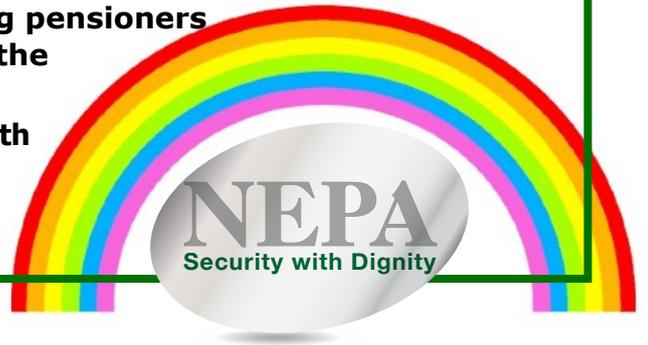


North East Pensioners Association

Regional impact report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in July/August 2021 including the following:

1. Care Homes & Housing, 2. Economy, 3. Health & Welfare, 4. The NHS, 5. Politics, 6. Poverty
7. Security and 8. Transport.



1. CARE HOMES & HOUSING

Care Home Covid deaths in North East. CQC has published detailed data on the numbers of Covid deaths that took place in individual care homes between April 2020 and March 2021. More than 39,000 died.



The data breakdown shows the highest number of deaths in a single care home was 44 with more than 30 deaths happening in 21 care homes (pages 3 and 5 give the region and home breakdown).

The North East had the most Covid-related deaths early in the pandemic and South East care homes were hit hardest in the second wave.

Nursing in Practice magazine reported on these figures:

- The head of policy at the Health Foundation, said the new data highlights the 'grim toll' that the pandemic has taken on people in care homes, which were often also impacted by community transmission but said the scale of the problem was not 'inevitable'.
- Central government support for social care during the pandemic was often too little, too late, particularly during the first wave.
- The government's claim of "a protective ring" around care homes was not grounded in reality.'
- 'The social care system that entered the pandemic was underfunded, understaffed, and undervalued – scarred by decades of political neglect.

2. ECONOMY

The New North East Chamber of Commerce CEO - John McCabe. He hopes to work with government to deliver a levelling up agenda that has a focus on people and opportunity as well as on critical investment in infrastructure (N/Echo).



Big investors back South Tees bid for key English ports. A group of investors are preparing a £2bn takeover of one of the UK's largest port operators in a move seen by some as a vote of confidence in the government's levelling-up agenda (Guardian).

Ageism at Work Survey. Those surveyed have spoken of their experiences of feeling shut out and overlooked within the workplace, and forced out of employment opportunities. A study released today by organisation 55/Redefined in collaboration with UK charity, Pro/Age, has demonstrated the extent of the problem which is a cause for concern (D/Express).

Takeaway app giant Just Eat - 1500 North East jobs. It has announced plans to invest £100m in the region over the next 5 years, with staff working partly from home and partly from a contact centre at Rainton Bridge, Houghton-le-Spring (Chronicle)

3. HEALTH & WELFARE.

Lasting Power Of Attorney reform plans. An LPA is a legal document which allows people to appoint someone else to make decisions about their welfare, money or property. They are often used by older people to choose someone to make decisions for them when they lose the mental capacity to do so in the future - but they can be made by anyone over the age of 18. Ministers are looking to overhaul access to make it quicker, easier access and even more secure from fraud ([BBC](#)).

Banks failing to support disabled customers - "Which survey". They reveal the best and worst banks, as rated by nearly 1,500 disabled customers, and explored the barriers that must be broken down. The top 3 banks First Direct, Nationwide and the Co-op. The research revealed that while some banks go above and beyond to help disabled customers, others are barely meeting minimum standards.

New care model for adults gets go-ahead in Northumberland. In 2020, the council proposed a new model for the integration of community-based health and care services for people with long-term disabling health conditions. The Northumbria NHS Healthcare Trust did not feel able to support this proposal, and came to the view that new opportunities associated with the national policy for Integrated Care Systems meant that the formal partnership agreement was no longer necessary. The formal partnership agreement will end on 30/09/21 ([Northumberland Gazette](#)).

5,000 Asbestos related UK deaths each year. This despite asbestos being banned in UK since 1999. The Work and Pensions Committee are looking into this. According to a [HSE Report](#) published in July covering 1981-119, Sunderland (360), South Tyneside (147) Hartlepool (72) and North Tyneside are in the 10 of male deaths. The North East accounted for 128 of the 352 female deaths for GB as a whole during 1981-2019 and included in the top five Unitary/Local Authority's, Sunderland and Darlington.

Terry McDermott - Lewy body dementia. Sadly another footballer falls victim to this terrible disease. We wish him and all suffers and their families well.



4. THE NHS



Amanda Pritchard. The new Chief Executive of NHS England since 1 August 2021. Pritchard has served as Chief Operating Officer of NHS England and as Chief Executive of NHS Improvement since 2019. Her credentials are good and we wish her well ([Wikipedia](#))

South Tyneside end-of-life care. Health chiefs are aiming for high standards in end-of-life care after closure in 2019 of St Clare's Hospice Jarrow. NHS leaders have praised new services in the grounds of South Tyneside Hospital ([S/Gazette](#)).

Blood bottle shortages. GPs instructed to halt all non-urgent blood tests until mid-September 2021. In an [update](#) to GPs ([NHS England 26/08/21](#)), health leaders said all primary care and community testing must be stopped, except for clinically urgent testing - admitting that the situation would get worse 'over the coming weeks'.

NHS data grab on hold. More than a million people opted out of NHS data-sharing in one month in a [huge backlash](#) against government plans to make patient data available to private companies the *Observer* revealed ([B/Telegraph](#)).

