

# North East Pensioners Association

Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in January 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.

**Ashington care home staff retention.** HC-One have seen record numbers of people staying in jobs in their care homes this year. This, 5% better than the national average. In addition to new flexible working practices they raised the pay of carers by almost 20% over the last 2 years." (N/Gazette). So that how it is done?

**Sunderland care workers to launch historic equal pay claim against council.** The mainly female workers say they are paid less per hour than male-dominated jobs and have been denied access to a more generous local authority pension scheme, that is predominantly used by male council workers (Chronicle).

## 2. ECONOMY

**4,000 North East Jobs.** North of Tyne mayor said: "We're getting £160m over 10 years to boost skills and infrastructure in Blyth, along the Tyne, at IAMP in Washington, and NETPark in Sedgefield. This will mean more well-paid jobs in green tech and advanced manufacturing – from offshore wind to electric vehicle production." (Chronicle).



**Marks and Spencer plans closure of Sunderland city centre store.** In a previous announcement, the company said it was expecting to open the new Washington store in the spring 2024 (S/Echo).

**Barclays Bank in Barnard Castle Closed.** This as the company announces a string of 20 closures of branches across the country (D&STimes).

**North East 'levelled down' since 2010 in flatlining economy.** This according to a report by the Centre for Cities. The report also highlights how the Newcastle economy has fared better than Sunderland and Middlesbrough (Chronicle).

## 3. HEALTH AND WELFARE

**'Red tape' cut for terminally ill in Northumberland.** People with rapidly progressing terminal illnesses can now receive non means tested funding of up to £6,500 for urgently required home adaptations (HexhamCourant).

**Single**  
If you are single with total weekly income under c. £220

**OR**

**Couple**  
If you're a couple, both of pension age, with weekly income under c. £320

**Then DON'T STALL JUST CALL**

**Aged 66 or older by 12 Dec 2023? Check now if you're due Pension Credit.** If your total income is under £220 a week, or are a couple with combined total income under £320 a week.pension credit helpline on 0800 99 1234 (MSE).

**Thousands of people have signed a petition.** They are demanding telecoms giants review a scheduled timetable to switch all landlines to digital, internet-based services by 2025 amid fears vulnerable pensioners could be left cut off ([MailOnline](#)). Please sign and share by clicking this link: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/653201>.

**County Durham residents warned of service cuts and council tax rise.** Cuts to frontline services could be in the firing line in years to come as the local authority continues to balance its budget amid a decline in funding, inflationary pressures and an increased demand in certain services. ([N/Echo](#)).



**The State of Ageing 2023-24 report.** Gains in life expectancy in past decades mean that millions more are living into their 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond. But at the same time, there is a growing divide in experiences of ageing, with the poorest people living shorter lives ([StateofAgeing](#)).

**Ageism is often dismissed as being harmless.** Evidence shows that it causes significant damage to individuals, the economy and society. Ageism causes people to be excluded from society and its institutions; it also leads people to limit their lives, activities and aspirations, damaging their health and wellbeing ([CentreforAgingBetter](#)).

**Age Without Limits.** With [new data](#) from the charity revealing half of adults aged over 50 in England have experienced age discrimination in the last year, [the campaign](#) is set to change the way we think about ageing, tackle prejudices and empower people to age with confidence ([Centre for Aging Better](#)).



**A new genetic mutation gives significant protect against Parkinson's.** 'This study advances our understanding of why people might get Parkinson's and how we might develop new therapies for this devastating disease,' said professor Cohen ([SCT](#)).

**A simple blood test can detect Alzheimer's up to 15 years before symptoms emerge.** Experts claiming it could "revolutionise" early diagnosis. Swedish trials found the test to be as accurate at detecting the signs of Alzheimer's as lumbar punctures, and better than a range of other current tests ([Independent](#)).

**Evidence grows of air pollution link with dementia and stroke risk.** Prof Frank Kelly, said: "These new findings help to clarify how air pollution plays an important role in the dynamic transitions of stroke and dementia, even at concentrations below the UK's current air quality standards ([Guardiane](#)).

## 4. NHS

**NHS dentistry as we know it 'gone for good'** The Nuffield Trust think tank said the service had been cut back so much it was now at the most perilous position in its 75-year history in England ([BBC](#)).



**Teesside branded 'dental desert'** On the "[Find a dentist](#)" section of the NHS website, a search calls up only one surgery with a TS postcode accepting new adult NHS patients, a centre in Stockton. Nearest surgeries accepting are in areas like Newton Aycliffe, Pickering, Newcastle, Jarrow and South Shields ([N/Echo](#)).

**Newcastle hospital trust overhauls leadership - Critical CQC Report.** A new CEO took control of the trust at the beginning of January. Now the organisation - has confirmed that two long-serving executives are to stand down and a third is moving to a different role ([Chronicle](#)).

