

North East Pensioners Association

Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in December 2025 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 any underlined words



1. CARE HOMES, CARERS & HOUSING.

Work gets underway on new 124-apartment Extra care scheme in South Shields. One of our key ambitions for this project is to provide homes that cater for a diverse mix of residents, from young adults with additional needs to those living with dementia (S/Tyneside).

Benefits triumph for thousands of carers. Ministers have set aside £75m to fix systemic failures that caused hundreds of thousands of unpaid carers to be hit with huge bills. This after unwittingly breaching complex and confusing benefit rules (Guardian).



'Turbocharge' new social housing in North East. The Government announces plans to deliver thousands of new social and affordable homes in the North East, allocating £1.1 billion under the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (Chronicle).

The two main areas of social care policy development are the Casey Commission and the Fair Pay Agreement. Other important workstreams in digital technology and a care workforce pathway lie behind these. However, the slow pace of change, with timelines extending to 2028, is a concern for a system under pressure (HealthFoundation).

2. ECONOMY.

Workforce. The lowest national employment rate was in the North East 69.0%. The North East unemployment rate was 5.8% (ONS).

Darlington will receive £16m in funding for a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths centre. MP for Darlington, said: "This cutting-edge Government-funded STEM Centre will make sure all of us can train and upskill in the sectors of the future, so we can benefit from the world-leading industrial excellence on our doorstep (D&STimes).



300 jobs expected as plans to expand Bishop Auckland retail park given the go ahead. The plans include four new retail units and additional car parking spaces, situated to the west of the existing site (Chronicle).

Over a dozen Sunderland businesses have created jobs and launched new products or services thanks to a Government-backed grant scheme. The Enterprising Sunderland Innovation Grants were launched to help the city's businesses realise their potential and are being delivered by the North East Business and Innovation Centre on behalf of Sunderland City Council (SunderlandEcho).



3. HEALTH & WELFARE.

Palliative care services in England are "failing to meet people's needs". This according to a new parliamentary report commissioned by MPs on the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee. The reports findings attribute these shortcomings primarily to "insufficient funds" for services providing end-of-life and life-limiting condition care. (Independent).



Dementia with Lewy bodies. The second most common form of dementia after Alzheimer's disease, affecting an estimated 130,000 people in the UK. Researchers at Newcastle University have transformed global understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of the condition. They have received royal recognition for their work with the award of the Queen Elizabeth prize (ShieldsGazette).

Cognitive decline and financial wealth at older ages report. Older people experiencing cognitive decline see a gradual decline in financial wealth, roughly £30,000 lower eight to ten years after first recording low cognitive function(IFS).

Hexham's Chrysalis Club Tynedale honoured with Kings Award. Chrysalis Club Tynedale received the award for its work supporting people living with dementia and their families. The award is the highest accolade given to volunteer groups in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE (HexhamCourant).

DWP State Pension. People over 80 with no Basic State Pension or receiving less than £105.70 weekly may be eligible for additional funds. The 'Over 80 Pension' and Pension Credit could provide financial support of up to £4,300 in extra financial support over the 2025/26 financial year (Express).

The UK response to Covid was "too little, too late" and led to thousands more deaths in the first wave. An Inquiry chaired by Baroness Hallett said that while government was presented with unenviable choices under extreme pressure, "all four governments failed to appreciate the scale of the threat or the urgency of response it demanded in the early part of 2020" (BBC).



4. NHS.

Our region leading the way. It was good to see that the North East and North Cumbria have reclaimed the top spot nationally for elective care, delivering the best performance in England for treating patients within the 18-week standard (NHS).

A pensioner has criticised hygiene and patient care standards at Darlington Memorial Hospital. He claimed he was sent home "covered in his own waste" following a colonoscopy procedure. Following the ordeal, he attempted to raise a complaint through the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service, but found it "impossible" to speak to anyone directly (D&S Times).



Gateshead NHS trust to get share of £7.4m for 'remote monitoring' to keep people out of hospital. Bosses at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will run one of 45 pilot schemes investigating how care can be provided outside of hospitals. This as part of a push to use "remote monitoring and self-reporting tools through the NHS App". This to "help patients share updates on their health directly with specialists"(Chronicle).

Sunderland families affected by dementia to benefit. This from new dementia specialist Admiral Nurse service. The Admiral Nurse service will ensure people with dementia and their families are supported by a specialist dementia nurse from the point of hospital admission through to discharge (NHS).

Freeman and Harefield Hospitals knew a heart device led to more patients' deaths - but they kept using it.