Record high waiting lists in Newcastle city hospitals. Some 80,000 needing treatment. Numbers are also increasing at County Durham and Darlington NHS Trust, at 29,473 it was the highest level since May 2008, and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust, rising to 25,056. The A&E waiting figure are also not good but a lot better than other parts of the country who are well off the standard ([Chronicle](#)). Our thanks to all.

NHS vacancies published 26/08/2021 as 93,806 (full time equivalent) by NHS Digital. Within the Registered Nursing staff group 38,952 vacancies exist.

5. POLITICS

State Pension Triple Lock. Under this the government committed to raise pensions each year by a minimum of either 2.5%, the rate of inflation, or average earnings growth - whichever is highest. Meaning an earnings boost of more than £700 for Britain's pensioners in 2022. Will they honour this commitment ([Mirror](#))?

Government Consultation Prescriptions. This on aligning the upper age for NHS prescription exemptions with State Pension age. [Click here to see the link.](#) This ends 02/09/2021. One option includes introducing a period of grace meaning people aged 60 to 66 at the point of any change can continue to receive free prescriptions ([DHSC](#)).

Miners Pension Scheme. Government has received £4bn from the fund but won't make changes to pay more to former miners – Government's response 'slap in the face' for scheme members, says Business Committee Chair ([UK Parliament](#)). The reform would have meant an average increase of £14 per week, say MP's ([Chronicle](#)).



Anita Lower Newcastle City Councillor. She received many tributes after her death, from across the political spectrum for her 25 years service as a leading Liberal Democrat. Our condolences to her family, friends and colleagues for their sad loss.

6. POVERTY



Pensioner poverty at highest level since 2012. Government figures show that while poverty in the overall population has remained relatively stable, since 2012, pensioner poverty has increased by 5%, with now almost a fifth of pensioners (18%) living in poverty after paying their housing costs in 2020.

Those 85 and over have the highest rate of poverty among pensioners, at 22%. This has risen 6% since 2012. The North East, which fell to a low of 10% in 2011 – 2013, has been steadily rising and has now gone up by 6% to 16% ([Independent Age](#)).

Pension Credit. As part of its 'Credit where it's due' campaign, Independent Age has been calling on the government to create an action plan to increase uptake since July 2019.

Universal Credit to be cut by £20. Regional child poverty campaigners have renewed calls for the government to reverse an impending £20 a week cut to Universal Credit after figures published by the Department for Work and Pensions 17 August 2021, confirm for the first time the number of children and young people across the North East who will be directly affected by this move ([northeastbylines](#)).

Local/Unitary Authorities.	Total households in receipt of UC	Households with children in receipt of UC	Number of children in households in receipt of UC
Darlington	8,086	3,486	6,343
Durham	38,666	16,700	30,154
Gateshead	16,359	6,537	11,546
Hartlepool	10,503	4,377	8,113
Middlesbrough	15,396	6,715	13,301
Newcastle	27,277	11,136	20,712
Northumberland	17,476	7,491	13,628
North Tyneside	13,905	6,010	10,567
Redcar & Cleveland	10,230	4,439	8,363
Stockton-on-Tees	14,175	6,232	11,570
South Tyneside	13,244	5,498	9,939
Sunderland	23,153	9,589	18,242
<u>NORTH EAST</u>	208,470	88,210	162,478

7. SECURITY

Northumbria police plans to permanently close 14 of its 23 front offices. This it says will make the service more cost effective. They were all closed last year due to Covid and the scheme would see just nine re-open. A Northumbria police spokesperson said: "It's not about closing front offices that are currently open and staffed as those staff had already been re-deployed in other roles" ([Chronicle](#)). Will the service be more effective?



Nurse made dementia patient hit himself 2018. The hospital dismissed the Northumberland nurse after investigation and referred the matter to the police and the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The NMC concluded in August 2021 that this was a one off incident and out of character with previous conduct. The nurse was suspended from the register for 1 month ([Chronicle](#)).

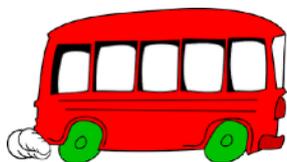
Gateshead Carer Jailed 13 months. She stole thousands from men in their 90s with dementia and was caught by the intervention of a concerned relative ([twnews](#)). Keep a look out for each other.

Treasury Select Committee - Bank Transfer Scams. [Which magazine](#) gave evidence in July 2021 as to why the regulator must do more to protect victims of bank transfer scams (see [twitter video](#) if you have device).



- £700,000 is lost to this crime every day, yet banks are routinely dodging their responsibilities under the current industry code.
- And now astonishingly, despite these repeated failings, the regulator is considering letting the banks rewrite their own code.
- This would be completely unacceptable. More people could be left vulnerable to scams and many more could lose huge sums of money.

8. TRANSPORT



Bus Back Better - report by Dept of Transport. After neglecting the issue for decades, the UK government this year published a new bus strategy for England. To its credit, it recognised the failures of the current system and acknowledged: "If we are not to abandon entire communities, services cannot be planned purely on a commercial basis."

- But the strategy completely fails to address the fundamental problem. It continues to put private interests ahead of public ones, despite decades of evidence that organising a transport sector around profit is not a good way to provide for people's needs. Instead, the strategy offers lacklustre half-measures.
- More fundamental change is needed. Public control or ownership would be more cost-effective and allow for reinvestment of profits, integrated networks, more efficient coverage, simpler fares, consistency with climate goals, and public accountability. Regulation in London and municipally owned operators such as in Nottingham, Reading and Edinburgh provide impressive counter-examples of what is possible. There is a way back ([Guardian](#)).

Sean Fahey
NEPA Secretary

The NEPA Website can be accessed by [clicking here](#) or google "NEPA Pensioners"
(Please note that underlined script in this document serve as links to web pages).