**Trusts first fully dementia-friendly inpatient ward.** This has been opened by South Tyneside and Sunderland Foundation Trust as it works to improve the experience of older people when they need to stay in hospital ([NHS](#)).

**Virtual ward costs twice that of inpatient care, study finds.** The [study's authors](#) said the findings should raise concerns over a flagship NHS England policy, which has driven the establishment of 10,000 virtual ward beds ([HSJ](#)).

## **Public Lecture By Amanda Pritchard Chief Executive**

**NHS England.** Thursday 21 March - Jacobson Lecture - 5.30 in Curtis Auditorium - Herschel Building. There is no charge for these lectures but pre-booking is required from 14th March 10.00am use this [booking link](#) or 0191 208 6136 ([Insight Public Lectures](#)).



## **5. POLITICS**

**The leader of Northumberland County Council has called on Government to provide local authorities with "sustainable" funding.** Northumberland has a highest proportion of old people in the North East and higher than the national average. The fact that people are spread over a large, rural area makes it even more expensive ([H/Courant](#)).

**Reaction as Middlesbrough Council bids to avoid bankruptcy.** The council is battling to plug a funding gap of almost £6.3m for 2024/25 while facing dwindling reserves. Mr McDonald said the local authority was moving "heaven and earth to avoid the unthinkable consequences of bankruptcy" ([D&STimes](#)).

**Councils to get extra funding to tackle cash crisis.** England's local authorities will receive a £600m funding boost from the government following recent warnings of further bankruptcies ([BBC](#)).

## **6. POVERTY.**

**700,000 people live in poverty in North East.** This according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report. Of those, 200,000 (29%) are children, with even higher rates of child poverty in Newcastle (38%), [South Tyneside](#) (36%) and [Sunderland](#) (35%).



**4,950 excess winter deaths caused by cold homes last winter.** Following publication of new official data, the End Fuel Poverty Coalition has estimated that 4,950 excess winter deaths in the UK were caused by living in cold homes during winter 2022/23 ([EFPC](#)).

**Two million people could have their gas and electricity cut off this winter.** This because they cannot afford to top up their prepayment meter, new research suggests. [Citizens Advice](#) has warned that having no gas and electricity would not be a "one-off" experience for many ([BBC](#)).



## **7. SECURITY**

**Durham Police and Crime Commissioner criticises government police funding settlement.** "This six per cent increase will do nothing to support growth and is merely there to fund the majority of the seven per cent pay award for officers and staff, announced in 2023. ([D&STimes](#)).

**Northumbria Police Council Tax proposed as 7.7%.** The police and crime commissioner has warned she must increase council tax bills to avoid making £4m worth of cuts – but has also pledged to use the money to reopen closed police stations ([N/Echo](#)).

## 8. TRANSPORT

**Mayoral Hustings - Transport.** The [North East Public Transport User Group](#) agreed with the Department for Transport and Environment at the University of Newcastle to jointly host a Hustings Meetings for the Mayoral elections due in May 2024. The meeting will be chaired by [Professor Phill Blyth CBE](#). The Curtis Auditorium in the Herschel Building at the University of Newcastle has been reserved for the 5th March 2024 from 6.00.pm - 8.30.pm to which the current 6 candidates who have declared will be invited. We are advised that more details to follow.

**Huge decline of North East bus services - 40m miles wiped off routes.** The [North East Public Transport Users Group](#), said the big decline was evidence of a “failure of transport policy over the last four decades in the UK and the huge impact it has had on lives across our region” ([Chronicle](#)).



**Give Us Better Buses for England!** The National Pensioners Convention has backed the Better Buses campaign. You can sign the petition By Clicking [Here](#). Find out more about the campaign by Clicking [Here](#) ([NPC](#)).

### **Metro closures to cause disruption until Easter.**

10-11 February: Buses replace trains from South Gosforth to Wallsend

17-25 February: Buses replace trains from Airport to Regent Centre

16-17 March: Buses replace trains from Heworth to South Gosforth

29 March-1 April (Easter weekend):

**Buses replace trains from Heworth to South Gosforth ([BBC](#)).**

**Worse than ever before – Tyne and Wear Metro.** It slumps to record low number of trains turning up on time. Just 61% of Tyne and Wear Metro services arrived on time between November 12 and December 9, the worst performance recorded in the rail network's history ([Chronicle](#)).



**Train station machines can charge more than twice the price of online tickets.** Mystery shoppers found many train operators have outdated ticket machines that don't sell the cheap fares available online ([Which?](#)).

Sean Fahey  
NEPA Secretary

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**If you want to know more contact the NEPA Secretary at :  
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