)).

A new beginning for UK medical care through promoting artificial intelligence in the NHS. A £21M fund will boost the use of AI in the NHS. Trusts can access it for swift deployment of advanced AI tools, expediting critical diagnoses like cancer, stroke, and heart conditions ([Open Access](#)).



Physician Associates. People are confused about the growing numbers in the NHS. Research suggests they wrongly assume they are doctors. Around 4,000 work in the NHS in England. Ministers and health chiefs plan to increase the figure to 10,000 to help plug widespread gaps in the NHS workforce ([Guardian](#)).

Industrial Action Junior Doctors. February saw the start of further industrial action that affected the NHS for five days, from 7.00 am on Saturday 24 February until midnight on Wednesday 28 February ([NHS](#)).

5. POLITICS



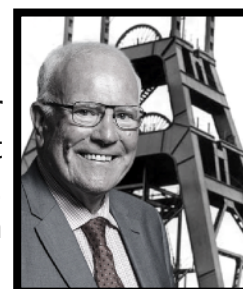
Are our council in crisis? Recently you may have seen local authorities warning that they are facing a funding crisis. Since 2021, six local authorities have declared themselves effectively bankrupt, and many other local authorities have reported that they may soon be forced to do the same ([Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)).

Council bankruptcy tracker: authorities under increasing financial strain. Central government grant funding for councils dropped by 40 per cent in real terms between 2009-10 and 2019-20 from £46.5bn to £28bn ([NewStatesman](#)).

UK women 'need to work an extra 19 years to retire with same pension pot as men'. The research found women retiring at 67 – the new UK state pension age from 2026 – will have saved an average of £69,000, compared with £205,000 for men ([Guardian](#))

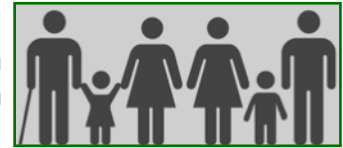
Dementia. Ask your MP, to ask the Chancellor, to use the Spring Budget to commit to funding a social care plan. For the 900,000 people living with dementia in the UK, quality care is a lifeline that cannot be dismissed ([Alzheimer's Society](#)).

A Dedicated Servant'. Ronnie Campbell a long-standing former MP for Blyth Valley, has died aged 80 ([N/Gazette](#)). NEPA's deepest condolences to his family and to his many friends for their sad loss. His funeral was attended from all across the political spectrum including local leaders and several North East MP's.



6. POVERTY.

Durham County - Absolute Poverty. Figures from Durham County Council suggest more than 112,000 people, about 1 in 5, are struggling and dependent on help ([BBC](#)).



'Energy bills to fall by 12.3% on 1 April 2024. This for those on price-capped tariffs. From April to June the 'typical' household will pay around £141 per month for gas and electricity, or £1,690 a year. Currently, the same household pays £161 per month, or £1,928 ([Which](#)).

Energy companies. They made profits of more than £1bn a week around the world last year as millions of hard-pressed Britons struggled to heat their homes or pay their bills in the ongoing cost of living crisis.

*“I’m trying my best but our bills are creeping up all the time.”
72-year-old parent of a disabled child ([Independent](#)).*

7. SECURITY

Tyne and Wear fire service warns of cuts threat as councillors sign off 'unavoidable' tax rise. A 2.99% rise in the fire precept on Tyne and Wear council tax bills means that almost half of the service's budget now comes from the pockets of local residents ([Chronicle](#)).

WARNING - Cheap electric heaters from TikTok and Temu. These could explode, result in an electric shock or even cause a fire, with new Which? research revealing that thousands of these dangerous items have potentially been sold ([Which?](#)).

8. TRANSPORT

Outrage at threat to strip over-70s of driving licences over eyesight tests. Any attempt to introduce compulsory eye tests for drivers over the age of 70 is “clearly discrimination”, a campaigner for Britain’s senior citizens has said ([Express](#)).



England has lost 22% of its local bus provision since 2011. And when we account for increases in population, the decline is even greater: 28 per cent. Analysis has found that every region of England has been hit, with those outside the South East seeing the sharpest falls. The North East lost 32% ([4News](#)).

Worst performing train stations in County Durham & Teesside. The data, taken from [OnTimeTrains](#), score services based on how many of their services depart on time and are not cancelled. This creates an overall score for 2619 stations. See the interactive map to see how your station is ranked e.g. Durham 2528, Darlington 2223 and Middlesbrough 1295 ([D&STimes](#)). Newcastle came in at 2049.

Metro fines manufacturer £1.4m for train failures. This for under performance. Stadler said, the 43-year-old fleet has reached its life expectancy, as new stock is delayed again ([BBC](#)).

Sean Fahey
NEPA Secretary



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[NEPA Website Click Here.](#)