

North East Pensioners Association

Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in January 2026 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.

Council Tax Carers Discount – one in five English and Welsh councils get it wrong. Unpaid carers can't trust councils' information about Carers' Council Tax discounts. All Carers who thought they weren't eligible after checking councils' websites should check again [use [Carers UK's help pages](#)] ([MartinLewis](#)).



Millions of households could get free solar panels and heat pumps. This through new government scheme. The government's 'Warm Homes Plan' will provide low and zero-interest loans for solar panels, heat pumps, and batteries. Low-income households will receive free insulation and clean tech upgrades ([Independent](#)).

Ground rents for leaseholders will be capped at £250 annually. The reforms also include banning the sale of new leasehold flats and giving homeowners more control over building management ([BBC](#)).

North East council housing waiting lists top 44,000.

Figures obtained by the Local Democracy Reporting Service through freedom of information requests show that at least 44,887 applications remain on waiting lists for some form of social housing across the region ([NorthernEcho](#)).

2. ECONOMY.

The North East Energy and Innovation Summit In January. This highlighted the region's potential as a green industry powerhouse, emphasising the need to harness renewable energy resources and create jobs. North East Mayor Kim stressed the importance of supporting the existing renewable energy workforce and doubling it to 50,000 ([EJournal](#)).



EDF abandons plans to expand Blyth offshore wind demonstrator project. EDF Renewables UK, part of the French energy giant, said it had made the "difficult decision" not to progress the Blyth 2 offshore wind farm project, which were once touted as a first in English waters ([BusinessLive](#)).

North East unemployment rises to highest level in more than four years. The figures from the ONS show that the joblessness rate in the North East rose sharply to stand at 6.2%, the highest level seen in the region since early 2021 ([Chronicle](#)).



Ofwat grilled as Water firms appear to evade bonus bans. Ofwat, the water regulator, has been questioned (ref. Q4 et seq) about how complex corporate structures allow senior executives to receive payments from unregulated parent companies. This despite the Water (Special Measures) Act banning performance-related bonuses ([PublicAccountsCom](#)). **Northumberland Water** has confirmed that household bills will be going up by around £30 per year ([NGazette](#)).

3. HEALTH & WELFARE.

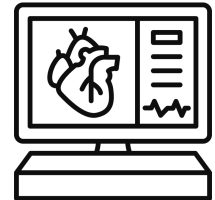


'Thoughts about Palliative and End of Life Care'. The NHS in the North East and North Cumbria is asking people to share their views through a survey – It asks how people feel about discussing death, dying and the care they would want for themselves or their loved ones. It's anonymous click here: [End Of Life Care Survey \(NHS\)](#).

The NHS to offer Abiraterone. This is a life-extending drug, to men with prostate cancer whose cancer has not spread. This treatment, which starves the cancer of hormones, will be available to around 2,000 men diagnosed in the last three months and an additional 7,000 expected to be diagnosed annually ([NHS](#)).

The government's housing strategy, Renters' Rights Act, and Decent Homes Standard aim to improve health. Successful implementation requires a delivery approach matching the intent. 15% of homes in England, particularly in the private rented sector, fail the 2006 Decent Home Standard, posing health and safety risks. These failures cost the NHS £1.4bn annually ([HealthFoundation](#)).

An artificial-intelligence program, gives doctors more time with their patients. The program analyses heart scans in seconds – a fraction of how long it takes clinicians to do this by hand. The software now assesses hundreds of thousands of heart scans done every year at almost 2000 hospitals worldwide ([Biobank](#)).




4. NHS.

Weardale Community Hospital - County Durham's 'secret gem'. A small community hospital in rural County Durham is quietly earning a glowing reputation from patients and families, at a time when some hospitals across the North East have faced difficult headlines ([D&S Times](#)).

James Cook cancer patients are to receive faster and safer treatment. This as work continues to upgrade radiotherapy machines at University Hospital. The Elekta linear accelerator machines carefully aim beams of radiation at cancerous areas to kill cancer cells ([NHS](#)).





10 Year NHS Plan - Removes need for NHS Public Governors oversight in our communities. Who or what will replace your elected representatives voices after 2027?

See on page 81 of the NHS 10 Year Plan it says, "We will remove the requirement for Foundation Trusts (FTs) to have governors. While governors have provided helpful advice and oversight for some FTs, we expect the next generation of NHS FTs to put in place more dynamic arrangements to take account of patient, staff and stakeholder insight. This should include systematic measures of patient reported experiences and outcomes, as we detail in chapter 6 (p85 et seq of Plan)" ([NHSPlan](#)).



The RCN has slammed the normalisation of corridor care. This after a new report from the Health Services Safety Investigations Body found corridor care takes place throughout the year with the practice becoming normalised across the NHS ([RCN](#)).

