

North East Pensioners Association

Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in APRIL 2026 including: 1. Care Homes & Housing, 2. Economy, 3. Health & Welfare, 4. The NHS, 5. Politics, 6. Poverty, 7. Security and 8. Transport.



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Note for more reading click on any underlined words

1. CARE HOMES, CARERS & HOUSING.

Around 25,000 unpaid carers in the UK will have their Carer's Allowance overpayment debts reduced, cancelled, or refunded. This following a Department for Work and Pensions review. The review, covering 2015–2025, addresses issues where confusing guidance led to carers unknowingly exceeding earnings limits and facing significant, sometimes, and unfair debt (Gov.uk).

The Care Quality Commission have updated their approach to assessing local authorities. The approach uses 9 quality statements across 4 themes. This following learning and feedback they have updated the information return. They have also improved their case tracking process and are introducing case sampling after piloting this during their baselining programme (CQC).

Helen McArdle CBE dies aged 77. She will be remembered not only for leading the way in the care sector with over 50 care homes but also for creating a lasting legacy in the region, giving generously to charities, foundations and educational establishments. Our deepest sympathy to her family and friends (Chronicle).



2. ECONOMY.

Nissan unveiled an all-electric Juke. Nissan has said its Sunderland plant is "central" in the switch towards electric vehicles after unveiling a new model of its Juke car which will be made in the North East (Chronicle).

The OpenAI company is shelving its Stargate UK project in the region. This was due to be based across a number of sites including Cobalt Park near Newcastle and in the Northumberland town of Blyth – a so-called AI growth zone. It is however opening its ChatGPT development in London (N/Echo).

Regional Unemployment 6.1%. This second only to London's rate of 7.4%. The unemployment rate for the UK is 4.9% (OfficeofNationalStatistics).

3. HEALTH & WELFARE.

Darlington Lions are helping to boost men's health with vital cancer checks.

The group arranged and funded free prostate cancer screenings for 179 men on Saturday, April 25 in Darlington in partnership with the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust. This marks the fourth screening event organised by the Lions to raise and improve detection (Darlington&StocktonTimes).



The UK population's health is poor. Its getting worse and not undergoing the same steady improvement seen in countries such as Japan, Norway and Spain. This according to a new analysis of healthy life expectancy in 21 countries by the Health Foundation. The decline in Britons' health in recent years is so significant that, in more than 90% of the UK, people now start suffering from illness before the state pension age, the study revealed. (Guardian).

The Timms Review of Personal Independence Payments. This is an important issue for older people and their families. The National Pensions Convention will be responding to the call for evidence, but would encourage individuals/families to respond personally using email: timmsreview.callforevidence@dwp.gov.uk. Closing date is 28/5/26 ([NPC](#)).



The IFS Deaton Review into Inequalities - From Evidence to Action. Six years of research tells us inequalities are at the forefront of today's public and policy debates. They have been linked to some of the most important political events, including the rise of populism across the developed world and the vote for Brexit, and have sparked worldwide protest movements. There could hardly be a more pressing time to understand how inequalities arise, which ones matter, why they matter, and how they should be addressed. Includes a concise toolkit in it 64 pages - a good read ([IFS](#)).



CrossSense an AI-powered smart glasses system giving gentle prompts. It is designed specifically to enable people living with early-stage dementia to maintain independence and live confidently in their own homes. Developed by a London-based team and awarded the £1m Longitude Prize on Dementia, the technology offers personalised, real-time cognitive support. Available from 2027 ([Alzheimer's Society](#)).

Alzheimer's Society responds to the Cochrane Collaboration's report on amyloid-targeting monoclonal antibodies for Alzheimer's disease. The Society emphasises the importance of challenging the report's conclusions, as amyloid is a key protein involved in Alzheimer's disease and anti-amyloid therapies aim to clear it from the brain ([AlzheimerSociety](#)).



THE NHS.



People living with Parkinson's disease. They have spoken of their disappointment at a trust's decision to end a specialist service. In December Gateshead Health Foundation NHS Trust's ended a two-year pilot with a speech and language therapist after the funding for the post from charity Parkinson's UK came to an end ([BBC](#)).

BlackRock, a landlord for NHS GP clinics. They are being considered by the government to finance neighbourhood health centres. Campaigners against this criticise this government's use of private finance initiatives, previously deemed poor value for taxpayers ([FinancialTimes](#)).

Tees Valley is among the areas to benefit from an expanded Community Diagnostic Centre. This forming part of a wider £237m investment in 36 new and expanded centres. North East patients are set to benefit from quicker diagnostic tests closer to home as part of the biggest expansion of NHS diagnostic services in a generation ([Darlington&StocktonTimes](#)).

NHS England CEO has warned that rising costs and supply chain issues from the Iran conflict could deal a "huge shock". This to health service finances, necessitating extra government funding. He stated that with potential for significant price rises in energy and materials, it is "not reasonable" for the NHS to absorb these costs ([HSJ](#)).

NHS England's new definition of A&E "corridor care".