The BBC learned that leading cardiologists at both hospitals were paid consultants for the device's manufacturer. The hospitals were aware of this. Both hospitals, Freeman and Harefield, continued to use the device for years, and questioned the reliability of the data flagged by the NHS ([BBC](#)).



The government will abolish Healthwatch England and Local Healthwatch. This to streamline patient safety functions. A new patient experience directorate within the Department of Health and Social Care will centralise patient feedback, improving care quality and safety. The government are being as to revisit this decision ([Click here to sign petition](#)).

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS launches pioneering clinic. This for older patients undergoing surgery. The clinic is designed to optimise outcomes for patients who need surgery because of a new diagnosis of bladder cancer, as well as having multiple medical conditions, dementia or frailty ([NHS](#)).

Calls for inquiry into NHS Trust's breast cancer care. [The BBC learned](#) patients suffered unnecessary mastectomies, delayed diagnoses and a lack of compassionate care at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust ([BBC](#)).

5. POLITICS.

WASPI. The Government agreed to reconsider its response to the Ombudsman's report on WASPI women's injustice and committed to a 12-week timetable. None of this would have happened without the solidarity, commitment and support through donations of WASPI women and their allies. Thanks to you all ([WASPI](#)).



Budget 2025 - National Pensioners Convention reaction. They welcome the 4.8% state pension increase but criticised the extended tax threshold freeze until 2031, which will result in higher tax bills for many older people. They also express disappointment at the lack of measures to address fuel poverty and concerns about future funding for the NHS and social care ([NPC](#)).

The State Pension. This will rise by 4.8% in April 2026. The full new State Pension (post 2016 retirees) to £241.30 per week, an increase of about £575 per year. The full basic (old/pre-2016 retirees) State Pension is expected to rise to £184.90 per week. An increase of £8.45 per week - annual increase: £439.40 ([CommonsLibrary](#)).

Assisted Dying Bill. The House of Lords is debating the bill allowing assisted dying for terminally ill adults in England and Wales. Over 900 amendments have been proposed, sparking concerns about potential delays, as the bill requires approval from both Houses before the current parliamentary session ends ([BBC](#)).

Durham County Council anticipates needing to make £72.8 million in savings over the next four years, with £10 million in new proposals unveiled this week. The council aims to avoid raising council tax and is considering job cuts and parking charge increases ([D&STimes](#)).



Northumberland County Council leader defended the council's spending on green initiatives. He emphasised the importance of reducing carbon emissions for future generations. The Reform opposition leader criticised the council's 2030 carbon neutrality target as unrealistic ([N/Gazette](#)).

6. POVERTY.

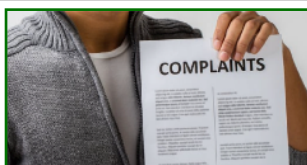
Virgin Media fined £24m after switching off elderly customers' landlines. Ofcom says operator put thousands at 'direct risk of harm' by disconnecting people with 'telecare' alarms ([Telegraph](#)).



Homeless. Nearly 300,000 families and individuals in England are experiencing homelessness, a 21% increase since 2022. Local authorities report a rise in homelessness-related approaches and significant spending on emergency and temporary accommodation ([LocalGov](#)).

7. SECURITY.

Watch out for fake NHS cold calls. NHS scam calls, likely spoofed, claim your GP record needs updating to avoid removal from the surgery. The NHS will never threaten removal or ask for financial information over the phone ([Which?](#)).



Police Complaints. More people than ever before are accessing the police complaints system in England and Wales, figures released by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) show. The number of complaints logged by the 43 police forces rose to 94,940 between April 2024 and March 2025 ([IOPC](#)).

End of the road for police and crime commissioners. So farewell PCCs. Designed to be the voice of the public in order to hold police forces and specifically chief constables to account, they will exist no more at the end of the current electoral cycle ([TeessideLive](#)).

8. TRANSPORT.

The Disabled Persons Railcard (DPRC) eligibility criteria are being expanded This to include both visible and non-visible disabilities. The changes, implemented in two phases, will simplify the application process and align DPRC evidence with other transport schemes ([Raildelivery](#))



The Transport Secretary has announced multi-year funding for bus services in England. Heidi Alexander said it will be "up to councils to determine how they use" the £3 billion of investment over the next three years. This allows for forward planning by local authorities ([ITN](#)).

Northern will introduce a new late service on the Northumberland Line. This departing Newcastle for Ashington at 11.21pm, starting 14 December. Sunday services will be extended to the MetroCentre. These changes come after over 800,000 journeys since the line reopened in December 2024 ([NorthumberlandCC](#))



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