The NHS reported 554,018 trolley waits of more than 12 hours in 2025. This is the highest number since current records began ([HealthFoundation](#)).

10 Year NHS Plan - Introduces Advanced Foundation Trusts (AFT). Its claimed these will get the NHS back on its feet by redistributing power to the frontline: to providers, clinicians, staff, and most importantly, patients and local communities. These will be rewarded and incentivised for good performance and re-establish the principle of earned autonomy, which drove substantial improvements in the 2000s ([NHS](#)).

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust AFT. This trust is among the first eight trusts nominated to become advanced foundation trusts. This is based on their record of delivering quality care, strong finances, and effective partnerships ([NHS](#)).



5. POLITICS.



WASPI Million Letters - Women affected by changes to the state pension age have accused the government of treating them with “utter contempt” after ministers rejected their claim for compensation once again ([Independent](#)). The Ombudsman found the DWP’s delay unjust, but the Government rejected this. WASPI women and their supporters have urged them to contact their MPs, urging them to support the Ombudsman’s findings and push for compensation ([Click Here WASPI](#)).

Changes to inheritance tax thresholds. The Farm Retail Association welcomed the changes which they believed would support family-run farms. They expressed concern that the new threshold may not be sufficient for all farms and criticised the government for the 14-month delay in decision-making ([D&STimes](#)).

6. POVERTY.



Nearly a million older people in the UK are cutting back on food. This due to rising costs and low, fixed incomes. Many are resorting to shopping for discounted food, growing their own vegetables, and even skipping meals to make ends meet ([Age UK](#)).



South Tyneside considers council tax reduction scheme. The scheme, reviewed annually for fairness and affordability, will benefit eligible residents in 2026/27. Key features include continued protection for pension-age residents, income disregards for certain benefits, backdating of council tax reduction, and disregarding

capital below £16,000 for eligibility ([S/Gazette](#)).

7. SECURITY.

Heinous' pair attacked 85-year-old man in his Newcastle home. Newcastle Crown Court found them guilty. They were given jail sentences of 73 and 21 months respectively. The victim, who later died of unrelated causes, suffered swelling and a laceration, requiring a 12-day hospital stay. His grandson called the offence “despicable and cowardly” ([Chronicle](#)).



Community connector Riada Kullani helping crime victims in Stockton. This funded by the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner's Protect and Support Fund. She will support victims of domestic abuse, hate crime, exploitation, and antisocial behaviour by connecting them to recovery services and providing advocacy. The project also includes Hate Crime Awareness Training for organisations across Stockton ([D&STimes](#)).



Home Secretary to introduce power to sack chief constables. New laws will restore the Home Secretary's power to dismiss chief constables for performance reasons, a power removed in 2011. This follows a report criticising West Midlands Police leadership ([PProfessional](#)).

8. TRANSPORT.



The Northumberland Line has exceeded expectations.

This with nearly a million passenger journeys. The line's success has been recognised with Ashington winning the World Cup of Stations, and there are calls for more carriages and an extension to Newbiggin ([NCC](#)).



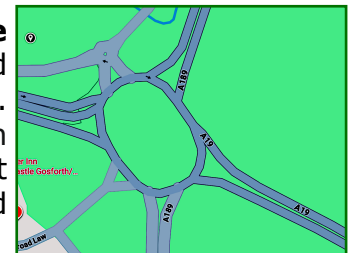
Heidi Alexander

Leamside Line.

North East mayor and the Secretary of State for Transport (Heidi Alexander) signed an agreement to advance a new rail line for County Durham, connecting to Newcastle via Darlington and Durham. For the first time in decades, the new line will give communities a rail link which will be transformational for local people ([S/Echo](#)).

A fleet of 29 electric buses has been unveiled. This amid promises of cleaner and quieter streets. Go North East said 3 of its busiest routes, Angel 21, X66 and 58, which serve places including Durham and Gateshead, will be fully electric following £17m of government-backed investment ([BBC](#)).

Moor Farm roundabout in Annitford links A19 Tye Tunnel with A1. 2026 is 'make or break' for long-awaited Northumberland roundabout upgrade says the County Council. The notorious Moor Farm roundabout's upgrades have been fraught with complications. Government funding for the project is uncertain, and even if approved, it wouldn't be implemented until 2031 ([Chronicle](#)).



RAC Pavement Parking Restrictions. Local councils in England will gain new powers to introduce wider pavement-parking restrictions, improving accessibility for disabled people and others. The Department for Transport confirmed that councils will receive stronger legal tools to manage pavement parking across broader areas ([RAC](#)).

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 You'll find our meeting details under Events.
 Come along and see if what we do interests you.