This is facing criticism from experts who claim it has too many loopholes and will likely lead to "gaming" of reporting. The metric



focuses on patients in corridors for over 45 minutes, a definition deemed complex and allowing for potential manipulation ([HSJ](#)).

Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust has defended the closure of Dementia Ward 23 at the Queen Elizabeth (QE) They stated that this was part of a necessary, modern approach to treat more patients in the community rather than in hospital settings. One protester warned the replacement services would not match the previous level of care provided and had resulted in the loss of 24 hospital beds ([BBC](#)).



Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust leadership rating downgraded by CQC to "requires improvement". The trust faced challenges in safeguarding, including inaccurate reporting, unclear reporting protocols, and workforce issues like high vacancy rates and inconsistent supervision. Additionally, staff faced barriers to career progression and concerns about bullying and discrimination ([ITV](#)).

5. POLITICS.

Pension Triple Lock. Since its introduction in 2011, has lifted millions of pensioners by uprating the state pension by earnings, inflation or 2.5%, whichever is highest. Even so, the UK state pension remains among the lowest in Europe, reliant on top-ups. But as the population ages, critics claim it's no longer affordable. The PM has pledged to keep it for this Parliament. For once, he hasn't done a U-turn ([Express](#)).



Pension Schemes ACT 2026 given Royal Assent. The Act aims to improve pensions by consolidating small pots, standardising value assessment, creating large multi-employer funds, consolidating Local Government Pension Scheme assets, and providing Defined Benefit schemes with flexibility. These measures could benefit average earners by up to £29,000 by retirement ([UK.Gov](#)).

Capita sacked - As Royal Mail Statutory Pension Scheme Administrator. The government has terminated the contract with Capita after the outsourcing firm "failed to deliver numerous milestones", Cabinet Office minister, Nick Thomas-Symonds, has confirmed ([PensionAge](#)).



Capita are also the administrators the Civil Service Pension Scheme. They have been heavily criticised by government ministers as falling "far short" of required standards. The breakdown has resulted in significant backlogs, financial hardship for members, and intervention by the Cabinet Office. This level of repeated service failure is the consequence of the introduction of privatisation to the administration of the scheme in 2012 ([PCS](#)).

A £20m, ten-year initiative has been approved to transform Blyth. This focusing on community and business-led improvements. The Government Pride in Place Programme will support local priorities like reviving high streets, tackling anti-social behaviour, and growing the local economy ([NorthumberlandCountyCouncil](#)).

Lord Jeremy Beecham. Tributes have been paid to the founding chairman of the Local Government Association Lord Jeremy Beecham, who has died aged 81. Lord Beecham was a councillor for 55 years at Newcastle City Council until 2022. He was leader for 17 years between 1977 and 1994. Our deepest sympathy to his family and friends. ([LGC](#)).



Local Elections results May 2026 - Reform celebrate major wins.

Reform has taken control of Sunderland, South Tyneside, and Gateshead.

Labour held its majority in North Tyneside.

Newcastle no majority achieved as follows : Lib dems 25, Greens 24, Reform 24, Independents 3 and Labour 2.

Reform took all 12 seats up for grabs in Hartlepool but no majority achieved as follows: 15 Reform, 14 Labour and 7 Independents. Negotiations will now have to take place to decide who will lead the council.

6. POVERTY.

Darlington Council will get the funding from the Government's new Crisis and Resilience Fund. This will provide the borough with around £1.8 million each year to support residents facing financial hardship. The scheme replaces the previous Household Support Fund and will run until March 31, 2029 ([NorthernEcho](#)).

7. SECURITY.

Digital ID Plan will increase digital exclusion. Liberty is concerned that millions of the most marginalised people in the UK do not have access to a digital device, the internet or possess the digital skills needed to use digital ID. Therefore, there is a real risk that people could be further excluded if digital ID becomes the de facto way to access services ([Liberty](#)).



Northumberland Police and Crime Commissioner. She has announced that 216 neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers have been hired or redeployed across Northumbria in the last year ([N/Police](#)).

8. TRANSPORT.

£55m Blyth Relief Road given green light by council. Despite the significant investment and long-held need for a relief road, the scheme received 132 objections from local residents. Speaking at Tuesday's meeting of the council's strategic planning committee, two objectors urged councillors to refuse permission ([N/Echo](#)).



The Tyne and Wear Metro introduced major fare changes. This capping single tickets at £2.50 and day travel at £5.00 for users with a Pop Pay As You Go card, representing the biggest fare overhaul in over 20 years to match bus prices in the North East ([NEXUS](#)).

Northumberland line is fully operational. The County Council leader hopes to submit a planning application by 2028 for a proposed extension of the Northumberland Line to [Newbiggin-by-the-Sea](#) and [Woodhorn](#). This potential "Phase Two" seeks to expand the route further north, supported by a new £2.5 million rail development fund ([Chronicle](#)).

Sean Fahey

Secretary NEPA



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We promote the relief of elderly people in any manner which is,
deemed to be charitable, in and around the North East.

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